District 64 schools get festive brought their musical talents to annual event | PAGE 6
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District 64

Students mark holidays with annual school Sing

JENNIFER JOHNSON
johnson@pioneernico.com | @jen_pioneer

Local schools got festive last week as students brought their musical talent to the annual Holiday Sing. A tradition at each Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 elementary school, the Holiday Sing gives students in kindergarten through fifth grade a chance to perform both popular and lesser known songs of the season in front of an audience of parents and teachers.

Students sing in groups and some also play instruments.
St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church wins Golf Mill Mall’s Festival of Trees contest

BY IGOR STUDENKOV
Special for Pioneer Press | @tsudenkov

St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church won the Golf Mill Shopping Center’s annual Festival of Trees contest for the second year in a row.

For the past five years, organizations from across the Niles area have decorated Christmas trees and competed to see which tree gets the most votes. The trees are placed in the center of Golf Mill Mall, near the food court. The votes are counted based on food donations and online votes.

Aside from St. Matthew’s, this year’s participants included the Brunswick Zone bowling alley, Golf Mill Barbershop, Maine Township Youth Services, Niles Police Department, Niles Public Library, and St. John Lutheran Church. The St. Matthew’s Christmas tree received a total of 784 votes.

The church has won a total of three times, but this was the first time it won two years in a row.

As the result of this year’s festival, Golf Mill Mall was able to collect 1,632 food items. The items were donated to the Maine Township Emergency Food Pantry.

The pantry is located in the Maine Township Hall’s basement. It is open to all Maine Township residents on Tuesdays and Fridays, between 1 and 4 p.m. Donations can be dropped off at the Township Hall on weekdays, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

St. Matthew’s was presented prizes: a plaque and $100 Sears gift card during a short ceremony that took place on Wednesday, Dec. 17 at 3 p.m.

This was the first Festival of Trees to take place since Sterling Organization LLC of Palm Beach, Florida, bought the shopping center. In a statement to the press, Angela Moreno, Golf Mill’s marketing and events
Coming Together in Skokie 2015 explores race

BY MIKE ISAACS

The 2015 edition of Coming Together in Skokie & Niles Township may look quite different on the outside, but it still is guided by the same principles that have made it such a success for the last five years.

In January every year, the community comes together for six weeks of enlightening programming on a single topic. Always at the center are several carefully-selected books with some of the authors visiting the area for presentations.

But whereas Coming Together in Skokie & Niles Township has always selected a single culture for study during its six-week run — Indian, Filipino, Assyrian, Greek and Korean over the first five years — this year it abandons that tenet.

Instead, Coming Together in Skokie & Niles Township shines its spotlight on the topic of race in general, aligning itself with the current exhibition at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center. Another difference this year is that programming extends over a longer time — as late as April for some programs.

“This year, the topic is especially opportune — race and race relations, one of the most sensitive from our past, and continuing to confront us again after several recent controversial situations,” said Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen, appearing at last week’s press conference on the program.

Starting next month, Coming Together in Skokie & Niles Township will offer at least 50 programs that all fit under the title of “Voices of Race.”

“Race relations is a subject of great national debate today that plays out locally in our everyday social, economic and working lives,” Van Dusen said. “The community venue is where the discussions need to take place.”

Coming Together history

This is the second year that Coming Together in Skokie has added Niles Township to its title, reflecting the growth and success of the program.

It began with five women — leaders in the community — having lunch together and emerging with an idea that would expand upon Skokie’s renowned Festival of Cultures annual weekend event.

Skokie is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the state with just under a hundred languages spoken in homes. This diversity has always been embraced and celebrated by the village.

“We wanted to see how we could improve Skokie because we have such a diverse community,” said Susan Van Dusen, wife of the mayor and one of the five women who formed the idea. “We wanted to have people understand each other through knowledge. And how do we do that? Through books.”

Susan Van Dusen said that the current museum exhibition — “RACE: Are We So Different?” — sponsored by the Illinois Holocaust Museum & the YWCA Evanston/North Shore — took the Coming Together program in a new direction this year.

“We realized we had a unique opportunity beyond the political boundaries to look deeper into humanity,” she said. “We found out that race is an artificial idea that came about hundreds of years ago when people started exploring different places and trading with different people.”

The evidence that race is a social construct, comprehensively presented by the museum’s exhibition, is supported in a complimentary way by the programming of Coming Together.

YWCA Evanston/North Shore Racial Justice Program Director Eileen Hogan Heineman acknowledged that the Coming Together committee made a tough choice this year. “But I think it’s the best choice they could have made,” she said.

It’s fact that race is a made-up construct, Heineman noted, but its also true that racism is very real and difficult to discuss. “We have been afraid as a country to talk about race,” she said. “It was too personal — if felt like we might say the wrong things. It was assumed what other people thought. We have all these roadblocks we’ve put up to talking about race, and we can see where that has gotten us.”

None of the Coming Together planners could have known that events in Missouri and New York would make race relations such a timely and heated topic. But it’s not terribly surprising that it is, they said, because race relations has never stopped being timely in the news.

Opening ceremony

The Jan. 11 Coming Together opening ceremony this year will feature poetry, song and an original theater piece at the Illinois Holocaust Museum. The next couple of months will include varied performances, films, book and author presentations, interactive workshops, programs for children and families and lectures.

District 219 Director of Equity and ELL Corrie Wallace underscored some of the programs available over the next few months — high school intergenerational programs; student group presentations; adult professional development activities; “Dar He: The Story of Emmett Till,” making its Chicago premiere in Skokie; and a frank conversation about race with Mayor George Van Dusen and Secretary of State Jesse White.

The annual Stand Against Racism event in Evanston will be supported and joined this year by the Coming Together program. Representatives of past Coming Together cultures will share their experiences on race at another event.

All of these programs will take place at a variety of Niles Township venues — high schools and Oakton Community College, libraries and park district centers, businesses and museums and more. Skokie, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles and Evanston will all be home to the wide range of programming.

“With Coming Together in Skokie & Niles Township, we realize we can’t change the world,” Susan Van Dusen said. “We can’t change the wrongs that have happened throughout history. But we can begin the discussion here. Maybe we can make little chips into people’s attitudes.”

“And at the very least, I think we can bring hope.”
Community comes together around five books on race

BY MIKE ISAACS
misadventures@pioneerpress.com | @SkiReview_Mike

Five books of different genres and for different ages all address race in a unique way. They are the heart and soul of the 2015 edition of Coming Together in Skokie & Niles Township.

“One of the things we’ve learned is it is through reading that people learn more in-depth about a subject and get the fodder for a discussion with each other,” said Skokie Public Library Director Carolyn Anthony.

Anthony explained why reading always is at the center of Coming Together in Skokie & Niles Township.

“A novel well-written drives you in,” she said. “It forces you to experience some empathy with characters and, perhaps, put yourself in a different place and to understand some people who may not be exactly like you or to see how they are like you.”

Coming Together committee members sifted through many good books before deciding on the handful for this year’s programming revolving around race. Like usual, the lineup begins with a novel.

- The Supremes at Earl’s All-You-Can-Eat by Edward Kelsey Moore
  Odette, Clarice and Barbara Jean have seen their friendship endure through bullies, love affairs and great tragedies. But can they survive a tumultuous year when they are forced to face their past mistakes?
  The book sheds light on what it was like to live through the Civil Rights era and how those struggles continue to shape communities and lives today.
  A variety of voices are showcased in an anthology of more than 50 poems. The poems are divided into five sections leading the reader on a path of discovery, examination and potential action.
  The anthology includes celebrated poets such as Langston Hughes and lesser known poets as well.
- Black, White, Other: In Search of Nina Armstrong by Joan Steinbauer Lester
  Nina, a biracial teen, feels her life turn to struggle as her parents get divorced. Now everything in her life feels like a push-and-pull between black and white, with the tensions in her family and in her community echoing her own hurt, confusion and search for identity.
- Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters by Barack Obama
  President Obama’s illustrated book reflects the idea that all children share many of the same qualities as those who have most influenced America such as Jackie Robinson (courage); Albert Einstein (imagination); and Georgia O’Keefe (creative vision).
- Xander’s Panda Party by Linda Sue Pak
  When Xander begins planning his party, he knows he wants to invite all of his fellow bears. He runs into a problem, though, when some animals who are not bears are interested in attending, too.
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

DRUG POSSESSION
Nicolaos Ferentinos, 28, of 16 E. Old Willow Road, Prospect Heights, was charged with possession of marijuana, possession of drug paraphernalia and driving with a suspended license on Dec. 14. He was taken into custody on the 9400 block of Milwaukee Avenue at 2:30 a.m. He has a Jan. 16 court date.

RETAIL THEFT
Deanna Soper, 39, of 9405 Bay Colony Drive, unincorporated Maine Township, was charged with felony retail theft on Dec. 12. She was taken into custody at a store on the 6500 block of Golf Road and assigned a Jan. 7 court date.

Stephanie Villasenor, 38, of 9973 Linda Lane, unincorporated Maine Township, was charged with retail theft on Dec. 15 at a store on the 9000 block of Golf Road. She has a Jan. 14 court date.

DUI
Igor Jovic, 32, of 9098 Terrace Drive, Niles, was charged with driving under the influence on Dec. 14. He was taken into custody at 12:14 a.m. on the 9400 block of Milwaukee Avenue. He has a Jan. 16 court date.

Robber of Park Ridge store suspected in additional crimes

JENNIFER JOHNSON
johnson@pioneedocat.com
@jen_johnson

A man who robbed a Park Ridge convenience store at gunpoint earlier this month is suspected of robberies in at least three other communities, as well, police said.

Park Ridge police said the man entered the 7-Eleven at 978 N. Northwest Highway around 1:40 a.m. on Dec. 9, pulled out a handgun and demanded money from the register before fleeing the store.

Deputy Police Chief Lou Jogmen said a report of the incident did not include details on how much money was taken, but he did say the incident occurred very quickly.

"He was in and out," Jogmen said.

Jogmen said he was not certain why the robbery was not included among weekly incidents released by the department's records division.

Cook County sheriff's police released this surveillance image of a man suspected of robbing several suburban businesses, including a 7-Eleven in Park Ridge.

Palatine, as well as an attempted armed robbery of a gas station in Schaumburg.

In the unincorporated Palatine robbery, which occurred at 2 a.m. on Dec. 15, sheriff's police say a man dressed in a red jacket and red hat, his face largely obscured by a scarf, entered a gas station on the 1400 block of North Quentin Road, took out a handgun and demanded money.

The robber also allegedly grabbed some menthol cigarettes before leaving the station.

The attempted robbery of the Schaumburg gas station occurred that same morning, police said.

The suspect is described as African-American, approximately 5-feet-8-to 5-feet-10-inches tall. Anyone with information is asked to contact the Cook County Sheriff's Police Department at 708-865-4896.

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Lucy Erickson has been working at Washington School in Park Ridge in various roles since 1967. JENNIFER JOHNSON/PIONEER PRESS

Her memories of growing up in Park Ridge — then surrounded by farmland and open fields — included ice skating at South Park and where Park Ridge Presbyterian Church's parking lot now stands. On Saturday afternoons, 10-cent films at the Pickwick Theatre were the activity of choice.

"If you had any extra money, you didn't buy candy in the theater — it was too expensive. You bought it in the candy store, two stores before you got to the theater," she said.

Park Ridge was also a community where children felt safe, Erickson recalled.

"We used to walk back from the theater at midnight and not have to worry about anything," she said. "I lived across the street from Lincoln School, so that was quite a walk."

While attending Maine High School (now Maine East), Erickson got a job at Moheiser's clothing store in Uptown, a job she held for a number of years. In 1950, when Erickson married her husband, Melvin — who owned a bike shop on Touhy Avenue — the ceremony took place on the Moheiser family farm in Lake County.

Erickson also worked at the Coffee Cup, located next to the former Gillick Realty on Main Street. Members of prominent Park Ridge families of the day — the Gillicks and the Bachmans, in particular — would frequent the cafe for lunch, Erickson recalled.

"We had a small town. All of these people you really knew," she said. "I'd go shopping with my mother on Saturdays and it would take us all day because you couldn't get through town without meeting everybody you knew."

The Ericksons raised four sons in Park Ridge, the boys attending Carpenter and Lincoln. In 1967, Erickson got a job as a library (learning center) aide at Washington School, and seven years later she became a secretary there until her retirement in 1989.

One of the notable District 64 leaders Erickson met through the years was Ray Hendee, the former superintendent for whom the district's educational services center at 164 S. Prospect is named.

"Dr. Hendee was top drawer," Erickson said, recalling how he asked her to teach him how to knit after he saw her doing her own knitting during school board meetings she was required to attend as president of the Carpenter School PTA.

"He said, 'Lucy, I think you should teach me to knit so I get something done, too,'" she said with a laugh. "He was a marvelous person."

Today, Erickson is earning appreciation from current administrators. Stephanie Daly, principal of Washington School, called Erickson "the most important person on our staff."

"The staff and students at Washington rely on her dedication and hard work on a daily basis," she said. "She comes into school on Tuesday and Fridays ready to work the copy machine. The love she has for Washington and the Park Ridge community is untouchable."
District 64 increases tax levy by 4.6 percent

BY IGOR STUDENKOV
Special for Pioneer Press | @istudenkov

The Park Ridge-Niles District 64 Board of Education voted to raise its tax levy by 4.6 percent.

The vote came after a public hearing in which two residents urged the board to vote against the increase. The increase is part of the district's efforts to maximize its revenues while staying true to its commitment not to call for a referendum seeking increased funding until 2021, officials said.

Furthermore, the district expects to receive higher tax revenues than last year due to the opening of Park Ridge Whole Foods and other new construction.

According to Rebecca Allard, the district's chief business officer, the tax revenue the district will actually collect will probably be closer to an increase of 1.5-1.7 percent. But she urged the board to set the levy higher just in case the revenue exceeds expectations.

While some board members considered decreasing the levy, the majority said the district couldn't take the risk of missing out on the revenue it was due.

As Allard explained to the board during the Dec 15 meeting, the tax levy the district sets doesn't represent the amount of money it actually gets from property taxes. Rather, it represents the cap on how much money it can collect on any given tax year.

The actual amount of money the district gets is set using the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law tax cap: PTELL tax cap is set using a complex formula that includes changes in the Consumer Price Index, Equalized Assessed Valuation, how many new properties came on to the tax rolls since the last tax year and how much the district collected in taxes the year before.

Because District 64 won't know what the EAV is going to be and how many new properties are going to come on the tax rolls until next year, it has to set a tax levy based on its best guess as to what the PTELL cap is going to be, Allard explained.

If the levy is set higher than the PTELL cap, it will simply get whatever the cap calls for, she said. But it's set lower than the PTELL cap, Cook County will get to keep anything beyond levied amount, Allard said.

"If you just levy 1.7 percent and the formula would give 2.5 percent, you'd have left [the difference] on the table," said Allard.

She said that with the opening of Whole Foods and some new construction, she expects the amount the district will get to be greater than last year. But because she doesn't know how much greater, she urged the board to set the levy higher than her projections.

Allard also noted that between Illinois Senate Bill 16, which would change the way state funding for school districts is distributed, and the possibility that the Illinois General Assembly will make suburban districts responsible for pension obligations, it would make sense for the district to try to shore up its finances.

The board granted preliminary approval to the 4.6 percent tax increase during its Nov 17 meeting. According to records on the district's website, the increase will go into the Education and Special Education funds.

The Education Fund covers general education expenses such as teacher salaries, health and attendance services, and lunch programs. The Special Education Fund covers the portion of funding for Special Education services that isn't covered through state and federal funding.

The final vote took place during the Dec. 15 meeting. To give the residents a chance to comment, the board scheduled a public hearing, which took place 15 minutes before the meeting itself.

A total of two people spoke. Steve Schildwachter said that in the 10 years he has lived in Park Ridge, taxes have gone up "100 percent."

"Every bit of tax increase takes away from my ability to save for my family's future," he said.

He argued that if the increase got approved, the residents would be less likely to support a referendum in the future.

"You underestimate the resentment people will feel if you vote 'yes' tonight," said Schildwachter.

When the tax levy came up for vote, Board President Anthony Borrelli said he was sympathetic to residents concerns about taxes going up especially in light of the city of Park Ridge's recent decision to raise its own levy.

Borrelli said he considered asking the board to lower the levy to 3.7 percent, which he described as a symbolic gesture that would nonetheless show that the district is sympathetic to taxpayers. But ultimately, Borrelli said he decided against it.

"We're still limited by PTELL," Borrelli explained.

SEE LEVY, PAGE 15 »
Tuba Christmas, in its 41st anniversary year, broke a record Dec. 20 at the Chicago Palmer House Hilton, drawing more than 400 musicians who came to play the tuba, sousaphone or euphonium.

Many participants came from around the country and a large percentage from the North Shore and south suburbs.

"When words fail, music speaks," said Whitney Giroux, an Evanston Township High School student and Tuba Christmas performer.

The event was conceived in 1974 by Harvey Phillips of Indiana who died Oct. 20, 2010. The event has grown since Phillips suggested that first performance featured in New York City and today, the Phillips family is proud of the Tuba Christmas global itinerary.

Harvey's son Thomas Phillips, vice-president of the Harvey Phillips Foundation (HPF), a nonprofit, was at the rehearsal early to set up.

"We will make people smile," Phillips said.

The event draws musicians of all ages, especially popular with high school students. A group of 15 performers from ETHS, mostly band members, was organized by Matthew P. Bufis, ETHS co-director of bands, who wore a festive red Tuba Christmas hat.

"Tuba Christmas is one of my favorite events of the year," said Bufis, who was accompanied by his wife Mackenzie, also a performer.

The Tuba Christmas, come one, come all registration fee was $10 per musician. Rehearsals lasted about an hour with a 1 p.m. performance in the Grand Ballroom where families awaited with cell phones and well wishes.

"It is exciting to see our annual tradition grow," Bufis said. "Tuba Christmas creates such a wonderful opportunity to build a strong community of tuba and euphonium players in school settings. It has done wonders for us at ETHS," he added.

Other teens or recent graduates hailed from New Trier Township High School, Glenbrook North High School and Buffalo Grove High School, for example.

"I like how Tuba Christmas brings people together musically," said Shawn Killian, 18, of Northbrook and a 2014 GBN graduate.

"It's a really cool sound experience," said Matt Landauer, 15, a GBN sophomore.

Another GBN graduate (2012) was Jeremy Sims of Northbrook, who decorated his instrument with gift wrap bows.

"I think 62 bows this year!" said Sims, estimating the number of bows. "Last year I had 42 and this year I wanted to put more on!"

Folks decorated with wreaths and battery-powered twinkling holiday lights. One man created a penguin face for the rim of his tuba bell. Another man from Chicago tied mini tree ornaments in his beard.

"I'm pretty excited about it, it's a cool opportunity and it's my first time," said Jared Lazgang, a Buffalo Grove High School student.

The New Trier students took chairs in the same row in the exhibition hall rehearsal. Musicians were organized in the ballroom based on instrument type. It appeared all or most of the New Trier students sat together during showtime.

Representing NTHS were Will Kendall of Glencoe, Rourke Pattullo of Wilmette, Josh Derrick of Winnetka and Timothy Campbell of Glenview and a 2013 NTHS graduate.

"I've been doing music for probably eight years now and it's just an amazing outlet for me," Campbell said.

"A lot of people think that low brass (tubas, sousaphones) is boring, but actually, when you play the melody, it sounds really, really good," Derrick said.

"The teachers are fantastic, there are so many opportunities," Kendall said, complimenting New Trier fine arts programming.

"I love coming to this every year and it's pretty much become a staple in our family, been coming here since the sixth grade and it's been spectacular ever since," Rourke said.

Among the youngest musicians was Mitch Brumirski of Oak Park, a fifth-grader from Abraham Lincoln Elementary School.

"This is my first time here and I'm pretty nervous," said Brumirski, who wore holiday festive clothing and played the euphonium.

The oldest performer, Thomas Phillips, is in his late seventies.

"Mel Torme always said that we are all kids from one to 92," Phillips said. "And though it's been said many times, many ways, Merry Christmas to you."

"You have to understand that we're all children at heart but we just grow older on the outside," Phillips said.

The New Trier students and its interfaith carols are an honor to conduct, said Col. Bryan Shelburne, retired commander of the U.S. Army Band.

"Harvey's vision, over 40 years ago, was really a remarkable thing," said Shelburne.

"He had a lot of visionary foresight. "It's come to pass as he hoped it would and in many ways, continues year to year to exceed his original vision," Shelburne added.

"We miss Harvey but his vision just lives on."
District 64 music students play in North Shore area's 'all-star group'

BY NATALIE HAYES
Special for Pioneer Press

The massive band program at Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 has more instrument-playing students than the number of athletes in most schools' athletic programs, so standing out among your peers is a significant accomplishment.

Out of the 775 students who make up the band program in the seven District 64 schools, 12 students were selected in November to participate in two separate one-day music festivals that granted them the rare opportunity to work with the North Shore area's top band conductors.

Sponsored by the Illinois Music Educators Association, the two music festivals - one for band and orchestra students and the second for jazz only - offered kids a chance to perform with the top band students in the area and learn from top musicians and conductors in the state.

"They get to perform at a level above their school orchestra," Jacobi said. "It enables them to achieve a higher level of performance, and it inspires them to reach a higher level of excellence."

Almost like a day-long musical "boot camp," the students worked with conductors throughout the day to learn the musical number for a performance held that evening.

Almost like a day-long musical "boot camp," the students worked with conductors throughout the day to learn the musical number for a performance held that evening.

This year, eight students from Emerson and Lincoln schools were accepted into the ILMEA District Festival on Nov. 2. They are: Olivia Davis (clarinet), Tommy Doubleday (trumpet), Sophia Stefanik (flute), Allison Paxxia (flute), Eva Nicholas (violin), Anna Sorbun (cello), Grace Dziedzic (flute), and Anna Szurzynski (violin).

The four students included in the ILMEA Jazz Festival on Nov. 22 were: Natalie Eng, Connoly Ferraro, Mark Parages (all saxophone) and Owen Kopka (trombone).

District 64 students audition for the two festivals in September each year, and about a dozen students from the district are usually chosen, Jacobi said.

"It's an honor to be chosen because you're received as a top-level player in the region and in the state," Jacobi said. "Having our students play in the festivals improves the quality of our music program for both the kids and the teachers."

The 12 students will be recognized by the school board at a future meeting, and each will receive a plaque engraved with their name.
DEATH. RELIGION. SEX.

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.

District 64 considers further residency requirement changes

IGOR STUDE NKOV Special for Pioneer Press / @istudenkov

The Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 Board of Education is moving closer to requiring more regular residency checks for students from home-owning families.

During the board's Dec. 15 meeting, Superintendent Laurie Heinz recommended instituting residency checks once every three years. Students who live in rental properties would still go through residency checks every year.

But the board decided to hold off against making the final decision until its January meeting. In the meantime, it asked Heinz to analyze the cost of doing the residency checks once a year versus once every three years.

The board also considered changing its policy toward families that are in the process of building or renovating homes in the district but don't actually live in the district. Under the current policy, they can't attend district schools until 60 days before the construction is complete.

The board is considering changing the policy so that students would be able to attend district schools while construction is going on, provided it is completed in no more than 18 months.

Under the current residency policy, students need to live in the district. Families that live in rented housing undergo annual residency checks. But families that live in houses they own only need to verify their residency when they first register their children.

As Chief School Business Official Becky Allard explained to the board during its Nov. 17 meeting, this means that families could move out of the district and keep sending their kids to district schools, and the district staff would be none the wiser.

Heinz recommended that students from home-owning families would undergo three residency checks - one when they first enroll, one when they enter third grade and one when they enter sixth grade. The checks would at least partially utilize Infosnap, the new online registration system the district is implementing next year.

If the new policy is approved in January 2015, the district will roll out the new process sometime in the spring, Heinz said.

Board member Dan Collins argued that the checks should be conducted every year:

"I would like to do the [checks] for all grades," he said. "When you do a study, you want to study the biggest number."

Board member John Heyde, who previously said that he wasn't sure if there are enough policy violators to make more frequent checks worthwhile, said that he felt that annual checks would be too burdensome.

He also argued that three-year checks make more sense fiscally.

When a district accepts students who don't live in the district, educating them costs extra money, since their parents aren't paying taxes in the district. But the residency checks also come with administrative costs.

Heyde argued that checking every year would cost the district more than the amount of money the district would be losing by accepting non-resident students.

Three-year checks are less expensive, so the district is more likely to "break even," he said.

"For me, it has to pass the business case," said Heyde.

After some discussion, Board President Antony Borelli directed Heinz to research the cost of annual checks and compared it to the cost of three-year checks.

The board also discussed changing the residency requirements for families that are building or substantially renovating homes within the district. Under the current policy, the only way their kids would be able to attend district schools is if they can show that they'll be able to move in within 60 days.

Heinz proposed changing the policy so that the district would be able to give students temporary exception from the residency requirement. The requirement would last no more than a single school year, she said.

Board Vice-President Scott Zimmerman argued that the exception should be longer, given the speed of construction in Park Ridge.

"A year is too little," he said. "[It should be] 18-24 months."

Zimmerman argued that changing the policy would benefit the district.

"These are people who are building homes and increasing property values in the district," he said. "I'd like to encourage that."

Recalling his own experience with home remodeling, Borelli agreed that one school year may not be enough. But he argued that 24 months may be too much. After some discussion, the board settled on a compromise. The superintendent would have the authority to offer an exemption on a case-by-case basis for no more than 18 months.

Board member Dathan Paterno argued that the exception wouldn't hurt the district financially.

"As long as they're paying taxes on the property, they're putting money into the system," he said.

The board is expected to vote on both policy changes during its next meeting, which is scheduled to take place on Jan. 26.
Opinion

Letters

Thanks to all who make PADS run

I'm humbled when I walk through our daytime Support Center on the way to my office every morning. Most of the men, women and families who are here to meet with case managers, use computers, take a shower or do their laundry have spent the previous night sleeping en masse at a shelter site hosted by congregations in Oak Park, Forest Park, Berwyn or Franklin Park. They were greeted by volunteers, many who have been part of PADS' shelter operations for years. They were served a dinner thoughtfully prepared by volunteers and were watched over as they slept by a crew of second-shift volunteers. They were awakened by volunteers who prepared and served breakfast while they cleaned up the shelter space together. As they left the shelter at sunrise, they were handed a sack lunch prepared by volunteers.

West Suburban PADS has had another magnificent year of growth and impact. We're helping more men, women and families transition back to stable housing - people who are unemployed or under-skilled, disabled by a chronic medical condition or struggling with their mental health. ALL of whom are experiencing a housing crisis. I'm thrilled to report that this past year there were 15% fewer people relying on our emergency shelter and 100% more participating in our supportive housing program. In addition, we engaged more than 100 people living on the streets and for extended periods in the shelter to help them connect to services and housing.

As we turn the page on 2014, we want to express our gratitude for this community's tremendous generosity and for enabling us to be there for those without a home this holiday season. It is on their behalf that we write this note of appreciation and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2015.

Lynda Schueler,
Executive Director West Suburban PADS

So this is Christmas ... does it still matter?

"Is it just tradition, or is there something more meaningful at work? If we look closely at the story of the first Christmas, we see something there for everyone, something that touches us in a most basic and human way."

S o this is Christmas.

Does it still matter? We've been bombarded by the sights and the sounds of the holiday season since long before Thanksgiving.

That great day of thanks was highlighted by the official start of the shopping season marked by "Black Friday."

As Christmas Day approaches, we're running around still searching for the right gift, decorating the house with twinkling lights, putting up the tree, and creating the holiday menu.

But is there any more meaning to the day?

On Christmas, the churches will be filled with worshippers who attend faithfully each week and those who attend once or twice a year. Why do those who never go to church the rest of the year faithfully attend on Christmas? Is it just tradition, or is there something more meaningful at work?

If we look closely at the story of the first Christmas, we see something there for everyone, something that touches us in a most basic and human way.

Start with Mary, the virgin who learns she is with child. An unwed, single mother with no future.

Then there is Joseph, a man older than Mary, betrothed to her. A nice guy, he decides to quietly divorce Mary.

So there you have it: Before we even get started we have a teenage mother, much pain, dishonor, disgrace and a broken family. Basically, the human condition in a nutshell.

In their dreams, what they perceive to be God tells them what to do next. Against what most of us would consider good judgment, they go forward and marry.

But then comes the next turn. They have to travel to Joseph's hometown to be counted. Basically, they have no place to stay, no job, no money and no family to help. They're homeless.

Mary gives birth in the barn. Then come the travelers from afar. They are searching for something, too. They bring gifts, place them before the child, and leave.

Isn't all of this just like us - struggling to mend broken relationships, hoping to make right what was wronged in our lives even when it makes no sense, never feeling quite at home or at ease, even in our own town and traveling the world over looking for an answer?

Christians consider this story to be the greatest event in human history, when God became one of us.

If it is so, God had to become like us to the core. Weak, fearful, unsure, unwelcome, alone, but willing to trust us to the core. Weak, fearful, unsure, even at home or at ease, even in our own hometown, and traveling the world over looking for an answer? And if that is so, then should we not look at our fellow travelers in this life, even those considered the lowest of the low, the down and out, the poor, the jobless, the homeless, the refugees, the unwed teenage mothers, and see in their faces the light of God?

And if we do see that, shouldn't we look into their eyes and give them the sacred gifts of love and peace?

So this is Christmas.
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There is hope for us all at Christmas

The Christmas shopping season never stops. But Christmas itself seems to come and go in a blink.

We know about shopping, buying things. But Christmas isn't a thing.

Maybe we're not quite sure what to make of it, how Christmas fits in with the world as we live it and see it.

In the world we live in and see on TV there is war, crime, prejudice, poverty, bills to pay, illness and more. But perhaps Christmas, like other religious observances, comes as a crucial reminder that life doesn't have to be the way we so often perceive it. We can be better than this.

Christmas reminds us of, to use Lincoln's phrase, the better angels of our nature.

In many ways the world is a mess. And we are the ones who messed it. But that's not all we are or all we can be.

War and greed and poverty? Yes. But there also is love and kindness and generosity.

Christmas reminds us to do and be better.

Isn't that the point of the most popular Christmas story, "A Christmas Carol"? The cruel, miserly Scrooge is reformed. He now wants to be a better man, to be unselfish, to care for others. He repudiates selfishness and becomes a force for the good of others.

Christmas teaches us also to look outside ourselves, to be mindful of others and that our family is more than just our relatives. That's why charitable donations always pick up at Christmas.

Some remain unconvinced about Christmas. The celebration of Christmas often is criticized as crassly commercial.

Who can deny there is some truth in this? But it should be noted that most of the commerce involves buying gifts for others and not for ourselves.

No, Christmas is good, its brevity the sole drawback. It's the rest of the year that needs work. How can kindness and concern for others become a part of us in May and September and not just at Christmas time?

It isn't that we don't have examples before us. Just look around. See the friends and neighbors who volunteer to provide housing and care and food to those in want. See and emulate those people who tutor children, who deliver meals to the homebound, those who provide safety and shelter for the abused ...

The honor roll of decency is not negligible and it goes on.

So, yes, the world is a mess, thanks to human beings. But not all of it. There are bright and shining places, also thanks to human beings.

There is hope for us.

And maybe that hope is Christmas.

And so, with hope, I wish you a Merry Christmas.
The previously online-only Jila LaBelle store now has a physical location near the Milwaukee/Oakton intersection in Niles.

**Jila LaBelle brings online store to busy Niles intersection**

**BY IGOR STUDENKOV**
Special for Pioneer Press | @istudenkov

Jila LaBelle dress and accessories shop was online only for about a year when owner Jila Jihanguiri decided to open a physical location near the intersection of Milwaukee Avenue and Oakton Street in Niles.

"A lot of people like to try on dresses before they buy them," she said. "And they should. This space has been vacant for a while. I decided to buy it and give it a go."

Three days after the store opened for business, Jihanguiri said the decision was starting to pay off. Even though she hadn't done any marketing, she was already getting more foot traffic than she was expecting. Jihanguiri hopes that the traffic will get even better once she starts advertising.

Jihanguiri, a Park Ridge resident for over 20 years, decided to start Jila LaBelle for a simple reason: no other store had what she was looking for.

"I was visiting Europe, and I came across a lot of dresses and accessories that I liked," said Jihanguiri. "But when I came back to the United States, nobody was selling them. So I decided to start importing them."

She decided to focus her shop on dresses, jewelry and accessories from Turkey and various European countries. Jihanguiri imported some of them directly, while others were purchased from wholesalers. She also bought some items at trade shows.

Jihanguiri said she selects her inventory based largely on what strikes her interest. She also tries to make sure the store's selections are affordable and unique.

"One thing I don't like is going to a wedding and see five people wearing the same dress," said Jihanguiri. "Buying from a boutique eliminates that."

Once she decided to open Jila LaBelle's physical location, Jihanguiri considered opening in Park Ridge. But ultimately, she decided to open in a vacant space at 8032 N Milwaukee Ave., because it was a good location that didn't have any dress shops.

"I feel like Milwaukee Avenue gets a lot of traffic," said Jihanguiri. "I [also] wanted to be in a place where we're unique."

Actually getting the store up and running took about seven months. She had to gut the interiors and start over, she said. Jihanguiri mentioned that she bought the interior furnishing from a Niles store further up Milwaukee Avenue.

"I like to support local businesses," she said.

The store opened for business on Monday, Dec 15. She didn't get her business license until Dec. 11, and she didn't want to advertise Jila LaBelle until she had it. So she was very surprised to get decent foot traffic right from the get-go.

"I've had a lot of people coming in and looking inside," said Jihanguiri. "Everybody asks for cards, to give to their friends. To tell you the truth, I had customers that returned twice."

Dresses and accessories are still Jila LaBelle's bread and butter, but its inventory has expanded to include coats, raincoats, jeans, jump suits and scarves. To Jihanguiri's surprise, ponchos are a big seller since the store opened.

"I sold 10 ponchos in the last three days," she said.

Accessories are also a big hit. Jihanguiri hopes that a physical location will result in more dress sales.

For now, her biggest priority is making sure the customers are happy, she said.

"I hope to see a lot of customers happy," said Jihanguiri. "I want them to be happy with what they get. I don't want to sell them something that won't look good on them."

While she does plan to let her employees handle the day-to-day tasks in the store, she said she will be fairly hands on in the next few weeks.

"I want to make sure everything goes smoothly," said Jihanguiri.

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**Get up and go**

Your guide to the weekend and beyond

Every Thursday
Hundreds gathered Wednesday, Dec. 17, in suburban Countryside, to memorialize the late Judy Baar Topinka, a unique voice and personality in Illinois politics for more than three decades.

The state comptroller, who was preparing to begin her second term, died Dec. 10 in Berwyn, from complications due to a stroke.

The two-hour tribute, held at the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 150 Hall, 6200 Joliet Road, was filled with stories and memories that were humorous, honest and touching, about a public figure who loved people and whom people loved back.

Top Illinois politicians testified about Topinka, 70, mostly emphasizing her lifelong career improving people's lives through effective lawmaking, fighting corruption and recognizing those seeking help.

Topinka, a Riverside resident and moderate Republican, was elected Illinois state comptroller in November 2010. She was the first woman in Illinois history to be elected to two constitutional offices, having also served three terms as state treasurer from 1995 to 2007. She previously served as a state representative for the western suburbs, as well as a state senator.

"She brought a smile to everyone when entering a room with a big cup of coffee. A gifted dancer of polka and gifted in so many ways," said Monsignor Michael Boland, president and CEO of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago. "She was deeply committed to public service, to those deeply in need."

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn said she volunteered for very difficult political assignments, such as helping the state Marriage Equality Act get passed in 2013.

"She had a signature sense of love and fairness," he said.

In 2006, she was Illinois' GOP chairman, but lost a bid to become the state's first female governor to Democrat Rod Blagojevich, who was sentenced to federal prison in 2011 on corruption charges.

Former Illinois Gov. Jim Thompson also eulogized his late fellow Republican, saying she was a hard worker for the people.

"As Judy might say, 'Lock the doors and order some pizzas. We're gonna get started now,'" Thompson said. "Imagine a politician whose name was never in headlines for scandal or corruption. We don't have to imagine it because we had Judy for a few years."

Topinka graduated with a journalism degree from Northwestern University in Evanston and wrote for Suburban Life Newspapers.

"The whole idea of reporting to me was interesting, especially going after corruption," Topinka said in a taped interview shown at the memorial.

Brookfield resident Bob Lifka, who worked as an editor with Topinka at Suburban Life Newspapers in the late 1970s, called her a "go-getter and a people person."

"She was honest and a straight shooter," Lifka said. "Judy was what she seemed to be."

In the 1970s and before, some west suburban governments were corrupt, but she did not back down, the speakers said.

"She was a seasoned reporter to the core and always told the truth, which did not go well in Springfield. Later when the state was in a mess, the state needed a frugal comptroller like her," said journalist Rich Miller, publisher of Capitol Fax. "We'll never have a leader like her; but we can still follow her."

Topinka married and had a son, Joe, but divorced in 1981 after 16 years.

Nancy Kimme, her longtime chief of staff, said Topinka years ago insisted on marching in Chicago's Gay Pride Parade, despite others warning her not to participate.

"I won't be intimidated by those bigots yelling at me in the parade," Kimme recalled her saying. "She also often said, 'I'm not prepared to fly under false colors.'"

Kim said Topinka looked upon her staff as family.

"The day she died, Judy said we needed to keep the family together. We feel a tremendous loss," said Kimme, who received a standing ovation.

Governor-elect Bruce Rauner described Topinka's death as "a terrible loss for all of us."

"We might hear her chuckling up in heaven that I'm here in a union building," said Rauner, a Republican who beat incumbent Quinn in November.

Known for nonpartisanship, Topinka was willing to work with anyone if it meant getting good laws passed, speakers agreed.

Acknowledging Illinois' deep financial problems, her son urged listeners, residents and elected officials to work together in bringing political and fiscal resolve.

"Embrace the spirit of my mom and dedicate yourselves in making Illinois a better place to live. Compromise is a positive word," Joe Baar Topinka said, his voice breaking in emotion. "Bring Illinois back to its golden age. Abraham Lincoln would have wanted it that way."
MORTON GROVE
5514 Washington St, Morton Grove 60053-3462: John Choughoon Baik sold the property to Julie M Jacobs for $275,000 on December 5
5814 Monroe St, Morton Grove 60053-3338: Alko International Development sold the property to Jenny Payhan for $430,000 on December 8
5826 Oakton St, Morton Grove 60053-3505: Federal Home Loan Mtg Corp sold the property to Klara Zaya for $200,000 on December 4
6261 Lincoln Ave 2a, Morton Grove 60053-2850: Orner M Adil sold the property to David Yoo & Lydia N Yoo for $260,000 on December 4
7710 Dempster St 402, Morton Grove 60053-1800: Fannie Mae sold the property to Andy Bloniarz for $102,000 on December 5
8638 Fernald Ave, Morton Grove 60053-2823: US Bank Na Trustee sold the property to Jose H Sosan & Omotayo Sosan for $226,000 on December 4

LINCOLNWOOD
3303 W Albion Ave, Lincolnwood 60712-3801: Panna Mody sold the property to Rahul Kapoor & Pooja Kapoor for $180,000 on December 5
6823 N Kolmar Ave, Lincolnwood 60712-4702: Lincolnwood Investments Llc sold the property to Jacob Mathew & Seema Taneja for $795,000 on December 8

EVANSTON
1031 Wesley Ave, Evanston 60202-1160: Howard Scharf sold the property to Douglas Belkin & Colleen Mastony for $522,500 on December 8
1241 Judson Ave, Evanston 60202-1316: John E Stensen sold the property to Esther Buonanno for $600,000 on December 8
1415 Wesley Ave, Evanston 60201-4119: Robert K Bush sold the property to Elizabeth Sandier & Kerah Caro for $850,000 on December 8
1720 Maple Ave 610, Evanston 60201-3101: Elizabeth S Sandier sold the property to Kemisola A Yusuf for $485,000 on December 4
1834 Ridge Ave 132, Evanston 60201-3689: Steven P Lee sold the property to Maria B Paluselli for $275,000 on December 5
2000 Emerson St, Evanston 60201-3300: Chase Trust sold the property to Shalimar Avery & Donald Avery for $720,000 on December 4
2539 Prairie Ave 2539, Evanston 60201-2253: Jeffrey S Ward sold the property to Merle Gleeson for $125,000 on December 4
2710 Central St 2w, Evanston 60201-1257: Joseph S Niedbalski sold the property to Christine Cegelis for $172,000 on December 4
2772 Crawford Ave, Evanston 60201-4683: Jeffrey H Cullerton sold the property to Ernest M Josellis & Elizabeth H Josellis for $271,500 on December 5
3321 Hayes St, Evanston 60201-1831: Philip J Hasa sold the property to Colleen L Conley for $377,500 on December 8
3321 Hayes St, Evanston 60201-1831: Philip J Hasa sold the property to Colleen L Conley for $377,500 on December 8

SKOKIE
4046 Howard St, Skokie 60076-3727: Julian Andres Chacon sold the property to Victor Renterias for $240,000 on December 5
7920 Park Ave, Skokie 60077-4218: Ahiad H Erlich & Shari N Erlich sold the property to Robert K Bush & Kerah Caro for $850,000 on December 8
9129 Lawler Ave, Skokie 60077-4218: Agron Preza & Elsa Preza sold the property to Ahiad H Erlich & Shari N Erlich for $286,500 on December 8
9307 Kildare Ave, Skokie 60076-1448: Roberta Rhum sold the property to Kemisola A Yusuf for $485,000 on December 4

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 Altobelli sold the property to Natasha Holub for $300,000 on December 2
1709 Marve Pkwy, Park Ridge 60068-2424: Arsh Lakhw sold the property to Jenny Payhan for $430,000 on December 8
1815 W Oakton St, Park Ridge 60068-1980: Fannie Mae sold the property to Nataliya Farin for $970,000 on December 1
2100 Boucher St 106, Park Ridge 60068-2368: Filippini Trust sold the property to Roberta Rhum & Sharif N Erlich for $286,500 on December 8
2913 Scott Lynne Dr, Park Ridge 60068-2854: Louis L Kenyari Jr sold the property to Curtis W Manning & Sarah J Manning for $343,500 on November 26
2917 Lahon St, Park Ridge 60068-2126: Schoenberg Trust sold the property to Roberta Rhum & Sharif N Erlich for $286,500 on December 8

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Chicago Tribune
COMMUNITY CALENDAR

NILES

FRIDAY, DEC. 26
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. 29
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. 30
Family Story Time
7 p.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

FRIDAY, DEC. 26
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.

Handicrafters
10 a.m.: Held every Friday at 10 a.m. Park Ridge Senior Center, 100 S. Western Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127.

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

Book Buddies
4 p.m.: Circle time, arts and crafts and small group reading with Northwestern’s Jump Start members. For ages 3 and older. Evanston Public Library - Main Branch, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston. Call 847-948-8600.

5Rhythms Dance — A Moving Meditation
7:30 p.m.: Come and explore the 5Rhythms Dance — a movement meditation. No experience necessary and “you cannot do it wrong”. Check out 5Rhythms.com. First Class Free. Ample Street Parking. Foster Street Dance, 915 Foster St. (next to the Purple line Foster stop), Evanston. Call 847-869-0250. $15, $10 Students/Seniors.

Friday Night Meltdown

SATURDAY, DEC. 27

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.

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, 4050 Dempster St., Skokie. Call 847-777-1770.

Al-Anon
9:30 a.m.: Details at 708-967-5044. St. Paul Lutheran Church, 5650 N. Canfield Ave., Chicago.

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.

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

FUSE: Studio
Noon: Drop in with friends to wire LEDs, compose a ringtone, build an amp, mix chemicals to make your own monster out of clay with Miss Natalie. This day filled with monster juice, gym games, and more! The activity fee includes all activities and a pizza lunch for each School Day Off Fun program. Drop off and pick up are at the Takiff Center. Pre-registration is required for all School Day Off Fun programs; on-site registrations accepted only if spaces remain. Takiff Center, 999 Green Bay Road, Glencoe. Call 847-333-3030. $45/54.

MGPL Kids: Monday Morning Playgroup
10:30 a.m.: Drop-in play time for preschoolers with a parent or caregiver. Evanston Public Library - Main Branch, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston. Call 847-449-8600.

Lego Club
2 p.m.: Join this Lego club that meets each month. Participants are given a new building challenge at each meeting. Lego bricks are provided. A session for grades kindergarten to second is 2 p.m. and a session for kids grades three to five is 3 p.m. Registration is required. River Forest Public Library, 735 Lathrop Ave., River Forest. Call 708-366-5205.

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 loft, Evanston Public Library - Main Branch, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston. Call 847-449-9630.

MONDAY, DEC. 29
Thank You Note Workshop
9 a.m.: Drop by the Children’s Room to write your personalized holiday thank you cards. Supplies will be provided. This is a drop in program designed for ages 5 and up. River Forest Public Library, 735 Lathrop Ave., River Forest. Call 708-366-5205.

School Day Off Fun: Clay Play and Monster Day
9 a.m.: Watch “Monsters Inc. 2” and then create your own monster out of clay with Miss Natalie. This day filled with monster juice, gym games, and more! The activity fee includes all activities and a pizza lunch for each School Day Off Fun program. Drop off and pick up are at the Takiff Center. Pre-registration is required for all School Day Off Fun programs; on-site registrations accepted only if spaces remain. Takiff Center, 999 Green Bay Road, Glencoe. Call 847-333-3030. $45/54.

MGPL Kids: Morning Playgroup
10:30 a.m.: Drop-in play time for preschoolers with a parent or caregiver to introduce young children to the library in a low-key, unstructured session. Call 847-929-5102 or visit www.mgpl.org/kids for more information.

Holiday Bingo
2 p.m.: Hey, kids! Need a break from the holiday craziness? Celebrate National Bingo Month at the Library. Come and play bingo and win prizes! NOTE: This session is for children and families only. Franklin Park Public Library, 10311 Grand Ave., Franklin Park. Call 847-455-6016.

MGPL Kids: Liston Up!
10 a.m.: Drop-in story and playtime for preschoolers with a parent or caregiver. Evanston Public Library - Main Branch, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston. Call 847-449-9600.

Bingo Club
4 p.m.: Kids in grades one and up are invited to try their hand at knitting, crocheting or other yarn crafts. Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove. Call 847-965-4220.

Holiday Bingo — Adults Only
6 p.m.: Need a break from the holiday frenzy? Celebrate National Bingo Month. Come play bingo and win prizes! NOTE: This session is for adults only. Franklin Park Public Library, 10311 Grand Ave., Franklin Park. Call 847-455-6016.

Sales Vantage Referral Group
7:30 p.m.: Join the group to connect with new customers and sharpen presentation and sales skills. Call the Skokie chamber at 847-673-0240 to see if there is an opportunity to join the group available for your particular industry. Weber Leisure Center, 9300 Weber Park Place, Skokie.

Thank You Note Workshop
9 a.m.: Drop by the Children’s Room to write your personalized holiday thank you cards. Supplies will be provided. This is a drop in program designed for ages 5 and up. River Forest Public Library, 735 Lathrop Ave., River Forest. Call 7083665205.

SCHOOL DAY OFF FUN: PUMP IT UP
9 a.m.: Jump and dance around. Head to Pump It Up to jump around in the bounce houses, then spend the afternoon dancing and playing games! The activity fee includes activities, trip admission, transportation, and a pizza lunch for each School Day Off Fun program. Drop off and pick up are at the Takiff Center. Pre-registration is required for all School Day Off Fun programs; on-site registrations accepted only if spaces remain. Takiff Center, 999 Green Bay Road, Glencoe. Call 847-835-3030.

$45/54.

The Young and the Restless
9:30 a.m.: Join this family friendly event where Evanston Public Library invites families for playtime and read-aloud for young children. Evanston Public Library - Main Branch, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston. Call 847-449-9630.

MGPL Kids: Liston Up!
10 a.m.: Drop-in story and playtime for preschoolers with a parent or caregiver. Evanston Public Library - Main Branch, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston. Call 847-449-9600.

Bingo Club

SEE CALENDAR, NEXT PAGE »
CALENDAR

10 a.m.: Gather at 9:30 a.m. for coffee and conversation, followed by bingo at 10 a.m. Monetary donations are requested each week for coffee, sweets and prizes. Bingo cards are 50 cents each. Contact the North Shore Senior Center to register or for more information. North Shore Senior Center, 6140 Dempster St., Morton Grove. Call 847-784-6030. $8 members, $10 nonmembers (covers entire semester).

Park Ridge Kiwanis Meeting
Noon: Club meetings are held every Tuesday. Meetings start with lunch and fellowship, followed by a brief business meeting, announcements and a few songs. Each week, guest speakers will lead presentations on a variety of topics. Summit of Uptown, 10 N. Summit Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-912-7447.

Supervision Group
6:30 p.m.: Chicagoland's credentialed music therapists are invited to this networking event. Music Institute of Chicago - Dempster Street Theater, 2008 Dempster St., Evanston. Call 847-448-8337. $5.

Trivia Night
7 p.m.: Trivia Night is back! Join in Baciami Restaurant for a night of trivia hosted by Elmwood Park Public Library. Bring friends and form a team of up to 4 people or meet new people and team up. Prizes for the winners! Contact Elmwood Park Public Library with any questions about this event. Baciami Restaurant & Bar, 18 Conti Parkway, Elmwood Park. Call 708-453-7645.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31

Kiwanis Club of Park Ridge-Morning
6:45 a.m.: The Kiwanis Club of Park Ridge-Morning meets Wednesdays to plan programs and activities including Kiwanis Peanut Days, flag display in Uptown Park Ridge on national holidays and more. For more information, call 847-625-4630. Le Peep Grill, 100 Euclid Ave., Park Ridge.

Lunch and Bingo
10 a.m.: Enjoy a game of bingo and lunch. Come early for coffee and conversation. Fee includes lunch from a local restaurant or caterer. Bingo cards 50 cents each. Registration is required. North Shore Senior Center, 6140 Dempster St., Morton Grove. Call 847-784-6030. $8 members, $8 nonmembers.

Current Events Discussion
10 a.m.: This round table meets each Wednesday. Park Ridge Senior Center, 100 S. Western Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127.

New Year's Eve 100th Anniversary Celebration
5 p.m.: Enjoy a dinner and dessert buffet, DJ entertainment, inflatables, toddler play area, miniature golf and an 8 p.m. countdown to midnight. Alcohol is not permitted. All children must be accompanied by an adult. The registration deadline is Dec. 20 and no at-the-door attendees are allowed. Register online at http://www.prparks.org using class #36676. Maine Park Leisure Center, 2701 W. Sibley St., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127. $17.

THURSDAY, JAN. 1

Medication and Sharps Collection
8 a.m.: Deposit your old or unneeded medications and needles in a safe manner by taking them to the foyer in City Hall on the first Thursday of each month. Medications will also be accepted at a 24-hour dropbox in the same location, although sharps will not be accepted. Park Ridge City Hall, 505 Butler Place, Park Ridge. Call 847-318-5200.

Book Discussion
1 p.m.: This group meets on the first Thursday of each month. Park Ridge Senior Center, 100 S. Western Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-5127.

German Stammtisch
1 p.m.: The group meets on the first and third Thursday of each month in the community center to practice German and learn about German culture. For all experience levels, from native speakers to beginners. Oakton Park Community Center, 4701 W. Oakton St., Skokie.

SATURDAY, JAN. 3

Flight-to-Fun Kids Club: Frozen Fun with Ben & Jerry's Scoop Shop

ACT Prep Test
Noon: Professional tutors from College Nannies and Tutors of Glenview will guide those present through a practice ACT test. A great way to gain testing experience in a relaxed environment. Three hours to complete the test and one hour to review answers. Bring pencils and a calculator. Grades 9-12. Register at glenviewpl.org/register, 847-729-7500, or the Reader Services Desk. Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview. Call 847-729-7500.

MONDAY, JAN. 5

Park Ridge City Council Meeting
7 p.m.: Park Ridge City Hall, 505 Butler Place, Park Ridge. Call 847-318-5200.
GET NOTICED by the NEIGHBORHOOD.

Reach local audiences by advertising in our paper.

For more information, contact us at:
847-486-9200
Help Squad recently heard from readers on both sides of the consumer satisfaction fence regarding mattress warranties.

**Sealy**

What constitutes unnatural sagging? Body indentations of 1.5 inches. How is unnatural sagging verified? A third-party inspector comes to a consumer's home to measure.

Cost for inspection? Our Help Squad reader was given an estimate of $60 by Sealy, but Sealy's warranty claims process is handled by its various retailers, and as such, inspection costs vary.

Shipping or other fees? Per Sealy's website, the purchaser is responsible for transportation and inspection costs associated with any warranty claim, which will vary from retailer to retailer.

Turnaround for repair/replacement? This also varies due to the variety of retailers involved. Is defective mattress repaired or replaced? If deemed defective, Sealy will repair or replace (at Sealy's option) the defective mattress within a "reasonable period of time."

**Serta**

What constitutes unnatural sagging? Sagging that measures 1.5 inches or greater. How is unnatural sagging verified? A third-party inspector comes to a consumer's home to measure.

Cost for inspection? $85, applied to the replacement mattress delivery fee, if deemed defective.

Shipping or other fees? $149 delivery fee minus $35 inspection fee: $114.

Turnaround for repair/replacement? Four to six weeks from submission of paperwork to delivery of new mattress.

Is defective mattress repaired or replaced? According to Customer Service, Serta will only replace, not repair, mattresses. According to Serta's website, mattresses are repaired or replaced (at Serta's option) with charges per the Serta Warranty Schedule.

**Tempur-Pedic**

What constitutes unnatural sagging? Deterioration causing mattress to have a visible indentation greater than 0.75 inches. How is unnatural sagging verified? Consumer places straight edge, such as broom handle, across sagging area, inserts upright quarter in sag area under straight edge, takes photo and submits to Tempur-Pedic.

Cost for the inspection? No fee, as there is no professional inspection involved.

Shipping or other fees? No shipping or other fees per the experience of Help Squad's satisfied reader. However, per the Tempur-Pedic website, during the first 10 years of warranty, Tempur-Pedic will not charge a purchaser to repair or replace a mattress if deemed defective; however, transportation costs associated with repairs or replacements are purchasers' responsibility.

What is turnaround for repair/replacement? Two to three weeks from submission of paperwork to delivery of new mattress.

Is defective mattress repaired or replaced? Tempur-Pedic's website states it will repair or replace a purchaser's defective mattress (free of charge for years 1-10; at a prorated rate for remainder of warranty), but our reader's seven-year-old mattress was replaced free of charge.

**The bottom line for this or any type of warranty?**

Know whom you will be dealing with should an issue arise. Know if coverage is warranted, if deemed defective; however, transportation costs associated with repairs or replacements are purchasers' responsibility.

Need help?

**HELP SQUAD**

**BY CATHY CUNNINGHAM**

**HELP SQUAD**

**Love Essentially**

**BY JACKIE PILOSSOPH**

When it comes to relationships, there are two must-haves for it to work long-term: trust and loyalty. Those are the biggies. Ask yourself if they define your relationship. If they do, I'd hang on to her!
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BIZ NOTES

• John Prunskis, MD, FIPP, was chosen by Becker's ASC Review, leading source of healthcare industry information, as a top person to know in the Ambulatory Surgery Center industry. Prunskis was selected for making an impact on the ASC industry and standing out as a leader in the field. In 2012, Prunskis founded Barrington Pain and Spine Institute, Illinois' only Ambulatory Surgery Center dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of spine and other pain problems.

• Northbrook-based KemperSports announced that, for the third consecutive year, it has been named the Club Management Company of the Year by the BoardRoom magazine. The three consecutive years of being honored is unprecedented in the 16-year history of the magazine's "Excellence in Achievement" awards.

• PCTEL, Inc., a leader in performance critical telecom solutions, announced the appointment of Shelley Bacastow of Burr Ridge to vice president and general counsel. Bacastow succeeds Varda Goldman.

• Dynatrace, the market leader in the new generation of application performance management, announced that John Van Siclen has been appointed Chief Executive Officer.

Kessler Orlean Silver & Co., P.C. is pleased to announce that it has merged with Ruzicka & Associates, Ltd. of Northbrook, effective Dec. 1, 2014. Ruzicka & Associates, Ltd. and its three principals have moved into the KOS offices in Deerfield, and operate under the KOS name. Founded 38 years ago, Ruzicka & Associates, Ltd. provides a full range of accounting and tax services with a strong specialty niche servicing not-for-profit clients.
Niles extends Class 6B tax breaks for Shure

By Igor Studenkov
Special for Pioneer Press | @istudenkov

The Niles Village Board voted to extend Cook County's Class 6B tax classification to Shure Incorporated's corporate headquarters for another nine years.

The classification allows the company to continue paying property taxes at 10 percent of its assessed market value. According to the documents submitted to the board, Shure expects to save approximately $6.2 million. The company indicated that it will use the resulting savings to make improvements and eventually expand its headquarters.

As the board prepared to vote on the extension, Mayor Andrew Przybylo and most trustees argued that the extension was good for Niles, since it would allow Shure to keep creating jobs. But Trustees Chris Hanusiak and Rosemary Palicki argued that the extension is a burden to the nearby businesses, whose property taxes could potentially go up because of the extension.

The Cook County Class 6B tax classification was created to encourage new industrial development, retain the existing industrial businesses and create more industrial jobs. It is granted to companies that either create new industrial facilities, rehabilitate the existing ones, or take over and rehab abandoned industrial facilities. The classification can only be granted if the municipality where the property is located signs off on it.

Once the Class 6B classification is granted, the property gets taxed at 10 percent of its market value for the first 10 years, 15 percent for the 11th year and 20 percent for the 12th year.

Shure Incorporated is an audio equipment manufacturer that was originally based in Chicago. In 2003, it moved its headquarters from Evanston to Niles, a move made possible when it got a Class 6B classification for the site onto which it relocated.

Shure Senior Vice-President James Ahlborn wrote in a letter to the village of Niles that the company needs the savings to make improvements to its headquarters. Both buildings, he wrote, are reaching capacity. He also indicated that the company plans to expand the facilities in 2019.

"Shure is projecting that we will employ over 750 people in Niles by the end of 2019," Ahlborn wrote. "At that time, Shure will need to expand our current footprint or look for adjacent land to build on."

He also wrote that the company is considering relocating its distribution center from Wheeling to Niles some time in the future.

In his letter, Ahlborn did not specify how much the expansion would cost, but he estimated that improvements to headquarters would cost between $1 million and $1.5 million a year and the project would take about five years.

The Niles Finance Committee recommended approving the extension of Shure's Class 6B classification during its Nov. 19 meeting. The Niles Village Board approved it on Dec. 15.

Przybylo urged the board to renew the classification, arguing that it would be good for the village. "This is a very positive thing for Niles in terms of jobs," he said.

While most trustees offered similar sentiments, Palicki and Hanusiak expressed concern about how this would affect the property taxes in the surrounding area. Hanusiak said that the board shouldn't renew the classification.

"By not giving a tax break, we can give relief to other businesses and property owners," he said. Hanusiak asked Ross Klicker, the village's economic development and marketing coordinator, whether extending the tax break could lead to higher taxes for the nearby properties.

"Assuming taxing bodies don't change their rates, yes," Klicker replied.

Palicki said that while she is willing to help Shure, she doesn't want to do anything that would hurt other businesses.

"I don't want it to be at the expense of other businesses in the area," she said.

The board wound up approving Shure's Class 6B classification renewal by the vote of 4-2, with Hanusiak and Palicki voting against.
Heart of Mercy Ball raised $680,000+ for Misericordia

MISERICORDIA WOMEN'S BOARD
HEART OF MERCY BALL
Benefitting: Misericordia Home
Honors: Heart of Mercy Award, Bernadette and Edmund Boyle of Park Ridge; the Sister Rosemary Connelly Service Medallion, Peggy and Bob Bourke of Evanston; and the inaugural Pillars of the Community Award, Walsh Construction; Dan Walsh of Chicago and Matt Walsh of Burr Ridge
Location: Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel, Chicago
Date: Nov, 14
Attended: 685
Raised: $680,000+
Website: misericordia.com

Edmund and Bernadette Boyle of Park Ridge

Tom and Dorie Finnegan of Niles

Peggy, Molly and Bob Bourke of Evanston

Mark and Nina Santacroce of Glenview

Patsy and Patrick Caruso of Northbrook
THE AUSTRALIAN-BORN JESSICA MCNAMEE RISES TO FAME WITH A CHICAGO-SET SERIES

PARTIES

JDRF'S ONE DREAM GALA
JUF'S BIG EVENT FUNDRAISER
WINGS' SWEET HOME CHICAGO

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THINGS WE LOVE THIS WEEK

NYE at Headquarters
Rock in the new year at either of the beercade's Chicago locations: Alt group OK Go will raise the roof at the Lakeview location, while rockers Neon Trees (pictured) will bring down the house in River North. Tickets start at $75, 2833 N. Sheffield, 213 W. Institute.

Barley & Brass
Mac and Joe Boumaron, the brothers behind 25 Degrees, are at it again, this time opening a new beer- and craft cocktail-centric gastropub in Wicker Park. Don't miss the house specialty: short ribs with malted barley risotto — served on a brass platter, of course ($16).

Fabio Viviani Wine Collection
The Italian-born celeb chef (and former Splash cover star) recently made his wine-making debut with this eponymous collection, which features a 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon and a 2012 Chardonnay squeezed from California grapes. Stop by Mariano's Westchester Dec. 21, where Viviani will be signing bottles from 3-4 p.m. $13-$15, 3020 Wolf, Westchester; Marianos.com

Jet set manicure
Nail holiday shopping this year with help from Michael Kors. With any purchase from its Fragrance & Beauty Collection, the fashion house is offering a luxe polish change with shades from the new nail lacquer collection. Dec. 28, 1-6 p.m., items start at $18, Macy's at Water Tower, 835 N. Michigan; Macys.com

ON THE COVER
Skirt: Marco De Vincenzo, $1,215, Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan; neimanmarcus.com Belt: Hermès, stylist's own, similar styles available

25 E. Oak, Hermes.com
Top: Isabel Marant, $770 Booties: Chloé, $1,095
Both available: Chalk Boutique, 261 Prairie, Evanston; chalkboutique.com
Earrings: A Marek, 18-karat rose gold and brown diamonds, $7,000
Ring: Christophe Danhier, white gold, gray moonstone and diamonds, $18,000
Both available: A Marek Fine Jewelry, 3021 Butterfield, Oak Brook; amarekJewelry.com

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WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE NEW YEAR'S EVE MEMORY?

Publisher and Editor Susanna Negovan, susannasuntimes.com
Art Director Jessica Sedgwick, jsedwick@suntimes.com
Managing Editor Rachel Handler, rhandler@suntimes.com
Senior Editor Elle Eichinger, eeichinger@suntimes.com
Assistant Editors Katerina Bizios, kbizios@suntimes.com, Zak Stern, zstern@suntimes.com
Multimedia Producer Ramzi Dreessen, rdreessen@suntimes.com
Director of Brand Strategy Liz Switzer, lizasuntimes.com
Account Executive Allie Cremo, acremo@suntimes.com
Event Director Diana Vdovets, dvdovets@suntimes.com
Editorial Assistant Chira Milours
Interns Rachel Bogo, Spencer Ebach, Aileen McGraw and Jack Nuille
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December 24

- FEAST OF THE SEVEN FISHES AT NICO OSTERIA

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 the acclaimed Nico Osteria. Chef de cuisine Er-Hing Wu-Bower's seafood-centric, four-course meal includes dishes such as salt-crusted branzino, roasted razor clams and plenty of crude 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 21

- HANUKKAH CONCERT

Rabbi Joe Black and the Maxwell Street Klezmer Band perform two one-hour concerts in honor of the holiday in the Aldorff 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.

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, Purpose and more. 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.

December 31

- MONSTER'S BALL

Rather than black-tie gowns and tuxes, pull that Halloween attire out of the closet for New Year’s Eve, as Stage 773 resurrects its popular Monster’s Ball. Enjoy cocktails and appetizers alongside a haunted house, live music from a zombie band, a haunted theater tour, an undead dance party and a midnight “champ-PAIN” toast.

Time: 9 p.m.
Place: Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont
Cost: $70, $100 VIP. For tickets, visit Stage773.com.

January 1

- NEW YEAR'S DAY 5K RUN & WALK

Start your “get fit” resolutions off on the right foot with this New Year's Day run/walk. This 30th annual athletic event runs along the lakefront path, and participants receive a swag bag stocked with items such as gift certificates to Leah Chavie Skincare Boutique and Laugh Factory, and can attend a post-race party at Select Cut Steakhouse. A portion of the proceeds benefit the Lake View Citizens’ Council, a nonprofit organization working to make the neighborhood a better place.

Time: 9:30 a.m. registration, 11 a.m. start
Place: Lincoln Park, Stockton and LaSalle
Cost: $30 in advance, $35-$40 on race day. To register, visit Chicagoevents.com.
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“10 BEST BARS
IN CHICAGO”
The future of Chicago style looks bright thanks to these chic children, who brought their fashion A-games to the Joffrey Ballet's 17th Annual Nutcracker Family Dinner Dec. 7. More than 450 kids and their equally fashionable parents joined co-chairs Laura Ferris Anderson, Maggie Scheyer and Jessica Steffensen for a performance of the holiday classic 'The Nutcracker' before snacking on sweet treats like Magnolia Bakery cupcakes, creating beaded jewelry from AVP Jewelry and Beads and even decorating their own ballet pointe shoes with feathers and jewels at Allegro Dance Boutique's Candy Cane Creativity Station. The giving spirit was in full force that night: More than $82,000 was raised for the Joffrey's productions and Community Engagement program.
Late-night laughs

STORIES BY CHIARA MILIOULIS

NL alum and "Late Night" host Seth Meyers entertained a crowd of 2,400 young professionals at the Jewish United Fund Young Leadership Division's Big Event Fundraiser Dec. 13 at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers (301 E. North Water). Following a performance by spoken-word artist Andrew Lustig, the Emmy Award-winning Meyers took the stage for a comedy show and, later, guests flocked to an afterparty bash. The fundraiser kicked off the 2015 JUF Annual Campaign for the Young Leadership Division and raised $333,000 for the next generation of Jewish Chicagoans. splash was the media sponsor of this event.

Dream big

The world's largest charitable funder and advocate for Type 1 diabetes, JDRF held its 35th annual One Dream Gala Dec. 13 at the McCormick Place Lakeside Center and Arie Crown Theater (2301 S. Lake Shore). The event, hosted by Rosemarie Andolino and Meredith O'Connor, saw special appearances by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Governor-Elect Bruce Rauner, and featured a sit-down dinner and silent and live auctions. Later, rock band Foreigner hit the stage to perform its classic hits, including "I Want To Know What Love Is." The gala raised $4 million, which will go toward finding a cure for diabetes. Splash was the media sponsor of this event. The Sun-Times Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust will match every dollar donated to JDRF up to a total of $10,000. Up to $500 can be matched per individual donation.
Visits with Santa Claus and K-9 comfort dogs from Lutheran Church Charities — plus music by Ralph's World — were just some of the highlights at WINGS' 11th annual Sweet Home Chicago fundraiser Dec. 14. The event drew more than 480 people to the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago (120 E. Delaware) for a delicious brunch in support of WINGS' (Women In Need Growing Stronger) domestic violence shelters, programs and services for women and children in the Chicago area. Honorary co-chairs Greg and Anna Brown and event co-chairs Anna Bilton and Meghan Norton helped raise a record $955,000 for the nonprofit organization.

Splash was the media sponsor of this event. The Sun-Times Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust will match every dollar donated to WINGS up to a total of $50,000. Up to $1,000 can be matched per individual donation.
ever after

Jaye Eisenberg & Jonathan Kepniss
BY CHIARA MILIOULIS

While waiting out a long delay at the Willard Airport in Chicago in 2007, University of Illinois student Jaye Eisenberg noticed a fellow passenger, Jonathan Kepniss, wearing a U of I fraternity shirt. “I had a sorority T-shirt on, so we started talking to see if we could find people in common,” she says. Though the two then parted ways, they reconnected at a local bar the following school year. “I said, ‘Weren’t you on the airplane?’” Eisenberg says. “The rest is history.”

After graduating, Kepniss, a New Jersey native and tax manager at Deloitte, moved to New York City with Eisenberg, a development coordinator at National Academy Foundation. On a Friday afternoon in August 2013, the two met up to head to Chicago for what the bride thought was her nephews birthday party. “We were walking uptown to get a cab [to the airport] and he stopped at the base of Central Park and got down on one knee,” she says. “We then headed straight to the airport, where a party waited for us in Chicago.” Though the proposal was very spontaneous, “Chicago is home to me and always will be,” she says. “I always knew I wanted to get married in the city I love.”

On Oct. 25, more than 180 guests gathered at the opulent Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel Chicago (163 E. Walton), where they were greeted with gift bags filled with Carol’s Cookies and Garrett’s Popcorn before the traditional Jewish ceremony. The couple then led guests to a fall-inspired reception, complete with gray and purple accents and an abundance of mini appetizers, including hot dogs, hamburgers and grilled cheese sandwiches.

Later, the duo made their way to the dance floor for their first dance. “We spent less than a minute on a traditional wedding song — ‘You Make It Real’ by James Morrison — and then we broke out our sunglasses to [dance to] ‘Empire State of Mind,’” Eisenberg says. To cap off the wedding, the newlyweds fled to Tahiti, Moorea and Bora Bora for a romantic honeymoon.
Chicagoan Cory Hardict is on the verge of greatness with his new role in 'American Sniper'

BY ZAK STEMER

Cory Hardict is gearing up for a very exciting 2015. In the next 12 months, the Chicago native will star in four movies: "Destined" with Jesse Metcalfe; "Car Dogs," opposite Octavia Spencer and Nia Vardalos; "Brotherly Love" with Macy Gray and Keke Palmer; and, most notably, Clint Eastwood's latest war flick "American Sniper" alongside Bradley Cooper.

With such big names attached to it, there's immense hype swirling around "Sniper" right now, but Hardict, 35, is keeping a cool head. "I'm very grateful and thankful to be in a film of this caliber and magnitude, but it's not out yet," he says. "Hype is what it is. We'll see if it resonates with people. But I can say that it's a great movie."

The film — Hardict's second with Eastwood (the duo previously teamed up in 2008's "Gran Torino") — centers on legendary sharpshooter Chris Kyle (Cooper), who, after four tours in Iraq, has difficulty coming home and leaving the past behind. Hardict joins the cast as D, Chris Kyle's fellow SEAL and friend during battle.

Creating a realistic environment on set is crucial for the no-nonsense Hardict. "I'm very locked in, I'm very focused," he says. "If I'm into a dramatic role, I like keeping that tone until I'm done for the day. At the end of the day, I'm making a movie — it has to be real to me or else people aren't gonna buy it."

Case in point: To prep for his turn as a SEAL, Hardict immersed himself in a two-week boot camp in Morocco, where the film was shot. "We had to dive into that heat in Morocco; it was 100 degrees almost every day," he remembers. "The hardest part about boot camp is that they train you harder than [what you'll need for the} movie to get you prepared. In the film, there's a lot of breaks and cuts. In boot camp, you have to train straight through, there's not a lot of pauses or breaks, but it prepares you to really go the distance when you start filming."

Yet for Hardict, the physical training wasn't nearly as difficult as the emotional strain he experienced being away from his wife of seven years, actress Tia Mowry, and their 3½-year-old son, Cree, for three months. "It was tough," he says. "I was just missing them. I would cry myself to sleep. But I'd Skype a lot, a lot of FaceTime."

When filming wrapped and Hardict returned home, "I just kissed everybody" he says, "and hugged them and told them I loved them."

With all the buzz around "Sniper," Hardict might be wise to soak up every moment of calm at home while he still can. "It takes 20 years to become an overnight sensation — I've been acting for about 19 years now," he laughs. "But you can't force or rush your destiny. Just work hard toward that goal and see what happens. Trust that it will all work out."
'Sirens' star JESSICA MCNAMEE talks growing up Down Under, chasing her dreams in America and finding her funny bone in Chicago

BY RACHEL HANDLER   PHOTOS BY SIMON PERRY
STYLED BY FAVIA, FORD ARTISTS

ON MCNAMEE
Top: Martin Grant, $1,140
Skirt: Mathieu Mirano, $2,345
Pumps: Balenciaga, $605
All available: Chalk Boutique, 2611 Prairie, Evanston, ChalkBoutique.com

Earrings: A. Marek, 18-karat rose gold and diamond hoops, $36,500
Rings: A. Marek, pink sapphire and diamond bow, $18,000
Patijniero, pink sapphire and diamond flower, $35,000
All available: A. Marek Fine Jewelry, 3021 Butterfield, A.Marekfinejewelry.com
Jessica McNamee is the kind of gorgeous that inspires clichés, so here are a few: She's tall and thin, with long, honey-hued hair, great skin, piercing blue eyes and supermodel-worthy bone structure. As she approaches me at the bar at the Radisson Blu, the overall effect is intimidating, at first.

But that dissipates almost immediately. The Australian-born actress plops down in an overstuffed chair and — despite the fact that she's fresh off filming scenes for season two of her Chicago-based, Denis Leary-produced comedy "Sirens" (premiering Jan. 27 on USA) — flashes me a brilliant and genuinely enthusiastic grin. "I'm so confused by this week," she laughs. "I just got back from New York, and I was working this morning, and we had press this afternoon, and it's been one of those days where I'm like, 'Where are we? Who am I?'"

It's hard to blame her for feeling a little off-kilter. McNamee, 28, is essentially living a quadruple life: In Australia, she's a silver-screen sensation who can hardly walk through an airport undetected — she rose to fame in the mid-aughts by starring in popular TV dramas and continues to work Down Under whenever she can. In LA, where she's had a home since she made her Hollywood debut in 2012's "The Vow," she's part of a crowd of close-knit Aussies who migrated across the ocean to bolster their film and TV careers. In Chicago, where she camps out in the Aqua building for roughly three months a year to film "Sirens," she's Theresa Kelly, a wary police officer dating a local EMT (Michael Mosley). And in her hometown of Dural, New South Wales — which she still visits about six times a year — she's just Jessica, one of five children, a warm, self-deprecating wit who performs pitch-perfect imitations of her family members.

To her credit, McNamee is mostly untaxed by her madcap lifestyle. "I've always been a bit of a free spirit," she says. "I've never really found it daunting or overwhelming.... I always laugh that when I get married, I don't even know how that wedding would work out in terms of where I'd be, would come or if I'd have to have three separate weddings or just close. I have these completely different worlds — they're all over the place." (Just whom that wedding might include is unclear, though McNamee does admit that she's "been dating someone more in the last little while, though it's always long-distance for me.

What keeps McNamee going is her burning desire to succeed, both at home and in America. "I've always been really gung-ho about [my career]," she says. "I've always backed myself. [Failure] has never really been an option for me." What keeps her sane is her delicate balance of self-confidence, humor and levelheadedness, which she attributes to her Australian clan. "My family instilled a great work ethic in me.... They were very tentative at the beginning [of my career], because in Australia, there's so much less opportunity," says McNamee, who grew up performing in school plays and left Sydney University in 2007 to pursue acting (she plans to eventually finish her degree). "But they've seen that it makes me happy — and that it doesn't really change me. I'm exactly the same as I was when I left."

It didn't hurt that McNamee found work in the U.S. almost immediately. In 2012, after she made a name for herself in Australia on the soap "Home and Away" and the hit family drama "Packed to the Rafters," the latter show's writers offered her...
choice to stay on for the remainder of the series or leave. "I'd always had it in the back of my mind that I wanted to come to America and try my luck," says McNamee. A natural ham, she was also eager to hone her comedic chops on screen. "In Australia, people would be surprised to learn that I don't take myself that seriously, that I have a sense of humor about myself," she says. Sensing an opportunity, she chose to e, dt the sho and, as she puts it, "basically straight off that, I got 'The Vow.'"

Filming the Chicago-set romance in Toronto with Channing Tatum and Rachel McAdams, "we had a ball," McNamee recalls. She rattles off names of the cast and crew, saying things like, "I just spoke to him yesterday" and "she's still one of my best friends." It's something of a pattern for McNamee - making and keeping hordes of close friends as she hops around the globe.

In fact, that gregarious (and decidedly un-Hollywood) nature is a big part of what's helped her reach the raror's edge of stardom in America so rapidly. At the 2012 audition for "Sirens," McNamee was disheartened when she realized she was one of 50 hopefuls vying for the role of Theresa. "But I was so determined," says McNamee. "I was like, I want this role, I'm not gonna let this psyche me out."

Inside the room, she immediately bonded with show runner and executive producer Bob Fisher. "We kind of hit it off," she says. "We had a really good chat. And I left, and I called my agent. and I remember saying, 'I think they really liked me! Can you follow up?'"

McNamee's instincts were right, and the raunchy comedy, which follows a rag-tag group of Chicago EMTs and cops, premiered to favorable reviews in March 2014 before being renewed in June. These days, unsurprisingly, she counts the cast among her best friends. "We're no-bull human beings," she laughs. "We have natural chemistry." It helps that they spend almost all of their time together, trappiing to and from Aqua, where they run lines, drink wine and cook for each other (and where they all moved because, as McNamee puts it, "the idea of living apart is absurd"). They've also become tight with the stars of other locally set shows - including Jesse Spencer of "Chicago Fire" and Sophia Bush of "Chicago PD" - some of whom live in the same apartment complex.

The unlikeliness of her relatively soft landing in America hasn't been lost on the actress. "I have lots of [Australian] friends back in LA who are some of the best actors I know who should be working and they aren't," she says. "I just feel so lucky, and I try to make a habit of recognizing that each day.

That gratitude in mind, she's ready to take on any TV or film role that comes her way," as long as it's good work and I feel fulfilled doing it, and I'm challenging myself." First, though, she's taking a much-deserved breather. "It's been a hectic year," she says. "I'm not thinking about [my next move] until we wrap up here and I do some traveling and see my family."

As our interview draws to an end, McNamee stands up from her seat and gives me a tight hug, her movie-star aura again attracting the attention of the room. Of course, she's complete1 unaware of her gravitational pull. chatting casually about her weekend as if were already old friends. "Ugh, I ate so much cheese last night," she groans, laughing as she throws on a slick leather jacket. "I was doing this health kick until I went to New York and I ruined everything. You know when you're like, I already ruined it, I might as well continue. And I broke my toe so I can't even work out. I kicked it on the door frame when I was doing my laundry — it's really dumb. I was still running on it, and it was swelling, and I was like, 'OK, that's not right.' It's a great excuse to not do anything."

Still laughing at herself, she takes a breath and heads toward the door, yelling out plans for one last, much-deserved indulgence: "I'm gonna go home and go straight to bed."
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New Year's Eve can be decadent and delightful, sure, but also overpriced and predictable. Let's face it: You're paying for real estate. This year, why not veer away from the norm for something a little more adventurous? Follow our handy guide below to figure out how you should ring in 2015:

**START HERE**

- **Do you desperately wish to be somewhere warm?**
  - **YES**
  - **NO**

- **What's more important?**
  - **FOOD**
  - **ATMOSPHERE**

- **Your ideal party vibe is...**
  - **RENEDEST ENERGY**
  - **REFINED AND ELEGANT**

**Party Like a Rockstar (@ ROOF on theWit (201 N. State))**

This trendy rooftop club on the hotel's 27th floor classes it up with a black-and-white themed celebration. Dress glamorous in those hues for the high-energy party, where you'll ring in 2015 while sipping on Dom Perignon's P2 Champagne, a re-released vintage exclusive to the ROOF with only 33 bottles available in the Midwest. A Veuve Clicquot chandelier is the grand centerpiece, surrounded by an iced sushi bar, go-go dancers, explosive confetti cannons and music by DJ Joe Maz. Fountains will be overflowing with the festive "Midnight Kiss" cocktail — just the liquid courage you need to approach the cute you've been eyeing across the room. Private table reservations and packages are available starting at $1,200 for four and include a premium open bar from 9:30 p.m. to 1 a.m., extravagant food displays, a dessert bar and a premium Champagne toast at midnight. Table reservations also include 4 State and Lake Chicago Tavern vouchers for a New Year's Day Bloody Mary and mimosa bar. Table packages are available at Roofonthewit.com/nye.
Hawaii may be a little far to travel for just one night, but Mott Street recreates the warm island vibes in frigid Chicago with a luau-themed party. Tiki torches, tropical plants, carved fruit, pineapple lanterns, orchids, banana leaves and calypso tunes will transform the dining room. This lively luau pays homage to beverage director Nate Chung’s Hawaiian heritage, and the family-style 10-course feast includes roasted braised pork shoulder and pineapple boat fried rice. “The aim is to be decadent without being fussy,” Chung says. “We want to throw a New Year’s party that’s jovial, cheeky and wholeheartedly sincere.” Exclusive tropical cocktails include a Mott Street Mai Tai made with chestnut orteat and a Monserrat with rum, black tea, lemon grass and pineapple. Attire is casual — you’ll be led — and guests are encouraged to dress in tropical, bright tones. There will be two seatings, one at 5:30 p.m. ($115, $175 with beverage pairing) and another at 8:30 p.m. with an open tiki bar ($235). Prices include tax and tip. Make your reservations at Mottstreetchicago.com/nye-luau-feast.

If you could teleport, where would you go?

Do you have kids?

Yes

No

ST. TROPEZ

CASUAL

Do you prefer...

FINE DINING

Taste of Every Season @ Moto (945 W. Fulton Market)

For the first time ever, this Michelin-starred restaurant — best known for avant garde molecular gastronomy — is mixing a sit-down dinner for a more interactive soirée. Rooms will be themed for all four seasons with food, drink and activities that correspond, including a different Môet Hennessy Champagne for each. Take a tour of the restaurant’s famous indoor farm and get your game on with a good ol’ Midwestern cornhole toss for summer, then decorate a pumpkin or gingerbread man. Throughout the night, chef Richie Farina promises 35-40 bites, including a raw bar, freeze-dried bird’s nest, brisket, s’mores and smoked salmon on everything bagel crisps (the guest list will be capped at 80). And dress up, but make sure you’re comfortable enough to hunt for Easter eggs — you might even win an extra bottle of bubbly or dinner for two. The party starts at 9 p.m. and goes until 1 a.m., and tickets are available for $275 (including food, drink, tax and gratuity) at Motores- taurant.com/reservations or by calling (312) 491-0058.

Which is more enticing?

Seafood Towers Galore

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FINISHING YOUR FOOD

PLAYING GAMES BEFORE FINISHING YOUR FOOD

30th Anniversary & NYE @ Shaw’s Crab House (21 E. Hubbard)

This year, Shaw’s is going above and beyond for New Year’s since it’s also the restaurant’s 30th anniversary. The downtown location will be bedazzled with twinkling white lights, poinsettias, wreaths, balloons and yard upon yard of holiday ribbon. For one night only, you can order a $100 chilled ode-to-crab tower with empress and stone crab claws, king crab bites, pecky toe crab, golden king crab and mini bottles of Moët & Chandon. In the main dining room, an a la carte menu will be served throughout the evening with specials including Nantucket Cape scallops, dover sole and Alaskan red king crab. The oyster bar is first come, first served with reservations accepted after 9 p.m. and live music by local blues and rock band Big Dog Mercer. Expect smartly dressed regulars celebrating great memories over the years — although newcomers are always welcome, too. At midnight, usher in 2015 with a complimentary oyster and Champagne toast. Make reservations by calling (312) 527-2722.

White & Gold Celebration @ Fig & Olive (104 E. Oak)

One of Chicago’s hottest new restaurants, Fig & Olive is bringing us a taste of St. Tropez to break up the winter blues. Similar to the venue’s LA and NYC bashes, this party has a white-and-gold theme — think red-carpet refined glamour with tiaras, gold hats and other party favors. Fashionable guests can celebrate with a four-course menu, including foie gras with fig chutney, roasted lamb rack or Chilean sea bass with charmoula and cumin. Save room for dessert — Valrhona chocolate brownies — then dance the night away to sexy house music by Paris-born DJ Edward Netter. The 9 p.m. seating, including all food and a glass of Champagne, is $150. Revelers may also opt for Champagne and grazing on passed bites in the lounge from 9 p.m. - midnight for $100. Reserve your spot by calling (212) 924-1200 ext. 1 or emailing Nye-chi@figandolive.com.
Mad dash

With 'Burning Bluebeard,' playwright Jay Torrence pays homage to a past tragedy and celebrates the ongoing power of live theater.

BY THOMAS CONNORS

You've paid your annual visit to Bedford Falls, stood dutifully through the "Hallelujah" chorus and escorted the little ones to "The Nutcracker." But before the needles begin to drop from the tree and you tote all that wrapping paper to the curb for recycling, there's still time to take in one of the most unusual shows of the season: "Burning Bluebeard," on stage at Theater Wit through Jan. 5.

Written by Jay Torrence, a founder of The Ruffians—the collective of acrobats, clowns and dancers that brings the show to life—"Burning Bluebeard" spins a weird magic from the December 1903 Iroquois Theatre fire, in which hundreds perished. This is not "A Christmas Story."

"Theater artists are obsessed with and good at controlling exactly what happens within the four walls of a theater," says Torrence. "In this case, the reality of the outside world encroached upon that. My curiosity in the Iroquois Theatre fire started as an interest in understanding what the performers must have felt about this horrific thing that occurred during their show. There are tons of testimonies from audience members who survived the tragedy. There are fewer documents that give insight into what the performers experienced or learned from this tragedy."

The show on stage that fateful day was "Mr. Bluebeard," a now-forgotten British pantomime with elaborate sets and a huge cast, including a 13-year-old aerialist who swung over the audience tossing cannonballs through the seats of a theater."

"Burning Bluebeard" imagines six of those long-gone artists emerging from the smoky past to complete the show the fire cut short. But this is not "The Walking Dead" in whiteface. Lively and engaging, the show is a delightful, if shadowed, spectacle. And for Torrence, it's a musings on the unique communion of performer and spectator.

"This is a show about a show where people died while trying to watch a show," he says. "In 'Burning Bluebeard' that relationship between audience and story is heightened. Anyone who comes into this theater to see our show is not only a part of the actual show, the event of the evening, just by sitting down, but they also assume the role of representing the actual people who attended the historical pantomime. And along with that comes all of the potential for joy and the sorrow and pain that echo through the seats of a theater."
A decade ago, Christina Milian had us swaying to dance tracks like 'Dip it Low' and 'LOVE.' Now, the actress and singer is taking back the limelight with a sophisticated wine line dubbed Viva Diva Wines and a new reality show, "Christina Milian Turned Up," premiering on E! in January.

"I was born in New Jersey and grew up in Maryland. I always knew that I wanted to be in this business, as a child I was very imaginative and creative. By the time I was 13, my family had moved to LA and had a hosting job with Disney Channel. I started writing songs at 17 and then signed to Def Jam [record label] at 19."

Perfect pairing
"My sister Lizzy is a chef, so I’ve learned to pair wine with everything. She recently did a dessert piece [for OK! Magazine] that had a wine-infused sauce poured over vanilla ice cream. It was too delicious!"

Show time
"[Turned Up] is a docu-series that follows me and my family through the ups, the downs, our businesses and careers, as well as our lives and times spent together [Viewers will see me] working on music, doing a charity event for my wine line, moving, traveling. It was an exciting season to shoot."

Catch "Christina Milian Turned Up" on E! beginning Jan. 18 at 9 p.m. with a wine from Viva Diva Wines.

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THE CHRISTMAS LIST

Just like that, the holidays are upon us. Where does the time go? I swear I was just writing one of my summertime posts about poolside margaritas and sundresses. But here we are — deep into December, covered in wrapping paper, hyped on sugar, overstuffed with rich foods and trying to keep family and friends happy while spreading ourselves too thin.

Not too long ago, I posted a letter across my social media platforms, one much more valuable than the usual holiday to-do list. On this list, key words were crossed off and replaced with much better and far more profound words. It resonated with me and, ever since, I've tried to make these same adjustments in my own daily life.

It suggested simple fixes like "Be Present" instead of "Buy Presents." Of course we're still going to buy presents, but this is a valuable reminder at such a busy and stressful time of the year. Really, this is the most important time to be present, because there's so much love and happiness around us to witness, share and take part in. Don't miss out because you're wrestling with some lady in curlers at the toy store over the last Minecraft toy.

My personal favorite item on the list, though — and this will surprise nobody — is "Be the Light" versus "See the Lights." There is so much to be grateful for, and every single day I get to see the light in so many of YOU through your amazing tweets and letters and messages to me. I see them all and I am grateful and reflect your light back to you. Thank you for being my bright reflections!

Make a point to alter your list of holiday to-do's into more meaningful actions. 'Tis the season, right?

Read Jenny's blog at ChicagoSplash.com.

BY JENNY MCCARTHY

ACCESSORIES
Chef Joseph Heppe thinks big at the meat-centric Oak + Char

BY ANTHONY TODD

Oak + Char is deeply rooted in wood. Its tables are hand-hewn from a Winnetka oak tree felled in a storm; the walls are made of charred Douglas Fir; and whether it's smoked, char-grilled or wood-roasted, each dish on the menu is kissed by the flame. "We're not a steakhouse, but we want to have a relationship to that technique of fire-cooking," explains chef Joseph Heppe.

The kitchen, formerly owned by celebrity chef Graham Elliot, had been recently renovated, but Heppe added some of his own touches: Inspired by his time at Vermilion, he brought in a tandoor — an Indian oven — as well as different smokers that use woods from pear to apple to maple. "We want to incorporate the fire into the cuisine in as many ways as we can," he says.

Here's what else to expect at Oak + Char:

Chef stats: Heppe has been cooking professionally since he was 16, starting in fast food and, after college, moving upscale. His Chicago career started at Vermilion; he then moved to Mercat a La Planxa before ending up at Untitled, where he was most recently executive chef.

Must-try dishes: "I'm excited about what I'm seeing all over the country — chefs doing big plates of real chef food," enthuses Heppe. At Oak + Char, that means a huge 32-ounce ribeye for two, served with bone marrow and sauce Perigeeux or a whole roasted foie gras (both market price). "I've eaten foie gras since I was sneaking it off my station when a chef wasn't looking," laughs Heppe. "So it's great to offer a pound and a half of perfectly whole roasted foie; it's one of those special-occasion dishes that you just can't do at home."

Seafood stars: It's not all about the red meat at Oak + Char. Inspired by a recent binge on Spanish canned seafood and Ritz crackers at a party, Heppe buys plump 1871 oysters from Fortune Fish and lightly smokes them. He hits them with Pimentón oil and pickled lemon, then serves them with homemade butter crackers ($13). He also roasts octopus in the tandoor oven, then accompanies it with an nduja vinaigrette and a side of charred eggplant ($12).

Cold-weather cocktails: Mixer Mae Governale has come up with a great cocktail program, but the highlight (at this time of the year, at least) is a selection of hot toddys for two. Served in the restaurant's collection of eclectic old teapots, the toddys are made with rum or bourbon ($20). If you can stand the cold, out of the frozen drink machine comes Margot ($14), a mix of vodka, coconut milk, chocolate and coffee liquor that Heppe describes as "just like a grown-up Wendy's chocolate Frostee."

217 W. Huron, (312) 643-2427; Oakandchar.com
Sometimes different looks call for a bolder or subtler brow, and I can get either with these two products.

MAC: brow pencil in Lingering, $16; fluidline gelcream in Dirty Blonde, $16, $40 N. Michigan; Maccosmetics.com

I'm completely in love with Sachajuan's line of products, but the intensive hair oil is the star of the show.

Sachajuan: intensive hair oil, $45, Barneys New York, 15 E. Oak; Barneys.com

This white tuxedo number is a perfect play on a traditional NYE staple with a twist.

Topshop: tuxedo jacket and pencil skirt, $220, $50 N. Michigan; Topshop.com

There is something so luxe about this lipstick. It feels special every time I pull it out of my bag — it's the perfect glam-red lipstick.

Tom Ford: lip color in Scarlet Rouge, $50, Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan; Neimanmarcus.com

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Tom Ford: lip color in Scarlet Rouge, $50, Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan; Neimanmarcus.com

The Chicago-based makeup artist gives the city's beauty scene a makeover

BY CHIARA MILIOULIS
PHOTO BY RAMZI DREESSEN

I put out there. WINTER SHIELD: Water is super important. If you're hydrating your body, your skin is going to reflect that. I use a Peter Thomas Roth peel ($48; Peterthomasroth.com) every day. It's an extra gentle peel that eats away at the dead skin and helps prevent breakouts. I also pile on Vitamin E oil and let that soak in while I sleep. NYE TIP: It's a fun time to explore lashes and a great way to add intensity and emphasis to your face. It makes you bright-eyed, and come 1 a.m., you can probably use that on New Year's. LAST DAY PLANS: New Year's Eve is a crazy time for me. Last year, I did 17 faces in a day. Since my husband [DJ Matt Roan] and I work on the days when everyone is having fun, we use Tuesdays and Wednesdays as our weekend. We love going on adventures and exploring the city.

To see O'Brien's favorite New Year's Eve beauty products, visit Chicagoospash.com. For more information on O'Brien, visit Shannonobriennua.com or follow @Shannicat on Instagram.
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Improvements to 2015 Nissan Altima include new Xtronic CVT

BY FRANK A. AUKOFE
Motor Matters

For most of its life and despite its best efforts, the midsize Nissan Altima has played third fiddle to the Toyota Camry and Honda Accord. But it arranges some new notes for 2015 in a powerful play to overtake the sales leaders.

One of the more interesting is the new Xtronic continuously variable transmission (CVT). It includes an improvement called D Step. Using computer software, D Step simulates the shift points of a conventional automatic transmission.

This is true in the 2015 Nissan Altima SV sedan tested. Under moderate acceleration its CVT shifts smoothly, without hiccups. But if you jam on the throttle, the engine rmps spool up to 4,000 or 4,500, and then the transmission upshifts in a blink and drops the revs, just as would happen in a standard automatic.

There's also a quick kick-down passing mode if you press the accelerator pedal to overtake another car or merge onto a freeway. The CVT instantly jumps the engine to higher rmps for the needed power.

D Step, with its combination of CVT and regular automatic transmission sensations, contributes to a pleasant overall ride in the new Altima, which is available in seven models. Four of them — 2.5, 2.5 S, 2.5 SV and 2.5 SL — come with Nissan's 182-horsepower 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine. The other three Altimas — 3.5 S, 3.5 SV and 3.5 SL — are powered by a 270-horsepower, 3.5-liter V-6 engine.

The tested 2.5 SV delivers city/highway/combined fuel economy of 27/38/31 mpg. With a base price of $25,530, it arrives with a good level of standard equipment, including full safety equipment, rear-view camera, Nissan's "zero gravity" front seats with eight power adjustments and lumbar support on the driver's seat, satellite radio, push-button starting, automatic headlights, cruise control and 17-inch alloy wheels.

Options on the test car included the Nissan Connect system with navigation and mobile apps, motorized glass sunroof, garage door opener, auto-dimming inside mirror, blind-spot and lane-departure warning and Nissan's moving object detection system. That brought the total suggested delivered price to $28,180.

If you want something more luxurious, the SL model starts at $28,900 and, with options, can reach $31,060.

The upholstery on the SV model is a plush, comfortable cloth. Front seats are big and supportive for long-distance cruising, and the interior features soft-touch vinyl surfaces, comfortable cloth covering on armrests and the console cover, piano black trim and easy-to-read white-on-black instruments.

Out back, there's decent knee and head room for 6-footers in the outboard seats. But the center position has a high, hard cushion that truncates the headroom, and feet must be splayed on both sides of a floor hump.

On the road, the Altima SV feels solid, like a bigger car. The steering is nicely weighted and holds steady in straight-line driving. Curves can be negotiated without much fuss, as long as you don't drive too fast. This is a family car, not a sports sedan. The ride is comfortable, thanks to a compliant suspension system.

There's a fully carpeted trunk of nearly 16 cubic feet. However, the C-hinges are not protected, so they could damage luggage or squash a standing grocery bag.
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NEW 2015 JEEP COMPASS
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$14,938

NEW 2015 DODGE DART SXT
STK# D661887, MSRP $21,585
$16,836

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STK# C555849, MSRP $22,405
$18,827

NEW 2015 JEEP CHEROKEE SPORT
STK# J517577, MSRP $23,990
$19,192

NEW 2015 JEEP PATRIOT
STK# J171558, MSRP $18,785
$13,900

NEW 2015 CHRYSLER 200 LIMITED
STK# C555849, MSRP $22,405
$18,827

NEW 2015 DODGE DURANGO SXT AWD
STK# D703335, MSRP $33,990
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NEW 2015 JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE LAREDO 4X4
STK# J691673, MSRP $36,185
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STK# R56702, MSRP $31,390
$24,798

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STK# D643672, MSRP $22,390
$17,688

NEW 2014 DODGE DART SXT
STK# D661887, MSRP $21,585
$16,836

NEW 2014 JEEP COMPASS
STK# J818978, MSRP $20,185
$14,938

NEW 2014 RAM 1500 QUAD CAB
STK# R56702, MSRP $31,390
$24,798

NEW 2014 CHRYSLER 300
STK# C343379, MSRP $31,990
$24,632

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STK# J818978, MSRP $20,185
$14,938

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SAVE $6,151

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2012 Ford Fusion $14,988
2014 Dodge Grand Caravan $19,988

2013 Honda Odyssey $23,996
2013 Jeep Grand Cherokee $36,979
2013 Chevy HHR $24,984
2009 Toyota Matrix $9,998
2009 Chevy Malibu $8,994
2009 Pontiac G6 $9,999
13 Hyundai Elantra $10,699
13 Nissan Altima $11,998
13 Chevy Impala $12,920
13 Toyota Corolla $12,959
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- **2015 Honda Accord SE V6:** $22,995
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Grow your Business by Being More Generous

By: Bob Rosen

Perhaps the veracity of no old adage has benefited more from scientific research than that of this favorite of mothers, teachers, and preachers: "It is better to give than to receive.

An ever-growing body of hard evidence supports the notion that generosity enhances our physical and emotional well-being and has tremendous benefits for the social structures we inhabit, including our workplaces. What's more, generosity begets gratitude, another positive emotion with tremendous power for generating good feelings and great outcomes.

Hard-Wired for Kindness

Belying the evidence of TV news, human beings are hard-wired for kindness. Evidence suggests that our genetic ancestors with a higher capacity for giving increased had a greater likelihood for survival. Two studies by the University of Michigan bear this out.

One pointed to greater mental and physical health tied to generosity. Another which tracked 2,700 people over a 10-year span, showed that men who performed volunteer work regularly had mortality rates that were two-and-one-half times lower than men who were not generous with their time.

Study after study shows that practicing generosity reduces stress and contributes to stronger immunity to illness.

Having examined 500 scientific studies on the power of unselfishness, Case Western Reserve University bio ethicist Stephen Post noted, "It's abundantly clear from a number of studies that people who live generous lives also live happier lives."

On the other hand, parsimony seems to do little to help us lead better, healthier lives. Canadian social psychologist Liz Dunn in her vast research discovered a link between stinginess -- and the shame people have in being stingy -- and higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

As reported in Scientific American, Dunn examined cortisol levels in subjects who responded in experiments with the choice of giving money away or keeping it for themselves. She found that the more money people chose to keep in the experiment, the greater shame they felt -- and the higher their cortisol levels were.

What's Your Purpose?

One reason that generosity makes us feel good is because it gives us a greater sense of purpose in our lives. Our minds and bodies are built for more than mere survival. They have the capacity for social and emotional drives that give us greater meaning.

Finding an answer begins with accepting that this is not like coming up with another New Year's resolution. It is not a formula like a weight-loss program. It is a journey of discovery as you look for ways to use your unique gifts while helping others.

Discovering this higher purpose changes you. You will think about yourself and others differently. It is a little like reinventing yourself. You will have a new persona or self-definition that is more closely aligned with what you value and are passionate about.

And, by being more generous and other-directed, you, at long last, can take some of the focus off yourself. Certainly, self-awareness is critically important to our emotional intelligence and success. However, many achievement-driven individuals look at themselves through a fault-finding filter, concentrating on what we did wrong or could have done better.

So often, our internal talk is self-critical, and induces stress, doubt, uncertainty and obsession. These do little to build our confidence or contribute to our successes.

Generosity distracts us from that all too critical inner voice, and helps us build a strong argument against its critique of our personalities and our efforts. In other words, it is hard to be convinced that we are a sad collection of faults when we see others benefit from our good works and actions.

Happiness at Work

One of the most admired business executives of the 21st Century, Tesco's retired CEO Terry Leahy clearly saw that generosity was the key to success. "When I joined Tesco, somebody said to me, 'They'll eat you alive,' because it was known as a bit of a hard-charging place," he told the New York Times.

"That sort of brought out the street kid in me, and made me a little bit hard and combative. I had to learn later that there's another way to get the best out of people, which is to really motivate them and make them feel good about themselves. So I changed. If I had to sum it up...[be] generous at work rather than selfish."

Leahy thinks it essential that people follow the golden rule -- treat others in the workplace the way you wish to be treated -- in order to be successful. But, he says, not everybody can adopt that mindset.

"Sometimes the brightest find it the hardest to make that transition because they've always been better than the people around them. However, "if you consciously build people up so that they say, 'I matter here and people respect me and they think I can contribute and they trust me to contribute,' that really gets the best out of people."

And it will benefit you as well. According to research out of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, being altruistic not only improves well-being at work, but also makes people feel more committed and makes employees stay.

"Our findings make a simple but profound point about altruism: Helping others makes us happier," said UW researcher Donald Moynihan. "Altruism is not a form of martyrdom, but operates for many as part of a healthy psychological reward system."

So, obey that urge toward generosity that is hard-wired into us human beings. The investment, it seems, will pay off.

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management reserves the right to refuse any and all bids. The sales will be at the following location, 1680 N. Roosevelt Rd., Des Plaines, IL 60016 and will begin at or after 8:00 a.m. and continue day by day until all units are sold. Auctioneer: Brook Snyder - IL License #44101668 Registration Fee $20.00 - Boxes, Bags, Chair, Remaining items stacked.

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Nancy Ross of Wilmette, first vice president; Felicia Middlebrooks, emcee and WBBM Newsradio 780/105.9 news anchor; and Terry Hendrickson of Park Ridge, board president

**UNION LEAGUE BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS 37TH ANNUAL GALA**
Benefiting: At-risk youth through Union League Boys & Girls Clubs
Location: Union League Club of Chicago

Date: Nov 1
Attended: 300
Raised: $260,000
Website: ulbgc.org

Mike Kiss and Gail Kiss, Gala Chairperson, both of Deerfield | Photos by Joe Sallo

Guy Arvia of Lake Forest and Mary Ann Mahon-Huels, President & CEO, Union League Boys & Girls Clubs
THE PARK RIDGE PANHELLENIC CLUB MONTHLY MEETING AND LUNCHEON
Benefiting: Funds for scholarships that go to high school graduates in the Maine Township area

Location: Park Ridge Country Club
Guest performers: Maine East High School choral group
Date: Dec. 5
Attendance: 30+

Program Co-Chair Carol Longman, Irene Schmitt, and Publicity Chair Barbara Pfaff, all of Park Ridge

Program Chairman Donna Chor, Marilyn Mau, and President Carol Gonzalez, all of Park Ridge

Secretary Mercedes Lombardi of Niles and Vice President Carol Cubberly of Park Ridge

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**Part II: 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 about the best meal they ate out this year. That's what we did — and we ended up with this roadmap that digs deep and wide into the Chicago area food scene. This is Part II of our two-part series.

Bradford Phillips — Guildhall in Glencoe

**Best meal:** Start: oysters, baked potato bing bread and homemade pickled eggplant; main: hand-torn rice noodles with lamb soffrito; dessert: patbingsu

**Restaurant:** Parachute, 3500 N. Elston Ave., ParachuteRestaurant.com

**The skinny:** "I ate my meal there at the bar, with a good friend of mine on a day that I didn't expect to be off of work, which is a good starting point right there. The pickled eggplant in particular was sweet, spicy and almost a little smoky. The grilled carrots with chermoula were also a nice take on a very conventional vegetable. Far and away the best dish was the hand-torn rice noodles with lamb soffrito, perhaps the best single dish I've eaten in the last couple of years. We finished the meal with a take on the Korean dessert patbingsu, a shaved ice concoction with condensed milk, puffed rice, and sweet red beans. It was sweet and refreshing and very much unlike anything I had in quite a while. I was able to have a number of really good meals in 2014 but my experience at Parachute has been stuck in my mind since I walked out the door."

Gale Gand — Spritz Burger in Chicago

**Best meal:** Dover Sole

**Restaurant:** Mon Ami Gabi, 2300 N. Lincoln Park West, Chicago; 260 Oakbrook Center, Oak Brook; MonAmiGabi.com

**The skinny:** "This year's winner is Mon Ami Gabi. It's their Dover Sole, that they run as a special — so they do run out. It's classically prepared, pan-sautéed, then served with butter and parsley, filleted and accompanied by some sautéed spinach. Perfect with a crisp bubbly glass of Marquis de la Tour Rose."

Matthew Riordan — Saigon Sisters in Chicago

**Best meal:** #15 Dwen-Jang-Ji

**Restaurant:** Joong Boo Market, 3333 N. Kimball Ave., Chicago; JoongBooMarket.com

**The skinny:** "You know this place is the real deal because the kitchen is run by three Korean women. The soup comes out still bubbling hot, in the crock. The soybean paste adds the perfect amount of 'funk.' The tofu is soft and silky smooth. A very substantial and healthy meal for under $10."

Gene Kato — Sumi Robata Bar in Chicago

**Best meal:** Grilled Quail with Grilled Scallions with a Lime Salt

**Restaurant:** Embeya, 564 W. Randolph St., Chicago; Embeya.com

**The skinny:** "The dish is very straightforward, using great quality quail and it plays well with the lime salt. The whole fish is fried to perfection and goes great by adding a side of the young bamboo with garlic chives and tamarind-chili jam. I enjoy the food that Owner/Chef Thai Dang is doing with his Vietnamese heritage. It's food that is honest, clean, pure and pays tribute to his background."

Jaime Laurita — Chef Jaime Laurita Brands

**Meal:** Starters: Soft Shell Crab and Pork Belly Buns with fresh house Ceviche; mains: Enso Exclusive Maki Rolls; Crazy Eight and Crouching Tiger, Hid-
cocktails are perfect for a night out with eclectic, modern and sexy. Their wines and spot and I would like to shine a bright light on the moment she tried it. The dough is baked in a small cast-iron pot, and they just pull apart in little magical bites. Soft, and garlicky with this bright green melted butter to dip.

Now I'm a bit skeptical about seafood in the Midwest, but these head-on prawns are cooked to absolute perfection. So crispy on the outside, and sweet, tender meat.

Tony Mantuano — Bar Toma, Spiaggia, Terzo Piano and River Roast in Chicago
Best meal: Tasting menu
Restaurant: Grace, 652 W. Randolph St., Chicago; Grace-Restaurant.com
The skinny: "We were at Grace with John and Hogan [River Roast] and his wife Cathy. We've been friends for years, and were doing a pre-River Roast opening celebratory dinner. It's hard to pick one dish because it was all amazing."

Bradford Knox — Carnivore in Oak Park
Best meal: Chicken Liver Mousse served cafeteria style (ice cream scoop on lettuce leaf with sliced red onion)
Restaurant: Tom's Steakhouse, 1901 W. North Ave., Melrose Park; Tom'sSteakhouse.com
The skinny: "The main reason for my new-found obsession with Tom's is ambiance. The place fell directly out of 1955. Huge cocktails, tiny price tags, charcoal braziers on rolling meat trollies, iceberg salads with three creamy house-made dressings. How could I not be in love?"

Barry Sorkin — Smoque BBQ in Chicago
Best meal: Ahogada and Churros with Vanilla Soft-Serve Ice Cream
Restaurant: Xoco, 449 N. Clark St. and 1471 N. Milwaukee Ave. Chicago; RickBayless.com/restaurants/xoco/
The skinny: "I'm a huge fan of unpretentious food. And this sandwich at Xoco finds a way to be both simple and extraordinary. Juicy, succulent pork with black beans, pickled onions on perfectly crunchy bread served an addictive spicy broth. Add the freshly made churros, that are just sweet enough, along with the ice cream and there's just no need for fancy food."

Remoun Abraham — Olive Garden in Chicago
Best meal: Carpaccio, Tuscan Kale Salad and Bolognese
Restaurant: Campagnola, 815 Chicago Ave., Evanston; CampagnolaRestaurant.com
The skinny: "The restaurant is simple — minimal decor and dim lighting. The food is the star. Campagnola is mine and my wife's favorite restaurant, and we try never to miss it."

See Chefs, Page 38
CHEFS

to eat there regularly. This particular meal stands out in my mind, though, because it was absolutely perfect. In the Carpaccio, the beef just melted and the Reggiano was perfect with the horseradish sauce. With the Tuscan Kale Salad, the thinly sliced fennel and radishes paired perfectly with the fresh lemon and ricotta. And finally, the Bolognese is hands down, the best in town!

Matt DuBois — inovasi in Lake Bluff
Best meal: Pork Belly Buns, Fried Kimchi Spring Rolls, Ramen, Sushi, Yakitori Skewers (chicken skin, Wagy-skirt)
Restaurant: Wasabi, 2115 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago; WasabiChicago.com
The skinny: “I have two young kids, and my wife and I rarely, if ever, get out for dinner these days. We did, however, have an outstanding dinner at Wasabi on a Sunday this summer. No kids, casual, fun, perfect pace, great service. I definitely need more nights like that.”

John Gatsos — Tavern on Rush in Chicago
Best meal: Trio of ceviches
Restaurant: New Rebozo, 1116 Madison St., Oak Park, NewRebozo.com
The skinny: “There is nothing like a trio of ceviches on a warm summer night on the patio at New Rebozo with a couple of cold Coronas.”

David Bacso — Kuma’s Corner in Chicago
Best meal: Ribeye, Caramelized Onions, Chanterelle Mushrooms, Shishito Peppers, Broccoli, Taleggio, Bacon Shallot Jam.
Restaurant: Longman & Eagle, 2657 N. Kedzie Ave. Chicago, LongmanAndEagle.com
The skinny: “For me, it’s hard to top a perfectly prepared steak. Along with their addictive bone marrow, and a couple Manhattan’s, this would have to be my favorite meal of the year.”

Rebecca LaMalfa — Trenchermen in Chicago
Best meal: The Cornish Pasty
Restaurant: Owen and Engine, 2700 N. Western Ave. Chicago; OwenAndEngine.com
The skinny: “Owen and Engine is a chef’s eating dream. The food is always great and interesting but not climbing the walls of trying too hard. The pasty is my favorite. It’s like the pot pies we had as kids responded to us growing up and grew up with us. The house-made pickles and picallily on the side are the perfect condiments to combat the richness and super flaky pastry.”

Sam Sianis — The Billy Goat in Chicago
Best meal: Bean Soup
Restaurant: Parthenon, 314 S. Halsted St., Chicago; TheParthenon.com
The skinny: “The bean soup is very tasty. It’s made with soy beans, and they cook them nice and slow. I like it because the broth is full of flavor — and beans are good for you!”

Ellen King — Hewn in Evanston
Best meal: Hamburger
Restaurant: Union Pizzeria, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston; UnionEvanston.com
The skinny: “My favorite go-to meal is the burger at Union Pizzeria in Evanston. I know it’s weird to pick a burger at a pizza place, but after working in the bakery all day, I just want to sit down and have a really good burger. Union has the best burger around and I always order it with caramelized onions and a side of baked butter beans with roasted tomatoes and goat cheese. Not to mention they have a great bar and it’s a concert venue.”
**Family Friendly**

The Exploratorium in Skokie will host an Itty Bitty New Year with magic, music, games and crafts.

**Celebrate an Itty Bitty New Year at Exploritorium**

**BY MYRNA PETLICKI**  
For Pioneer Press

Two fun-packed hours are planned for Itty Bitty New Year, 10 a.m.-noon Wednesday, Dec. 31 at the Exploritorium, 4701 Oakton St., Skokie.

"Two magicians in two different rooms will be running ten-minute mini magic shows throughout the event," said Mary Amato, Exploritorium and special events supervisor. Families can attend as many of these shows as they wish. There will also be a DJ running games and dance contests, and a photo booth.

Other activities include carnival games, a face painter, craft projects (including decorating hats for the end-of-event finale) and enjoying the Exploritorium's permanent activity areas.

"Then we do a countdown to the Noon Year and a balloon drop," Amato said. Tickets are $10 for resident children; $12 for nonresident children; $2 for adults. The event is popular and preregistration is required.

For details, call (847) 674-1500, ext. 2700 or go to www.skokieparks.org/exploritorium.

**ANOTHER WAY TO MARK THE DAY**

There will be massive confetti drops at New Year's Eve Bashes from 8:30-11 p.m. and 12:30-3 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 31 at Kohl Children's Museum, 2100 Patriot Blvd., Glenview. Children will create party hats and noisemaker horns, get free hair styling from KidSnips and hear a concert by Wendy Morgan (morning session). The cost is $21 for members, $31 for nonmembers. Registration is required.

For details, call (847) 832-6600 or go to www.kohlchildrensmuseum.org/nye.

**HER BAD**

A vengeful fairy comes to regret the fact that she cursed an infant princess in "Malignent." The family movie will be shown at 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 27 at Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St. A treat will be served.

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

**SHORT BUT SWEET**

All ages will enjoy Movie Day — Holiday Movie Shorts, 2-3:45 p.m. Monday, Dec. 29 at Park Ridge Public Library, 20 S. Prospect Ave. Selections will include films about the Grinch, Rudolph, Frosty and more.

For details, call (847) 825-3123 or go to www.parkridglibrary.org.

**KEEP THIS IN MIND**

Your family can share “A Kwanzaa to Remember!” The free production, presented by a multiracial, multicultural cast of Evanston children, from age 6-eighth grade, will be presented at 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 26 at Fleetwood-Jourdain Community Center, 1655 Foster St. There will be skits, dances, songs and poetry celebrating the seven principles of Kwanzaa.

For details, call (847) 448-8254 or go to cityofevanston.org.
Uncorked: Dress up your bubbles to play nice with the food

BY ALISON LADMAN
Associated Press

Looking for a simple way to dress up your New Year's Eve bubbles? May we suggest spiking them with a spiced liqueur? It's fast, simple, delicious and flexible. And that last part is key. Start by sorting out what you plan to serve alongside your bubbles. Then you pick a complementing liqueur to blend with the bubbles of your choice. We opted for individual puff pastry tarts spread with brie (or any soft cheese) mixed with chopped fresh basil, then topped with persimmons that have been brushed with honey, then broiled until lightly browned and tender.

For our bubbles — we like prosecco — we went with Sorel liqueur, which gave the cocktail a gently spiced, lightly fruit flavor. Other fine choices could include raspberry liqueur and a dash of spiced rum, orange liqueur (such as triple sec), or rhubarb or ginger liqueurs.

**SPICED PROSECCO**
Start to finish: 5 minutes
Servings: 1

1/2 ounce Sorel liqueur
3 ounces prosecco, chilled
Orange twist

Pour the Sorel into a sparkling wine flute, then top with prosecco and an orange twist. Stir gently and serve immediately.

**HONEY-BROILED PERSIMMON TARTS**
Start to finish: 30 minutes
Servings: 9

1/4 cup sugar

Hefty pinch of salt
17.3-ounce package puff pastry, thawed (each package contains 2 sheets)
2 fuyu persimmons, sliced into thin wedges
Honey
8 ounces very soft cheese, such as brie
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
Ground black pepper
Balsamic glaze, to drizzle

Heat the oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with kitchen parchment.

In a small bowl, mix together the sugar and salt. Cut each sheet of puff pastry into nine 2-inch squares. Discard any edges. Arrange the pastry squares on the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle all over with the sugar-salt mixture. Place a second sheet of kitchen parchment over the pastry squares, then place a second baking sheet over it. The second baking sheet should rest directly on the pastry squares.

Bake for about 15 minutes, or until deep golden brown. Set aside to cool.

Increase the oven to broil. Line a baking sheet with foil and coat with cooking spray. Arrange the persimmon wedges on the prepared baking sheet and drizzle lightly with honey. Broil for 3 to 4 minutes, or until lightly browned.

In a small bowl, mix together the cheese and basil. Season with black pepper. Spread a small amount of the cheese onto each pastry square. Top the cheese with a warm persimmon wedge, then a light drizzle of balsamic glaze. Serve immediately.

Nutrition information per serving:
350 calories; 200 calories from fat (57 percent of total calories); 22 g fat (8 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 25 mg cholesterol; 32 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 13 g sugar; 10 g protein; 450 mg sodium.
Volunteers needed on Christmas morning
5:30 a.m.: Christmas Cheer Foundation, needs volunteers to deliver meals to the homes of the needy in 36 southwest and northwest communities. On Christmas morning, volunteers wishing to pack or drive are asked to show up. Those interesting in packing may arrive between 5:30 and 6:30 a.m. Drivers start delivering meals, children's books and Beanie Babies to homes of over 20,000 people at 7 a.m. For more information, call or visit the website, Dominican University Priory Campus, 7200 W. Division St., River Forest. Call 847-977-8069.

FRIDAY, DEC. 26
Handicrafters
10 a.m.: Held every Friday at 10 a.m. Park Ridge Senior Center, 100 S. Western Ave., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-9127.

Friday Film Lovers - La Dolce Vita
1:30 p.m.: Join on Fridays to watch classic, documentary, and foreign films on the big screen. "La Dolce Vita" was the biggest hit from the most popular Italian filmmaker of all time, the film rocketed Federico Fellini to international stardom and was one of the first European films to win an Academy Award. $5. Cosmix with DJ Greg Haus 10 p.m.: Cosmix with DJ Greg Haus is YouTube sensation with over 6.5 million subscribers. In Chicago and the surrounding area, he hosts open mic nights and improv shows at local venues, playing to a crowd of up to 500 people. Call 847-677-7761.

SUNDAY, DEC. 28
Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.: All-you-can-eat pancake breakfast including sausage, bacon, scrambled eggs, milk and coffee. American Legion Post 974, 9757 Pacific Ave., Franklin Park. Call 847-678-7747. $6.

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.

Thurday, Dec. 25
Creative Creatures
9 a.m.: School-aged children are invited to join Miss Dana for a different art project each week. A variety of materials will be available to participants. Drop in for crafting at any time. Bensenville Community Library, 200 S. Church Road, Bensenville. Call 630-766-4942.

Public Service Project Share Your Holiday Spirit
11 a.m.: Join in the fun to celebrate the holidays with The Kindness Connection. A representative from The Kindness Connection teaches how to make a board book to donate to Operation Shower and a gift bag for The Little Brothers - Friends of The Elderly. Open to all children in grades three and up with a caregiver, but registration is required. Register online at www.vapld.info, by telephone at 224-543-1486, or in person at any service desk in the library. Vernon Area Public Library District, 300 Old Half Day Road, Lincolnshire.

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.

Holy Bounding Bobbies: A Batman Burslesque
11:45 p.m.: Ages 18 and up only. Approximately 60 minutes. Gorilla Tango Theatre, 1919 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. Call 773-598-4549. $25.

Saturday, Dec. 27
Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.: All-you-can-eat pancake breakfast including sausage, bacon, scrambled eggs, milk and coffee. American Legion Post 974, 9757 Pacific Ave., Franklin Park. Call 847-678-7747. $6.

Lunch and Bingo
10 a.m.: Enjoy a game of bingo and lunch. Come early for coffee and conversation. Fee includes lunch from a local restaurant or caterer. Bingo cards 50 cents each. Registration is required. North Shore Senior Center, 640 Dempster St., Morton Grove. Call 847-784-6030. $6 members, $8 nonmembers.

Inferlitch Soup Kitchen
Noon: Held in the Fellowship Hall every Monday, Second Baptist Church, 1717 Benson Ave., Evanston. Call 847-869-6965.

Trivial Night
8 p.m.: Winners receive gift cards. Specials include $4 Budweiser products and 60-cent wings. Buffalo Wild Wings, 7020 Carpenter Road, Skokie. Call 847-329-9339.

Second City's Improv All-stars
8 p.m.: See a mix of local talent perform improv comedy. UP Comedy Club, 230 W. North Ave., Chicago. Call 312-337-3992. $17.

Pub Stumpers Trivia Mondays
8 p.m.: Teams of 1 to 4 players can compete for gift cards to Crew; first place is $25, second is $15, third is $10. All Absolut drinks are $5. Crew Bar & Grill, 4804 N. Broadway St., Chicago.

Paint Covered Wednesday
10:30 a.m.: Children, guided by Wonder Works' resident artist Michell Martinez, play with different types of paint at this weekly class. Wonder Works Children's Museum, 5445 W. North Ave., Oak Park. Call 708-383-4815, $6.

New Year's Eve 100th Anniversary Celebration
5 p.m.: Enjoy a dinner and dessert buffet, DJ entertainment, inflatables, toddler play area, miniature golf and an 8 p.m. countdown to midnight. Alcohol is not permitted. All children must be accompanied by an adult. The registration deadline is Dec. 20 and no at-the-door attendees are allowed. Register online at http://www.prparks.org using class #3669. Maine Park Leisure Center, 2701 W. Sibley St., Park Ridge. Call 847-692-9127. $17.

New Year's Eve Celebration Pop-Up
6 p.m.: One of the hottest tickets in town for New Year's Eve is the Feast and Imbibe New Year's Eve Pop-Up Celebration. The night features two separate pop-up events: the first is a gala sit-down four-course luxury dinner with champagne pairings, while the second includes a cocktail party, a red carpet photo shoot and a fire dance performance. You can go to one, the other, or both to celebrate all night. Visit website for tickets. Now We're Cookin', 1601 Payne St., Evanston. Call 847-491-9744. $75-$150 per person.

Funny Old Broads: New Year's Eve
8 p.m.: The Funny Old Broads bring their offbeat comedy and musical parodies for a special New Year's Eve celebration! The Funny Old Broads consists of veteran stand-up comic Caryn Bark known for her wildly successful show Diary of a Skottie Girl, The Boomer Babes - Pam Peterson and Jan Slavin - who have a YouTube sensation with over 6.5 million hits and new comer Robin Riebaum. Skokie Theatre, 7924 Lincoln Ave., Skokie. Call 847-677-7761. $36.

Natural Gas
8 p.m.: The Improvitational group takes a suggestion from the audience and turns it into a show. The Gift Theatre, 4802 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. Call 773-227-7071. $5.
Big C Jamboree
9:30 p.m.: Rockabilly fans can come enjoy this open mic on the first Thursday of every month. Martyrs', 3855 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago. Call 773-404-9494.

9 a.m.: Trip to view the Museum of Contemporary Art's exhibit, 'David Bowie Is.' Explore the extraordinary career of one of the most influential performers of our time. More than 400 objects, including costumes, photographs, set designs, and album artwork from the past five decades, are brought together for the first time. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7828.

9:30 a.m.: The group meets the first two Tuesdays of each month for breakfast. Park Ridge Senior Center, 100 S. Western Ave., Park Ridge. $2.

9 a.m.: Last day to view this "Art in the Library" exhibit, which explores a style of brush painting originating in 13th-century Japan. Closely associated with Zen Buddhism and similar in concept to Japanese calligraphy, Sumi-e (black-ink pictures) and Haiga rely on only simplicity of thought, action, and form to create works of understated beauty. Painter and poet Lidia Rozmus traveled to Japan to learn about its culture and arts. These experiences enriched her understanding of the spirit that lives in these ancient Japanese techniques—where the essence of form is expressed with a single brush stroke. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7828.

9 a.m.: The community is invited to bring their own instruments. Visitors are also welcome to bring their own instruments. Via Gelato, 1853 Tower Drive, Glenview. Call 847-729-7098.

9 a.m.: Last day to view this "Art in the Library" exhibit, which explores the extraordinary career of one of the most influential performers of our time. More than 400 objects, including costumes, photographs, set designs, and album artwork from the past five decades, are brought together for the first time. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7828. $30.

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Winter Documentary Series: "Knickleball"
Noon: Keep warm every Friday afternoon this January with the Documentary Film Series. This week, come view "Knickleball," an enlightening look at the careers of veteran Red Sox pitcher Tim Wakefield and Mets up-and-comer R.A. Dickey - the only two knuckleball pitchers in the Major Leagues. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7828.

Saturday, Jan. 3
Bus Trip: David Bowie Is Exhibit at the MCA
8:45 a.m.: Trip to view the Museum of Contemporary Art's exhibit, 'David Bowie Is.' Explore the extraordinary career of one of the most influential performers of our time. More than 400 objects, including costumes, photographs, set designs, and album artwork from the past five decades, are brought together for the first time. Eisenhower Public Library, 4613 N. Oketo Ave., Harwood Heights. Call 708-867-7828.

Sunday, Jan. 4
GlenVIEWINGS Winter Film Series: "The Hundred Foot Journey"
1:30 p.m.: "The Hundred Foot Journey" runs 122 min. and rated PG. The Kadam family leaves India for France to set up an Indian restaurant—directly across the road from a snobbish Michelin-starred eatery. A journey from ignorance to understanding. Combine this film with Seeking Spiceland and Curry in a Hurry to complete your Indian adventure. Just drop in. Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview. Call 847-729-7500.
Fascinating story about an extraordinary man in "American Sniper". Rated R for strong and disturbing war violence, and language throughout including some sexual references.

**American Sniper**

**Stars:** Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller, Luke Grimes

Somewhere inside this surprisingly flat, simplistic and contrived war drama, there’s a fascinating story about an extraordinary man with a tragic fate that really deserves to be told. Unfortunately, director Clint Eastwood seems to have decided sketching it in broad outline is good enough. After a promising opening, this biodrama about Iraq war sniper Chris Kyle (an impressive performance by Cooper) takes on all the excitement of a turkey shoot as Kyle picks off a record number of enemy combatants, despite an attempt to goose things with the invention of an equally talented sniper for the other side.

**Big Eyes**

Rated PG-13 for thematic elements and brief strong language

**Stars:** Amy Adams, Christoph Waltz, Jason Schwartzman

Grimes

The story of artist Margaret Keane (Adams), who invented the popular Big Eyes style of painting in the 1950s, only to have the credit stolen by her husband (Waltz). Tim Burton (“Dark Shadows”) directed the drama.

**Into the Woods**

Rated PG for thematic elements, fantasy action and peril, and some suggestive material

**Stars:** Meryl Streep, Chris Pine, James Corden, Emily Blunt, Anna Kendrick

The first half of this dazzling production from director Rob Marshall (the even more razzle-dazzle “Chicago”) is a pure delight. After that, things turn a bit darker for the inhabitants of this Stephen Sondheim’s fairy-tale not-quite-parody. That’s the point of the exercise, however: Illustrating the notion that happily ever after is often a temporary state of affairs. The performances are terrific across the board, especially Streep as the wicked witch and Blunt as the morally flexible baker’s wife.

**Leviathan**

Rated R for language and some sexuality/graphic nudity

**Stars:** Alexey Serebryakov, Roman Madyanov, Vladimir Vdovichenkov

In modern Russia, a family man (Serebryakov) being threatened by the corrupt mayor of his town (Madyanov) turns to an old army friend turned Moscow attorney (Vdovichenkov) for assistance. Andrey Zvyagintsev directed the drama.

**Most Violent Year**

**Rated R for language and some violence**

**Stars:** Oscar Isaac, Jessica Chastain, David Oyelowo, Albert Brooks

Despite the title, the thing that makes "Most Violent Year" interesting is its atypical hero’s determination to avoid violence at all costs. Former immigrant truck driver Abel (Isaac, confirming the promise displayed in last year’s "Inside Llewyn Davis"), now the owner of an embattled NYC heating-oil business, is determined to take the “most right” road wherever possible despite the cutthroat nature of his business. A position that puts him at great risk after gambling on one make-or-break deal. This dark, brooding urban drama is the third smart, serious, finely crafted film in a row from 41-year-old writer/director J.C. Chandor ("Margin Call," "All is Lost").

**Selma**

**Rated R for language and some sexuality!**

**Stars:** David Oyelowo, Oprah Winfrey, Tom Wilkinson, Carmen Ejogo

Intelligently written, skillfully crafted and featuring a powerful performance front and center, "Selma" does a highly effective job of dramatizing this turning point in the struggle for civil rights. Best of all, it does so without feeling the need to place a halo on the head of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Oyelowo), excellent. It acknowledges his human shortcomings even while he’s orchestrating the history, violently opposed march on Montgomery in 1964 — making his accomplishments all the more impressive.

**Unbroken**

**Rated PG-13 for war violence including intense sequences of brutality, and for brief language**

**Stars:** Jack O’Connell, Domhnall Gleeson, Jai Courtney

The life story of Olympic athlete and World War II hero Louis Zamperini certainly makes for a ripping yarn and director Angelina Jolie depicts it with old-school war-movie flair, yet "Unbroken" remains a superficial exercise. Upcoming Irish actor O’Connell suffers stoically and prodigiously while lost at sea and as a Japanese prisoner of war, where he is singled out for torment of a sadistic camp commandant (Japanese pop star Miyavi). Yet you’re not likely to come away with a clear understanding of what made him tick.

**Woods’**

Half happy, half fairy tales from the dark side

**Into the Woods**

**Rated PG-13 for war violence including intense sequences of brutality, and for brief language**

**Stars:** Oscar Isaac, Jessica Chastain, David Oyelowo, Albert Brooks

Despite the title, the thing that makes "Most Violent Year" interesting is its atypical hero’s determination to avoid violence at all costs. Former immigrant truck driver Abel (Isaac, confirming the promise displayed in last year’s "Inside Llewyn Davis"), now the owner of an embattled NYC heating-oil business, is determined to take the “most right” road wherever possible despite the cutthroat nature of his business. A position that puts him at great risk after gambling on one make-or-break deal. This dark, brooding urban drama is the third smart, serious, finely crafted film in a row from 41-year-old writer/director J.C. Chandor ("Margin Call," "All is Lost").

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Death Notices

Drozda, Daisy C. (nee Gawrys) Age 98, of Norridge. Beloved wife of the late John Drozda; mother of Richard and Marcy (Michael) Shal; sister of the late Jean Gawrys.
Daisy retired from Marshall Field and Company State Street Store in 1978 as manager of the artificial flower department. Daisy's adventurous spirit took her from the Tatra Mountains to Machu Picchu and from Rome to Las Vegas. Daisy brought happiness and kindness to all who knew her. She had a beautiful spirit, love of life and loved people. She will be missed by many. Following her wishes there will be no services.

A memorial mass to celebrate 93 years of life will be held for Genevieve after the holidays at St. Paul of the Cross Church also in Park Ridge. Genevieve (Jean) was born in Chicago to Ann (Fraser) and William McKavanagh on May 27, 1921. She was preceded in death by her parents, Ann and William; two sisters, Ann Gilmore and Alla McKavanagh; two brothers, William McKavanagh, Jr. and Gordon McKavanagh; and her beloved husband, Eugene Gibson Hendricks, who passed away March 11, 2009.
Survivors include her daughter, Susan Lynne (Gregor) Hendricks; her son, Michael Eugene Hendricks; and her sister, Margaret West.
In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Genevieve's name to Rainbow Hospice Ark in Park Ridge, Illinois.
Arrangements entrusted to Cremation Society of Illinois. 847-577-6656.

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What are the odds? Baseball's current best pitcher and one of the NFL's top quarterbacks were double playing partners in high school. 2014 NL MVP and Cy Young award winner Clayton Kershaw of the Dodgers and QB Matthew Stafford of the Lions not only went to school together at Highland Park High in Dallas, but Stafford was Kershaw's catcher in baseball, while Kershaw was Stafford's center in football, each helping the other perform at his best in his respective future professional sport.

The Indianapolis Colts hit the jackpot when they were able to draft Andrew Luck to follow Peyton Manning as the team's quarterback. The same could be said of Green Bay with Aaron Rodgers stepping right in for Brett Favre. Manning and Favre are locks for the Hall of Fame; with Rodgers and Luck likely candidates. But only two sets of back-to-back NFL QBs were already in the Hall as of 2014. Any guesses? San Francisco's Joe Montana (1981-90) and Steve Young (1991-98) is the easy one. But the other is Bob Waterfield (1945-52) and Norm Van Brocklin (1951-60) of the old Los Angeles Rams.

As of the end of 2014, who was the longest-tenured coach among the 122 franchises that comprise the four major team sports in North America? Hint: He's an NBA coach. The answer is San Antonio's Greg Popovich – 17 seasons and counting, a league record 17 straight winning seasons (with 17 playoff appearances), five NBA championships and three Coach of the Year awards. No wonder Pop’s got job security.

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Chicago Tribune
Danny Nikitas beats older brother on the court

Evanston's Farr a key contributor on Xavier men's basketball team

BY RYAN NILSSON
rnilsson@tribpub.com, @Ryan_Nilsson

The Dec. 9 men's basketball game between Lake Forest College and Lawrence was a battle of the Nikitas brothers. Danny Nikitas, a 6-0 freshman guard from Glenbrook South, scored 12 points and dished out four assists in Lake Forest College's 79-70 home win. Older brother Jamie Nikitas, who also played for the Titans, scored 21 points and grabbed seven rebounds — both team highs — in a losing effort.

The game was played in front of approximately 50 family members and friends.

Danny Nikitas is averaging 13.8 points and 3.6 assists while shooting 43.2 percent from behind the arc. He has started all eight games for Lake Forest (3-5). The Foresters play at Greensboro on Sunday.

Jamie Nikitas, a 6-0 junior guard, is leading Lawrence in scoring (17.5), rebounding (11.4), assists (3.0) and steals (2.5). He has played in, and started, eight games for Lawrence (4-5). The Vikings are off until a Jan. 2 game at Grinnell.

Daniel Nikitas, Danny and Jamie's father, played basketball at Lake Forest College in the 1970s.

After coming off the bench for the Xavier men's basketball team a season ago, Evanston native James Farr has started all 11 of the Musketeers' games this season.

Farr, a 6-10 junior forward, is averaging 8.7 points and 4.4 assists while shooting 43.2 percent from behind the arc. He has started all eight games for Xavier (3-5). The Musketeers play at Greensboro on Sunday.

Jamie Farr, a 6-0 junior guard, has started all 11 games for the Musketeers this season.

Farr, a 6-10 junior forward, is averaging 5.1 points, 6.5 rebounds and 19.4 minutes a game. He leads the team with 14 blocks. Farr spent a season at Maine Central Institute in Pittsfield, Maine, after his senior season with the Wildkats.

Xavier (8-3) plays host to Florida Gulf Coast in its final nonconference game on Sunday and then opens Big East play on Dec. 31 with a home game against Georgetown.

Maine South graduate Jacqui Grant has been a key contributor for the Illinois women's basketball team, averaging 8.6 points and 5.7 rebounds per game entering the week. Grant, who started each of Illinois' first 11 games, is fourth on the team in scoring and third in rebounding.

Grant's best game of the season was arguably Dec. 3 when she scored a team-high 16 points and tied for the team lead with seven rebounds in an 86-63 home win against Virginia.

The 6-3 sophomore forward has led the team in scoring, or tied for the team lead, three times. She's also been the leading rebounder, or co-leader, three times.

Illinois was scheduled to play its next nonconference game Monday against Murray State and then open Big Ten play on Sunday with a home game against Purdue.

Junior guard Michelle Maher, another former Hawks standout, is averaging 8.7 points, 4.4 assists and 4.1 rebounds per game at Western Illinois. The Leathernecks are 6-5 and have two nonconference games remaining on their schedule before they open play in the Summit League at IPFW on Jan. 2.

Princeton's Steven Cook scored a career-high 28 points and registered seven steals — one shy of the program record — to lead the Tigers to a 77-64 victory over Stony Brook on Dec. 6 in Princeton, New Jersey. It's the most points any Tigers player has scored through the first 12 games of the season.

Cook, a New Trier graduate, finished 8-for-12 from the field, including 5-of-7 from behind the arc, and made 7-of-9 free throws in 37 minutes.

The 6-8 sophomore forward is third on the team in scoring, averaging 10.1 points per game.

Princeton began the week 4-8. Its first Ivy League game is Jan. 10 when it plays host to Penn.

Cory Dolins, a 6-0 junior guard who played at Niles West, has appeared in three games for the DePaul men's basketball team this season and played a total of three minutes. Dolins, who is from Northbrook, walked onto the team before the 2012-13 season.

DePaul was 6-4 entering the Hawaiian Airlines Diamond Head Classic in Honolulu, which kicked off Monday. The Blue Demons open Big East action by playing host to Marquette on Dec. 31.
Pieruccini, Thomas team up at Mankato

"Brotherhood" helped Mavericks move past turmoil

By Matt Harness
mharness@tribpub.com, @harnesspreps

Nick Pieruccini hadn't played much football at Minnesota State-Mankato before this season.
The Notre Dame graduate red-shirted as a freshman and missed most of last season with a torn labrum in his right shoulder. Then, in April, a coaching change disrupted Hoffner's naked, or partially clothed, on his school-issued phone. The arbitrator determined that he was arrested, but the school still chose to fire him in May 2013 for viewing pornography on his work laptop and allowing his wife to use the computer, according to USA Today, and Hoffner denied viewing pornography.

In Hoffner's absence, Aaron Keen was put in charge of the program and led the Mavericks to a 12-1 record in 2012 and an 11-1 mark in 2013.

But an arbitrator cleared Hoffner of any wrongdoing and ordered him restored to his old position as head coach, if it was a job he still wanted. Although Hoffner had been hired as head coach of Minot State-Mankato, he decided he wanted to return to Minnesota State-Mankato.

"If nothing else, it's a great opportunity to be with the players," Hoffner said. "No. 1, they are talented. No. 2, they are team players and team leaders."

"A very decisive runner, shifty and a tremendous cutter," Hoffner said. "He gets north and south very quickly."

Notre Dame coach Mike Hennessey said he isn't surprised by how his former players performed on the field.

"Wherever those two guys went, I figured they would be successful," he said. "No. 1, they are talented. No. 2, they are team players and team leaders."

Hoffner, who coached the Mavericks from 2008-2011 before missing two seasons, said he's proud of how the players responded to the unusual challenges they faced this season.

"Bottom line is that I am so happy for these young men, for them to get to this stage," he said. "I couldn't be happier."
James plans to remain at Pittsburgh

Former Dons standout running back doesn't blame Chryst for leaving for Wisconsin

BY MATT HARNESS
mharness@tribpub.com, @harnesspreps

Paul Chryst was one of the reasons Chris James picked Pittsburgh. However, James got to play only one season for Chryst, who left on Dec. 17 to take the head coaching job at Wisconsin, where he played and was an assistant coach.

"That was his dream job," said James, a 2014 graduate of Notre Dame. "I can't blame him for going home, but it was hard for us."

Despite Chryst's decision, James said Friday he's committed to the Pitt program for the long term. The Panthers finished the regular season 6-6 and play Houston in the Lockheed Martin Armed Forces Bowl in Fort Worth, Texas, on Jan. 2.

"For now, I am here," he said. "[It] stinks that he's gone, but the last thing on my mind is transferring. I love my teammates, and I plan to make the best of my next three or four years."

A 5-11, 210-pound running back, James made an immediate impact in the backfield as a freshman. He's run 82 times for 404 yards and four touchdowns and had one catch for 23 yards. James is third on the team in rushing yards. He ran for a season-best 122 yards on 19 carries in a 30-7 win over Syracuse on Nov. 22.

"When I was being recruited, I was told I would have a chance to come in and contribute," James said. "I would have liked to have

some more wins, but it was all a learning experience for me."

James said his first introduction to the college game came at the team's preseason camp. On a run to the outside that he said he normally would break for a long gain around the corner, he was caught by a linebacker and defensive end and pushed out of bounds before he could make his cut.

"Right then and there, I knew I wasn't in high school anymore," he said. "The main thing is the speed of the players. Everybody is fast here. It's taught me to be a smarter runner, to be able to read the defensive line more. In high school, I would see a hole and go. Now, you have to learn how to run."

Notre Dame coach Mike Hennessey said he stayed in contact with James throughout the season, mostly by text and e-mail. After watching James run for 4,220 yards and score 53 touchdowns in high school, Hennessey said his star running back was ready for the big time.

"It's about what I expected," Hennessey said. "He got a great opportunity this year, and I sure am looking forward to him making more progress in the future."
Notre Dame grads help Minnesota State-Mankato bounce back from coaching controversy

Minnesota State-Mankato running back Connor Thomas (5) reaches for extra yards during the NCAA Division II semifinal game against Concord on Dec. 13 in Mankato, Minnesota. Thomas is a Notre Dame graduate.
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