No more empty bowls

Annual event sells ceramics to raise money for food pantries. Page 4

Attendees at the 12th annual Empty Bowls at Oakton event examine the hand-crafted ceramic bowls on display Dec. 5 at the Oakton Community College campus in Des Plaines. All proceeds from the event benefit five food pantries and one soup kitchen located within OCC’s boundaries.

Backstage helpers

Child supervisors help care for the kids cast in local theater, dance productions. Page 20

Best of the best

Pioneer Press unveils its All-Area teams for football, girls volleyball and boys soccer. Inside

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John Schuman, music director

at First United Methodist Church of Park Ridge, is the founder of the Christmas Cantata, an ensemble of volunteer singers from the congregation. This year, the group will sing for residents of Bella Terra nursing home in Morton Grove Dec. 12, and during the morning worship service at First United Methodist, 418 W. Touhy Ave., Dec. 13.

Schuman also directs the church's adult and student choirs, which perform throughout the year during Sunday services.

Q: What is the Christmas Cantata?
A: For the music program at our church, it's a means of getting many people involved in music and as easily as possible. We use a lessons and carols format. We have nine traditional Bible readings for the telling the prophesies and story of the birth of Jesus. Typically, different families of the congregation will share one of these readings.

Q: What are some of the songs the group will perform?
A: Favorite and familiar carols, including "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," "Angels We Have Heard on High," "Go Tell it on the Mountain."

Q: What are the ages of the singers?
A: We start with first-graders, so we have some who are 6 years old. And we'll have some who are getting close to 90. It's intergenerational.

Q: How long has the group been performing?
A: This is our third year.

John Schuman, music director

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$525. TruMiracle 3/4 ct. tw. in
14k white or yellow gold.
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Reg.Orig. 228.99-348.99, after 2pm:
22.40-318.40. Wristlets & more.
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Reg. $15-535, after 2pm:
girls 7-16.

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WebID 846992.

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wristlets & more.
WebID 2241141.

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Attendees at the 12th annual Empty Bowls at Oakton event examine the hand-crafted ceramic bowls on display Dec. 5 at the Oakton Community College campus in Des Plaines. All proceeds from the event benefit five food pantries and one soup kitchen located within OCC's boundaries.

Empty Bowls raises cash for food pantries

BY LEE V. GAINES
Pioneer Press

Brushing shoulders as they meandered around several long tables laid out in a large rectangle, the dozens of attendees at the Dec. 5 Empty Bowls at Oakton event intermittently grabbed one of the hundreds of hand-crafted ceramic bowls of varying shapes, sizes, textures and colors on display at the Oakton Community College campus in Des Plaines.

Professor of art at OCC, Lou Pierozzi, one of the main organizers of Empty Bowls at Oakton, said the most committed attendees of the annual charitable affair line up before doors open at 10:30 a.m. to select the best of the best.

By about 1 p.m., an hour before the official end of the 4 1/2-hour event, most everything has been picked over, and even so, “we usually sell out,” he said.

Attendees selected as few or as many bowls, priced at $15 each, as they liked. Some purchased raffle tickets for donated pieces of ceramic artistry or chose from a selection of other items on sale at the event. This year, which marked the 12th annual iteration of Empty Bowls at Oakton, the event brought in more than $29,000, all of which will be donated to the charities.

As an added bonus, attendees who purchased at least one bowl were offered a bowl of soup served in a Styrofoam container, their choice of bread and a cup of either water or lemonade.

With their bowls wrapped in newspaper and tucked away in bags or cardboard boxes, the crowd gathered at this year’s event enjoyed the simple meal at long tables, each one adorned with a red sign directing diners to “imagine this is your only meal today.”

“I do love that,” said Rhonda Fried, co-chairwoman of the event. With attendees on the hunt for the best bowls, busily knocking items off their holiday gift lists and enjoying the generally festive atmosphere, which included a musical performance, Fried said it’s easy to forget the ultimate purpose of Empty Bowls, which is to benefit organizations helping those in need. The signs, she said, are a reminder.

After learning about a national, grass roots movement dubbed “The Empty Bowls Project” roughly 14 years ago, Fried said she convinced the members of Oakton’s Ceramics Club to host their own local iteration.

Attendance has swelled over the years, but only about 20 club members made the majority of the bowls on display, she said. Fried said she hosts a “bowl-a-thon” each month to encourage club members to make the bowls, a process that varies depending on whether the clay is thrown on a potter’s wheel or is hand-built.

“The ongoing battle is to make as many good-looking bowls as possible,” she said.

Katie Susko, an Evanston resident and a member of the club, estimated she made about 150 bowls for this year’s Empty Bowls at Oakton event. After tallying the time it takes to complete each stage in the process, she estimated each bowl took about 45 minutes to an hour to complete.

A seven-year veteran of Empty Bowls at Oakton, Susko said she has no plans of dropping out of the charitable effort any time soon.

“I’m going to continue. Even if I can’t be at the event, I’ll always donate bowls,” she said.

Sharon Lau, director of volunteers for Empty Bowls at Oakton, said it’s a rewarding feeling when she sees the bowls she built by hand disappear from the table at each event.

“It strokes your ego,” she said. “But the whole process is just a pleasure. You don’t see people here who are unhappy.”

Lee V. Gaines is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.
Niles Library Board votes to increase tax levy by $800K

By Lee V. Gaines
Pioneer Press

Following four meetings worth of debate and push-back from community members, the Niles Library District Board of Trustees voted at a recent meeting to increase the district’s property tax levy by $800,000, according to library officials.

Two board members - Carolyn Drblik and Danette Matyas - who have repeatedly expressed opposition to the increase since it was first proposed by their colleagues on the board in early November, maintained their position and voted against the more than 13 percent increase over last year’s levy figure, said library Director Susan Lempke. The other five members of the board voted in favor of the increase, she said.

Board President Linda Ryan said during a public hearing on the levy on Nov. 18 that the increase was necessary because such an increase in tax revenue would be impossible next year under state law, and without the increase, the library risks running a deficit in a few years. She also highlighted the $1.2 million decrease in the levy over the past two years.

Ryan said the $800,000 levy increase would add about $37 to the average resident’s annual tax bill.

Drblik said in a recent interview that she could not justify the increase given a recent audit presentation that indicated the district’s cash and investments on hand total $8.9 million. The district’s approved budget for fiscal 2016 includes $6.5 million worth of expenditures.

A significant portion of those funds are either already committed to capital projects or specific expenditures, and some of the funds are earmarked for current expenditures, Greg Pritz, business manager for the district, said in a recent interview.

He said the library has about $5 million in reserve in the general fund, which is below the target of 100 percent of a full year’s worth of expenditures.

“We do need to collect a little bit more than we spend every year or we won’t have money to make repairs or replace technology items,” Lempke said.

During last month’s public hearing, Ryan also noted the district’s plan to embark upon a new strategic planning process. She said the process might call for expanded library services, particularly in the north end of the district, which includes unincorporated areas of Des Plaines and Glenview. But Drblik said the district has no current plan as to what it intends to do with the additional funds generated by the higher levy.

“How can I take money from taxpayers when I don’t know what I’m going to do with it?” she said. “Something just seems off.”

Lempke said she’s relieved the board ultimately decided to increase the levy, though staff refrained from making any recommendation to elected officials.

If the board had chosen to maintain a level levy or reduce it, Lempke said she would have had to consider cost-cutting measures including reducing staffing hours at the library next year.

Lee V. Gaines is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

FROM THE COMMUNITY

Skokie’s hidden Hanukkah angels

By Menachem Posner
From the community

They’re called the “Hanukkah angels,” the six fellows who spent the better part of Dec. 6 night erecting giant menorahs all over Skokie. With just 24 hours to go before the onset of the Hanukkah holiday, they needed to move fast. In fact, working in three pairs, they perfected a system to build each menorah in less than eight minutes.

Led by Rabbi Yochanan Posner of Lubavitch Chabad of Skokie, the other angels are a lawyer, a plant manager, a home inspector, a history teacher and a student.

At each location, teams unloaded the giant menorahs, placed them on wooden bases held down by sandbags, screwed in the light bulbs, fastened the menorahs with wire and cable-ties, and took a moment to step back and admire their handwork before zipping off to the next menorah site.

“We go out in the cold night because we are inspired by the Hanukkah lights,” said Posner, who refurbished his first giant menorah when he was in seventh grade and placed it on the playground of Cheder Lubavitch Hebrew Day School on Howard Street.

“They teach us so much: that a little light dispels a lot of darkness and that [God] makes miracles when we do our part.”

To request a free menorah starter kit email office@skokiechabad.org.

Menachem Posner is a rabbi at Lubavitch Chabad in Skokie.
BY MIKE ISAACS
Pioneer Press

Stepping down

Open Communities leader reflects on long journey as she ends run

Inside her cozy Skokie living room, Gail Schechter takes her clarinet from its case and plays a few harmonious notes from it before packing it away again.

She wants to have more time to play music, she says, but that is not the real reason she is resigning next month as executive director of Open Communities. The organization's self-proclaimed mission is to "educate, advocate and organize to promote just and inclusive communities in north suburban Chicago.

"This isn't easy for me to leave although I have been itching to really get back and do organizing," she said. "I love community organizing as well. I just feel like it's time for somebody to take the baton."

When Schechter became executive director of the nonprofit more than 20 years ago, the organization was called the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs. A few years ago, it changed its name to Open Communities to reflect its expanded goals.

"Over the years, we were finding that we were getting involved in issues that were beyond housing by popular demand," she said.

One example she gave is when the Rev. James Meeks, a former Democratic member of the Illinois House, staged a boycott around the issue of Illinois education funding.

Meeks announced he was coming to New Trier High School with Chicago students; Interfaith helped pave the way for the protest, she remembered.

Community organizer

Schechter grew up in New York City and attended Oberlin University in Ohio before returning after college to work as a tenant organizer in Brooklyn.

At 23, she had a staff of five organizers in Brooklyn, she said. She later was leading a city-wide task force on housing court.

Schechter returned to school, earning an advanced degree in urban and environmental policy from Tufts University. She followed her then-husband to the Chicago area where she knew she would continue working for fair housing and justice.

"I grew up in the neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens," she said. "My formative years were in this big middle-income high rise."

She wanted to live in a real community where it didn't take 10 minutes just to get out the door, she said. Aside from her urban upbringing, Schechter also said she was greatly impacted by her mother being a Holocaust survivor, her grandfather having been killed in Auschwitz. Her mother and grandmother survived only because they were taken in by others, she said.

"I wouldn't be around today if there hadn't been this amazing large Catholic farm family that protected them," she said. "I feel my life is a gift and that its purpose is to make sure that I'm useful."

In Chicago

In Chicago, Schechter initially worked as part of a team for the Center For Neighborhood Technology. She helped administer a loan and grant program for the Amoco Foundation around affordable housing, credit unions and economic development.

Wanting to work closer to her home, she later volunteered for the Interfaith Housing Center for the Northern Suburbs.

Posing as a potential tenant, Schechter looked at apartments to document any discrimination to use as evidence for complaints.

Following a test on the Evanston side of Howard Street, Schechter said she had an epiphany about "white privilege." A landlord regularly charged an application fee, but he said he would waive it for her, she recalled.

"I remember leaving that test, walking out the door, and saying to myself, 'Would he have said that to me if I was black?'" Schechter became executive director of Interfaith Housing at the end of 1993.

When Interfaith first got off the ground, she said, there was blatant discrimination that drew a response from people who united from Skokie to Highland Park. Now, the discrimination wasn't so blatant, but it still needed to be addressed, she said.

"I learned that the unique thing about Interfaith as a fair housing agency is income," she said. "Here we are on the North Shore where income is as much a barrier to moving here as actual acts of discrimination."

What became clear to Schechter early on, she said, is that the agency's advocacy on those tenants' behalf was one of the more memorable projects in which she was involved.

Another was last year's 50th anniversary celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech on Winnetka's Village Green during the civil rights movement. That speech was a galvanizing event that helped give rise to Open Communities.

But for Schechter, it isn't just the projects undertaken by Open Communities that account for why she remained its leader for 22 years.

"There is one thing that has kept me going all along at Open Communities," she said. "You have people who care about justice, and not just for themselves, but for everyone. There is nothing more inspiring than that."
Niles home struck by fire twice in one day

BY LEE V. GAINES
Pioneer Press

Two fires broke out within one single-family home in the 9200 block of North Callero Drive in Niles on Dec. 1, according to Niles Fire Department officials.

The Fire Department was notified of the first incident around 9 a.m. by an employee of a business on North Milwaukee Avenue, located near the home, who spotted smoke in the area, said Niles Fire District Chief Orlando Diaz.

He said fire crews found the home and forced their way into the residence. The homeowner was not in the home when fire crews arrived, he said.

The fire was confined to an upper-level bedroom in the rear of the house and crews were able to put it out in a matter of minutes, he said.

Diaz said the homeowner and her son-in-law returned to the residence later that morning. Shortly after Fire Department personnel left the scene, the resident called 911 around noon to report smoke coming from the attic, he said.

A second fire, Diaz said, was found in the attic above the bedroom where the first had been extinguished earlier the same day.

The blaze was put out within a matter of minutes, he said.

The homeowner was transported to Advocate Lutheran General Hospital after informing paramedics on scene that she did not feel well, Diaz said.

Niles Fire District Chief Martin Feld said the resident's medical issue was unrelated to the fire incident.

When fire crews responded to the first fire in the bedroom of the home, Diaz said the attic was examined but nothing was found.

"Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for rekindling to occur, but that's not what we want to happen," he said.

Feld and Diaz said the cause of both fires is still under investigation.

The state fire marshal is assisting with the case, Feld said.

The upper level of the home suffered extensive water damage as a result of both blazes, he said.

Lee V. Gaines is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

Man claiming to have gun steals from Niles store

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON
Pioneer Press

Niles police are looking for a man who stole two video game systems from a Milwaukee Avenue store after telling an employee he had a gun.

Police said the suspect, a man between 35 and 45 years old, entered GameStop, 9639 N. Milwaukee Ave., shortly before 12:30 p.m. Nov. 28 and began speaking with an employee about different gaming systems. When other customers left the building, the man asked the employee for two video game systems, an Xbox One and a PlayStation 4, police said.

After the employee got the video game systems for the man, "he said, 'I'm taking these' and then grabbed them," said Niles police Sgt. Robert Tornabene.

When the female employee told the man not to take the games, he reportedly pushed her and said he had a gun. Police said the man never displayed a weapon, but ran out of the store with the two video game systems.

The systems are believed to be valued at more than $400 each, Tornabene said.

Store surveillance video captured an image of the suspect, which police are sharing in an effort to identify and apprehend him. He is described as thin, white and about 6-feet, 2-inches tall. He was wearing a gray jacket, baseball cap and sunglasses at the time of the theft, police said.

Anyone with information is asked to contact the Niles Police Department at 847-588-6500.

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The following items were taken from the Niles Police Department reports. An arrest does not constitute a finding of guilt.

**RECKLESS DRIVING**
- A 17-year-old Glenview boy was charged with reckless driving on Dec. 1 after police said he drove a car that had known mechanical problems, including wheel alignment issues, and crashed into a concrete safety pole behind a building in the 8500 block of Golf Road. He and his passenger sustained injuries in the accident, police said. The teen has a Dec. 22 court date.

**RETAIL THEFT**
- Karen Jameson-Chavez, 43, of the 9600 block of Golf Terrace, unincorporated Maine Township, was charged with retail theft on Dec. 1 after she allegedly stole two sets of headphones from a store in the 9000 block of Golf Road. She has a Dec. 22 court date.
- Rooyia Hakimi, 37, of the 2600 block of West Hunt, Chicago, was charged with retail theft on Nov. 27 after she allegedly stole clothing, a water bottle and holiday cards from a store at Golf Mill Shopping Center. Police said the value of the items was $202.

**BATTERY**
- A 59-year-old Northbrook man told police he was standing outside a restaurant in the 9000 block of Golf Road around 11:15 a.m., Nov. 25, when he was confronted by a group of four to five men. Police said the victim claimed not to know the men and that he was pushed, causing an injury to his shoulder. An investigation was pending.

**THEFT**
- Police said a 65-year-old Niles woman on Nov. 23 sent a $1,756 money gram to a caller who claimed her personal information had been compromised and that she needed to pay to have a new Social Security number issued. The caller identified himself as an immigration service employee, police said. A $500 lawn mower was reported stolen from an unlocked garage overnight between Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 in the 8200 block of Osceola Avenue. A snowblower, bicycle and generator were also reported stolen from an unlocked garage in the 8200 block of Olcott Avenue.
- Someone attempted to break into a car parked on the Milwaukee Avenue side of Golf Mill Shopping Center on Nov. 28.

The following items were taken from the Niles Police Department reports. An arrest does not constitute a finding of guilt.

**BURGLARY**
- A resident of the 9200 block of Callero Drive told police that he returned home on the night of Nov. 23 to find his front door lock broken. The man did not find anything disturbed, police said.

**BATTERY**
- A woman's husband said Munir did not return calls seeking comment. She is due in court Jan. 5 at the Skokie Courthouse.

**THEFT**
- A woman's husband said Munir did not return calls seeking comment. She is due in court Jan. 5 at the Skokie Courthouse.

**COPS: CAREGIVER STOLE CREDIT CARD INFO FROM CANCER PATIENT**

**BY NATALIE HAYES**

A woman charged with felony aggravated identity theft Nov. 4 allegedly charged thousands of dollars to a credit card belonging to a cancer patient she was hired to care for.

Jane Munir, 30, of the 1900 block of Chamberry Court, Wheeling, was employed as a caregiver with Compassionate Care Inc. of Des Plaines, and was sent to work in the home of a Morton Grove woman with advanced-stage cancer in 2014, police said.

According to a police report, the theft victims were the first family Munir was assigned to work with through Compassionate Care.

Sue Ahn, owner of Compassionate Care, confirmed Munir left the company in September 2014.

Munir was fired by the family after just three days because the woman's husband said Munir hadn't fulfilled her job responsibilities, according to the police report.

The following month, the patient's husband noticed suspicious charges on his wife's credit card statement and called police. He signed a complaint on his wife's behalf because she was too sick to do so, police said.

A yearlong investigation ensued, police said. Police arrested Munir at her home on Nov. 4, and she allegedly admitted to writing down the Discover card information belonging to the victim while she was employed at the home. Police said Munir allegedly used the card at Verizon, Groupon, Zappos, Expedia, and several local restaurants.

The Cook County State's Attorney's office alleges Munir used the card to charge more than $6,200.

Munir did not return calls seeking comment. She is due in court Jan. 5 at the Skokie Courthouse.

Natalie Hayes is a freelancer.
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Exploring with Google Expeditions
Skokie students take grand field trips without ever leaving the classroom

BY MIKE ISAACS
Pioneer Press

Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School students recently experienced what many would consider field trips of a lifetime — only they never physically left their familiar classrooms in Skokie.

Simply by donning a viewing device, inside of which was a cellphone running just the right free app, they suddenly were transported.

They experienced 360-degree panoramic views of underwater coral life in the Galapagos, remote caves well off the beaten track, gorillas inside the deep forest that is part of their habitat in Borneo.

The new Google Expeditions Pioneer Program is not the first virtual reality technology conceived with learning in mind, but what educators say is so enticing about it is the relatively little cost.

"This is the first piece of technology I've seen that has the real potential to bridge the technology divide," said Beth Burke, coordinator of instructional technology at Hillel Torah.

That's why Burke wanted the private school to be selected by Google to pilot the Expeditions program. Her persistence in signing up for the one-day teaching event ultimately paid off.

"When I saw the technology at an educational technology conference, I just fell in love with it," said Burke. "I saw so much that could be done in the classroom with this."

A Google technician came to the school early morning Nov. 24 to briefly train teachers; then for the next few hours, the adults led students on virtual reality journeys few had ever experienced.

"It's amazing because the headset is made of cardboard," Linzer said. "Look what can be accomplished, and it won't cost a lot."

For demonstration purposes, some of the students were given plastic viewing devices and others were provided the cardboard ones that will be standard once the program is released, Google said. There is no announced date yet when Google Expeditions will be available for all schools.

Burke said she wants to collect at least 50 cellphones for Hillel Torah so that when Google Expeditions becomes available, the school will be ready to use it.

An advantage, she said, is that an older cellphone can run the program. That makes donated cellphones a more valuable commodity.

A Google representative at Hillel Torah on Nov. 24 said she was not authorized to speak to the media about the Expeditions program. But Google, through its own online information, said that the Expeditions Pioneer Program is still looking for schools to apply for a trial.

Expeditions teams will visit selected schools around the world, including the United States, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Canada, Singapore and Denmark, Google states on its Expeditions website. "Each team will bring a complete Expeditions kit with everything, the teachers need to take their students on journeys anywhere. The team will show teachers how Expeditions works and help set it up before class."

According to Hillel Torah, the Chicago area is one of only 20 or so currently piloting the technology.

"Expeditions is a virtual reality platform built for the classroom," Google said. "We worked with teachers and content partners from around the world to create more than 100 engaging journeys."

Linzer said his school's fifth-grade social studies class is studying the first people who came to Antarctica. On the day of the demonstration, he said, they were able to take a virtual field trip to augment what they were learning.

"Through virtual reality, the kids can actually go there," he said. "That's the potential of this program."

The Hillel Torah educators see the Google app as having the highest potential for what technology can achieve in a school setting.

"A lot of developers are creating the same kind of apps these days," Burke said. "There's a lot of zombie-killing apps and things like that. There's not a whole lot of educational content. What's so cool about this is that Google has created all of these virtual field trips. Kids will never forget what they see when they go on them."

Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School teacher Samantha Toljanic takes her students on a virtual field trip.

Hillel Torah

Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School is a private modern Orthodox Jewish school. Students from second through eighth grades participated in the Google pilot program.

"This is so amazing," one student said, echoing the sentiment of many in the room who were exploring a 360 degree view of a gorilla in the mist.

Rabbi Menachem Linzer, principal, smiled as these students collectively shrieked in excitement at what they were seeing with their special viewers. Upon returning from the conference, he said, Burke gave him one of the headsets to try out, and he knew this was something special.

"It took them three hours to walk to this location," Toljanic said.

In another class, a virtual field trip allowed the teacher to guide students in a discussion about elephants and how they are hunted just for their tusks.

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Out-of-district family ordered to pay $12,731 to District 64

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON  
Pioneer Press

A family will have to pay more than $12,700 to Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 after an investigation allegedly found their children were attending school in the district unlawfully.

The Board of Education on Nov. 30 unanimously approved a motion declaring that the two children were not legal residents of District 64 and that the family must pay tuition for each day the children attended school during the fall 2015 term.

That tuition was assessed at $78.59 per day per child, for a total of $12,731.58, according to the motion that was read.

The school board discussed the matter entirely in closed session before the vote. The children were not identified by the district.

District 64 Superintendent Laurie Heinz said this is the first family to be assessed tuition, charge since the district adopted a new residency re-verification process in February.

The board's action required that residency be verified by all students before the start of the 2015-16 school year.

Heinz said a private investigator is used if district officials believe a student is not living in the district and, in this particular case, a hearing officer was called upon to make a residency determination. It was determined that the children lived in Des Plaines, Heinz said.

The cost of hiring a private investigator and hearing officer is borne by the district and not included in the tuition assessment, Heinz said. For this case, the investigator cost the district $5,522.50 and the hearing officer cost an additional $900, she said.

Heinz said the children, who were found to live outside the district, cannot return to District 64 schools even if their families agree to pay a tuition charge for the remainder of the school year.

“We have a board policy that says you're not allowed to attend District 64 schools if you are a non-resident,” she explained. “Some districts allow families to pay out-of-district tuition, but our board policy does not allow for that.”

In September, Heinz told the board that seven to eight residency cases were under examination by the district.

A verification checklist provided to parents by the district indicates that documentation is required to prove the family physically resides at the home that is on file. Such documentation includes paid property tax bills with a homeowner's exemption stated, a signed lease agreement, a notarized letter of residence from a landlord with proof of the most recent rent payment, a new homeowner's HUD statement or a Section 8 housing letter. Families must also provide two of the following: the most recent cable or telephone bill, gas or electric bill, water bill, homeowners or renter's insurance policy, bank or credit card statement and Medicaid or LINK card.

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 headquarters, 164 S. Prospect Ave.

JENNIFER JOHNSON/PIONEER PRESS

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Food for the soul

Park Ridge church provides meals, friendship for needy

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON
Pioneer Press

As the guests start to arrive, Heather O’Reilly greets them like friends, calling many by name. For some, there are hugs; for others, there is joking, laughter and small talk about the day.

O’Reilly and the other volunteers who staff Sunday Suppers at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, admit they know very little about the regulars who gather with them each week for a free, hot meal.

“There are no questions asked,” said Janet Hoiberg, another regular volunteer who coordinates the church and civic groups that donate the meals. “Just come and enjoy.”

This “no questions” policy helps guests feel comfortable about coming to the dinners, volunteers believe.

“You try to make this a highlight of their week,” O’Reilly said as preparations took place Nov. 1 for a dinner of roast pork, potatoes, peas and carrots, bread and salad provided by parishioners of Our Lady of Ransom Catholic Church in Niles.

Blue tablecloths, autumn flowers and handwritten notes with uplifting messages ( “Gather here with thankful hearts,” read some) covered tables in the church’s Henderson Hall, which hosted about 70 guests that night.

Sunday Suppers were started by the Park Ridge Ministerial Association in 2009 following community backlash against a proposed weekly homeless shelter in the city. The meals were originally served at St. Paul of the Cross Catholic Church, where the Public Action to Deliver Shelter site was to have been located — but moved two years ago to St. Luke’s at 205 N. Prospect Ave.

The suppers were open “to anyone in need of a meal,” organizers said at the time, and that philosophy still stands today. No one has to prove economic hardship or be homeless to receive a free meal, offered every Sunday night at 6 p.m. from Labor Day weekend through Memorial Day weekend. Residency in Park Ridge is also not required.

The guests who come, said Cindy Nommensen, another St. Luke’s volunteer, are “people who need food, but who also need companionship and fellowship. Some are friends; they know other people. Some are in more severe need than others. I think some are hungry. And a couple may be homeless, but we don’t know for sure.”

“You’ll find there are proportionally more older people on fixed incomes, and there are also a significant number of men who come,” Hoiberg said, explaining that many are probably widowers just looking for someone to prepare a meal for them.

“What we’ve observed over time is this becomes their community,” Hoiberg said. “People tend to sit together week after week and check in with another.”

“They care a lot about each other,” O’Reilly added. “They’ll point out to us if someone is not around.”

Dee Hardesty, a senior who lives in Park Ridge, said she began coming to Sunday Suppers after hearing about them through a posting at the Maine Township Town Hall. The weekly meals serve not only an economic need, but a social one as well, she said.

“I don’t have anything but a hot plate and it’s hard to cook,” she acknowledged during the Nov. 1 meal. “I’m not exactly homeless, but that’s the next step.”

Hardesty said she, too, tries to give back. Receiving nutritional assistance from food pantries, Hardesty said she donates to other pantries the canned goods that she is given but cannot use. This way, she said, they can go to someone else in need.

“Every little bit helps,” she said. Lee Duet, of Chicago, said his neighbors told him about Sunday Suppers after his wife passed away. He has been coming for several months.

“It’s a nice social thing,” he said. “I’m a widower, I live by myself. I do have family, but everybody is working. All these people are strangers, and yet it’s a nice thing because it’s very social. You talk to them about things you wouldn’t talk to your family about.”

“I’ve got friends over here, camaraderie and nice, home meals,” said John Gora, also of Chicago.

The dinners also draw families with small children, though they make up a relatively small number of the guests, said St. Luke’s volunteer Carolyn Callahan. But those who do come make an impact.

“I said to my son, I can’t imagine you going hungry,” Callahan said. “I think when people bring their kids here, they really do need the food.”

For volunteer Patty Gomez of Our Lady of Ransom Church, one moment stood out: a mother of four children who was grateful to receive leftover milk after a supper earlier this year.

“When she runs out of food stamps, they have to wait until they can get milk,” Gomez said, explaining that the family’s government food assistance had been cut, which led them to Sunday Suppers. “So this was extra-special for them, because they were able to have a meal and then she had extra milk to take home with her. She was so happy. She said, ‘I can give them breakfast tomorrow.’”

Sometimes, Hoiberg said, making a difference doesn’t even involve food.

“Heather gave a man a hug and he stepped back in tears. She asked what was wrong and he said, ‘My wife died 15 years ago and that’s the first hug I’ve gotten since then,’” Hoiberg shared.

“We don’t know the effect (we have),” Nommensen added. “It’s like Jesus said, ‘If you do it for the least of these, you do it for me.’”

More than 20 churches and organizations from Park Ridge, Chicago’s Northwest Side and a few other suburbs help serve meals throughout the year, according to St. Luke’s website. Some volunteers cook their own meals, others raise money to buy catered foods, and Whole Foods provides loaves of bread, volunteers say.

Any leftover food from the night is distributed to the guests.

“It is always good to remind ourselves that we are called to serve one another in any way we can,” said the Rev. Mark Augustine, who helped serve the Nov. 1 meal with parishioners. “Feeding the hungry is one of the great ways we can give of ourselves, give of our time and talent to help others.”

Those interested in volunteering for the 2015-16 season can go to www.stlukespr.org/CSunday-night-supper.

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It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON
Pioneer Press

Santa Claus made another early visit to Park Ridge during the city's annual Winterfest last week. The 2015 festival brought crowds to the city's Uptown and South Park neighborhoods for live music and carolers, Christmas lights, visits with Santa, trolley rides, and treats from local businesses. The event also launched the Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce's Elf on a Shelf contest.

Twinkle, the Chamber's toy elf, is appearing inside Park Ridge businesses through Dec. 19 and moving to a new location each day. The Chamber is inviting the public to take a picture with Twinkle and post where she was found on the Shop Park Ridge Facebook page in order to be entered into a drawing for a $100 Chamber gift certificate. Daily clues about Twinkle's location can be found on the Shop Park Ridge web page.

Christmas lights are on outside the Park Ridge Public Library on Nov. 27 during the city's annual Winterfest event.

Mary, Seat of Wisdom Catholic Church
920 W. Granville at Cumberland in Park Ridge

Thursday, December 24th – Christmas Eve:
Early Evening Masses at 3:00 and 5:00 p.m.
11:00 p.m. Solemn Mass of Christmas
(Preceded by a special program at 10:30 p.m.)

Friday, December 25th
Christmas Day
8:00, 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.
No 7 p.m. today

Friday, January 1st
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Thursday, Vigil Mass at 5 p.m.
Friday Masses 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.

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In this Nov. 18 photo, Katie O'Connor and Marcus Ohanesian pose in their apartment that they list on Airbnb in Worcester, Mass. Ohanesian and O'Connor list their apartment on Airbnb.

Lincolnwood’s Plan Commission talks potential Airbnb regulations

By Natalie Hayes
Pioneer Press

Lincolnwood’s Plan Commission is weighing whether the village should impose regulations on short-term rentals, which have grown in number during recent years since Airbnb launched its popular service that lets homeowners rent out their properties for as little as a day at a time.

Airbnb and other similar short-term rental services like Vacation Rentals by Owner first got their footing in urban areas when they were launched a few years ago, but the trend is now moving into the suburbs, prompting municipalities to react in some cases.

Lincolnwood is the latest town to consider a zoning ordinance change that would regulate short-term rentals in an effort to keep transitory renters out of its neighborhoods.

Under a proposal that was moved forward by the plan commission on Dec. 2, the village would ban all property rentals offered to guests for less than 30 days. “We’re trying to protect our residents by guarding against that very short-term time frame because it can be destructive to the neighborhood, said Paul Eisterhold, chair of the Plan Commission. “The whole point is to stop people from using Airbnb — it’s not a bad thing, but we don’t want different people coming in and staying for just a week.”

Other municipalities in the Chicago area, including the villages of Lincolnshire and Wilmette and the city of Evanston, have either passed or have started considering similar measures to place local regulations on short-term rentals.

In Evanston, people renting out their living spaces for a period of less than a month are required to get a license, according to the city’s planning department.

In Lincolnwood, complaints from residents regarding Airbnb rentals have also been few, according to Eisterhold, who noted the village has, however, received several calls recently about one home that has been rented out on Saturday nights for parties.

“We’ve been monitoring the situation, but there’s nothing pending in the near future,” Brady said. “It might need to be addressed later on, but we don’t have many issues right now.”

In Lincolnwood, complaints from residents regarding Airbnb rentals have also been few, according to Eisterhold, who noted the village has, however, received several calls recently about one home that has been rented out on Saturday nights for parties.

“Right now, there’s not a lot we can do to regulate disruptive rentals,” he said. “We’re not in the same sphere as resort towns, or in the same category as downtown Chicago — we’re kind of on the periphery.”

The Plan Commission will continue its review of the proposed ordinance at its January meeting.

Natalie Hayes is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.
Workers at 2 Coca-Cola plants go on strike

BY ALEXIA ELEJALDE-RUIZ
Chicago Tribune

Coca-Cola workers at two Chicago-area production plants went on strike Dec. 3 to protest unfair labor practices including stall tactics and intimidation as they try to hash out a new contract with the beverage giant.

"They haven't given us any respect," said Carl Maxwell, a nine-year veteran of the company who was among about 300 workers waving picket signs as the sun rose outside Coke's facility in Niles. "We don't want to be here, but we have no choice!"

Teamsters Local 727, which represents 319 production and warehouse workers at Coca-Cola plants in Niles and Alsip, has negotiated with Atlanta-based Coca-Cola Refreshments since October for a new three-year contract in which the union seeks improvements in wages, health insurance, retirement benefits and scheduling practices. Their contract expired at midnight Dec. 1.

The union has encouraged workers to spend their eight-hour shifts picketing outside the plants and expects 100 picketers throughout the day in Niles and 50 to 75 in Alsip, said Will Petty, communications director for Teamsters Joint Council 25.

"We'll be here as long as it takes," Petty said. "It's up to Coca-Cola to come back with reasonable proposals."

The last time Chicago-area Coca-Cola workers went on strike was 1985.

Coca-Cola said in a statement that it is "prepared to continue production and deliver our quality products to our customers and consumers throughout the region." It has contingency plans in case of a work stoppage that include using its existing workforce to ensure its production lines operate at both facilities.

Union members had authorized an unfair labor practices strike to begin after the contract expired but the union agreed to a one-day delay at Coca-Cola's request to continue bargaining.

Maxwell, who works at the Niles plant prepping Coke's vending machines and is a member of the bargaining team, said proposals the company put on the table Dec. 2 were "insulting."

"We're just asking for a fair share of the pie," Maxwell said. "Get us in the middle class, and we'll keep helping you make your billions."

Maxwell declined to say how much he earns, but members of Local 727 make, on average, $12-19 an hour, Petty said.

"Everything on the planet goes up: eggs, milk, Cook County taxes, you can't go anywhere and park for less than a quarter every five minutes," said Charles James, who supplies Coke products to ballparks and fast-food restaurants and has worked for the company for 21 years. "Everything is going up but what we make."

Coca-Cola, which reported 2014 revenue of $45.93 billion and net income of $7.1 billion, said it imported 2014 revenue of $7.1 billion, said it will continue to negotiate in good faith with the union leadership. "It is unfortunate that the union's leadership abruptly left the discussion and chose not to continue to work toward an agreement," a spokesperson said in a statement Dec. 2. "We were ready to work as long as it took to find a solution."

The union also alleges the company solicited contract proposals directly from workers and refused to fulfill multiple information requests from the union.

In addition to pay and benefits, the union wants the new contract to address "mandatory overtime," Petty said. Some workers go into work not knowing if they will be instructed to stay several hours after their regular shift ends, he said.

"It is unfortunate that the union's leadership abruptly left the discussion and chose not to continue to work toward an agreement," a spokesperson said in a statement Dec. 2. "We were ready to work as long as it took to find a solution."

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Begyle Brewing Co. tap room, brewery approved

BY NATALIE HAYES
Pioneer Press

When a pair of bearded, industrious beer brewers in their early 30s from Chicago's North Side approached the Lincolnwood Village Board last week with plans to open a new tap room and brewery in the village, one official questioned whether a brewery has a place in a town that has no bars but plenty of seniors and single-family homes.

The Village Board on Dec. 1 approved a request from Brendan Blume and Kevin Cary, co-owners of Begyle Brewing Co., to open a 24,000-square-foot brewery and tap room at 7005 N. Central Park Ave. - in an empty building tucked inside of an industrial area known as Town Center.

Aside from the occasional visit from a food truck, the tap room won't serve food.

"I'm just wondering, in this area, is there enough of an alcohol-drinking demographic without serving food?" Trustee Larry Elster asked during the Dec. 1 Village Board meeting.

Cary's answer managed to illicit a few chuckles from the Village Board.

"Our main demographic is 21 and up - I don't know if we could come up with an exact demographic, but we kind of appeal to all," he said. "We think it will be a destination for Lincolnwood residents as well as tourists."

After outgrowing the 4,500-square-foot warehouse that houses their brewery on a quiet residential street on the 1800 block of West Cuyler Avenue in Chicago's North Center neighborhood, Blume and Cary started searching for industrial areas with empty warehouses all over Chicago before choosing the Lincolnwood spot, they said.

Four years after Begyle brewed its first beer, the demand for its locally-made craft beers has skyrocketed, with retailers like Whole Foods, Binny's and Mariano's now selling six-packs of some of the 11 craft beers and two ciders it produces.

The new Lincolnwood brewery, Cary said, would allow Begyle to more than triple its 1,700-barrel-a-year production rate to roughly 5,000 more barrels per year.

"So many breweries are opening up, and that makes it hard to stand out," Cary said, "but I think we underestimated the amount of beer we'd be able to sell in Chicago."

Plans for the Lincolnwood brewery show a 2,000-square-foot tap room with an outdoor patio.

The production side will include brewing, packaging, tours and private events, according to plans approved by the village.

The proposal for the brewery passed the both the village's Plan Commission and the board of trustees by unanimous votes.

Begyle will next have to apply for building permits and a liquor license, according to village attorney Steven Elrod.

Kevin Cary, co-owner of Begyle Brewing Co., tests a batch of Tripel Stamp, a Belgian style beer, April 23, 2014, before bottling begins.

The village will also have to design a new liquor license class to accommodate a brewery, according to village attorney Steven Elrod.

Blume and Cary said they hope to open sometime next year.

Natalie Hayes is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

Lincolnwood approves special-use permit for Binny's Beverage Depot

BY NATALIE HAYES
Pioneer Press

The Lincolnwood Village Board last week cleared hurdles for Illinois-based liquor store giant Binny's Beverage Depot to expand its chain of stores to include a new location in Lincolnwood, in the space formerly occupied by Lincolnwood Produce.

Binny's owner Michael Binstein, a native of Lincolnwood, is planning to build out a 31,000-square-foot space at 7175 N. Lincoln Avenue and open the store by spring of 2015, he said following a Dec. 1 Lincolnwood Village Board meeting.

The Vineyards of Lincolnwood, a liquor store that opened next to Lincolnwood Produce in 2014, will close under Binstein's plans for the new Binny's location, which will occupy the entire building adjoined to CVS, including the former New Century Bank.

Village Trustees on Dec. 1 unanimously approved Binstein's request for a special-use permit and certain sign variations that will allow him to start renovating the property.

"The building won't change much from how it looks now," said Mike Pagan of Bridgeview-based Milford Company, the architect heading the project. "People who drive won't see much of a difference."

Binny's will be the third alcohol-based retail business to open in the village once the Vineyards of Lincolnwood closes, according to the village. Three other chain stores within Lincolnwood also sell liquor -- the Walgreens on North Lincoln Avenue and the CVS store on West Devin Avenue and the CVS next to the new Binny's.

Among the Village Board's approvals was a request from Binstein to erect a nearly 12-foot-tall wine bottle-shaped sign, which will appear along Touhy Avenue. The village's zoning code requires special permission for ground signs that exceed eight feet, according to the village.

Binstein made his case for the sign variation to the village's Plan Commission on Nov. 4 by noting the property's irregular location, which is set back from the street on a triangular piece of land bordered by North Lincoln, Kostner, and West Touhy avenues.

The Plan Commission concurred with Binstein's claim that the location of the property would make it difficult for motorists traveling westbound on Touhy Avenue to notice the store.

Before the store opens, the village plans to install a stop sign at the driveway exit at Kostner Avenue and a "right-turn-only" sign at the other exit on Lincoln Avenue, according to the village. Binstein is also required to submit a security plan for the store to the Police Department.

The village will also have to issue a liquor permit before Binny's can start selling alcohol.

"I grew up here and it's wonderful to be home," Binstein said following the board's approval.

Although the board voiced no qualms about the store coming to the village, not everyone is pleased about the big-name liquor store chain moving to town.

Family-owned Miska's Keystone Liquors has been open for more than 20 years, according to Jay Patel, an employee of the store in the 6400 block of North Cicero Avenue.

Patel, who said his sales started decreasing when Walgreens and CVS started selling alcohol, said he was worried Binny's would take up even more of his business. He said it's impossible for Miska's to compete with the liquor store chain because they don't buy in bulk, and therefore miss out on discounts the bigger stores get when they buy more product from distributors.

"Everyone wants a cheaper price -- I've heard it a lot before, and I'm afraid sales are going to go down for the smaller store," Patel said. "(Binny's) has more space to stock shelves, and the more they buy, the cheaper they get it for -- if they do 10 cases, I'm doing two."

Natalie Hayes is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.
Heroin a growing problem in suburban Chicago

A study found that 15.7 percent of people arrested in Cook County reported using heroin within three days of their arrest.

When the police chief of a leafy, idyllic suburb like Northbrook stands up and says heroin use is a significant driving factor behind crimes in the suburbs, it might be wise to listen.

Northbrook Police Chief Paul Wernick made the pronouncement at a forum on heroin use at the North Suburban YMCA Nov. 17. At the forum, he said 44 crime reports committed in Northbrook since 2013 included the word “heroin.”

Wernick said most of the Northbrook crime is shoplifting, and most of those crimes are committed by junkies, according to a recent Pioneer Press report. But he added that heroin use leads to more serious crimes.

It’s a lesson I learned early as a young reporter. One of the first violent crimes I covered as a reporter was the murder of an 80-year-old Berwyn man on Halloween night who was the grandfather of our paper’s lone photographer.

Grandpa liked to go to bed early. In order to not be disturbed by trick-or-treaters throughout the night, he decided to shut out all the lights and make it look like no one was home.

Tragically, an empty home was just the thing two junkies were looking for. As the police later told me, they needed money to feed their habit, and wanted an easy burglary, some place they could get in and out of fast with a TV and other items they could sell on the street.

So they picked grandpa’s home. He heard a noise, went to investigate and surprised the junkies who were there to rob him.

A struggle ensued. One of the burglars picked up a lamp and hit the old man on the head, crushing his skull and killing him.

But crime is just the symptom of a growing problem in the region, a problem that needs to be acknowledged and then addressed.

A Roosevelt University study cited in the recent story found that 15.7 percent of people arrested in Cook County reported using heroin within three days of their arrest.

Those users need to get into readily available health programs to get off the junk. But treatment is hard, long and prone to failure.

Like the user, we need to acknowledge that it is a growing problem here in the suburbs.

Randy Blaser is a freelance columnist for Pioneer Press.

Columnists don’t eavesdrop, they observe

You probably call it eavesdropping. I am a newspaper columnist, so I get to call it research.

You know what I mean — listening to the conversations of complete strangers in a public place.

But that’s the chance you take when you pursue the calling of observer of human nature.

The non-creepy kind of observing. I mean.

Paul Sassone is a freelance columnist for Pioneer Press.
SPECIAL EXHIBITION LEAVES CHICAGO JANUARY 10

Light & NOIR EXILES AND EMIGRES IN HOLLYWOOD, 1933-1950

YOU LOVE THEIR FILMS. NOW DISCOVER THEIR STORIES.

WINTER BREAK MUSEUM FAMILY OUTING
Kids visit for free!
Saturday, December 19 - Wednesday, December 23

Families are invited to experience Illinois Holocaust Museum’s world-class exhibitions and enjoy screenings of classic films such as Casablanca and It’s A Wonderful Life.

To view tour and film schedules, visit www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/events.

9603 Woods Drive, Skokie

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thanks to those who made movie night ‘Wonderful’

The Park Ridge Community Fund benefit of the annual Christmas movie “It’s a Wonderful Life,” which was sponsored by Liberty Bank, had record attendance yesterday.

Thank you to Liberty Bank for sponsoring the movie and donating an Apple iPad Air as the grand raffle prize. The second prize in the raffle was a $100 VISA gift card plus lunch, donated by The Summit of Uptown with much appreciation. And the final prize, donated by Barton Marketing Group, were two tickets to Star Wars on Dec. 17 (the night before the premiere), plus a $40 Pickwick Theatre gift card. Thank you to all three organizations for their generous contributions to this benefit for the Park Ridge Community Fund.

Between the donations received at the door and the raffle ticket sales, the PRCF cleared over $4,000.

Since 1958, the Park Ridge Community Fund has been the easiest way to help neighbors of all ages and with a wide array of critical needs, right here at home. The Park Ridge Community Fund is here to assess the needs of our community, and then raise and allocate funds to help meet those needs. Volunteers — who live or work in Park Ridge — control all aspects of PRCF’s activities.

With one convenient gift to PRCF, you help nearly two dozen service organizations and care providers make life better, neighbor to neighbor.

For more information, contact the Park Ridge Community Fund at PRCommunityFund.org, info@prcommunityfund.org, or call 847-825-5311. Donations can be made securely online at the website.

Gail Haller
Executive Director, Park Ridge Community Fund

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We want to hear from you! Send your letters to the editor to suburbanletters@tribpub.com. Letters should not exceed 250 words and should include your name, phone number and address (only your name and town will be published).
'Shark Tank,' U. of I. coaching version

ERIC SCOTT

Fortunately for the University of Illinois, appearing on the hit TV show "Shark Tank" is not required for hiring a head football coach. But based on recent events, here's how this week's episode might go if that was the case. Illini Nation, it's best to keep the sharp objects away before continuing.

OPENING SCENE: An energetic, hoarse-voiced man wearing a sun visor (even though we're indoors) walks into a TV studio where two sharks sit. One represents the University of Illinois and the other the University of Southern California.

COACH: Hello sharks, I am a long-time assistant coach with years of experience in big time programs. I was recently promoted as interim head coach under some really chaotic circumstances and I'd like to hold onto this highly coveted gig.

I could be Bill Cubit, the guy one of you named interim head coach after dumping your previous coach only a week before the season started.

I could also be Clay Helton, the guy one of you named interim head coach after dismissing your previous coach midseason. Whoever I am, I proved that I could notch some impressive wins when even our most die-hard fans thought we should throw in the towel and redshirt the entire team. I am asking for a 100 percent investment in me as your permanent (unless Notre Dame or the NFL calls) head coach.

SHARK 1 (USC): Excellent presentation coach, and OK if I call you Clay? We want you to know that we really respect what you've done and we want you to lead our program into the future.

Our athletic director will offer you a guaranteed five-year contract and will promote your hiring among our fans, boosters, recruits and everyone else by releasing a statement saying, "After weeks of searching the collegiate and pro ranks, interviewing candidates and speaking with head coaches, athletic directors, NFL executives, and very knowledgeable football people... it became abundantly clear that what we were searching for in a coach was right here in front of us."

SHARK 2 (U. of I.): Wait until you hear this, Bill. Is it OK if I call you Bill, at least temporarily?

As the representative of our interim chancellor who oversaw the midseason booting of our athletic director who hired, investigated and fired the football coach who brought you into the program, I've got a deal for you that'll knock the wind out of your sails - if state budget cuts haven't forced us to take back that interim boat we might have promised you.

We'll offer you a two-year deal that our new AD will have to inherit and will make it virtually impossible for you to woo any blue chip recruits who will have no idea if you'll be around when they finish up sophomore year.

You see, we need a new AD because our interim newbie likes to fire up our fan base by telling the Chicago Tribune highly motivational things such as: "It would be best for a permanent AD to make a decision of their choosing, whether it's Bill or someone else. This will get us to where we need to be to make this decision.

Of course, it's not ideal. For now, I don't think it will put a damper in the heart of the program."

C'mon Bill, you're our Cinderella story, at least until we find a new athletics boss who hopefully likes pumpkin orange as much as you do.

COACH: Actually, I think I'd look better in USC Trojan red. Oh and Illinois, as one of the usual sharks on this show likes to say - you're dead to me!

Eric Scott is a freelance writer for the Pioneer Press.

Twitter @ribersder18
Keeping track of kids in the cast

Child supervisors handle young performers’ loose teeth, stage fright and backstage homework

BY DOROTHY ANDRIES
Pioneer Press

Children are a common sight on theatre and dance stages this time of year. The Joffrey Ballet alone has 120 young dancers in its holiday production of “The Nutcracker.”

And along with children comes the role of the young performer supervisor, an adult tasked with looking after all the young people in the show. Actors Equity rules require that the supervisor have no other job or performance duties in the show, said Maria Somma, Equity’s national director of communications.

“Theyir whole task is to make sure the children are where they should be, whether on the stage or out of the way backstage, so that they are not getting in the way of people coming and going in the wings,” Somma said.

The good young performer supervisor can establish a bond with the children. “They see her the first day of rehearsal and she is with them through the whole production,” Somma concluded.

“I’ve seen children hugging their supervisors. Their work is definitely an integral part of the production.”

With that in mind, we spoke to some of the young performers supervisors about the role they play.

’ELF: MARRIOTT LINCOLNSHIRE

There are four children in Marriott Lincolnshire Theatre’s production of the musical “Elf,” and Adrienne Bader is in the role of the show’s young performer supervisor.

“We used to be called child wranglers,” Bader said, laughing. “The nomenclature has changed, but that’s really what we do. We keep track of the kids in the show.”

Keeping track, though, doesn’t begin to describe the supervisors’ duties. “We have to make sure the children get their rehearsal breaks,” she explained, “that they aren’t taken advantage of, that they have some snacks. And we have to make sure they do their homework.”

She paused, then added, “It’s more like being a mom, a nanny.” Indeed her litany of little woes is decidedly domestic. “Teeth fall out, kids get bloody noses,” she said. “Occasionally there are tears, but we handle it.”

Bader, a graduate of Northwestern University’s Department of Theatre, has worked backstage with numerous theaters, including as a child supervisor on “The King and I” at Marriott; “The Little Mermaid” at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, and “Les Miserables” and “Billy Elliot,” both at Drury Lane Oakbrook.

“There aren’t a lot of people in Chicago who do this,” Bader said. “I enjoy being backstage and I enjoy being with the kids.”

‘A CHRISTMAS STORY: PARAMOUNT THEATRE IN AURORA

Carlee Beth Fields is one of two women supervising 13 children in “A Christmas Story - The Musical,” on stage through Jan. 3 at Paramount Theatre.

Fields, who has been a child supervisor for less than a year, majored in Spanish and theater at North Central College in Naperville. After spending some time as an au pair in Spain, she supervised six children in Paramount’s “Les Miserables.” “We did a lot of drawing during breaks,” she said. “At one point we completely ran out of paper.”

After that, she was a substitute supervisor on “Billy Elliot” and “Beaches” at Drury Lane. “Children are not as difficult as you might think,” Fields said. “They actually support each other on stage.”

Sharing child supervision duties with Fields is Somer Benson, who is working at the Paramount for the first time. She called child supervising “a marriage of my love of acting and my love of children.”

Before each performance, Benson gathers the kids into a “pow-pow circle” to “help them focus, get a sense of purpose.” They have to sing and dance and act. That’s a lot for a child, but when they are on stage, they are so joyful,” she said. “I say to their parents, ‘Hug your kids tonight, because they are making magic happen.’”

In case either child supervisor has a question, company manager Kaylee Oost, who started her career as a child supervisor in 2011, will be there with answers.

Oost’s most nanny-like episode took place at Drury Lane when she was supervising 22 children in “Oliver!” “One boy lost a tooth on stage,” she said. “I was in the wings and he threw it into my hand!”

‘A CHRISTMAS CAROL: GOODMAN THEATRE IN CHICAGO

Maggie Ward is making her debut as a young performer supervisor in “A Christmas Carol” at Goodman, where she brings her experience as a director and instructor at children’s theatre, a summer drama camp instructor and children’s choir director.

Working with children can be unpredictable, she said. The other day, she heard the boy playing Tiny Tim calling for her from the dressing room. “I came in, and he had fallen backwards into the round laundry basket and was stuck with his arms and legs sticking out,” she said.

Ward clearly enjoys being with the young cast members. “The boys really love learning and performing magic tricks,” she said. “I bought a couple packs of cards at the beginning of the rehearsal process, and they now have a whole slew of tricks that they show to the other cast and crew members.”

Maintaining an even keel is mandatory for the role. “It is so important to stay cool, especially because the kids look to you to see how you’re reacting to something,” she concluded.

‘THE NUTCRACKER: JOFFREY BALLET OF CHICAGO

Ballerina Suzanne Lopez, who retired after 20 years as a Joffrey dancer, now teaches at the Joffrey Academy and for the first time is serving as the company’s children’s ballet master.

About 120 young dancers were chosen for the Joffrey’s “Nutcracker,” and the company has special rules for children. “We rehearse by roles,” Lopez said, “and a rehearsal with our children is never more than two hours. We don’t want them to get tired.”

But the experience is priceless, Lopez said. “I was in different ‘Nutcracker’ productions since I was seven,” she said. “Every dancer has his or her own Nutcracker story. We all remember our first encounter with it so vividly.”
'Nutcracker' dances onto North Shore Center stage

BY MYRNA PETLICK

Dancing the role of Clara in "The Nutcracker" is the dream of most young ballerinas. That dream is coming true for Ingrid Pearson of Glen Ellyn and Audrey Giltner of Hinsdale. The two share that role in Salt Creek Ballet's production, with performances Dec. 12 and 13 at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie.

Ingrid, an 11-year-old sixth-grader at Wheaton Christian Grammar School, said that when she learned she would play Clara. "I actually started crying.

Ingrid has been studying dance for five years - the last two at Salt Creek Ballet. She noted that the role of Clara involves "a lot of dancing, but it's also a lot of acting, so you have to have both of those strengths to make it look good."

The young dancer described the ballet as "so joyful - a perfect dream."

Twelve-year-old Audrey, a seventh-grader at Clarendon Hills Middle School, said that when she was chosen to play Clara, "I was so excited because it's been a dream of mine since I was 2. My family always takes me to see it."

Audrey has been studying dance since she was 3. This is her fifth year in Salt Creek's "Nutcracker" and her first as Clara.

The role is enjoyable for Audrey. "The little girls always look up to you and it's fun to inspire them to be a better dancer," she said.

Salt Creek Ballet's Executive Director Christina Salerno of Clarendon Hills appeared in five Salt Creek "Nutcrackers" when she was a child. "I never did the dancing role of Clara, and it was something I always wished I had done," Salerno said. "But I ended up being a professional dancer and doing the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy."

A scholarship student at the San Francisco Ballet School, Salerno had a 15-year professional dance career, performing with the Boston Ballet, Zurich Ballet and Royal Ballet in London before returning to Salt Creek in an administrative position in 2008.

A "Nutcracker" family tradition is emerging. Salerno's daughter Vivian Sweeney, 9, and her son Quentin Sweeney, 6, are both performing in this year's production.

For her second year in Salt Creek Ballet presents 'The Nutcracker'

When: 1 and 5 p.m.
Dec. 12 and 13
Where: North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie
Tickets: $20-$42
Contact: 800-514-3849; www.northshorecenter.org; www.saltcreekballet.org

Vivian Sweeney dances the role of a mouse.

"The Nutcracker," Vivian is dancing the roles of a Mouse and a Bon Bon. Dancing in the show "is a lot of fun," Vivian said. "You don't really notice that everyone's staring at you. You just feel like you're acting the part."

Quentin, a first-grader, is appearing in the show for the first time. "I'm going to be the boy that falls asleep at the end," he explained.

Salerno praised Salt Creek Ballet's "Nutcracker" as "a really top-level performance and we get some international stars for leading guest roles. I also think our sets and costumes are amazing."

This Season, Steven Wright

Tickets a Better Gift than Gift-wrap!

I bought my brother some gift-wrap for Christmas. I took it to the Gift Wrap department and told them to wrap it, but in a different print so he would know when to stop unwrapping.

-Steven Wright

Mock The Vote

The Capitol Steps!

JAN 21-24
The Affordable Holiday Tradition Performed in Grand Russian Style with Guest Soloists from Colorado Ballet!

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NORTHSHORECENTER.ORG
Singers get a kick out of honoring Frank Sinatra

BY MYRNA PETLICKI
Pioneer Press

The impresario of anniversaries is at it again. Daryl Nitz celebrated Billie Holiday's centennial, Elaine Stritch's 90th and John Lennon's 75th at the Skokie Theatre with shows that featured some of Chicago's top cabaret artists. Nitz's next extravaganza, on Dec. 18, is "It Was A Very Good Year: a centennial birthday concert for Frank Sinatra." It's a reprise of a show that was a big hit at the theater in June, with a slightly different cast.

The impressive lineup of cabaret performers includes Mark Madsen, Bob Moreen, Daryl Nitz, Bob Solone and Denise Tomasello, with musical direction by Johnny Rodgers.

"Sinatra is representative of the American Songbook because he not only championed the old songs, he looked for composers that he could help along the way," Nitz said. In creating this show, "I went with the songs he recorded the most."

"He probably had more influence on popular music than anybody else in this century," said Bob Moreen, a lifelong Sinatra fan. "Without him, the world would have been very different as far as pop music is concerned."

Moreen will primarily perform music from the 1950s, including "Love and Marriage," "The Tender Trap," "Young at Heart" and "You Make Me Feel So Young."

Buffalo Grove resident Denise Tomasello has a special connection to the Sinatra legend - she dated Frank Sinatra Jr. in the early '90s and they remain friends. Tomasello has also had a long-time connection to the music.

"My mother and father had all the Frank Sinatra albums and I grew up with that music," Tomasello said. "He stands out more than any other entertainer. He was a phenomenal talent."

Tomasello will sing, "Witchcraft," "I Get A Kick Out of You" and "Nice and Easy."

"I love paying tribute to Frank Sinatra. He embodies the American Songbook," Johnny Rodgers said. "I can't think of a singer in the world who hasn't been influenced by him in some way."

Rodgers also has an indirect but strong connection to Sinatra. "I feel like the luckiest guy in the world because I got to tour and train with Liza Minnelli for many years; the singer/pianist related. "And Liza did a concert with Sammy Davis Jr. and the man that she reverently called Uncle Frank. They toured with that. To be taken under the wings of someone who's a part of that lineage of show business is one of the greatest blessings I ever had in my life."

Rodgers will perform "The Best is Yet to Come" plus several other numbers. "I don't want to ruin the surprise," he said playfully.

Nitz's selections will include "Luck Be a Lady" and "The Lady is a Tramp."
Parents can take advantage of great photo ops at Breakfast with Santa on Dec. 12 at Howard Leisure Center's Banquet Room, 6676 W. Howard St., Niles.

FAMILY FRIENDLY

Santa and his sleigh come to breakfast in Niles

BY MYRNA PETLICKI
Pioneer Press

The jolly guy in red is going to be even rounder after attending Breakfast with Santa, Saturday, Dec. 12 at Howard Leisure Center's Banquet Room, 6676 W. Howard St., Niles. He will be greeting guests and taking requests during three seatings — 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

"Each one is an hour. It's for kids and families up to third grade," said Julie Jentel, director of marketing for Niles Park District. "We'll do breakfast and a craft. There's a free picture with Santa in his sleigh. We have a Christmas fairy that walks around." The sleigh is a new addition this year.

The breakfast buffet will include pancakes, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausages, fruit and hash browns, plus beverages. Each child will have a chance to speak with Santa and pose with him.

"It's a good kickoff to the holiday season," Jentel said. The cost is $10 per resident, $12 per nonresident. Register early because spaces fill quickly.

For details, call 847-673-6633 or go to www.niles-parks.org.

It's a toss up

Juggler Jason Kollum will entertain families at Temple Beth Israel's Hanukkah Party, 11:15 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Dec. 13 at 3601 W. Dempster St., Skokie.

Lunch and the performance is $5 per child; $10 per adult. The charge without lunch is $5 per person. Reservations are required.

For details, call 847-673-0951 or go to www.tbisko.org.

Class act

You and your kids will dance along with Dancing with Class during a Second Sunday Family Program: Dance Around the World! 2-2:45 p.m. Dec. 13 at Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St. Pick up free tickets in KidSpace starting at 1:30 p.m. that day.

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

All aboard

Make your reservations now for a fabulous family experience with the Interactive Polar Express, 7-9 p.m. Dec. 18 at Skokie Public Library, 5215 Oakton St. Kids are encouraged to wear pajamas to this event for pre-kindergartners through fifth-graders and their families.

For details, call 847-673-7774 or go to www.skokielibrary.info.

Answer for curious kids

Families are invited to meet actress Amanda Peet and Andrea Troyer, co-authors of "Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein," 4 p.m. Dec. 11 at Barnes and Noble, 55 Old Orchard Center, Skokie. Peet wrote the book in response to questions that her kids — who are being raised as Jewish — had about Christmas. The authors will autograph copies of the book.

For details, call 847-676-2230 or go to www.barnesandnoble.com.
COMPUTER STUDENTS CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

Students from Algeria performed a dance from their country that was part traditional but also included techniques of modern Arabic performance at the International Student Festival hosted by Computer Systems Institute, Skokie, at the DoubleTree Hotel, Skokie, on Oct. 31. Students from the school's Skokie, Chicago and Lombard campuses came out to celebrate the many cultures they represent. Visit www.csinow.edu.

GALA RAISES $33K FOR REMBRANDT CHAMBER PLAYERS

John O'Kieffe of Skokie, from left, Charles "Jack" O'Kieffe of Evanston, board member, and Patsy O'Kieffe of Skokie were among 82 supporters at the 2015 Rembrandt Chamber Players gala at the Sunset Ridge Country Club in Northfield on Nov. 8. The event, which honored Ann Sherby Cole for her decade-long dedication to the organization, raised more than $33,000 for the Rembrandt Chamber Players. See more at rembrandtchamberplayers.org.

Park Ridge Chorale’s ‘Cabaret’ raises more than $2,000

The Park Ridge Chorale raised $2,000 at its first-ever fundraiser held Nov. 7 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church.
Event: 'Come to the Cabaret'
Benefiting: The Park Ridge Chorale
Location: St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Park Ridge
Date: Nov. 7
Attended: 100+
Raised: $2,000+
Upcoming: "We Wish You the Merriest," holiday concert, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 205 N. Prospect, Park Ridge, 7 p.m. Dec. 12.
Website: parkridgechorale.com

We want to publish your photos. To submit, visit http://community.chicagotribune.com or email community@pioneerlocal.com.
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<td>1572 Maple Ave, # 305, Evanston</td>
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<tr>
<td>2951 Central St, # 307, Evanston</td>
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<td>Nancy J Compton</td>
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<td>319 Dodge Ave, Evanston</td>
<td>Elizabeth A Haws &amp; Jason N &amp; John W Day Estate</td>
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<td>2001 Sherman Ave, # 204, Evanston</td>
<td>Trudi Davis</td>
<td>Saul Ferder</td>
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<td>1322 Cleveland St, Evanston</td>
<td>Dade Barley &amp; Jennifer Huff</td>
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<td>1623 Maple Ave, # 1590, Evanston</td>
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<td>Joseph Clay Fulks</td>
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<td>D Rogers Grant</td>
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<td>3181 Custer Ave, Evanston</td>
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<td>Rosemary Ryan</td>
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<td>1540 Maple Ave, # 1384, Evanston</td>
<td>Richard C Nash</td>
<td>Todd Schieler</td>
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<tr>
<td>1736 Kenney St, Evanston</td>
<td>Judith Cieslak &amp; Jean Prebess</td>
<td>Jeffrey W Krol &amp; Assoc Ltd</td>
<td>11-01-15</td>
<td>$350,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**MUNDELEIN**

Four bedrooms, three baths. Living room opens to dining room. Chef's kitchen has updated cabinetry, granite counters, stainless steel appliances. Family room has exterior access to patio/fenced yard. 2nd-floor master suite has updated bath with heated tile flooring and walk-in closet. Finished basement has rec room, full bath and laundry. Recent updates include roof, hot water tank, furnace & AC, and windows.

Address: 203W. Hawley St.  
Price: $245,000  
Schools: Mundelein High School  
Taxes: $3,769  
Agent: Leslie McDonnell/RE/MAX Suburban

**SKOKIE**

Two-story brick home built in '05 features 5 bedrooms, with possible sixth in basement, and 4.5 baths. Kitchen has maple cabinets and stainless steel appliances. Family room with fireplace. Hardwood floors throughout. 2nd-floor master suite with sitting room, dual-sink bath, shower with Jacuzzi tub, and two walk-in closets. Basement features high ceilings, rec room, laundry, bedroom and full bath. Two-car attached garage and brick patio.

Address: 7528 Keystone Ave.  
Price: $715,000  
Schools: Niles North High School  
Taxes: $12,540  
Agent: Joanne Toyama/Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Evanston

**WILMETTE**


Address: 2115 Parkview Court  
Price: $495,000  
Schools: New Trier Township High School Winnetka  
Taxes: $7,366  
Agent: Marla Schneider/Coldwell Banker Glenview

**PARK RIDGE**

Rehabbed 4-bedroom, 3-bath bungalow. Neutral decor with crown molding and hardwood floors throughout. Rear sunroom. Full bath on each level. Side yard, 2-car garage off alley and concrete drive doubles as patio space. Rec area, full bath, 4th bedroom, laundry and bonus room downstairs. Second floor saved for master suite with sitting area, walk-in closet, walk-in shower and dual sinks.

Address: 106 Gillick St.  
Price: $529,900  
Schools: Maine South High School  
Taxes: $6,494  
Agent: Sue Hall/Century 21 Elm Realtors

Listings from Homefinder.com

**ARE YOU FULL OF IDEAS?**

Here's a thought: start a blog

chicagonow.com/pitch
Holiday gift guide

Let these ideas help get you through the giving season

INSIDE
Warm up your belly with some chili

By Judy Buchenot
Beacon-News

I have always wondered what Santa eats before he embarks on his long journey on Christmas Eve to deliver gifts to good little boys and girls around the world, but arranging an interview with the jolly old elf is not easy.

But then I remembered Denny Wowra, an Aurora resident who has been on Santa’s favorite list for years. Not only has Wowra led a busy life of service to others, he has also helped hundreds of boys make good life choices through decades of work with area Boy Scouts.

I asked Wowra if he could help me contact Santa.

“Well you are in luck,” said Wowra. “Santa is in town cooking for Boy Scout Troop 889 as they get ready to start their 23rd year of selling Christmas trees.”

It seems that Santa enjoys surprising hard-working young people with a hearty meal. He made 12 pots of chili cooked in Dutch ovens, the Boy Scouts’ preferred culinary vessel. When the nearly 100 boys and leaders finished setting up the tree sale at Wheatland Salem Church in Naperville, they were treated to a steaming bowl of Santa’s finest chili.

Wowra talked with Santa and arranged an interview for me at Wowra’s Aurora home. When I walked into the house, I couldn’t see Santa anywhere.

“Oh, Mr. Claus,” I ventured, deciding to go with a respectful approach. Then suddenly I heard it. “Ho, ho, ho.”

I turned around quickly and what to my wondering eyes should appear but Santa Claus standing before me in his traditional red coat trimmed in white and full beard that was, yes, white as snow.

“So, Judy Buchenot,” he said, unfurling an incredibly long list entitled “Naughty.”

I was surprised that he knew my name but then I realized that he knows everyone’s name. Thankfully, he did not find my name on the naughty list, and his eyes, how they twinkled, as he asked, “What can I do for you, my dear?”

Santa takes a taste of his hearty chili, his favorite quick meal for Christmas Eve.

I suppressed an urge to blurt out a list of all the things I wanted for Christmas and asked instead, “Mr. Claus, do you cook?”

Santa broke out into a grin, then began a hearty round of “Ho! Ho! Ho!” that shook his stomach like a bowl full of jelly.

“Do I cook? Well, you can tell that I do like to eat, can’t you?” he said patting the ample girth beneath his shiny black belt with a gold buckle. “I love to cook but I don’t always have too much time. It is my busy season you know,” he said with a knowing nod.

“I have been visiting with boys and girls all over to make sure I have their lists. Sometimes when I am lucky, two of my elves, Blizzard and Snowflake, come with me to help. I just get so many requests for visits. One place I try to visit each year is Narnia Pet Behavior. I pose for pictures with the puppies but honestly, dogs are afraid of me. I think it might be my laugh. Ho! Ho! Ho! They always start barking when I start laughing. But I really can’t help it. Cute animals make me jolly. I also try to visit the charities. We should all be thinking about giving to our favorite charities this holiday season. That’s the kind of behavior that keeps you on my nice boys and girls list.”

Santa paused for a moment as if something just popped into his head.

“Now, there, I just found out that Sydney and Harper have been being very good kids. Oh, I have something special for them this Christmas. I hope all boys and girls are being good not just for me but for their parents. Moms and dads love their kids so much and work so hard to care for them. Children need to show them how much they appreciate it by doing all of their homework, cleaning their rooms and helping with their brothers and sisters. I really should get going. I have so much to do.”

“Wait, Santa, can you give me a recipe to share with my readers?” I pleaded as the plump old man started walking toward the chimney.

“Ho! Ho! Ho! Of course, my dear. Look! It is in your notebook already. It’s my chili recipe. I always have a pot simmering on Christmas Eve. I do love all of those cookies that children leave for me, especially chocolate chip. And the reindeer as so happy when children leave a few goodies for them also. But when I need a quick boost, I swing by and pick up a big bowl of steaming chili from Mrs. Claus. It keeps me warm and toasty from the inside out.”

Santa climbed into his sleigh and to his team gave a whistle.

“Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night.”

Judy Buchenot is a freelance writer.

Find more suburban cooks on Page 4.

Santa’s Chili Recipe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground chuck</td>
<td>2 - 3 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable oil</td>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diced onion</td>
<td>2 1/2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green pepper</td>
<td>1 large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red pepper</td>
<td>1 large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned tomatoes, crushed</td>
<td>4 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloves garlic</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablespoon salt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaspoon cumin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaspoon celery salt</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaspoon cayenne pepper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay leaves</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crushed cumin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablespoon chili powder</td>
<td>5 - 6 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark red kidney beans</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cans</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch oven</td>
<td>12”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown ground chuck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. In a 12” Dutch oven, brown ground chuck. Remove, drain and set aside. Add oil to Dutch oven and saute the onion and peppers in oil until golden. Return meat and add tomatoes, garlic, salt, basil, celery salt, cayenne pepper, bay leaves, cumin, chili powder and water. Stir gently and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to simmer and cook uncovered for 3 hours. Add beans a half hour before serving.

Santa’s Culinary Cue

Start with a mild mix of chili but keep the chili powder and spices on the serving table. After tasting their bowl, your guests can spice it up if they wish.

Boy Scout Troop 889 Christmas Tree Sale

When: Monday-Friday, 6-9 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m.-9 p.m. through Dec. 18
Where: Wheatland Salem Church, corner of Book Road and 95th street, Naperville
Why: To raise funds for troop activities

Find more suburban cooks on Page 4.
A tasty batch

10 of the year’s best cookbooks

By Tom Witom | Pioneer Press

Publishers worked overtime in 2015 to respond to the home cook’s voracious and seemingly insatiable appetite for interesting new cookbooks.

As always, the subject matter is broad, ranging from a focus on fundamental techniques for grilling, baking and pasta making, to preparing ethnic specialties and favorite regional delicacies. Others directed attention to vegetarian dishes, homemade ice cream and artisanal cocktails.

Here are some standout contenders vying for shelf space:

**“The Food Lab: Better Home Cooking through Science” (W.W. Norton & Co.)**

Self-described food nerd and active blogger (SeriousEats.com) J. Kenji Lopez-Alt puts his education at MIT to work in this weighty (11-pound!) yet down-to-earth 958-page volume. He provides hundreds of appetizing recipes along with an understanding of what’s behind their appeal — all the while helping home cooks determine parts essential to the quality of the finished product and which parts are merely decoration. Dishes are analyzed by flavors, ingredients and steps to achieve the desired end result.

**“Le French Oven” (Gibbs Smith)**

Hillary Davis’ latest book, a follow-up to “French Comfort Food,” is further proof that elegant, French-inspired dishes can easily be created in any American kitchen. Davis provides instruction on preparing tarts, soufflés and accessible dishes in a cocotte, the French version of a Dutch oven. Readers can expect to find new but familiar comfort food, including classic bistro fare such as French onion soup gratinee, duck breasts with black cherry sauce, one-pot Nicoise pasta and Allsatian pork chops with ginger-snap gravy.

**“More Mexican Everyday” (WW. Norton)**

In his eighth book, popular Chicago restaurateur and chef Rick Bayless offers further insights into the unique fare being cooked by our neighbors south of the border. This collection of recipes explores topics that include ways to create dynamic flavors, vegetables at the heart of the Mexican kitchen and daily inspirations for busy cooks. Look for step-by-step guidance on building tasty, nourishing meals quickly and with few ingredients.

**“V Is for Vegetables” (Little Brown)**

Michael Anthony, executive chef at New York’s Gramercy Tavern, focuses attention on home cooking in this new tome co-authored by Dorothy Kalins. The splashy book is vegetable-centered from artichokes to zucchini, but it’s not vegetarian or vegan, since meat and fish often play supporting roles. Recipes and techniques cover composed salads, fresh herb sauces, hot gratins, thick flavored soups and sauteed greens over a bowl of grains.

**“Pasta by Hand: A Collection of Italy’s Regional Hand-Shaped Pasta” (Chronicle)**

Portland, Ore.-based restaurateur Jenn Louis sheds light on what may be the ultimate comfort food: fresh hand-shaped pasta. Her book, inspired by research in Italy, is an ode to regional specialties: gnocchi, orecchiette, gnudi and spatzli, among others. Louis tells readers how to create more than 65 pasta shapes by hand; she also devotes a chapter to classic Italian sauces.

**“The Scandinavian Kitchen” (Kyle Books)**

Camilla Plum, co-owner of an organic farm near Copenhagen, Denmark, shares her knowledge of Scandinavian cooking in this concise, well-documented guide. She highlights the importance of Nordic ingredients to the cuisine, from cloudberry jam to local dairy products, and provides alternatives. American cooks may use as substitutes, if necessary, in her recipes. Lush food photography sprinkled throughout is a bonus.

**“Flavorful” (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)**

Readers will find many irresistible temptations in food writer/chef Yeh Boyle’s latest cookbook. Its 150 taste-teasing desserts will delight the most jaded palate. Chapters cover vanilla, citrus, chocolate, coffee, nuts, sweet cheese and berries, among others. Smart home cooks undoubtedly should consider adding the recipe for Two-Tone Milk Chocolate Mousse with Sweet-and-Salty Almonds to their repertoire.

**“Food52: Genius Recipes” (Ten Speed)**

Ready to change the way you cook? This impressive volume, by Kristen Miglore, executive editor of the food52.com website, may pave the way. Miglore’s book houses foolproof, game-changing recipes from food writers, chefs and bloggers who made them legendary. Included are Jim Lahey’s no-knead bread, Marcella Hazan’s tomato sauce with onion and butter, Nigella Lawson’s dense chocolate cake, legendary restaurateur Alice Waters’ ratatouille, Julia Child’s zucchini gratin and Barbara Kafka’s secrets to roasting everything.

**“Besh Big Easy” (Andrews McMeel)**

In his fourth book, chef/restaurateur John Besh shares 101 home-cooked recipes that showcase traditional New Orleans flavors. His easy-to-follow authentic include secrets for mastering staples like making a roux or getting the perfect crispy crust on skillet cornbread.

**“Oodles of Noodles” (Ryland Peters & Small)**

Prolific cookbook author Louise Pickford capitalizes on the popularity of noodles in her latest work. She calls noodles versatile, healthy and lively on the plate — the perfect ingredient for a quick midweek supper. Her 70-plus recipes draw inspiration from Japanese chilled soba noodles and Vietnamese beef pho to traditional Chinese pot stickers and Korean kimchee noodle dumplings.

**Worth a look:** With so many cookbooks hot off the presses in 2015, some great ones risk being lost in the shuffle. “Lidia’s Mastering the Art of Italian Cuisine” (Alfred A. Knopf) by Lidia Bastianich; “The Everyday Rice Cooker” (Chronicle) by Diane Phillips; “Paleo Planet” (Harvard Common Press) by Becky Winkler; “Baking with the Bass Sisters” (St. Martin’s Press) by Marilyn and Sheila Bass; “Make It Ahead” (Clarkson Potter) by Ina Garten and “Healthy Greek Cooking” (Pelican) by Anna Naltsatzian Bourla.
Christmas Eve meal starts family tradition

By Judy Buchenot
Naperville Sun

Christmas cooking and baking can be a lot of work.

If you have ever wondered whether it is worth your time to chop and stir and do it all again, consider the tale of the Krauss family Christmas. The story of this Naperville family begins years ago when Jim Krauss was an art student living his dream of studying a year abroad in Italy.

“I fell in love with Italy,” Jim said. By the time he returned to the United States, panoramas of Italian villages had been permanently etched in his mind and became the inspiration for numerous paintings.

He also fell in love with Italian food, especially carbonara, a dish he frequently enjoyed at a small trattoria outside of Rome.

The name carbonara refers to charcoal in Italian. It was a dish favored by peasants but especially coal miners because it didn’t need tomatoes. It was inexpensive to make and could be made quickly,” he said. He tried to duplicate the dish several times until he finally came up with a recipe that offered the comforting familiar flavors of the meal he enjoyed at the small trattoria.

The story skips ahead a few years to when Jim had married Kelly and the couple were raising five children. Jim was an art professor at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines and Kelly was a Chicago Public Schools teacher.

The couple traveled together to Italy thanks to a generous gift from Kelly’s parents after Jim recovered from a serious bout with cancer. “When I went to Italy, I finally understood his need to paint Italy. It was beautiful,” Kelly said.

She began to share his passion for the lovely country as well as the unique cuisine. So when the couple was trying to come up with a quick dish to enjoy with their family on Christmas Eve after Mass, they decided to make spaghetti carbonara, the flavorful dish which they had feasted upon in Italy. It quickly became the meal to enjoy on Christmas Eve.

A few more years pass and the children have grown up and are pursuing their own lives. “It is hard when your children leave,” Kelly said. “But when I was growing up, my mother was always happy when we left the nest because she knew it was the only way we would be happy. So I was happy for them when they left. There is no reason for them to feel guilty. We are happy for them because they are happy.”

Two of the children ended up in California, one in Wisconsin, one in London, and one relatively close in Chicago. There are also seven grandchildren.

Although Kelly and Jim were happy to see their children starting lives of their own, there was the moment on Christmas Eve when it was time to enjoy the spaghetti carbonara without all of their children sitting around the table.

The couple made the dish after Mass and sat down to eat alone. And then, a message popped up on the phone. It was a picture of spaghetti carbonara made by one of the children, who was enjoying the Christmas Eve traditional meal with her family. Other photos followed.

“They were all making spaghetti carbonara,” Kelly said. Jim nods in agreement with tears filling his eyes over the memorable moment. The photos came at different times since the children live in different time zones.

“So even though we were not together, we were sharing the same meal,” Kelly said. “Sometimes they are able to be here but if they aren’t, they send us a photo of their meal. Food is a way of connecting families across the miles.” So it is worth the effort to make those traditional foods, maintains the couple.

Kelly and Jim have both retired and are spending their last Christmas in their current home with plans to downsize to a smaller home next year. To make the event more memorable, they volunteered their home to be part of the annual Naperville Garden Club Cup of Cheer House Walk last week.

Their home featured Kelly’s 30-plus-year collection of Santas, Jim’s original artwork and many other decorations artfully displayed. “We plan to do some traveling,” Kelly said. “The kids are so busy with careers that it is hard for them to visit us. It is easier for us to visit them.”

A return to Italy will most likely show up on the travel list again.

Jim and Kelly share their recipe for spaghetti carbonara as well as caramelized bacon, a deliciously decadent holiday treat. “When we take this to a party, it is gone in minutes,” Kelly said of the salty, smoky and sweet combination. They invite others to try their holiday favorites and perhaps find a new family food tradition.

Judy Buchenot is a freelance writer for the Naperville Sun.

Kelly and Jim Krauss do the final step of a batch of spaghetti carbonara.

Kelly’s Culinary Cue

Bacon creates less mess and comes out flat and even when baked in the oven instead of being fried. Place bacon on foil lined sheets and bake at 400 degrees until crisp, about 15 to 17 minutes. Drain on paper towels.

Caramelized bacon

Spaghetti Carbonara

1 pound bacon
3-4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
6 tablespoons salted butter
6 egg yolks
16 ounces heavy cream
2 cups grated Parmesan cheese, divided
1 pound spaghetti or linguine
1 shot of dry vermouth or white wine
freshly ground pepper
1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
1. Cook, drain and cut bacon into chunks, reserving bacon grease. Set aside bacon.
2. Brown garlic in bacon grease. Melt butter in the pan with bacon grease and garlic. Set aside. In a bowl, beat egg yolks, cream and 1/2 cups of Parmesan cheese. Cook pasta until al dente and drain. Return spaghetti to the pot. Add cream and egg yolk mixture, the bacon, garlic and butter mixture, most of the cut bacon pieces and a shot of vermouth. Lightly toss and stir until the sauce thickens and the pasta is coated, about three to five minutes. Place in serving bowl. Sprinkle remaining Parmesan cheese, black pepper to taste, parsley and remaining bacon pieces over the top of pasta. Serve immediately.

Brown garlic in bacon grease.

Bacon creates less mess and comes out flat and even when baked in the oven instead of being fried. Place bacon on foil lined sheets and bake at 400 degrees. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Check often so that bacon does not burn. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Cool. Cut bacon into smaller, bite-sized pieces if desired.
Confused by the health insurance marketplace?

Are any of you currently attempting to purchase insurance through the state health insurance marketplace – aka Get Covered Illinois? If so, are you feeling overwhelmed? Or perhaps even slightly defeated?

Speaking from recent personal experience, finding health insurance through the exchange is no easy task. My family is currently in the position of choosing between coverage through COBRA (the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act), which allows workers to continue their group health coverage for 18-36 months following a qualifying event, such as leaving a job) and the purchase of insurance through the Affordable Care Act’s health insurance marketplace.

I began my insurance quest by visiting GetCovered.Illinois.gov and “Explore Your Health Coverage Options.” My goal was to find a plan that includes the same benefits and doctors as our current policy. After completing several screens worth of information and plugging in the names of all our doctors, I was shocked to discover there were close to a hundred policies to evaluate, and none of the initial 20+ I reviewed categorized all of our doctors as in-network. There had to be a better way!

At this point, I contacted the Illinois Department of Insurance’s public information officer, Aissandra Calderon, to request assistance in navigating the process. Calderon put me in touch with Michele Thornton, a licensed broker with Thornton Powell Insurance Financial Services of Oak Forest, who is also a member of the Get Covered Illinois (GCI) training team.

When Thornton and I met, I provided her with the following requested information: the details of our COBRA package, the names of our doctors and their affiliated hospitals and a list of our prescriptions. After telling her the two hospitals with which our doctors are affiliated, she quickly informed me, “I can tell you right off the bat that in terms of individual plans, you will have three choices.”

She then explained next steps: “I'll put some plans together side by side from each of the companies and get your reaction. We'll then discuss and narrow things down and refine the choices further. Once your decision is made, the application process is super quick and easy. It can be done online or over the phone.”

When I inquired if I should apply via the online exchange, Thornton explained, “If you are subsidy-eligible (based on your income), we will put you on the exchange because there can be a huge difference price-wise. However, base pricing is the same whether you purchase your policy on or off the exchange.”

I asked Thornton how the common person looking for assistance with the online marketplace would find someone like her. She explained that there are three assistance options available, all of which can be found on the GCI site. These options consist of licensed health insurance brokers who are paid a commission by insurance companies; navigators who are funded by federal or state grants and are available only during open enrollment; and certified application counselors, individuals such as hospital employees, who are trained the same as navigators. All can be located using the “Find In-Person Help” button on the GCI site. A more robust resource for locating a health insurance broker or agent, in her opinion, is the National Association of Health Underwriters, at NAHU.org.

“It's almost impossible for the average person out there to make the right call,” said Thornton when I noted that the plethora of information results in a selection process that can be overwhelming. “Getting good information about how to make that decision is really hard.”

Open enrollment for the health insurance marketplace runs through Jan. 31.

Send your questions to Help Squad@pioneerlocal.com.

Cathy Cunningham is a freelance columnist for Pioneer Press.

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#WeMatchHalf
Presents for pets, people who love them

By William Hageman and Wendy Donahue
Tribune Newspapers

The AirMaster, Homedics' new air purifier, is aimed at pet owners. Whether it's that wet-dog smell, litter-box odor, or the dander and fur that's floating around, the AirMaster is designed to clear the air. A HEPA filter removes 99.97 percent of airborne contaminants, according to the manufacturer.

The ToeGrips head a list of interesting animal-related holiday gifts. There are a few more:

The AirMaster

The AirMaster, which stands 28 inches tall, has three air-cleaning speeds and runs almost silently. Available for about $180 from Bed Bath & Beyond online.

PLAY pet bed

A comfy pet bed with some attractive features, the PLAY (Pet Lifestyles and You) bed is sold through Belle & June. The beds come in five sizes and are machine washable. There are interchangeable covers, allowing a pet owner to choose different designs and colors. The majority of beds use 100 percent natural cotton, and the fillers are made with recycled plastic bottles and packaging from recycled paper. Prices start at $85.

Cuddle Clones

This Kentucky-based company will make a customized stuffed animal replica of your pet. Submit a photo (more than one, if possible) and choose options for things such as eye color and ear and tail position — then the Cuddle Clone folks do the rest. Priced from $179 and available at cuddleclones.com.

Paws Jawz

This handy plastic device works with the PawZ line of rubber dog boots, helping the pet owner put the boots on a dog's feet. Prices are from $10.99-$11.99. To order or for more information, go to pawsjawz.com.

Treatibles

Made with hemp extract, each of these dog treats contains 1 milligram of cannabidiol, derived from the nontoxic cannabis hemp plant, which has been shown to help with a variety of health issues, including cancer, pain, mood disorders, heart issues and inflammation. Check out the supporting research and order at (can be shipped to all states). Priced at $24 a bag for small dogs and $32 a bag for large ones.

Project Onward ornaments

Project Onward, a nonprofit studio and gallery for professional artists with mental and developmental disabilities, sells handmade ornaments starring people's pets. The ornaments are hand-painted by artist Fernando Ramirez and cost $50 each. Orders can be placed by emailing a photo and cost $50 each. Orders can be placed by emailing a photo and the user squeezes the handle with one hand, widening the boot opening. It slips right on, you release the Paws Jawz and little Grover can go splash happily in the mud. Paws Jawz come in three sizes, priced at $10.99-$11.99. To order or for more information, go to pawsjawz.com.

Pawz Jawz

Paws Jawz is a plastic grip that works with the PawZ line of rubber dog boots, helping the pet owner put the boots on a dog's feet.
Online business does dirty work for you

While technology can be amazingly helpful and enjoyable, I think the world is dealing with a double-edged sword when it comes to communication in dating and relationships.

Having just returned from a weeklong family vacation where I Facetime my boyfriend several times and thoroughly enjoyed seeing his cute face pop up on my iPhone, I find myself a huge fan of the technology. But, there is a downside to having so many communication options that take the place of face-to-face meetings. Technology has made it very easy to relay a difficult or uncomfortable message without actually having to say it to someone's face. This includes a breakup.

I cringed when I recently heard about The Breakup Shop, a new online business that will break up with someone for you via text, email or a phone call. Imagine this. You are sitting in your office hard at work, motivated by the fact that you have a great weekend planned with the guy you've been seeing recently. You get a text, which reads something like:

*Hi Stephanie,*
*We are sending you this message on behalf of Danny.*

We regret to inform you that Danny is breaking up with you. Although you've had a good run and shared some memories along the way, it's time to move on.

We offer you our deepest sympathies, and wish you all the best in the future.

Kindly,
The Breakup Shop

How much colder and more insensitive can a person get than to hire a company to end a relationship? And, are people such wimps that they can't actually find the guts or the consideration to personally break up with someone?

Feeling like I myself needed some therapy after reading the breakup messages available via The Breakup Shop, I reached out to David Klow, a Chicago-based marriage and family therapist, who said breakups are so difficult, they are often the catalyst that bring men and women into therapy.

"Breakups are one of the hardest experiences in life," said Klow, a faculty member at the Family Institute at Northwestern University, who has been practicing for 10 years. "It's the ending of an attachment or a bond, and sometimes that attachment can be more powerful than love.

The disruption of something you are familiar with or comfortable with can be heartbreaking. In my opinion, hiring the The Breakup Shop is rubbing salt in the wound or twisting the knife.

Thinking someone could be so coldhearted as to hire someone to send a text on their behalf, or worse, get someone else to call and do their dirty work, is beyond upsetting to me. It takes a selfish, wimpy and cruel person to hire The Breakup Shop.

But, since most people don't aim to be selfish, wimpy and cruel, there has to be some appeal to The Breakup Shop, right? I asked Klow why he thought someone might use such a service.

"Many people don't have the communication skills to face the challenge of a breakup discussion head on," he said. "But if they learn how to communicate, and how to put their thoughts and feelings into words — which is often done in therapy, they are more likely to have an easier time. Communication takes practice."

Klow offered these tips to breaking up with someone in person:

- Avoid using "I." Instead of saying "I don't think we are compatible" or "I need to move on," try "We come from very different places" or "This doesn't feel like a love connection."

- Be genuine and honest. Although difficult, most people end up appreciating a straightforward breakup. Men, in particular are sometimes conditioned to try not to cause pain, but they end up causing more pain and hurt by being indirect, vague and even dishonest.

I did find a redeeming feature of The Breakup Shop: a "gifts for ex's" section, which includes gift options like wine glasses, the movie "The Notebook," chocolate chip cookies, Netflix gift cards, and even a bouquet of daisies and carnations. If someone broke up with me, I really do think a nice gift might soften the blow.

Writing this column, I recalled the famous Post-it note episode in season six of "Sex and The City," when Carrie's boyfriend, Jack Berger, broke up with her on a Post-it note that read, "I'm sorry. I can't. Don't hate me."

Had people been texting in the '90s, Berger's little yellow sticky note would most likely have been a text, which in my opinion is still better than hiring The Breakup Shop.
Sensing a theme

Gifting a book to a book lover for the holidays is kind of like giving your dad a tie for Father’s Day, but these bookish gifts might surprise, delight

— Jeremy Mikula

Kurt Vonnegut’s “Slaughterhouse-Five” features the phrase “so it goes” more than 100 times after one character after another meets his or her demise. Fortunately, this necklace requires no such prerequisites to be worn. ($30, outofprintclothing.com)

Typing “books” into the search at Redbubble yields a plethora of bookish results. If you’ve got an eclectic collection of books, this “Bookworm” iPhone case fits the bill. Available for iPhones 4 through 6s Plus. ($24.16 and up, redbubble.com)

But, soft! what light through yonder cutting board breaks? This solid beechwood (and cleverly named) cutting board from Fred & Friends is shaped like a book and features a cutting area of 9.5 by 6.09 inches. ($16, fredandfriends.com)
Dig It: Which you’ll understand early on

ACROSS
1. Wouldn’t share
10. Midbody joint
13. Defeated
19. Preprogrammed, perhaps
21. Bovine sound
22. Reduced in price
23. Carefully considered
26. Premier
27. Khrushchev
29. Mimicked
31. Portable bed
32. Nest eggs held at S&Ls
33. Chest muscle, for short
34. Overplay a part
38. Swindle
39. Very knowledgeable person
45. Menu listing
47. Has an __ mystery (is secretive)
48. Chronicle
49. Taxing agcy.
50. Suffix for expert
51. Facebook posting, for short
53. Bedding, tablecloths, etc.
56. In an incisive way
61. Feel concern
63. Shredded cabbage dish
65. Female lobster
66. Hollandaise ingredient
67. Risktaker’s challenge
69. Pool measurement
70. Musically lively
72. Tailor, often
73. Fit to be tied
75. Common motion
76. Bit of broccoli
78. Screen image
79. Catch sight of
80. Novelist Vonnegut
81. Big name in elevators
82. Cut classes
85. Monarch’s domain
87. Early afternoon
89. Japanese dramatic form
90. Stayed out of sight
91. Collarless tops
93. Owl in Harry Potter novels
95. Nation on the Arctic Circle
96. Butch Cassidy and associates
97. Early afternoon
98. Storage container
100. Highly attentive
101. Deplete
115. Like a lot
116. Markdown marker
118. Popular pet
122. Quantity consumed
123. Altar avowal
124. Director Brooks
125. Ogle
126. Mall tenants
127. Short break of a sort
128. Some HP products
129. Collar extensions

DOWN
1. “That’s kind of you”
2. Golf club with a nearly vertical face
3. Chivalrous
4. Shore birds
5. Soul singer James
6. Outburst from Home
7. Water channel
8. Nickname for Dallas
9. German eight
10. Ins plan with copies
11. Better’s note
12. Stew ingredient
13. Off-white shade
14. Oklahoma’s “Queen Wheat City”
15. Show curiosity
16. Meditative exercise
17. Matador’s opponent
18. Spruce up
19. Olympics legend Jesse
20. Possessive pronoun
21. Sassy
22. Specialty bakery
23. Alphabetic quartet
24. Any service academy graduate
25. “Heaven!”
26. Brewer’s oven
27. Shortstop, e.g.
28. Roster or stallion
29. Arabian Nights prename
30. Not as relaxed
31. Tin Tin
32. Publicity, informally
33. Rotating machine part
34. City on the Rio Grande
35. Life Below Zero airer, familiarly
36. Verb sung by the Scarecrow
37. Instructions part
38. Decant again
39. Unabbreviated
40. Decanted
41. Far above the ground
42. Deviated from a course
43. Clinton’s labor secretary
44. Deal partner
45. Form of vitamin A
46. Activity in most musicals
47. Opulent residence
48. “Isn’t that adorable!”
49. Grammy category, for short
50. Barely visible
51. Ignored
52. Warning sign
53. Causeway fee
54. The “good”
55. Cholesterol: Abbr.
56.一点 (test-prep guarantee)
57. Instructions part
58. Instructions part
59. Raiding the fridge
60. Ignited
61. Warning sign
62. Causeway fee
63. The “good”
64. Cholesterol: Abbr.
65.一点 (test-prep guarantee)
66. Instructions part
67. Barely visible
68. Ignored
69. Warning sign
70. Causeway fee
71. The “good”
72. Cholesterol: Abbr.
73.一点 (test-prep guarantee)
74. Instructions part
75. Barely visible
76. Ignored
77. Warning sign
78. Causeway fee
79. The “good”
80. Cholesterol: Abbr.
81.一点 (test-prep guarantee)
82. Instructions part
83. Barely visible
84. Ignored
85. Warning sign
86. Causeway fee
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Or email: patrickjohnson72@yahoo.com
2400 Maywood Dr., Bellwood, IL 60104

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The Condominium Property Act 765 ILCS 605/18.5

Other than a mortgagee, shall pay the assessments and the legal fees in connection with the sale of the real estate without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition. The sale is further subject to confirmation by the court. Upon payment in full of the amount bid, the purchaser to a deed to the real estate after confirmation of the sale.

The property will NOT be open for inspection and Plaintiff makes no representation as to quality or quantity of title and without recourse to Plaintiff against said real estate and is offered for sale without any representation as to the condition of the property. Prospective bidders are cautioned against relying on any of the information contained here and it is the responsibility of each prospective bidder to conduct an investigation with respect to the information, to his or her satisfaction, to determine the condition of the property.

The sale is further subject to the conditions required by The Condominium Property Act, 765 ILCS 605/96(11 and 1x3141. If this property is a condominium unit which is part of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit at the foreclosure sale other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments and the legal fees in connection with the sale of the unit without recourse to Plaintiff and in "AS IS" condition.

The balance, including the Judicial sale fee for Abandoned Residential Real Estate at the rate of $1 for each $1,000 or fraction thereof of the assessed value of the real estate at the time of the sale, shall be paid in the manner provided by the act.

The sale is further subject to the conditions required by the act and the act is hereby accepted.

For your convenience, Tribunalsuburbs.com featured in this newspaper.

Visit placeinad, 24 hours a year, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.

The property will be sold at public auction to the highest bidder as set forth below, the following information:

- **Date and Time:** December 29, 2015, at 10:35 AM
- **Location:** The Judicial Sales Corporation, 100 South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, Chicago, IL 60606
- **Property:** Described real estate: commonly known as 11201 WET SUFFIELD AVE, MORTON GROVE, IL 60053, Property Index No. 09-13-321-020-0000
- **Assessed Value:** $1,000,000
- **Legal Description:** 1855 WET SUFFIELD AVE, MORTON GROVE, IL 60053

Additionally, it is required by the act that the purchase of the unit shall be made by the highest bidder at the sale or by any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor acquiring the residential real estate whose rights in and to the property is not limited to the amount paid by the purchaser not to exceed $300, in certified funds.

Prospective bidders are suggested to visit Tribunalsuburbs.com, or for more information, please contact:

THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION
One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, CHICAGO, IL 60606
Tel No. (312) 476-5500
Please refer to file number FA0915024.

The property will be sold in accordance with Section 15-17011 of the Illinois Mortgage Foreclosure Law. You will need a photo identification and what is required by the act, issued by a government agency (driver's license, passport, etc.)

The court has appointed Serving Process as the receiver of all the property of Defendants.

Plaintiff, HOME CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, for the benefit of ONE BANK (USA), N.A., One North Dearborn Street, Suite 100, BURR RIDGE, IL 60527, (630) 794-9776

Defendants:
- HOME CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
- ONE BANK (USA), N.A.
- OTHER THAN MORTGAGEE
- MORTGAGEE
- JUDGMENT CREDITOR
- OTHER LIENOR
- SELLER
- PURCHASER
- RECEIVER
- PROCESS SERVER
- COURT

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THE JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION
One South Wacker Drive, 24th Floor, CHICAGO, IL 60606
Tel No. (312) 476-5500
Please refer to file number FA0915024.
NOTICE OF SALE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS
COUNTY COURT OF CHICAGO, IL

BENEFICIAL FINANCIAL, INC., SUCCESSOR TO BENEFICIAL FINANCIAL CORPORATION, BENEFICIAL MORTGAGE CORP.

PETITIONER

VS.

JOHN N. BROWN, ET AL.

DEFENDANTS

IN THE NAME OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THROUGH THE COUNTY OF COOK, IN THE 13th DISTRICT COURT

NOTICE OF SALE

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the name of the Plaintiff, the sale is scheduled to take place at 10:30 AM on October 15, 2015, at The Judicial Sales Corporation, 2400 N. 13th Ave., Chicago, IL 60612, subject to public auction to the highest bidder, as set forth below the described real estate.

13 CH 10195

6071 W. 23rd St., Chicago, IL 60612

The property is subject to the following conditions

The real estate is sold in a single family residence.

The judgment amount was $365,871.28.

Sale terms: 20% of the bid amount is due to the Judicial Sales Corporation for the balance of the purchase price, after which the property will be conveyed to the highest bidder, as set forth below the described real estate.

The property is subject to the following conditions:

The sale is subject to confirmation by the court.

The sale terms are 25% of the bid amount, including the Judicial sale fee, payable to the Judicial Sales Corporation.

The sale is made payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation.

The sale is made payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation, and no fee shall be paid by the mortgagee acquiring the residential real estate pursuant to said sale.

The sale is made payable to The Judicial Sales Corporation.

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LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Skokie Village Commission, Thursday, January 7, 2016, Village of Skokie, 5127 Oakton Street, Skokie, Illinois 60077, at 7:00 p.m., to consider the following:

2015-50P - Zoning Chapter Amendment: Streetlight Windows and Entry Doors
The Skokie Village Manager requests to amend Section 159-121.4 of the Skokie Village Code to regulate streetlight windows and entry doors and any other necessary modifications to the Village Code related to this request.

2015-51P - Zoning Chapter Amendment: Demonstration Projects
The Skokie Village Manager requests review of demonstration projects and recommendations amendments to Chapter 118 of the Skokie Village Code to allow changes to the Village Code related to this request.

LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that on Thursday, December 17, 2015, at 7:00 p.m., the Village Commission of Skokie, Illinois, 60077, will consider the following:

2015-52P - Complete Streets Policy
The Skokie Village Manager requests review of Skokie’s draft Complete Streets Policy. This presentation is for informational purposes only.

PUBLIC NOTICES

FOR THE FOLLOWING DATES OF EACH MONTH, EXCEPT AUGUST:

REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS OF THE VILLAGE COMMISSION WILL BE HELD AT 7:00PM. AND REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS OF THE ADVISORY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS COMMITTEE MEETINGS WILL BE HELD ON THE SECOND WEDNESDAY OF THE FOLLOWING MONTHS:

JANUARY 13
FEBRUARY 10
MARCH 14
APRIL 13 & 27
MAY 11 & 25
JUNE 13 & 27
JULY 13 & 27
AUGUST 11 & 28
SEPTEMBER 14 & 28
OCTOBER 12 & 26
NOVEMBER 14 & 28
DECEMBER 12 & 13

PUBLIC NOTICESTO BE HELD AT THE LOCK UP SELF STORAGE 3850 W Devon, Skokie, IL 60076 708-597-5300 SEPT. 26, 2015 BEGINS AT 10:00 AM

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE TO BE HELD AT THE LOCK UP SELF STORAGE 3850 W Devon, Skokie, IL 60076 SEPT. 26, 2015 BEGINS AT 10:00 AM

UNITS:

Unit availability subject to prior sale. All goods must be removed from the unit within 24 hours. Payment due immediately upon acceptance of bid. Unit availability subject to prior settlement of account.

Unit 4212 Tenant Phil Fisher
Unit 4212 Tenant Theresa Burton
Unit 3335 Tenant Johnathan Sisan
Unit 3257 Tenant Desiree Vasquez
Unit 1132, Louise Harnady
Unit 132, Louise Herman
Unit 1108, Christine Sunogan

CONDITIONS: All units will be sold to the highest bidder. All goods must be removed from the unit within 24 hours. Payment due immediately upon acceptance of bid. Unit availability subject to prior settlement of account.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Skokie Village Manager requests review of Skokie’s draft Complete Streets Policy. This presentation is for informational purposes only.

LEGAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that on December 17, 2015, at 7:00 p.m., the Village Commission of Skokie, Illinois, 60077, will conduct a public hearing on the matter below in the Council Chambers of Village Hall, 6000 North Lincoln Avenue, Skokie, Illinois:

Consideration of a request by Skokie School District 74 for a Street Vacation of Morse Avenue between East Prairie Rd. and Crawford Ave.

Persons desiring to comment or submit written comments in advance for consideration at the hearing. Written comments, addressed to the Village traffic commission in the Police Department of Village Hall, 6000 North Lincoln Avenue, Skokie, Illinois 60077, must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. on the day of the hearing.

Information concerning these requests is available for inspection in the Police Department during normal business hours.

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Find out more:
CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM/ATHLETES
Second Shift

ACROSS
1 “SOS” group
5 Race site for more than 300 years
10 Traffic stoppers?
15 Goes on and on
19 Tradition born under King Kamehameha II
20 The “It Girl” Bow
21 Youngest of three dramatic sisters
22 Inner: Pref.
23 Gust that rattles the blinds?
25 Humor among buddies?
27 No longer used
28 Tweeting source
29 “Très sexy!”
30 Rich deposit
31 Noveau-Mexique, e.g.
33 Put away
35 Plumbing piece
38 1983 Indy 500 winner Tom
39 Sprint, for one
43 Colorado tributary
44 Where mixologists learn the ropes?
48 Genetic info carrier
49 Heaps
50 “Rubaiyat” rhyme scheme
51 Rare indication?
52 Peanuts, say
53 “Trés sexy!”
54 Gere title role
55 Commonplace
gift
56 She adopted
57 Hospital holding area, briefly
60 “That sounds bad!”
61 Fat-shunning
62 “Piano Man”
63 Tracks down
64 Made judgments on diamonds
66 Winner of 82 PGA Tour tournaments
67 Pipe cleaner
68 Zen enlightenment
70 “That sounds bad!”
71 Chiefs coach Andy
72 Short lines at the register?
73 Garfield, e.g.
76 Holiday season store statistic?
78 FX customer
79 Start of an attorney’s conclusion
80 Masters gadget
81 Kiddie-lit monster
82 D-Day city
84 Buzzers that can’t be seen?
85 Sci-fi film classic
86 Lose energy
87 Pudding fruit
88 Split-resistant lumber
89 “Whatever you say, honey”
90 Romantic evening
91 Rachael Ray
92 Sends
93 Cheap shots
94 Greener-covered, as walls
95 Liable to snap
96 To snap
97 Heath-covered wasteland
98 How music may be
99 Captivate
100 Prohibition
101 Mystery writer
102 Solitary sort
103 Shot contents
104 Lounge around
105 Mirror shape
106 Component
107 Kegger venue
108 Ordinary dot?
109 Business sch.
110 Termite?
111 Laudatory verse
112 Generous offer
113 Backspace over
114 Did some
115 Hindu melody
116 American-born Jordanian queen
117 Trifled (with)
118 Tips off
119 Keycard receiver

DOWN
1 “One more thing ...
2 Light source
3 They’re heard in herds
4 Bank offering
5 Had a yearning
6 Political list
7 Encrust
8 Smellier raw material
9 Carwash challenge
10 Line at the beach?
11 LAX postings
12 Real cards
13 “Inside Politics” ainer
14 Repeat
15 Start of a quaint business sign
16 Co. known for music
17 “Diana” singer
18 Former Cubs slugger
19 Brake
20 “Piano Man” pianist
21 “Avatar” race
22 Room-size computer unveiled in 1946
23 Jack’s value, sometimes
24 Room-size computer unveiled in 1946
25 “Holy moly!”
26 Bath quantity?
27 Tools for removing reputation stains?
28 Where mixologists learn the ropes?
29 Colorado tributary
30 Rich deposit
31 Noveau-Mexique, e.g.
33 Put away
35 Plumbing piece
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111 Laudatory verse
112 Generous offer
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114 Did some
115 Hindu melody
116 American-born Jordanian queen
117 Trifled (with)
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119 Keycard receiver

Sudoku

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box in bold borders contains every digit 1 to 9.

Level: 1 2 3 4

Last week’s answers appear on the next page.
Gifts from the suburbs

This year, give them something from home

By Annie Alleman
The Beacon-News

Face it, no one on your gift list wants a food dehydrator or one of those singing fish.

Be the hero this year and give the special people in your life something super useful and yet totally unique.

Here are some ideas to help you win Christmas this year.

Season passes. Six Flags season passes. No one — no one — would hate this gift. Even a bad day at Six Flags is better than a normal day anywhere else. There are options, too. And it doesn’t have to be just Six Flags — you can get season passes to Brookfield Zoo, Raging Waves Waterpark in Yorkville or even Indiana Beach. “The season pass is an incredible value ... and it’s really a great gift for all ages,” said Tess Claussen, communications specialist at Six Flags Great America. “We pride ourselves on providing the most thrills for all ages,” Claussen said. “Tickets cost $68.99 each when you purchase four, and you have until March to pay it off. You can also pay it off in monthly installments. A season pass has a lot of different perks to it,” she said. “You get free admission to Hurricane Harbor, free Fright Fest, three ‘bring a friend’ free tickets, plus $300 worth of special discounts. We also have Coaster After Dark events, where they come to the park after it closes and get exclusive coaster time.” There's also the All-Season Dining Pass for $79.99, which gets you lunch, dinner and a snack every time you come to the park, she said.

DuPage Children’s Museum. Along the lines of season passes, how about a membership to the newly renovated kid spot in downtown Naperville? After a pipe burst during the night all-

most a year ago, causing about $2 million in damages, the museum opened its doors in September after giving the place a complete makeover. Memberships range from $90 to $250. dupagechildrens.org.

Portillo’s. You know what a staple Portillo’s is in the Chicago area. From its Italian beef sandwiches to the chocolate cake, the food is legendary. Not only can you do gift cards ranging from $5 to $100, but you can ship Portillo’s to friends and family unfortunate enough to live not within driving distance. What a hero you’ll be when your uncle in Duluth opens up a box of tamales, barbecued ribs, hot dogs or Italian beef sandwiches. Now that’s a great gift. portillos.com.

A tour of local breweries. There are a lot of breweries in the area, from Three Floyds Brewpub in Munster, Ind., to Two Brothers Brewery in Warrenville, to Penrose Brewing Company in Geneva, to Mickey Finn’s Brewery in Libertyville. Hockey fans should definitely take note of Light the Lamp Brewery in Grayslake, with beers like Red Line Ale, Sin Bin Stout and the Hattrick Hefeweizen. Treat the craft beer lover in your life the gift of a brewpub tour, a six of his favorite brew or some merch.

Gift certificates to Hollywood Palms In Naperville or Hollywood Boulevard In Woodridge. These high-end movie theaters combine the restaurant and bar experience with movie watching. The chairs are luxe, the bar is fully stocked and the menu is on point. These theaters also do events like the Hollywood Classic Film Series and “The Rocky Horror Picture Show.” Hollywoodpalmscinema.com Hollywoodbvdcinema.com.

The Russian Gift Shop In Lisle. Also known as the Maison Russe (“Red House”), the Russian Gift Shop specializes in folk art, tea sets, Russian porcelain, nesting dolls, Christmas figurines and more. You can also buy a gift certificate online. Therussianshop.com.

Oberweis Dairy products. Headquartered in North Aurora, Oberweis Dairy has stores throughout northern Illinois and Northwest Indiana. Why not give the gift of some “Moola” gift cards, a stuffed Bessie the Cow or Oberweis fleece blanket? You can also order ice cream and have it shipped to a loved one, or give the gift of home delivery service. oberweisdairy.com.

Holiday High Tea at the Pickwick Society Tearoom. Frankfort. Here’s a gift for the classy folks in your life. Every Wednesday through Saturday in December, you and your friends can take tea at this quaint tea shop in Frankfort. Seatings are at 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. by reservation, $30 per person. Tea includes soup, hot and cold tea sandwiches, freshly baked scones served with clotted cream and lemon curd and desserts. pickwicktearoom.com.

Chicagoland Popcorn. This mom-and-pop shop in Merrillville, Ind., is brand new, but it is already making a big impression, having served nearly 100,000 bags, tins and baskets of popcorn in their first year of business. For starters, they offer a ridiculous variety of popcorn flavors — 250, to be exact. “Crab Legs” flavor was featured in the June 2015 issue of Food Network magazine. Loaded Baked Potato, Kebob Coffee and Peanut Butter and Jelly are other flavors. Take the popcorn lover in your life to this place and buy him or her a bag. They also ship tins and gift boxes. chicagolandpopcorn.com.

Annie Alleman is a freelance writer.
The naughty list

These are the toys kids may crave, but parents dread

By Annie Alleman
The Beacon-News

Every year, consumer groups release their lists of best and worst toys. Usually, the best toys are educational and provide children with hands-on learning. The worst toys pose some sort of safety hazard.

For example, the consumer watch dog group World Against Toys Causing Harm is warning parents about the potential choking, strangulation and bodily harm certain toys can inflict. This year, the group targeted toys such as a folding trampoline, an electronic sword and some dinosaur claws that tie in with the latest "Jurassic Park" movie.

Safety is important. We all care about safety. But you know what else we parents care about? Stupid toys that tick us off.

With that, here are 10 toys that will probably appear on your kids' wish lists this Christmas, when it's your wish that they would just disappear.

**Shopkins.** This is my No. 1 with a bullet, and naturally my kids are clamoring for them. Shopkins are tiny, squishy grocery store items that are meant to be collected and traded with friends. They are sold by the pair in baskets for about $3 (in my day, these things would have cost 25 cents in a gumball machine). Plus, they sell play sets, vehicles and many other accessories. They come in series, so of course early sets are already valued. Still, what really grinds my gears is when I tell my kids they can see the real live Shopkins when they go to the store with me, and they just laugh and say, "Oh, we want Shopkins." What's next? Real live Furbacca? That's the stuff of nightmares.

**Hot Huez.** While we're talking about hair, let's talk about hair chalk. This product took a great idea — temporary hair color — and executed it poorly. You clamp a chunk of hair in a compact-like thing and pull it down toward you. What actually happens is you pull your kid's hair out — and I'm speaking from personal experience.

**Pie Face.** There is a board game that the whole intent is to knowingly, willingly, take a pie in the face. It's like a very messy but nonetheless Russian roulette. The instructions suggest putting either whipped cream or a wet sponge in the hand to keep things exciting. Then you turn the handle and cross your fingers — the handle could go off at any time. You score a point for every time you turn the handle without getting pie-faced, and the one who scores 25 points wins. It's a win for Hasbro and a loss for humanity that this game has four and a half stars on Amazon and is a best-selling board game.

**Furbacca.** Along with the roughly 8 million "Star Wars"-themed toys released this season comes a Wookie-themed Furby, titled Furbacca. You can find it at Walmart and Amazon, retailing for $65-80. The body says "hug me," but the eyes say, "You will obey me."

**Poo Dough.** Yeah, this is exactly what it sounds like. The kit comes with a disturbingly realistic plastic mold and three colors of modeling dough: dark brown, light brown and yellow. I can see kids and dads alike wanting this particular toy.

**Imaginext Ultra T-Rex.** This thing is huge and, frankly, terrifying. He is two and a half feet tall, plus he walks, roars, and his eyes and spikes light up via LED lights. Oh, and he fires projectiles from his mouth and launches boulders from his chest. I realize now I just spelled out exactly why little kids (and grown men) want this thing so much. See also: Poo Dough.

**SWAT Police Force Electric Battery Operated Toy Gun.** This thing has a moving slide, silencer, aiming scope and blue LED flashlight. From the reviews on Amazon, this seemed to be the prop of choice for Lara Croft cosplay, but kids who actually wanted to play with it were disappointed with how fast it fell apart.

**VTech KidiBeats Kids Drum Set.** Does this come with a pair of earplugs for Mom and Dad, too? Actually, this looks like a pretty cool toy for budding musicians. As long as I don't have to hear it.

**Wubble Bubble.** Parents on Amazon hate this. I mean, they really hate this, to the tune of 2.2 out of 5 stars from 750 reviewers. They complained about how hard it was to inflate it and that the sticky surface picked up every single piece of flotsam it touched. Most of all, they complained that it popped almost immediately.

Annie Alleman is a freelancer.
GIFT GUIDE

Top toys: 5 under $50

Joy for your favorite kids at prices your wallet also will like

By Danielle Braff | Tribune Newspapers

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the sheer number of toys on the market this year, use our quick guide to find some of the top toys for every age group for less than $50.

Danielle Braff is a freelance writer.

SmartMax Start Plus: Kids can make 2-D and 3-D shapes by stringing magnetic bars and balls together. This is an open-ended construction set that works for multiple age groups and grows with your child. For ages 1 and up. Buy it for $49.95 at www.fatbraintoys.com.

Spaceflix: You can be the director of your own space-theme, stop-motion film. Each kit comes with all you need to film your own masterpiece — except for an Apple or Android device you need to download the free stop-motion animation app. Buy it for $16.99 at www.marblesthebrainstore.com.

Monopoly: Here and Now: In the latest version of the classic game, Hasbro teamed up with BuzzFeed and invited fans to vote (nearly 4 million cast a ballot) for their favorite cities. The top 22 cities are featured as property spaces. For ages 8 and up. Buy it for $19.99 at www.hasbrotoyshop.com.

Design & Drill Brightworks: This is a Lite-Brite type toy for which a child uses a realistic power drill to place plastic pegs in a light-up base. The peg placements can follow one of the 12 patterns included or be placed in any design that strikes a child's fancy. Buy it for $39.99 at www.educationalinsights.com.

Learn to Dress Monkey: Children will learn how to zip, to snap, to button, to loop, to tie — and hopefully shortly after playing with this little monkey, they'll be able to dress themselves without your help. For ages 18 months and up. Buy it for $46.99 at www.alextoys.com.
ALWAYS GIVING ADVICE?

Here’s a tip: start a blog

If you can dish it out, we want to take it. Simply pick a topic you’re passionate about and send us your pitch. If chosen, you’ll join ChicagoNow, a network of hundreds of local bloggers. No worries if you’re a newbie – we’ll help you build and launch your platform. So get going, Chicagoland’s waiting for your words of wisdom.

chicagonow.com/pitch
FOR KIDS

“Super Mario Maker” $59.99, rated E
(> Wii U)
It's easy to create your own Mario levels,
dropping in props and baddies from his
classic games while testing everything on
the fly. You can change the visuals to match
the original 1980s look or take it all the way
up to the smooth-looking modern Mario of
2015. “Mario Maker” encourages
experimentation, allowing you to break the
rules in subtle ways to create unexpected
challenges.

“Disney Infinity 3.0” $64.99, rated E10+
(PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox
One, Wii U)
“Star Wars” arrives in Disney’s virtual
theme park in grand fashion, with a “Clone
Wars” play set and a pile of aliens and
starships for the game’s anything-goes Toy
Box mode. A revamped hub area helps
organize your adventures, and the new
farming and sidekick options bring a lot of
new value to the Toy Box. Additional modes
are available through $19.99 expansions.

“Splatoon” $59.99, rated E10+ (Wii U)
This fashionably messy game is about
trendy squid kids who love paintball battles
just as much as dressing in brand-name
couture. Your weapons are super soakers,
j ust as much as dressing in brand-name
trendy squid kids who love paintball battles

“Minecraft: Story Mode” $4.99-$29.99,
rated E10+ (iOS, Android, PlayStation 3,
PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One, PC)
Gaming’s biggest phenomenon in recent
memory digs in a new direction in this
episodic “Minecraft” adventure. Imagine a
playable TV show set inside the familiar
world of “Minecraft,” and you’ve got the
idea. Even though “Story Mode” doesn’t
play like regular “Minecraft” — instead it’s
more about solving puzzles and choosing
what characters say — the fans in your
house will love it.

“Yo-Kai Watch” $39.99, rated E10+
(Nintendo 3DS)
Similar to “Pokemon,” this new
creature-collecting game focuses on
capturing mischievous spirits that hide all
around us. You're introduced to the secret
world of “Yo-Kai” by a friendly ghost butler
and given a fancy watch to capture and train
them. “Yo-Kai Watch” includes plenty of
“Pokemon”-style battles, but it is just as
comfortable coaxing spirits to help
townpeople in need.

FOR ADULTS

“The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt” $49.99, rated
M (PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360,
Xbox One, PC)
This medieval masterpiece turns you into a
monster-killing hero for hire with a gigantic
world to explore. Lead character Geraldt has
an understated sense of humor, and the
game’s expansive options for customization
let you make him your own. Don’t overlook
the built-in collectible card game, one of
the many optional side missions that are
developed way beyond being mere
distractions.

“Armello” $19.99, rated E10+ (PlayStation 4,
PC)
A beautiful, intricate board game, “Armello”
lets players compete for the fate of their
country and poisoned king. The cartoon
animals strike a balance between serious and
silly as they battle and scheme across a
hexagonal map. “Armello” offers the
experience of a nicely complicated tabletop
game without having to worry about setting
up lots of little pawns and card decks.

“Batman: Arkham Knight” $59.99, rated
M (PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC)
Batman returns to the streets of Gotham
City to fight a mysterious new enemy named
the Arkham Knight. Naturally, plenty of his
friends and foes join in the chase, as the
story winds around the superhero’s familiar
supporting cast. While the “Arkham” games
are famed for spotlighting both the
detective’s gear and his combat skills, this
release adds Batman’s ultimate gadget, the
Batmobile.

“Until Dawn” $59.99, rated M
(PlayStation 4)
Featuring motion-captured performances by
actors from such shows as “Mr. Robot,”
“Nashville” and “Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.,”
“Until Dawn” is a teen horror movie where
you control the characters’ fates. An evolving
script can turn film cliches into interesting
character development depending on how
you play it, but it is ultimately up to you who
makes it through the night alive.

“Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom
Pain” $59.99, rated M (PlayStation 3,
PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One, PC)
Kiefer Sutherland is the voice of battle-worn
hero Snake in this latest installment of
tactical espionage operations.” Set mostly in
Africa and the Middle East, you’ll infiltrate
enemy compounds while building a private
army. The big twist for this “Metal Gear” is
that its world is open to be explored at your
leisure, rather than being limited to specific
structured missions.
GIFT GUIDE

Tips for picking out the perfect gift card for giving

By Elana Dure
Tribune Newspapers

Nearly 6 in 10 consumers celebrating the holidays say they would like to receive gift cards as gifts this year, according to the National Retail Federation's 2015 Holiday Consumer Spending Survey. This makes gift cards the most requested gift for the ninth year in a row.

"The appeal of a gift card over cash or a prepaid card is that you're not giving a physical item, yet you still give a sense of understanding the person and what they would like," said Eric Berger, director of growth strategies for CardCash, an online platform that allows patrons to buy and sell gift cards.

Last year, holiday spending on gift cards reached an all-time high with the average person spending $172.74 on gift cards, totaling about $32 billion nationwide, according to the National Retail Federation.

Gift cards are extremely popular because they remove the burdens and stresses that come with holiday shopping. More than half of the buyers surveyed in the retail trade group's November 2014 Consumer Survey said they preferred to buy gift cards to allow the recipients to select their own gifts. A quarter of customers said they choose to buy gift cards because they are easier and faster to buy than traditional gifts.

The only issue: How do you know which gift card to buy? Here are a few suggestions that can point you in the right direction.

For mom. Remember all those times mom stayed up late trying to keep the house in order? Cooking, cleaning and taking care of the kids sure is a full-time job (not to mention the additional hours she spends working at her actual full-time, 9-to-5 office job). Consider treating mom to a stress-free weekend with a gift card to a resort, salon or spa. Facial, massages, manicures - what more can a mom ask for? She deserves the relaxation time.

For dad. About 25 percent of dads said their gift of choice would be a new set of tools, according to research released by Ebat.com in June. Instead of buying dad the wrong kind of hammer or screwdriver, why not just give him a gift card to a home improvement store? This way, dad can select the tools of his choice. Or he can skip the tools altogether and go straight for the barbecue equipment.

For college students. Berger said CardCash data indicates people ages 18 to 34 spend more money on fast-food gift cards than any other demographic. "It kind of makes sense," he said. "College students don't really care about what type of food, they are just going for speed." No doubt they will be grateful the next time they have a late-night study session.

For her. Almost 3 out of 4 women said they wanted to receive clothing as a holiday gift, according to CreditDonkey's 2013 holiday survey. Of course, it's never smart to guess what outfit she'd want to wear (or what size, for that matter). Give her a gift card to her favorite clothing shop instead.

For him. More than 4 out of 5 men said they wanted to receive electronics as a gift, according to the CreditDonkey survey. But electronics come in a wide variety of types and styles, ranging from large flat-screen TVs to sleek video game consoles. Don't guess what he wants this holiday season. Give him a gift card to a big-box electronics store or online retailer and let him choose his own tech toy.

For that friend you don't know so well. We all have that person. The one we are obligated to give a gift, yet have no idea what he or she likes. How do we maneuver that roadblock? With a gift card for a large department store that offers a multitude of goods. "If you're looking to just give an overall gift to make the person happy and you know that they will be able to use it for basically anything they want, then you may want to focus on a broad brand," Berger said. "(Focus on) something that covers a whole slew of different types of products. That way, you cover as many bases as possible."

Elana Dure is a freelance writer.

Gifts that keep on giving, in more ways than one

By Danielle Braff
Tribune Newspapers

This holiday, consider giving a gift to your family and friends that keeps on giving - to you and others.

Studies have found that people derive more satisfaction from experiences than from material gifts, said Amit Kumar, postdoctoral research fellow who studies consumer behavior and happiness. When these experiences also benefit others, such as charities or nonprofits, you may find that your happiness will grow even more.

Here are a few gifts that offer experiences and benefit others.

Public garden membership
Best for: Families and individuals who love spending time outdoors.
Details: A membership to the Reciprocal Garden program from the American Horticultural Society or a membership to one of its participating gardens - will offer entry to a network of 300 gardens throughout the country, plus a few in Canada, the Cayman Islands and the Virgin Islands.
Price: $35 for an individual, $50 for two, $100 for four; www.ahs.org. Prices vary for individual botanical gardens or arboretums.

Classical youth concerts
Best for: Households with budding music lovers.
Details: Classical music isn't just for those who can keep quiet in their seats for more than an hour. Most major orchestras now have concerts for pint-size audience members.
Price: Fee varies by orchestra, but ticket prices are typically $10 to $20.

Construction
Best for: Anyone with a

For mom. Remember all those times mom stayed up late trying to keep the house in order? Cooking, cleaning and taking care of the kids sure is a full-time job (not to mention the additional hours she spends working at her actual full-time, 9-to-5 office job). Consider treating mom to a stress-free weekend with a gift card to a resort, salon or spa. Facial, massages, manicures - what more can a mom ask for? She deserves the relaxation time.

For dad. About 25 percent of dads said their gift of choice would be a new set of tools, according to research released by Ebat.com in June. Instead of buying dad the wrong kind of hammer or screwdriver, why not just give him a gift card to a home improvement store? This way, dad can select the tools of his choice. Or he can skip the tools altogether and go straight for the barbecue equipment.

For college students. Berger said CardCash data indicates people ages 18 to 34 spend more money on fast-food gift cards than any other demographic. "It kind of makes sense," he said. "College students don't really care about what type of food, they are just going for speed." No doubt they will be grateful the next time they have a late-night study session.

For her. Almost 3 out of 4 women said they wanted to receive clothing as a holiday gift, according to CreditDonkey's 2013 holiday survey. Of course, it's never smart to guess what outfit she'd want to wear (or what size, for that matter). Give her a gift card to her favorite clothing shop instead.

For him. More than 4 out of 5 men said they wanted to receive electronics as a gift, according to the CreditDonkey survey. But electronics come in a wide variety of types and styles, ranging from large flat-screen TVs to sleek video game consoles. Don't guess what he wants this holiday season. Give him a gift card to a big-box electronics store or online retailer and let him choose his own tech toy.

For that friend you don't know so well. We all have that person. The one we are obligated to give a gift, yet have no idea what he or she likes. How do we maneuver that roadblock? With a gift card for a large department store that offers a multitude of goods. "If you're looking to just give an overall gift to make the person happy and you know that they will be able to use it for basically anything they want, then you may want to focus on a broad brand," Berger said. "(Focus on) something that covers a whole slew of different types of products. That way, you cover as many bases as possible."

Elana Dure is a freelance writer.
Offering a helping hand can be the best gift of all

By Elana Dure
Tribune Newspapers

When Avital Schwartz was about 9 years old, she teamed with her four siblings to give her parents a memorable gift in honor of their wedding anniversary. The children didn't have much money of their own, so they decided to use creativity and wit to craft a unique yet inexpensive present they knew their parents would appreciate: a homemade coupon book.

“We put in things we were willing to do like help clean the bathroom or help mom cook,” said Schwartz, a University of Maryland senior. “It was all these different, cute things.”

The average person celebrating Christmas, Kwanzaa or Hanukkah will spend $808.65 on presents, according to the National Retail Federation's 2015 Holiday Consumer Spending Survey. However, some of those gifts most likely will never be used by the recipients.

“It seems like you wasted your money on something that maybe I'll use, maybe I won't,” Schwartz said. “I think (a homemade coupon book) is clever, especially since I appreciate not throwing away money on gifts!”

Homemade presents are also more personal than store-bought gifts and, if crafted with care and forethought, can be more meaningful as well.

“It probably really stems from the principle that it's the thought that counts,” Schwartz said, noting carefully decorated homemade gifts show the recipients that the givers actually took their interests into account. “Putting it into a written form is almost like a minicontract, and it shows that you really have a commitment to the other person that you're giving it to.”

Matt Leopold, of West Chester, Pa., said he believes the value of hand-crafted coupon books and certificates lies in the sentiment behind the gifts.

“I didn't cash them all in,” he said, referring to the coupons his 14-year-old daughter made for Father's Day five years ago. “But I have this (coupon book), and I can look at this... It's not about how big the gift is. It's about the thought behind it.”

Leopold said his daughter provided him with coupons for a mixture of home-related activities ranging from vacuuming the stairs to raking the leaves and cleaning the basement.

Of course, child-made coupon books are not the only creations worth sharing. The misspelled words and stick-figure drawings may be heartwarming, but adult-made coupons are just as valued.

Home improvement expert and contractor Danny Lipford of the TV show “Today's Homeowner with Danny Lipford” said the best gift you could probably give a family member or friend is your willingness to help them or her complete the difficult or strenuous chores throughout the house.

“...There are the things that you usually neglect, so they are usually quite a chore to clean,” he said.

“Anything that requires a ladder and a little extra effort would be something I would love for someone to clean up.”

Lipford also said he'd appreciate if someone offered to do his simple yet mundane tasks, including cleaning the gutters and installing curtains or blinds.

The great thing is you don't have to be close to someone to give them a homemade coupon. Lipford said he'd accept the present from anyone as long as they do the hard work safely and correctly.

Here are some more good deeds you can offer to do throughout the home: shovel snow, wash the car, mow the lawn, wash and fold a load of laundry, empty trash bins, and walk, feed and groom the dog.

Elana Dure is a freelancer.
Build some character: start a blog

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**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

**Thursday, Dec. 10**

**Des Plaines Art Guild Show:** Take some time out of your busy schedule to immerse yourself in the beauty of the paint strokes and the soul of a photographer. Featured artists include Beverly Beckman, Dolores Kenny, Stan Ko-tecki, Kathy Passi, Liz Pawlik, Rhonda Popko, Dee Schuster, Thelma Spain, Willard Strassburger, John Taylor and Elaine Tjeck. 1 p.m. Thursday-Friday, Sunday and Tuesday-Wednesday, Des Plaines History Center, 781 Pearson St., Des Plaines, free, 847-391-5399

**Griffin House:** With Lee Coulter. 7:30 p.m. Thursday, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, $18-$30, 847-492-8860

**Diabetes month by month:** Learn how to prevent, manage and take care of your diabetes in order to prevent complications. 5 p.m. Thursday, Erie Family Health Center Evanston/Skokie, 1285 Ridge, free, 847-666-2346

**Winter Arts and Crafts Expo:** The 13th annual expo features original, handmade arts and crafts by over 100 selected artisans, featuring original, handmade works of jewelry, ceramics, fiber, metal, glass, painting, photography, mixed-media and more. 10 a.m. Daily, Evanston Art Center, 1717 Central St., Evanston, free, 847-475-5300

**All My Relations: A Seneca History:** In collaboration with visual artist and dancer Rosy Simas (Seneca), this exhibit features traditional and modern Seneca artifacts, which span various generations. 11 a.m. Daily, Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, 3001 Central St., Evanston, free-$5, $10-$12 for talk, 847-475-5300

**Native Haute Couture:** The year long exhibit celebrates the history of Native American high fashion features garments that showcase American Indian artistry and expertise in tanning, weaving, embroidery, beadwork and tailoring. 10 a.m. Daily, Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, 3001 Central St., Evanston, free, 847-475-1385

**Material View Art Cloth exhibit:** Showcasing work by members of the Art Cloth Network, a nationwide organization of professional textile artists. 10 a.m. Daily, Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes St., Evanston, free, 847-571-1385

**Wonderland Express:** The annual festive event features 750,000 outdoor lights and an indoor exhibit where garden-scale trains wind past miniature replicas of more than 80 Chicago-area landmarks, nestled among evergreens, poinsettias and many other holiday-themed plants. 10 a.m. Daily, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe. Admission is $12 for adults, and $10 for children ages 3 to 12 and seniors ages 62 and older, 847-835-5440

**Much Ado About Mysteries:** Discuss Too Many Cooks: Culinary Mysteries. Advance registration recommended. 7 p.m. Thursday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

**Alliance Francoise du Nord Shore Cine-Club:** Participate in a showing and post-screening discussion in French of films. 1:30 p.m. Thursday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-328-9516

**Internet searching: Intermediate:** Spend less time searching and more time finding exactly what you need. 10 a.m. Thursday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

**Niles Songwriters Group:** Acoustic instruments are welcome. 7 p.m. Thursday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

**Wonder Ground Open Lab:** Look, touch, tinker and play with an intriguing array of science-oriented curiosities in this new space designed especially for kids. 4 p.m. Thursday and Tuesday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

**Niles Songwriters Group:** Acoustic instruments are welcome. 7 p.m. Thursday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

**Financing a 4-Year College Degree:** Find out how obtaining a four-year college degree can be financially possible for you and your family. All are welcome. 6 p.m. Thursday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

**You Can't Take It With You:** 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Friday; 2:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday; 2:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday, Northlight Theatre, 9501 Skokie Blvd, Skokie, $15-$60, 847-673-6000

**National Human Rights Month Lecture:** Accidental Holocaust Fiction: Dr. Danny M. Cohen discusses the surprising process of writing his historical novel. Set in 1943 Berlin, Train follows six Americans who witness and try to escape the Nazi round-ups. 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, free with Museum admission, 847-967-4800

**Special Exhibition Three Years, Eight Months, and Twenty Days: The Cambodian Atrocities and the Search for Justice:** Learn about the Cambodian genocide and the current trials to bring the perpetrators to justice, 40 years later. 10 a.m. Daily, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, free, 847-967-4835

**Wilmette Fiber Arts Group:** Sponsored by the Wilmette Public Library, this group of people is interested in all aspects of fibers arts: knitting, crocheting, needlepoint and more. 10 a.m. Thursday, Panera Bread, 1199 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, free, 847-293-6755

**Friday, Dec. 11**

**Christmas Carol the Radio Play:** This is a delightful and fresh spin on the traditional Dickens holiday classic. 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday, Leela Arts Center, 620 Lee St., Des Plaines, $15-$25, 847-220-2919

**Marcia Ball:** 8 p.m. Friday, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, $20-$45, 847-492-8860

**Distress and Danger in the Treatment of Young Adults:** A conference for mental health professionals focuses on the treatment of young adults ages 17-30. Featured are two guest speakers, as well as a panel discussion and dialogue treating young adults. 8 a.m. Friday, Yellowbrick, 1500 Sherman Ave., Evanston, $25, 866-364-2300

**Clara and the Nutcracker:** Nothing says ballet like The Nutcracker, and this Panto-retelling of the classic has all the magic and fantasy of the original fairy tale, except for one thing - absolutely no tutus. 7:30 p.m. Friday; 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Piccolo Theatre, 4059 Dempster St, Skokie, free, 847-677-1710

**St. James the Greater Church:** With Lee Coulter. 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Skokie's Aaron Griffin House, 600 Main St., Evanston, $11-$27, 847-492-8860

**Estate Planning:** Learn about the benefits of an estate plan and how to protect your financial interests while planning to bring the perpetrators to justice. 1 p.m. Friday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-679-7500

**Teen Game Night for ages 13-18:** Play on big screens with the library's game systems and collections. Pizza is generously donated by Giordano's Pizza. Please register by calling. 5 p.m. Friday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

**Turn to Calendar, Next Page**
CALENDAR

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Bibliobop Dance Party: Bring your family and friends as the tunes are cranked up and boogie down in the library. It’s fun for the whole family to dance with your little ones. 10 a.m.
Friday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

Amlings Toy Ride: The 10th Annual Amlings Toy Ride leaves Amlings Cycle, with bikers traveling 10 miles with a police escort pulling gift-filled trailers going to Mystic Cleft. Register online.
6:30 a.m. Friday, Amlings Cycle, 8140 N Milwaukee Ave., Niles, $5 for first bike, $1 per additional bike, $2 for passengers, 847-692-4240

Gentle Yoga: Exercises are done in a chair or standing not on the floor. 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Friday, Northbrook Public Library, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, free, 847-272-6224

Share The Warmth: Join a group of warm, friendly, supportive women (men welcome) to prepare one-of-a-kind fleece blankets for chemo patients. A basic crochet stitch can be taught if needed. 9 a.m. Friday, North Shore Senior Center, 161 Northfield Road, Northfield, free, 847-293-6755

Behind the Doors of Downton Abbey: This presentation will feature many behind-the-scenes anecdotes and fascinating hidden details, as well as highlight the historical context of these captivating characters and stories. 10 a.m. Friday, North Shore Senior Center, 161 Northfield Road, Northfield, $10 NSSC members; $13 non-members, 847-784-6030

The Senior Stompers Concert and Luncheon Event: Enjoy lunch and an afternoon of great music in the company of friends. 11:30 a.m. Friday, North Shore Senior Center, 161 Northfield Road, Northfield, $19 (NSSC members); $25 (non-member), 847-784-6030

Hanukkah Happening: 6 p.m. Friday, Temple Judea Mizpah, 8610 Niles Center Road, Skokie, $12 adult (13 and older); $5 child, 847-676-1566

Saturday, Dec. 12

Santa’s Brunch at White Pines: Kick off the holidays with brunch featuring an appearance by good ol’ St. Nick. Children can visit and have a photo taken with Santa, join in holiday craft activities and play games. Reservation required. 11 a.m. Saturday, White Pines Golf Club, 500 W. Jefferson St., Bensenville, $14.99 (adults); $7.99 (children ages 5-11); $4.99 (children 4 and under), 630-766-0304

Get Hooked: Adult Crafts: Winter Card Making: For those age 13 years or up to use layering techniques, stamps, paper punches and other fun embellishments to create fun and unique greeting cards. Materials are provided, but registration is required. 10 a.m. Saturday, Morton Grove Public Library, 1640 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

Second Saturday Bingo Breakfast: Kids and families are welcome to enjoy some breakfast treats as we play Bingo. Enjoy a kick start to your weekend with a morning of family fun at the library. 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

Niles Garden Club: Winter Container Project: Gardeners create the annual winter arrangements for the Library entwining techniques and stamps, Underground window well. This is an “in the dirt” garden experience. Dress for the weather. 10 a.m. Saturday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

Teen Gingerbread Houses: Teens create a gingerbread house using graham crackers, royal icing and tons of tasty treats. 1 p.m. Saturday, Niles Public Library, free, 847-663-1234

Wonderland Express Christmas Concert: Enjoy traditional holiday musical favorites in the Aldorff Auditorium. 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Saturday, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, $20 plus parking, 847-835-5440

Reflect on Christmas - The Shoemaker and the Elves: Cozy up with two heart-warming family tales for the season, as performed by Chicago’s premiere puppeteers. Please call to register. 11 a.m. Saturday, 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Glenview Library, 130 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

Exam Cram at Lincolnwood Library: We have snacks, WiFi, outlets, laptops you can check out, reference librarians on hand and some relaxing activities you can do to take a breather. Grades 9-12. Registration required. Noon Saturday, Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood, free, 847-677-5277

Meet Local Mystery Authors - Author Panel and Book Signing: Join in a discussion with three award-winning writers from the Chicagoland area, Lori Rader-Day (Little Pretty Things), Susanna Calkins (The Masque of a Murder) and Lynne Raimondo (Dante’s Dilemma), to learn about their newest books and their writing process. 1 p.m. Saturday, Morton Grove Public Library, 1640 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

Celebrate Star Wars: Join in celebrating “Star Wars” and the upcoming release of “Episode VII.” Come in costume and enjoy treats in our cantina, turn on some music and play BB-8 and more. Saturday, Evanston Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-869-0223

Sunday, Dec. 13

Gary Gulman: 7 p.m. Sunday, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, $20-$25, 847-492-8860

Do Not Submit: A Storytelling Open Mic: Local event that is pressure free for storytellers from zero to decades of experience to connect, share stories and hone their craft. 5:30 p.m. Sunday, The Celtic Knot Public House, 626 Church St., Evanston, free, 847-864-1679

Single Sword Combat Certificate: Single Sword is a theatrical style of sword play dating back to the golden age of Hollywood, featured in the classic swashbuckling movies of the 30s and 40s and contemporary classics like “The Princess Bride.” Influenced by modern sabre fencing, this is one of the most useful sword techniques to master. 10 a.m. Sunday, Actors Gymnasium, 927 N. Armitage Ave., Chicago, $415, 847-328-2795

Preserving Survivor Stories: Ask Holocaust Survivor Pinchas Gutter any question you would like, and “natural language” technology software will respond as if Pinchas were in the room.
10:30 a.m. Saturday, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, free, 847-967-4800

The Addams Family: The Musical: Enjoy this musical comedy about everyone’s favorite creepy and kooky family. 1 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Saturday, 7 p.m. Sunday, Wilmette Theatre, 1127 Central Ave., Wilmette, $15-$18, 847-251-7424

Breaking into the Business Workshop: Actors Training Center Founder and Director, Carole Dibo hosts this one-day workshop, primarily for parents of budding stars as well as professional actors interested in hearing from industry pros directly. 9 a.m. Saturday, Wilmette Theatre, 1127 Central Ave., Wilmette, $75 adult; $50 student 12 to 17 years, 773-398-6154

Corollis Holiday Concert: Holiday a cappella concert featuring works by Bebì, Lauridsen, Chilcott, Gjeilo, Vaughan Williams, Applebaum and others. 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Christ Church Winnetka, 784 Sheridan Road, Winnetka, $20; $10 under 18, 847-869-0223

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Study for Finals Week (Grades 9-12): Meeting rooms will be open for study all week long. Monday-Friday, 3-9 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

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Swing Into the Season: Jingle Jazz:
Add some zest to your holidays with the Suenos Latin-Jazz Quintet. Let your spirit soar with this lively repertoire of seasonal music infused with a distinctive Latin flair. 2 p.m. Sunday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

Lincoln Hall Holiday Concert: Get in the holiday spirit with an afternoon of seasonal tunes performed by Lincoln Hall Chorale. 2 p.m. Sunday, Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood, free, 847-677-5277

Bel Soiree Chamber Ensemble
Winter Holiday Concert: The Bel Soiree Chamber Ensemble of flute, oboe and bassoon with soprano voice performs a roster of repertoire ranging from early Baroque to Jazz standards. 2 p.m. Sunday, Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

Dance Around the World: Put on your dancing shoes and get ready to move for an interactive performance of dances from around the globe. 2 p.m. Sunday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

Hanukkah Party at Temple Beth Israel: Enjoy the Annual Brotherhood Hanukkah Party featuring Jason Kolcum, Juggler Extraordinaire. 11:15 a.m. Sunday, Temple Beth Israel, 3601 W. Dempster St., Skokie, $5 lunch fee for kids, $10 per adult. Charge without lunch is $5 per person, 847-965-0951

Chanukah Craft Booth at Westfield Old Orchard: Visit the Chanukah booth to enjoy Chanukah crafts, kosher refreshments, Jewish holiday spirit and lighting of the Menorah. 11 a.m. Sunday, Westfield Old Orchard, 4999 Old Orchard Center, Skokie, free, 847-673-8800

Architecture Tour: Symbolic By Design: Learn how renowned Chicago architect Stanley Tigerman infused every space in the Museum with historical and emotional symbolism. 11 a.m. Sunday, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, free with Museum admission, 847-967-4800

Second Sunday Survivor Presentation: Take advantage of the unique opportunity to hear a Holocaust survivor tell their story and answer questions. Adele Zaveduk, who survived in hiding in rural France, is the speaker. 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, free, 847-967-4800

Gifts of the Magi: This year's annual concert celebrates the gifts of the three kings and the King of Kings who received their offerings. 4 p.m. Sunday, Winnetka Presbyterian Church, 1255 Willow Road, Winnetka, free, 847-446-7777

Monday, Dec. 14

Folled Again: 7:30 p.m. Monday, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, $15-$30, 847-492-8860

Book Babies: Songs, games, story time and free play for babies ages 2 and younger with a caregiver. 10:15 a.m. Monday, Evanston Public Library - North Branch, 2026 Central St., Evanston, free, 847-448-8860

Live Bluegrass, Roots and Folk: The Mudflapps perform. 8 p.m. Monday, The Celtic Knot Public House, 626 Church St., Evanston, free, 847-864-1679

Alliance Francaise du North Shore Program: The program will be Haitian: its cultures, its people and its roots. This presentation will offer a brief description of Haitian life as it reflects its culture, people and history. 1 p.m. Monday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-328-9516

hoopla, MyMediaMail & Zino Individual Appointments: Meet with trained library staff for a 45-minute one-on-one session and learn how to download ebooks, audiobooks, magazines, movies, TV shows or music to your portable device. 10 a.m. Monday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

Community Service Club: Make placemats for Meals on Wheels or create coloring books for children in need. Complete projects for the community while earning community service hours. Grades 6-8: registration required, drop-ins welcome. 4 p.m. Monday, Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood, free, 847-677-5277

Ballroom Dancing Classes: Not only is ballroom again one of the most popular forms of dance, it has been proven to promote keeping the mind active and healthy. 6:30 p.m. Monday, Lincolnwood Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Lincolnwood, free, 847-663-1234

Minecraft Monday: Students in grades 3-5 are welcome to register to try their hand at this monthly MineCraft Monday challenge. The group meets in the new computer training lab on the lower level. 4:30 p.m. Monday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

Tuesday, Dec. 15

Rotary Club of Evanston Light-house: 7:35 a.m. Tuesday, Hilton Garden Inn Chicago North Shore/Evanston, 1818 Maple Ave., Evanston, free

LightSaber Workshop: Fight like a Jedi: Come and learn the basics of lightsaber combat used in the epic film series. Using the same types of lightsabers used on the film sets, the basics of Jedi attack and defense with the lightsaber are covered, as well as the tactics of the evil Sith. 8 p.m. Tuesday, Actors Gymnasium, 927 Noyes St., Evanston, $10, 847-328-2795

Tuesday Morning Music: Garden visitors can enjoy free hour-long meditative musical performances on Tuesday mornings in the McGlinn Pavilion overlooking Evening Island. Music varies from string quartets to Native American flutes, and are focused towards an older crowd. 10 a.m. Tuesday, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, free, 847-835-5440

Power Employment Workshop: Secret Strategies to Land a Job in 90 Days: Discover proven strategies to land a job, as Illinois WorkNet Center speakers share what's working and what's not in today's job market. 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

Financial planning: Schedule a free one-hour consultation with a Certified Financial Planner. 9 a.m. Tuesday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

DIY Tuesdays: Roll up your sleeves and get creative with bimonthly STEAM crafts and projects. Choose one of these to make during this session: bouncy balls, silly putty or stress balls. Grades 3-8: registration required. 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Lincolnwood Public Library, 4000 W. Pratt Ave., Lincolnwood, free, 847-677-5277

Movies, Munches, and More: Mr. Holmes: The story is of an aged, retired Sherlock Holmes, who looks back on his life and grapples with an unsolved case involving a beautiful woman. 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

MGPL Kids: Listen Up: Drop-in story and play time for preschoolers with a parent or caregiver. 4:45 p.m. Tuesday, Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

Tablet Tuesdays: Drop in to learn the basics of your iPad, Android tablet or Kindle Fire, as well as ways to customize your device and install apps. 3 p.m. Tuesday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

Religion Update 2015: Over two weeks, Jim Kenney offers a detailed assessment of world religions over the past 12 months. It's about good news (Pope Francis) and very bad news (religious violence). But the analysis will be thoughtful and often uplifting. 1 p.m. Tuesday, North Shore Senior Center, 161 Northfield Road, Northfield, $20 (NSSC members); $25 (non-members), 847-784-6030

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**Wednesday, Dec. 16**

**Christmas Bingo:** Comedienne Vicky Quade brings her hilarious holiday favorite 'Christmas Bingo' to the Leela Arts Center. Help her save a local parish by playing along with her in a rousing evening of bingo where attendees have a chance to win prizes. 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Leela Arts Center, 620 Lee St, Des Plaines, $20-30, 847-220-2919

**Dave Specter's Adventures in Guitar with Guy King:** 8 p.m. Wednesday, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, $12-$22, 847-492-8860

**ETHS Booster Board Meeting:** Held in Room 5-214, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Evanston Township High School, 1600 Dodge Ave., Evanston, free, 847-424-7000

**Live Music Wednesdays with the Josh Rzepka Trio:** Hear the music of Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk and other classics of the era played by the Josh Rzepka Bop trio. 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Found Kitchen & Social House, 1631 Chicago Ave., Evanston, free, 847-868-8945

**Preschool Story Time:** Stories and songs for children ages 3-5 and a caregiver. 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Evanston Public Library, 1703 Orrington Ave., Evanston, free, 847-448-8610

**All Things Spanish:** Both native and non-native Spanish speakers can practice their language skills. 7 p.m. Wednesday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

**Facebook basics:** Get started with the basics, including signing up, creating a profile and adding friends. 10 a.m. Wednesday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

**Scrabble for Adults:** Exercise your brain and enjoy friendly games of Scrabble with other word lovers. 2 p.m. Wednesday, Morton Grove Public Library, 6400 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-929-4220

**Book Discussion:** Join us for a book discussion of The Rosie Effect by Graeme Simsion. 1 p.m. Wednesday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

**Classics on Wednesday Film Series:**
1 p.m. Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Northbrook Public Library, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, free, 847-272-6224

**Chess Club:** Whether you're a skilled player looking for an opponent or a beginner interested in learning new skills, join our new weekly chess club. No registration required. 7 p.m. Wednesday, Northbrook Public Library, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, free, 847-272-6224

**Storytime and Snacks for ages two and up with adult:** Just drop in and join Mrs. Schmitt for stories, fun and a tasty snack in the Lifestyle Center. Younger siblings are welcome, but all children must be accompanied by an adult. 10:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. Wednesday, Whole Foods Market, 840 Willow Road, Northbrook, free, 847-729-7500

**Happy Birthday Beethoven:** Join Jim Kendros in celebrating the 245th birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven. Explore timeless gems including Symphonies #5 and #7, Moonlight Sonata, Piano Concerto #5 (Emperor) and much more. 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, North Shore Senior Center, 161 Northfield Road, Northfield, $10 (NSSC members); $13 (non-members), 847-784-6030

**Michael Palascak:** The local comedian, as seen on “Letterman” and “Leno,” headlines a stand-up showcase. Featuring Larry Reeb. 8 p.m. Wednesday, Zanies Rosemont, 5437 Park Place, Rosemont, $22-$25 plus a two-item food/drink minimum, 847-813-0484

**Home and Personal Safety Tips:**
Officer Tammy Jacobsen, Crime Prevention Officer with the Skokie Police Department, is the guest speaker. 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Ezra Habonim, The Niles Township Jewish Congregation, 4500 Dempster St., Skokie, free, 847-678-4414

**Senior High Youth Group:** For all youth Grades 9-12 to enjoy fun and friendship while engaging in meaningful discussions and service learning opportunities. 6:45 p.m. Wednesday, First Congregational Church of Wilmette, 1125 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, free, 847-251-6660

**World War II Veterans' Roundtable:** Vets gather for lively conversation and coffee. Newcomers are welcome. 10 a.m. Wednesday, Wilmette Public Library, 1242 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, free, 847-251-6660

**Get started with the fundamentals, including signing up, creating a profile and adding friends. 10 a.m. Wednesday, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, $50, 847-492-8860

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"Creed" ***½
PG-13, 2:12, drama. In 1976 the nation yearned for a red, white and blue plate special piled high with corn. Then up those Philadelphia Museum of Art steps, backed by the Bill Conti theme, that something arrived. Nobody went to the first "Rocky" for the finesse of the filmmaking. They went for the underdog rooting, for Rocky and Adrian, for the unexpected sweetness, for the redemption angle, for the reconstituted boxing movie cliches that tasted not new but new-ish. It was simply time for "Rocky," written by and starring Sylvester Stallone, directed by John Avildsen. So,"Creed," a seventh "Rocky" movie? Apollo Creed, Rocky's old nemesis turned best friend, had a son who grows up a scrappy fighter in the Los Angeles foster care system? Moves to Philly, connects with Rocky, who's tending the restaurant and still wearing that hat? Rocky trains him for a big fight? That's how it goes, yes. And "Creed" is easily the best "Rocky" movie since "Rocky:" — Michael Phillips

"The Good Dinosaur" ★★
PG, 1:40, animation. Work by multiple writers was cobbled together for this story of a world where the meteor that hit the Earth and wiped out all dinosaurs actually missed. The dinosaurs have evolved to the point where they live in houses, plant crops and herd bison. For some reason, humans have only progressed slightly more than canines. Production was halted early in the process of making "The Good Dinosaur" because it had some dinosaur-size problems. Peter Sohn was brought in as the new director and he started the process over two years ago. The second attempt ends up so flat it would have been smart to scrap it and try a third time. The only aspect worthy of high praise is the background work, which is so stunning it keeps the movie from heading for a tar pit. — Rick Bentley

"The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2" ★★½
PG-13, 2:17. sci-fi. "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2" brings the four-film saga of Katniss Everdeen and her revolutionary war to a dutiful, fairly satisfying if undeniably attenuated conclusion. In the first and best "Hunger Games" film four years ago, Jennifer Lawrence was like Peggy Sawyer, the Allentown, Pa., hoofer in "42nd Street." With bow, arrow and hawklike gaze of destiny, she went out there a youngster, but she had to come back a star, and she did. Lawrence brought home the bacon and fried it up in a pan. In "Mockingjay 2," it's more a case of her saving the movie's bacon, period. — M.P

"The Peanuts Movie" ★★½
G, 1:33, animation. Beloved, neurotic cartoon kid Charlie Brown hits the biggest screen possible (and in 3-D) in the warm "The Peanuts Movie," directed by animation vet Steve Martino. "The Peanuts Movie" is extremely faithful to the original source material, which will please longtime fans, but this is aimed at bringing in a new, youthful audience. While Charlie Brown is the definition of an insecure worrywart, the feature film not only redeems him in his failures but also rewards the way he reacts to disappointments and challenges. — Katie Walsh

"Spectre" ★★★
PG-13, 2:30, action. "Spectre" cost nearly $300 million to make, and I suppose it was worth it. It's a good Bond movie, which will be good enough for many millions of fans. It's also the longest Bond movie in existence, clocking in at just under 2½ decadent, carefree, flamboyantly destructive hours. This time Ian Fleming's well-dressed assassin changes clothes from Mexico City to Rome, from London to the Austrian mountains, from Tangier back to London, where terrorists-entrepreneurs carrying the familiar handle of Spectre are doing dirty work on a large scale. Of the Daniel Craig 007s, director Sam Mendes' follow-up to "Skyfall" is not quite up to "Skyfall" or my favorite, "Casino Royale." But it's a considerably better evil-quelling instruction manual than "Quantum of Solace." — M.P

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Block, Steve
Steve Block, age 53, of Park Ridge; dear son of the late George and Madeline Block; loving brother of Jeff Block, Linda (Kevin) Misselbrook and the late Nancy Block. Visitation Saturday, December 12 from 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. with a Celebration of Life Service beginning at 5:00 p.m. at Nelson Funeral Home, 820 W. Talcott (at Cumberland), Park Ridge. Interment private. In lieu of flowers, please direct memorial contributions to the Permanently Disabled Jockeys Fund (PDJF), P.O. Box 803, Elmhurst, IL 60126 or www.pdjf.org. For more information 847.823.5122 or www.nelsonfunerals.com.
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The Italian job

Fiat Chrysler must shake reliability issues with return of daring models

BY CHARLES FLEMING
Tribune Newspapers

In debuting two ambitious new automobiles at the Los Angeles Auto Show in mid-November, Fiat Chrysler is trying to capitalize on a decades-long American love affair with Italian design.

The carmaker faces an uphill battle, the result of an equally long American distrust of Italian engineering.

The automaker showcased the 2017 Fiat 124 Spider convertible and 2017 Alfa Romeo Giulia sedan, two new Italian-flavored offerings from the company that also controls the玛莎拉蒂 and法拉利 nameplates.

Anticipation is high. The Fiat Spider is a return to soft-top glory for the company, whose 1960s and '70s 124 Spiders were beloved. The Alfa Romeo Giulia is a grand-touring four-door with sports car specifications and luxury appointments.

Skepticism is high too. Fiat Chrysler's Italian brands suffer from U.S. consumer doubts about durability.

Fans of the Italian automobiles believe that the Fix-It-Again-Tony suspicion is ill-founded.

"You can't win the race if you don't finish the race, and Ferrari has been dominant at long, hard races at Le Mans, Sebring and Daytona," said car collector and Ferrari lover Bruce Meyer, who has owned a 1967 Ferrari 275 GTB for 45 years. "Mine has never let me down. The reliability issue is an urban myth."

Consumer Reports takes a different attitude. It has judged Fiat among the worst of the worst. In a recent reliability study, the publication found Fiat finishing dead last, ranked 28th out of 28 cars tested.

"The problem with Italian car companies has been quality and reliability," said Jake Fisher, director of auto testing of the car-quality publication. "It's not fair to judge them by their reputation of 20 or 30 years ago, but it is fair to look at the recent data. Fiat models are the absolute worst, and Chrysler is not far behind."

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles has experienced strong sales with the re-launch of the Fiat brand, which began in 2007 with reintroduction of the once ubiquitous Fiat 500, a bubbly subcompact.

Research provided by the online auto sales and data company TrueCar shows the company sold more than 40,000 Fiats in the U.S. each year from 2012 to 2014, with 2015 totals likely to hit that number too.

That's considerably more business than the company did with the higher-priced Maseratis and Ferraris.

The company moved 12,942 of the former and 2,145 of the latter last year, though the profit margins on those vehicles are believed to be considerably higher than on the Fiats.

Analysts and others agreed that the Fiat problem of old were more severe than the reliability issues of today, which may involve customer dissatisfaction with navigation systems or long-term performance problems rather than vehicles simply breaking down.

"It's relative, because the worst car in 2015 is probably better than the best car in 1982," Kelley Blue Book analyst Karl Brauer said.

"The spectrum is so much narrower now that a bad cup holder can torpedo a car's popularity. Nobody is buying Fiat 500s and being stuck by the side of the road. But 30 years ago, they were."

What has not changed, in far more than 30 years, is the excellence in Italian coach building and design. Leslie Kendall, chief curator of the Petersen Museum and an unabashed Fiat admirer - he once owned a 1961 Fiat 1200 roadster - saw no other country has produced so many beautiful automobiles.

"Since World War II, Italy has been making cars that are taut, lithe, concise and muscular, with a genuine sculptural quality to them," Kendall said. "And a lot of designers took their inspiration from what the Italians were doing. No one knows what the Italian secret is. What it is or how to define it, or what makes the country home to so many creative people. Maybe it's something in the tomato sauce."

The new Fiat 124 Spider will try to bring back some of that sauce. The two-seat soft-top is actually a Mazda Miata in an Italian suit. Most of the mechanics of the car, from the engine on up, are the result of a partnership between FCA and Mazda, which for 2016 redesigned the Miata MX-5, the best-selling roadster in history.

The Miata has won fans with its return to simple, stripped-down, sports car essentials.

Critics of Fiat engineering say the Mazda underpinnings and Italian styling could be a potent combination and produce a car that looks great and performs reliably at the same time.

"The Miata is almost flawless; a dynamic ride experience at a price that's right," KBB's Brauer said. "If Fiat can take that combination and add some Italian flair and mess up the performance, they could have an extremely effective brand builder."

FCA has high hopes for its 2017 Alfa Romeo Giulia too. Built in Italy and featuring a 505-horsepower engine "derived" from Ferrari, the Giulia will pair high-end sedan luxury with sports car performance, including a promised 3.8-second zero-to-60 mph time and a top speed of 191 mph. FCA says it's the "most powerful Alfa Romeo production car ever."

The Chrysler connection may not ultimately be helpful in putting more Italian cars on U.S. roads, since Chrysler, too, has found itself nearer to the bottom of reliability studies than the top.

But the Fiat Chrysler marriage has borne interesting fruit. Chrysler cars are being rebranded as Lancias in some European markets, bringing that historic brand back to life. And the new Dodge Dart and Chrysler 200 are both large versions of the Alfa Romeo Giulietta.

"The burden is on them to build incredibly good product with incredibly good dealer and service experiences, not for one year with one car but for five or 10 years, with 90 percent of the vehicles performing well," Brauer said.

"It's a cliché, but it's amazing what good product and service can do. That's always the fix for a brand that's suffering."
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Lincoln piles on the luxury

BY CHARLES FLEMING

Lincoln's luxurious 2016 MKX includes a suite of sophisticated driving aids.

The driving experience is one of silence — that most valuable of luxuries. The MKX is equipped with an active sound-damping system. Microphones in the headliner pick up unwanted or intrusive noises in the cabin, and the system programs sound waves to cancel them. On the freeway, there’s almost no engine noise, tire noise or wind noise. Just the quiet whir of the air conditioning.

The MKX produces its own light show, too. The headlamps glimmer to life when the key fob is activated, and a vision of the Lincoln logo is beamed onto the ground beside the doors.

Lincoln, owned by Ford, has begun offering MKX buyers the choice of its parent company’s new 2.7-liter EcoBoost V-6 engine — used in the F-150 pickup trucks — in addition to a larger, less efficient 3.7-liter V-6. The smaller engine gets better gas mileage, Lincoln says, while producing more horsepower (335) and torque (380 pound-feet).

The MKX — priced right in the middle of the somewhat crowded MK series of MKC, MKZ, MKS and MKT — starts at $38,000, but it goes up fast, and far. The version I drove goes out the door at almost $70,000.

Q: In July, I purchased a 2014 Ford Escape. For 30-plus years, I have purchased my vehicles from our local dealer. This vehicle I purchased from a different Ford dealer. My local dealer got very upset about this and has refused to service this car, although he will service our other Fords purchased from him. I have contacted other dealers and asked if I could receive service if the vehicle was not theirs, and all responded definitely. I love the service department and would like to continue using it but feel that this has been made a personal matter. Any ideas on how to proceed would be appreciated.

— B.Y., Chicago

A: We are aware of no law or Ford policy forcing a dealer to accept your business. However, as a legitimate Ford franchisee, the dealer is required to perform any and all warranty work, but it can make it rough on you by giving its own customers priority scheduling and then accept your car for an open appointment, which can have you cooling your heels for a long time. The dealer from whom you bought the car will be happy to service it and maybe your other cars too.

Q: I own a 1998 Nissan Quest and am the original owner. I took the van to the garage that I do business with in January because the smell of gasoline permeated inside the vehicle every time I put the heater on. The mechanic replaced the coolant, injectors and manifold gasket. The smell never went away in spite of my bringing the van back a couple of times as well as taking it to a different garage. Eventually I gave up on it as the warmer weather replaced the cold. However, the smell is back. Do you have any idea as to what the cause might be?

— N.P., Hartford, Conn.

A: This was a frequent problem for Nissans of that vintage. Fuel hoses and vapor hoses would eventually deteriorate. There was even a recall for some model years. Discuss this with the service manager at your dealership to see if your car’s VIN is on its list. If not, the source of the leak must be hunted down, not only for your safety, but also for the environment.

Q: My 2008 Dodge Charger developed a front wheel “thunk” noise at 23,000 miles. A Dodge dealership worked on it (dealership has since gone under), but the work lasted only about 5,000 miles. I took it to a couple of other mechanics. After $1,600, the thunk remained. I did get new brakes out of it, though. It doesn’t affect steering or braking, nor is there any feedback in the brake pedals or steering wheel. It is just annoying.

— C.J., DuPage, Ill.

A: Most likely, there is a problem with the front struts’ rods, or more precisely, the strut rod bushings. We have been unable to find replacement bushings, so it looks as if you may have to replace both struts. We would suggest an aftermarket brand such as Moog that uses a different type of bushing material than the original equipment struts.

Bob Weber is an ASE-certified master mechanic and freelance writer.

Send questions along with name and town to Motormouth, Rides, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Fifth Floor, Chicago IL 60611 or motormouth.trib@verizon.net.
Egofske resigns after leading Niles North to 7A quarters

By Eric Van Dril
Pioneer Press

Niles North is looking for a new football coach following Mark Egofske's resignation.

A year ago, Egofske led the Vikings to their first playoff berth since 1992. Niles North returned to the postseason this year, and it won two games before falling 28-17 to Bradley-Bourbonnais in the Class 7A quarterfinals. It was the deepest any team has advanced in the history of the program. It also was the first time the Vikings, who finished 7-5 in 2015, made the playoffs in consecutive seasons.

Egofske nearly wasn't a part of that run, however, due to lingering issues with his right hip.

"They asked me to be the varsity coach four years ago. I said, 'All right, it's going to be a year or two,'" Egofske said. "I really wanted to step down after last season. I did not want to do this year. I've got a hip I'm trying to get replaced."

Egofske said he was told he needed to have his right hip replaced in July. Due to football, Egofske pushed the surgery back. He scheduled his hip replacement for after the season.

Or so he thought.

Egofske's hip replacement was scheduled for the week of the Bradley-Bourbonnais game. Because the Vikings won their first two games of the Class 7A playoffs, he was forced to reschedule the surgery for January 2016. Most patients resume normal activities six to eight weeks after hip replacement surgery, according to www.mayoclinic.org, but patients typically continue to recover for six to 12 months.

The second reason Egofske said he was told was the desire to watch his daughter, Julienne Egofske, during her final season of high school softball. Julienne Egofske, who's a senior at Warren, signed with Bucknell last month.

"She's got one more spring left as a senior, and I'm just one of these guys... I've got to be around," Mark Egofske added that he's very proud of everything that Niles North has accomplished over the last two years. He credited the coaching talented running backs. Niles North senior Barrington Wade has verbally committed to Iowa and Rashard Mendenhall, who played for the Pittsburgh Steelers and Arizona Cardinals from 2008-2013, played for Egofske at Niles West.

Eric Van Dril is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

Twitter @VanDrilSports

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Congratulations to the winner!

Who was named December Athlete of the Month? Visit chicagotribune.com/athletes to find out, and stay tuned for a feature on the winner next week!
FOOTBALL

EMMETT CLIFFORD
QB, Loyola, Sr.
2015 stats: Passing: 191-for-271 (70.5 percent), 2,552 Yds, 33 TD; Rushing: 59 Att, 295 Yds, 4 TD
College: Undecided

DANIEL KURKOWSKI
OL, Loyola, Sr.
College: Undecided

MATT PRENDERGAST
OL, Nazareth, Sr.
College: Undecided

JOHN CLARK
OL, Nazareth, Sr.
2015 stats: Passing: 191-for-271 (70.5 percent), 2,552 Yds, 33 TD; Rushing: 59 Att, 295 Yds, 4 TD
College: Undecided

JACOB MOECKLER
OL, Deerfield, Sr.
College: Undecided

SEAN O’MALLEY
OL, Libertyville, Sr.
College: Undecided

FRANCIS FAY
2015 stats: Rushing: 72 Att, 509 Yds, 71 Avg; Receiving: 15 Rec, 112 Yds, 7.5 Avg; 153 return yards; 7 total TD
College: Undecided

SEAN MCCORMACK
ATH, Hinsdale South, Sr.
2015 stats: Rushing: 175-for-282 (62.1 percent), 3,041 Yds, 35 TD, 11 INT; Receiving: 15 Rec, 112 Yds, 7.5 Avg; 153 return yards; 7 total TD
College: Undecided

BOBBY DESHEROW
DB, Loyola, Sr.
2015 stats: 96 Total tackles, 5 TFL, 8 Pass break-ups, 2 Int, 1 FF, 2 Rec fumble
College: Undecided

ANTHONY ROMANO
LB, Evanston, Sr.
2015 stats: 125 Total tackles, 8 TFL, 3 Sck, 2 QB hurries, 7 Pass break-ups, 2 Int, 1 FF, 2 Rec fumble
College: Undecided

COLIN CASAS
LB, New Trier, Sr.
2015 stats: 52 Total tackles, 7 TFL, 5 QB hurries, 2 Pass break-ups, 1 Rec fumble
College: Undecided

VINNY SCALETTA
DL, Ridgefield, Sr.
2015 stats: 100 Total tackles, 11 TFL 5 Sck, 2 FF, 2015 stats: Passing: 191-for-271 (70.5 percent), 2,552 Yds, 33 TD; Rushing: 59 Att, 295 Yds, 4 TD
College: Undecided

LUKAS KERSTEIN
DB, Deerfield, Sr.
2015 stats: 90 Total tackles, 2 TFL, 13 Pass break-ups, 2 Int, 1 FF
College: Undecided

CHRIS SIMMONS
DB, Nazareth, Sr.
2015 stats: 23 Total tackles
College: Undecided

BOBBY DESHEROW
DB, Loyola, Sr.
2015 stats: 96 Total tackles, 5 TFL, 8 Pass break-ups, 2 Int, 1 FF, 2 Rec fumble
College: Undecided

VINNY SCALETTA
DL, Ridgefield, Sr.
2015 stats: 100 Total tackles, 11 TFL 5 Sck, 2 FF, 2015 stats: Passing: 191-for-271 (70.5 percent), 2,552 Yds, 33 TD; Rushing: 59 Att, 295 Yds, 4 TD
College: Undecided

BRAD HUTH
PR, Hinsdale Central, Sr.
2015 stats: 69 Rec, 834 Yds, 12.1 Avg, 2 TD, 400 Return Yds
College: Undecided

MATT CLIFFORD
ATH, Lake Forest, Sr.
2015 stats: 79 Total tackles, 8 Pass break-ups, 2 Rec fumble
College: Undecided

JALAN JENKINS
LB, Evanston, Sr.
2015 stats: 66 Total tackles
College: Undecided

MATT CLIFFORD
ATH, Lake Forest, Sr.
2015 stats: 79 Total tackles, 8 Pass break-ups, 2 Rec fumble
College: Undecided

DIMITRIJE MILUTINOVIC
DL, Glenbrook North, Sr.
2015 stats: 64 Total tackles
College: Undecided

BOYS SOCCER

JIMMY ALLEN
F, Timothy Christian, So.
2015 stats: 35 goals, 3 assists
College: Undecided

KEVIN REILLY
M, Libertyville, Sr.
2015 stats: 7 goals, 7 assists
College: Dayton

AUSTIN EHREN
F, Carmel, So.
2015 stats: 28 goals, 8 assists
College: Undecided

ERICK BALTHAZAR
F, Evanston, Sr.
2015 stats: 20 goals, 8 assists
College: Undecided

RYAN MCKERNAN
D, Carmel, Sr.
2015 stats: 9 goals, 4 assists
College: Undecided

MATT PRENDERGAST
OL, Nazareth, Sr.
College: Undecided

—Matt Harness, Pioneer Press

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

NIKI AHLSTRAND
OH, Maine East, Sr.
2015 stats: 243 kills, 42 aces, 92 blocks, 50 digs
College: Undecided

ALFREDO RECENDEZ
S-OH, Nazareth, Sr.
2015 stats: 109 saves, 10 shutouts, 16 goals allowed
College: Undecided

GRACE BUTLER
S-OH, Nazareth, Sr.
2015 stats: 746 assists, 45 aces, 131 kills, 185 digs, 47 blocks
College: Central Michigan

CHRISTINA REED
OH, Loyola, Sr.
2015 stats: 152 Total tackles, 11 TFL, 3 Sck, 2 QB hurries, 7 Pass break-ups, 2 Int, 1 FF, 2 Rec fumble
College: Undecided

ALLIE NELSON
OH, Loyola, Sr.
2015 stats: 849 assists, 66 kills, 37 aces, 246 digs
College: Undecided

SARAH ROSE
S, York, Jr.
2015 stats: 849 assists, 66 kills, 37 aces, 246 digs
College: Undecided

MÆEVE GRIMES
S-OH, Nazareth, Sr.
2015 stats: 218 kills, 36 aces, 29 blocks, 180 digs, 413 assists
College: Ferris State (Mich.)

DANI VAN LATEN
S, Timothy Christian, Sr.
2015 stats: 749 assists, 114 kills, 51 blocks, 45 aces, 228 digs
College: Undecided

—George M. Wilcox, Pioneer Press

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Expecting success

Wildkits entered every game confident they'd post a shutout

BY ERIC VAN DRIL
Pioneer Press

In the Evanston boys soccer team's first game of the regular season, Conant scored two goals against goalie Adam Masters. Masters, the Pioneer Press All-Area Boys Soccer Player of the Year, allowed just one goal during the rest of the regular season. The Illinois High School Soccer Coaches Association all-state selection allowed just six goals and had 21 shutouts during his senior campaign. He shut out Central Suburban South champion Maine South, Central Suburban North champion Deerfield and Class 3A state champion Libertyville.

Masters' 21 shutouts are tied for the fifth-best single-season total in state history, according to the IHSA. Masters and the Wildkits' defense - it primarily featured Josh Klier, Henry Honzel, Henry Young and Zane Kashner in the back, and Adam Trujillo, Christyan De La Cruz and Dylan Ter Molen in the midfield - led the program to the Class 3A Glenbrook North Sectional title.

The following is an edited transcript of an interview between Masters and Pioneer Press freelance sports reporter Eric Van Dril.

Q: You had shutout streaks of nine games and 12 games. When you start compiling shutouts, especially right in a row, do you as a goalie feel like you're going to get scored on? Where is your confidence level?
A: For me, personally, confidence doesn't necessarily carry over. As a goalie, you always have to be confident. Even if you get scored on, the next game you've got to be just as confident as you were. For me, it depended on the team. Some games, I went in thinking it wouldn't surprise me if they got a goal, they're a good team - a Libertyville, a Warren. Other games, it was more of an expectation. But... we always expected a [shutout]. We knew that our defense was solid and we could stack up against any offense in the state. We knew if we really did play as a team and stick to the gameplan, we were all confident that we'd get a shutout every game.

Q: What is it like when you concede a goal? Walking away from the game, do you look back on it and think, "What could I have done better?" Or are you able to immediately move on from conceding a goal?
A: Short-term, the best thing I've found over my years of playing is just forget about it. You've got to continue playing the game, no matter if you're up five or down five. You've just got to move on to the next play. The more you think about it, the worse it's going to be the rest of the game. ... For me, after the game, I always analyze my performance. Even if I don't get scored on, I think about what I could have done better, how I could have helped more. Especially when I do concede a goal, I think about where could I have been positioned, how could I have told my defense to stop it, could I have used a different technique, etc... But that [analysis] I save until after the game. Or at least I try to.

Q: Did you go through the same process after the second Libertyville game - after Nate Edmunds had basically a perfect shot to score [with 2 minutes, 52 seconds remaining, to win the Class 3A Barrington Supersectional 1-0]?
A: Yeah, absolutely. As you said, it was a pretty perfect shot. ... Most of the time after a game, I feel like I could have done something better. I could have helped my team in a better way. But honestly, against Libertyville, I feel like I did my part. I made a couple big saves, and a couple breakaway saves. Watching the replay, I was pretty close to saving it, but I really don't think there was much more for me to do on that play. I had the technique right. I was in the right position. I mean, hats off to Nate because that was a great shot.

Eric Van Dril is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

Twitter @VanDrilSports
FIRST TEAM

**Ben Lodewyk**
D/MF, Timothy Christian, Sr.
2015 STATS: 11 goals, 14 assists
COLLEGE: Undecided
Lodewyk played a variety of positions for the Class 1A state champions this year. He was dangerous in all of them. Lodewyk scored one goal and assisted on another in Timothy Christian’s 2-1 win over Latin in the 1A Benedictine Supersectional. Lodewyk had three assists in a 4-1 victory over previously unbeaten Urbana U-High in the state semifinals. He then scored the Trojans’ first goal in the state championship game, another in Timothy Christian’s 4-1 victory over Anna-Jonesboro.

**Nash Pirie**
D, Barrington, Jr.
2015 STATS: 2 goals, 12 assists
COLLEGE: Undecided
It's not typical for a left back to be the most instrumental part of a team's offense, but that was the role Pirie had for Barrington this year. Pirie's speed allowed him to get by defenders with regularity and send crosses into the penalty box. Pirie, an Illinois High School Soccer Coaches Association all-state selection, was also a very solid defender.

**David Aniol**
D, Maine South, Sr.
2015 STATS: 0 goals, 1 assist
COLLEGE: Undecided
Little was expected from Maine South this season, following an almost complete turnover of its starting lineup. The Hawks finished with 15 shutouts, however, and won the Central Suburban North. They did so by using just three defenders. Aniol's physicality, intelligence and leadership at center back proved to be invaluable.

**Nate Edmunds**
M, Libertyville, Sr.
2015 STATS: 14 goals, 3 assists
COLLEGE: Undecided
Edmunds finished his senior season as an Illinois High School Soccer Coaches Association all-sectional selection and a Class 3A state champion. He scored twice in a 3-1 victory over Highland Park in the Stevenson Sectional semifinal. He also recorded the game-winner against Evanston in a 1-0 victory in the Barrington Supersectional.

**Rigoberto Rojas**
F, Hinsdale Central, Sr.
2015 STATS: 18 goals (10 game-winners), six assists
COLLEGE: Undecided
The Illinois High School Soccer Coaches Association all-state selection returned to high school soccer this season and helped the Red Devils finish 18-2-1 and win the West Suburban Silver. Rojas was named the MVP of the West team in the High School Soccer All-American Game in North Carolina on Saturday, Dec. 5. He's also one of three Illinois high school players named an All-American by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America.

**Nick Klabjan**
M, Deerfield, Sr.
2015 STATS: 13 goals, 11 assists
COLLEGE: Wisconsin
Klabjan was an Illinois High School Soccer Coaches Association all-state midfielder in his lone season of high school soccer. Klabjan not only used his great touch to create opportunities for his teammates, he also led the Warriors in scoring. Deerfield won the Central Suburban North and ended its season with a 1-0 loss to eventual state champion Libertyville.

**Louis St. John**
F, Leyden, Sr.
2015 STATS: 17 goals, 17 assists
COLLEGE: Undecided
Arabik finished his career with 48 goals and 28 assists in three varsity seasons. His return to high school soccer provided the Eagles with a Division I talent and a player who was willing to create opportunities for his teammates. Arabik was an Illinois High School Soccer Coaches Association all-sectional selection this year.

**Albert Arabik**
F, Leyden, Sr.
2015 STATS: 17 goals, 17 assists
COLLEGE: Undecided
Arabik finished his career with 48 goals and 28 assists in three varsity seasons. His return to high school soccer provided the Eagles with a Division I talent and a player who was willing to create opportunities for his teammates. Arabik was an Illinois High School Soccer Coaches Association all-sectional selection this year.

**Konrad Malinowski**
F, Elmwood Park, Jr.
2015 STATS: 30 goals, 12 assists
COLLEGE: Undecided
The Tigers won their first sectional title in program history, and Malinowski’s goal-scoring ability was a big reason why Malinowski scored seven goals as a sophomore. Elmwood Park coach Martin Blake attributed Malinowski’s development to his mental and physical maturation, hard work and experience.

**Joseph Lee**
M, Vernon Hills, Sr.
2015 STATS: 8 goals, 15 assists
COLLEGE: Brown
Lee’s quickness and technical ability in the middle of the field was an important reason why the Cougars reached a Class 2A sectional final this season. Lee was an Illinois High School Soccer Coaches Association all-state selection. In addition to that, Lee's GPA is above a 4.25, according to Vernon Hills coach Mike McCaulou.

**Eric Van Dril**, Pioneer Press
PLANT OF THE YEAR
KATIE RANDOLPH, LOYOLA

Striking the right balance

Loyola's Randolph has 4.0 GPA, plans to attend Ivy League school

BY GEORGE M. WILCOX
Pioneer Press

Katie Randolph was confident in her abilities and wanted to be Loyola's only setter.

Knowing Loyola has a tradition of running two-setter offenses, Randolph approached coach Mark Chang after her freshman season hoping to change Chang's mind.

"I like to attack at the net," Randolph said. "I just asked him. I tried to show him I could do it. A lot of times people don't think I can because I'm short. I'm 5-foot-6, 5-7 with shoes."

Randolph's talk with Chang worked.

"The more I looked at her hands and her defensive ability, you could watch her and see how much ball control she had," Chang said.

As the lone setter, Randolph directed Loyola to three consecutive 27-win seasons and back-to-back Class 4A sectional championships. For her efforts, Randolph was named the Pioneer Press All-Area Girls Volleyball Player of the Year.

Randolph has a 4.0 GPA. She plans on playing volleyball at an Ivy League school, but is waiting to hear where she has been accepted.

Pioneer Press sports reporter George M. Wilcox talked to Randolph about being a student at Loyola and fitting volleyball into her schedule.

Q: Has the time commitment in volleyball taken away academic pursuits you might have had at Loyola?
A: It has a little bit. But not enough where I resent it. There were definitely clubs I would have joined if I was not in volleyball. We have a Philosophy Club that meets Monday after school so I can't do that because I have practice. For the most part, I've been able to participate. I'm in Clavius, which is an honors program for math and science-inclined students. I'm in a service learning class. Doing service is part of the class. Every Sunday I work at Friedman's Place [in Chicago], which works with the visually impaired. I go there every Sunday for two hours. It's my faith class. I go to the class during school and we read different things and then we do service on the weekends or during the week. When we come into class, we reflect on it and discuss it.

Q: What do you like most about school?
A: I've had amazing teachers. When you've had teachers that are very passionate about their subject and love to share, I really like that. I've had really good teachers that made me want to come to class. They made me learn better. That's been the biggest impact.

Q: What has your class load been like this semester?
A: I'm in three AP courses this semester: Language and Composition, AP Psychology and AP Biology. Then I'm in theater. We needed a fine art to graduate so I decided to take theater and I'm in regular pre-calc and Justice Seminar, my faith class.

Q: Are you enjoying your theater class?
A: We do a lot of theater games and then we did monologues. We had to memorize a performance a couple of weeks ago. Right now we have a partner and picked our scenes yesterday. We are working on our scenes right now.

Q: For what play?
A: Mine is from "Reckless" [by Craig Lucas]. It's four or five pages with three monologues. It's about this lady whose husband hires a hitman to kill her and then she runs away. She runs to a gas station. She has nowhere to go. This man invites her over to Christmas with his family.

KEVIN TANAKA/PIONEER PRESS

Loyola's Katie Randolph, left, and Natasha Borkowski team up for a block against Hersey during the Class 4A Maine South Sectional semifinals on Nov. 3.

Katie Randolph

S, Loyola, Sr.
2015 stats:
642 assists, 66 kills, 26 blocks, 193 digs
College: Undecided

The Pioneer Press All-Area Volleyball Player of the Year was a four-year starter and in 2015 became the first setter to lead the Ramblers (27-9) to back-to-back Class 4A sectional championships. Loyola lost to Glenbard West in a supersectional. Randolph

comment: "She lives and dreams about volleyball," coach Mark Chang said. When Randolph was a freshman, "we needed a setter at the varsity level. There was not anyone doing it better than she was. We gave her a shot and it worked out beautifully."
FIRST TEAM

Grace Crue
OH, Glenbrook North, Sr.
2015 STATS: 248 kills, 23 aces, 225 digs
COLLEGE: Undecided
The Spartans went undefeated in the Central Suburban North to win the conference championship behind their 5-foot-9 leader in kills. Crue was named team MVP and the co-Player of the Year in the CSL North.
COMMENT: “They are not in competition out there, whether it’s a practice or a game,” coach Chris Cooper said of Crue’s ability to play alongside younger sister Mary Clare Crue. “They both can be successful without going against one another.”

Jori Radtke
OH, Stevenson, Jr.
2015 STATS: 374 kills, 45 aces, 320 digs
COLLEGE: Northern Illinois
Expectations for next season might even be higher for the 5-foot-10 Radtke after she led the Patriots (31-9) in kills this season. Radtke guided Stevenson to its first sectional championship since 2011 and its fifth 30-win season in six years.
COMMENT: “Jori’s desire to compete and mental toughness sets her apart from other athletes,” coach Tim Crow said. “She is willing to put her team on her back to get the victory. Teams would gameplan for her and she still wound up with big numbers.”

Morgan O’Brien
L, Libertyville, Jr.
2015 STATS: 538 digs, 52 aces
COLLEGE: Illinois
O’Brien’s digs this season ranked third all-time among Libertyville defensive players for a single season. She was second on the team in aces and led Libertyville in serving percentage (96 percent) while also excelling on the serve-receive. O’Brien was a starter for Libertyville’s Class 4A state runner-up team in 2014.
COMMENT: “On a team that lacked superstars, Morgan anchored a stingy defense for a team what was only pushed to three sets six times,” coach Greg Loika said. “I feel we have the best defensive player around.”

Alexandra Preuss
OH, York, Sr.
2015 STATS: 508 kills, 43 aces, 31 blocks, 266 digs.
COLLEGE: Lewis
The 5-foot-9 Preuss powered the Dukes (32-7) to a West Suburban Silver title before they lost to conference co-champion and Class 4A state runner-up Glenbard West in a sectional final. The four-year varsity starter was named all-tournament at Benet and had more than 1,000 career kills.
COMMENT: “Alex is a versatile player who will attack or dig wherever she is needed and a wonderful teammate who is ready to listen,” coach Patty Iverson said. “She is also a fierce competitor who accepts nothing less than her best as success.”

Emma Decker
S-OH, Nazareth, Sr.
2015 STATS: 394 assists, 229 kills, 61 blocks, 37 aces, 179 digs
COLLEGE: Villanova
Nazareth switched to a two-setter offense this season to take advantage of Decker’s 6-foot-3 height and allow her to hit regularly. The four-year starter became this season’s only three-time all-East Suburban Catholic selection and was named all-tournament at the Asics Challenge and at events hosted by Glenbrook North and Bradley-Bourbonnais.
COMMENT: The two-setter formation “allows her to impact the game with her hitting and blocking as well as her running of the offense,” coach Wayne Saunders said. “Her presence on and off the court will be missed greatly.”

Isabelle Tashima
L, New Trier, Sr.
2015 STATS: 452 digs, 38 aces, 53 assists
COLLEGE: Harvard
Tashima proved how valuable she was to the Central Suburban South champions by being named the conference Player of the Year despite playing libero, a defensive position, rather than a more glamorous offensive position. Tashima led New Trier to a Class 4A sectional final.
COMMENT: “Isabelle was a consistent player and a responsible captain for New Trier girls volleyball,” coach Hannah Hsieh said. “She works hard and her consistency allows us to run our offense.”

—George M. Wilcox, Pioneer Press
-ending on a high note

By Matt Harness | Pioneer Press

With the Loyola football team’s 41-0 win over Marist in the Class 8A state final at Northern Illinois’ Huskie Stadium, Ben LeRoy captured his first football championship since he started playing the sport in fourth grade. For Loyola (14-0), it was the school’s second state title and the fourth time in 107 seasons that the Ramblers went undefeated.

LeRoy, the Catholic Blue’s most outstanding defensive player, was an integral part of the success. The senior lineman was the lone defensive starter back for the 2015 season, and the 6-foot-3, 265-pounder was the most dominant player on a unit that produced six shutouts and surrendered an average of 8.8 points per game.

After such a strong season, LeRoy is the Pioneer Press All-Area Football Defensive Player of the Year. LeRoy, a Glencoe resident, spoke with Pioneer Press sports writer Matt Harness about his memorable season.

Q: You have committed to play football for Northern Illinois in DeKalb. Was it extra special for you to win a state title at Huskie Stadium?

A: During the game, I didn’t think about that at all. But it sunk in after the game. After I left the press conference and went back to the locker room, that’s when it hit me. On the walk out of the stadium, I took my time to look around. I had been to Northern Illinois before, but this was the best time I had there. This was the best possible outcome I could have imagined. We always talked about bringing a state championship to Loyola. It’s a dream ending to my high school career.

Q: You were sitting close to Loyola coach John Holecek at the postgame press conference when he called you one of the best, if not the best defensive lineman he’s coached. Did you hear him say that?

A: Yes, I did. That was my favorite quote of his about me. It meant so much coming from him because he’s someone I look to up to.

Q: Holecek once described this year’s defense as nasty. Would you agree?

A: Yes. That’s the proper adjective. We were all tenacious and always played with an edge. We played angry and with a point to prove. I played with a chip on my shoulder. I felt like I had to show people who I was as a player. I tried to remember that every play.

Q: What was your favorite football moment off the field this season?

A: After we beat Brother Rice [28-0] and started 3-0, we all got burritos [from Chipotle] at one of the practices and ate them in the cafeteria together. That definitely was a fun day. Everybody was in high spirits.

Q: This Loyola team should go down as one of the best in the program’s 107-year history. How do you want to be remembered?

A: As someone who always gave his all for the team. I was willing to do anything for this team, and I always put them before me.
ALL-AREA FOOTBALL — DEFENSE

FIRST TEAM

Ben Kimpler
DL, Libertyville, Sr.
2015 STATS: 77 Total tackles, 7 TFL, 9 Sck
COLLEGE: Miami (Ohio)

An explosive player in the trenches, the 6-foot-6, 265-pounder anchored a Class 7A run-up defense that allowed 15.4 points per game. Kimpler earned a spot on the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association's Class 7A all-state team.

COMMENT: "He is very athletic for his size and has a tough demeanor," Libertyville coach Mike Jones said. "He excels at rushing the passer, but he is equally tough against the run."

Josh King
DL, Hinsdale South, Sr.
2015 STATS: 39 Total tackles, 11 TFL, 8 Sck, 9 QB hurries
COLLEGE: Michigan State

Among the more intimidating figures in the area, the 6-foot-6, 255-pound King helped the Hornets to one of their best seasons in program history with a trip to the Class 6A semifinals. For his efforts, he was named to the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association's Class 6A all-state team.

COMMENT: "He dominates the line of scrimmage despite being double-teamed the majority of the time," Hinsdale South coach Mike Barry said.

Richard Azunna
DB, Niles North, Sr.
2015 STATS: 51 Total tackles, 3 TFL, 1 Sck, 18 Pass break-ups, 3 Int, 3 FF, 2 Rec Fumble
COLLEGE: Undecided

The 5-foot-10, 190-pound Azunna showed his cover skills in the team's Class 7A quarterfinal contest by taking away Bradley-Bourbonnais' best receiver, Camron Harrell, early in the game. He helped the Vikings have the best season in program history.

COMMENT: "Richard was our best coverage cornerback," Niles North coach Mark Egozkie said. "He could take our opponent's best receiver and shut him down. This was evident in the quarterfinal game against Bradley-Bourbonnais as he shut down one of the state's fastest receivers while playing mainly man technique."

Frank Doherty
LB, Loyola, Sr.
2015 STATS: 54 Total tackles, 15 TFL, 7 Sck, 4 QB hurries, 2 Pass break-ups, 2 FF, 4 Rec Fumble
COLLEGE: Undecided

Doherty is not the biggest linebacker around, but he was one of the toughest, according to Loyola coach John Holecek. The 5-foot-11, 195-pound Doherty was a one-man wrecking crew for a team that recorded six shutouts, allowed an average of 8.8 points and won the Class 6A state title with a 41-0 victory over Marist.

COMMENT: "He had a monster game against Palatine in a state semifinal Nov. 21," Holecek said. "He was knocking people around that were 75 pounds heavier than him."

Thomas Schaffer
DL, Lake Forest Academy, Sr.
2015 STATS: 65 Total tackles, 10 TFL, 3.5 Sck, 3 FF
COLLEGE: Undecided

The 6-foot-7, 255-pound Schaffer is a highly-ranked defensive end with offers from Oregon, Stanford and Wisconsin. Lake Forest Academy coach Robin Bowkett called the all-Catholic League Red selection "relentless, physical, mean."

COMMENT: "Just a force to be reckoned with on the defensive side," Bowkett said. "Great get-off, good pass rush, good use of hands."

Max Rosenthal
LB, New Trier, Sr.
2015 STATS: 56 Tackles, 9 TFL, 3 Sck, 3 QB hurries, 1 FF
COLLEGE: Undecided

Rosenthal returned to football last season after taking two years off to focus on baseball. With the 6-foot-3, 220-pounder on the field at both linebacker and running back, the Trierians won three playoff games and went 19-4 over the last two years.

COMMENT: "Every play Max played was with intensity and love for the game," New Trier coach Brian Doll said. "He made others around him excited to play."

Riley Buncic
LB, Libertyville, Sr.
2015 STATS: 63 Total tackles, 2 TFL, 2 Sck, 1 Int, 1 Rec Fumble, 2 Defensive TD
COLLEGE: Undecided

Buncic is not only strong but fast for his size, enabling him to cover lots of ground. The all-North Suburban Lake selection returned an interception 99 yards for a touchdown.

COMMENT: "Riley has an outstanding skill set for a linebacker and has a knack for making the big play," Jones said.

Johnny Davidson
P, Barrington, Sr.
2015 STATS: 40.5 Avg
COLLEGE: Undecided

In addition to being one of the area's best punters, Davidson started at quarterback for the Broncos, totaling 3,128 yards and 39 touchdowns with his arm and legs. He was a Class 8A all-state selection by the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association.

COMMENT: "He is a winner," Barrington coach Joe Sanchez said.

Daniel Joseph
LB, Lake Forest Academy, Sr.
2015 STATS: 71 Total tackles, 8 TFL, 2 Sck, 2 Int, 1 Rec Fumble, 4 Blocked kicks
COLLEGE: Penn State

Although he played at a small private school in Lake Forest, the 6-foot-3, 245-pound Joseph is known around the nation as one of the top recruiting. He was selected as the Catholic League Red's Most Outstanding Defensive Player.

COMMENT: "He has one of the best highlight films you will see as he did everything for us," coach Robin Bowkett said.

Tray Banks
DB, Evanston, Sr.
2015 STATS: 44 Total tackles, 3 Int, 1 Rec Fumble
COLLEGE: Miami (Ohio)

One of the most electric players in the area, the 6-foot-4, 175-pound Banks often was the best athlete on the field. Not only was he the Central Suburban South's Offensive Player of the Year, he was a lockdown cornerback. He was selected to the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association's Class 8A all-state team.

COMMENT: "You can put him anywhere on the field and he's going to make plays," Evanston coach Mike Burzawa said.

Robert Hall
DB, Hinsdale South, Sr.
2015 STATS: 75 Total tackles, 3 TFL, 10 Pass break-ups, 2 Int, 1 FF
COLLEGE: Undecided

A three-year starter, the 5-foot-9, 195-pound safety was an invaluable member of the defense, which helped the Hornets reach the Class 6A semifinals. Hall leaves the program as the all-time leader in interceptions.

COMMENT: "His stats are solid, but to watch his physical style of play is even more impressive," Hinsdale South coach Mike Barry said.

Mitch Schermerhorn
ATH, Glenbrook North, Sr.
2015 STATS: 73 Total tackles
COLLEGE: Undecided

The fastest player on the Central Suburban North champion Spartans, Schermerhorn played all over the field, including free safety. The 5-foot-8, 160-pounder was named the conference's Co-Defensive Player of the Year.

COMMENT: "We use him in a lot of different ways," Glenbrook North coach Bob Pieper said. "He's a kid who can do so many different things for us. He does whatever we ask of him."

— Matt Harness, Pioneer Press

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Q: How have you spent the week after winning your second state title?
A: I have been working as an assistant to the [Nazareth] athletic director [Duane Buturusis]. I started the Monday after we won. I have been helping out with basketball games. I take care of the officials, making sure they have everything they need, take care of opposing teams, making sure everything goes well for them. It's been a learning experience for me to see how everything works, how everything is organized.

Q: What was your favorite non-game moment this season?
A: The night before the state title game coach [Tim Racki] gave us an opportunity to talk, say whatever was on our minds. I talked about taking care of the underclassmen, making sure they know we want them to succeed in the future. Then, some of the underclassmen talked and thanked me for helping them out. I didn't think much of it at the time because I was just doing what I thought was right. But hearing them say those things was special to me. They thanked me for being kind, generous and a role model.

Q: Nazareth went 14-0 and won the Class 6A state title last season. Was it harder to win the second one?
A: It was more challenging than last year. Teams targeted us. Every game we played it felt like it was their state championship game. I got double- and triple-teamed a lot. There was no element of surprise for us, no David versus Goliath. We were Goliath. But losing two games helped us. It helped our team develop an identity. I was grateful for them. If I had to do it over again, I wouldn't change a single thing. Those losses are what gave us our momentum.

Q: You were the Pioneer Press Offensive Player of the Year as a junior. At this time last year, you had offers from Illinois and Illinois State. How did you end up committing to Notre Dame?
A: I was always hoping to go to Notre Dame. I've been a fan and gone to games since I was young. One of my best friends is [Providence graduate and Notre Dame freshman Miles Boykin], and he kept dropping my name to the coaches there. Notre Dame then came into the picture in March. I visited them that month, got an offer and committed March 21. I wished for this and worked hard for this, but I didn't think it was possible.

Julian Love
RB/WR, Nazareth, Sr.
2015 stats: Rushing 104 Att, 1,067 Yds, 10.2 Avg, 18 TD; Receiving: 29 Rec, 662 Yds, 22.8 Avg, 7 TD
College: Notre Dame
Love demonstrated his versatility and value to the Roadrunners yet again in the Class 5A state championship game. He ran the ball nine times for 53 yards (a 5.8-yard average), caught three passes, returned one punt, made four tackles and intercepted a pass in a 42-21 win over Lincoln-Way West.
Comment: "There is no one in the state more versatile than Julian," Nazareth coach Tim Racki said.


**FIRST TEAM**

Riley Lees  
QB, Libertyville, Sr.  
2015 STATS: Rushing 211 Att, 2,404 Yds, 11.4 Avg, 33 TD; Passing 115-for-204 (56.4 percent), 1,770 Yds, 8.7 Yds/Att, 24 TD, 6 INT  
COLLEGE: Northwestern  
The 6-foot-1, 190-pound Lees was the engine of an offense that averaged 399 points per game. He helped the Wildcats win the North Suburban Lake and place second in Class 7A. He was selected to the Class 7A all-state team by the Illinois High School Football Coaches Association.

**Ivy Kelly-Martin**  
KR, Nazareth, Jr.  
2015 STATS: 190 Att, 1,972 Yds, 10.4 Avg, 33 TD  
COLLEGE: Undecided  
Called a game-changer by Nazareth coach Tim Racci, the 5-foot-11, 185-pound Kelly-Martin was part of a dynamic offense that helped the Roadrunners win the Class 5A state title. In a 42-21 win over Lincoln-Way West in the final, Kelly-Martin ran 13 times for 170 yards and four touchdowns, including a 96-yard run. It broke the all-class record for longest run in a championship game.

**Kevin Jarvis**  
OL, Maine South, Jr.  
2015 STATS: 278 Att, 1,833 Yds, 6.8 Avg, 11 TD  
COLLEGE: Undecided  
Jarvis cleared the way for the Hawks to average 35.3 points a game and was the Central Suburban South's Lineman of the Year. Jarvis, who had 42 pancake blocks, has offers from Oregon, Tennessee and Rutgers.

**Jonah Isaac**  
KR, Loyola, Sr.  
2015 STATS: 32 Rec, 478 Yds, 14.9 Avg, 6 TD, 10 Kick returns, 374 Yds, 37.4 Avg, 2 TD  
COLLEGE: Undecided  
Players dream of the game Isaac had in Loyola's 49-21 win over Mount Carmel, which clinched the outright Catholic League Blue championship for the Ramblers. The 5-foot-9, 175-pounder had a 99-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and another one for 97 yards.

**Barrington Wade Jr.**  
RB, Niles North, Sr.  
2015 STATS: 231 Att, 2,045 Yds, 8.9 Avg, 17 TD, 6 Rec, 88 Yds, 14.7 Avg, 2 TD, 6 2-point conversions  
COLLEGE: Iowa  
Despite defenses knowing he would get the ball, the 6-foot-4, 220-pound Wade carried the Vikings to the best season in the 52-year history of the program. Niles North advanced to the Class 7A quarterfinals, where it lost to Bradley-Bourbonnais 26-17.

**Dara Laja**  
RB, Loyola, Sr.  
2015 STATS: 278 Att, 1,833 Yds, 6.8 Avg, 22 TD  
COLLEGE: Undecided  
Laja added speed and size in the offseason and turned himself into a go-to offensive option for the pass-heavy Loyola offense. Although he only played a few fourth quarters during the Ramblers' run to the Class 8A state title, the 5-foot-9, 180-pounder and all-Catholic League Blue selection ended the season as Loyola's all-time leading rusher (2,995 yards).

**Jack Sorenson**  
ATH, Stevenson, Sr.  
2015 STATS: Passing 123-for-209 (58.9 percent), 1,832 Yds, 8.8 Yds/Att, 14 TD; Rushing 475 Yds, 9 TD  
COLLEGE: Undecided  
Sorenson filled a position he's pegged to play in college - an athletic, mobile quarterback. "He's a multi-threat player that can beat you with his arms and legs," Stevenson coach Bill McNamara said. "However, it is his mind and decision-making that makes him a consistent winner."}

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TWIN LOBSTER TAILS
PORK CHOPS AL FORNO
BAKED STUFFED SHRIMP
TWIN FILET MIGNON OSCAR
BONE-IN RIBEYE

...in addition to our regular menu

Gift Certificate Special... Buy $100 worth & receive...
A BONUS $25 GIFT CERTIFICATE!*  
*Cannot be used until Jan-1, 2016

TAKE AWAY

Complete Take-Away Dinners

HAM - $160
14 Lb. Brown Sugar-Glazed Ham, Pasta Marinara, Honey-Glazed Carrots

ROAST TURKEY - $150
24 Lb. Whole Turkey, Walnut Stuffing, Gravy, Honey-Glazed Carrots

ROAST PORK - $150
Rotisserie-Roasted Pork, Walnut Stuffing, Pork Gravy, Honey-Glazed Carrots

All dinners include our signature mashed potatoes, garden salad, bread and sweets tray.
Each meal serves 15.
Orders must be placed by Monday, December 21.
BRAND NEW 2015 NISSAN
ROGUE FWD
MODEL CODE 23115, 4 OR MORE AT THIS PRICE.
$16,995*
OR 0% APR PLUS NO MONEY DOWN**

BRAND NEW 2016 NISSAN
MAXIMA 3.5S
MODEL CODE 16116, 4 OR MORE AT THIS PRICE.
$269 PER MONTH
FOR 36 MONTHS-
$2,720 DOWN PAYMENT

BRAND NEW 2015 NISSAN
VERSA S SDN.
MODEL CODE 11155, 4 OR MORE AT THIS PRICE.
$9,995*

BRAND NEW 2015 NISSAN
VERSA S NOTE
MODEL CODE 11455, 4 OR MORE AT THIS PRICE.
$10,995*

BRAND NEW 2015 NISSAN
SENTRA S SVT
MODEL CODE 12015, 4 OR MORE AT THIS PRICE.
$13,995*

BRAND NEW 2015 NISSAN
ALTIMA 2.5S
MODEL CODE 13115, 4 OR MORE AT THIS PRICE.
$16,995*

BRAND NEW 2015 NISSAN
PATHFINDER
MODEL CODE 23118, 4 OR MORE AT THIS PRICE.
$24,485*

3 DAY / 100 MILE
EXCHANGE POLICY^*

CHALLENGED CREDIT? 100% FACTORY BACKED APPROVAL IS OUR GOAL!^^

Dealer not responsible for errors in the advertisement. Offers expire 12/31/15. *Plus tax, title, license, and doc fee. **$13.89 per $1,000 financed with $0 down to qualified buyers with approved credit on select models. ***To qualified buyers with approved credit on select models. ^Vehicle can be exchanged with another of equal or greater value. Must be in same condition. 3 days or 100 miles. Dealer reserves the right to reject any exchange. ^^May require a down payment. +Plus tax, title, license, doc. & acquisition fee, & 1st payment. To qualified lessees with approved credit.