Dam removal stalls
Illinois budget impasse means projects on rivers come to halt. Page 4

Shakshuka to freakshakes: What to eat in the new year
Looking to the latest culinary achievements around the nation for inspiration, Melissa Elsmo dusts off her crystal ball to predict the likely food trends of 2017, including female brewers, the rise of Filipino food, doner kebab, freakshakes and shakshuka. Inside

Top TV
A look at 10 of the best TV shows of 2016 from a Cold War spy drama to a sci-fi summer sensation. Page 22

Christmas tells a story of hope
The birth of Jesus teaches that all people are invited to take part in something wonderful, writes Randy Blaser. But only if we agree to our role in the process. Page 19

Decisions, decisions
High school football players peruse options at Libertyville college fair. Page 41
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Lincolnwood park district's Katie Gamroth

Katie Gamroth of Mundelein likes to wrap herself (and gifts) in holiday spirit. Gamroth, superintendent of recreation for the village of Lincolnwood's Parks and Recreation Department, was in a festive mood recently and spoke about the holiday season.

Q: We recently had the season's first snowfall. Are you dreaming of a white Christmas?
A: Yes, I love the snow. I'm a skier and I like to snowmobile.

Q: What do you and your family do at Christmas time that is a tradition for you all?
A: Santa wraps the doorway and the kids run through the gift wrap (to get to the Christmas presents).

Q: What's your favorite holiday wrapping paper design?
A: I like snowflakes and all sorts of colors.

Q: If you could for sure have one thing from Santa, what would you ask for?
A: A snowmobile helmet with hot pink coloring. Super girly.

Q: Do you make New Year's resolutions?
A: I have not made a New Year's resolution. I don't make them because I don't stick to them.

Q: Why do you like the holiday season?
A: I love spending time with family. I love the all-around good cheer.

Katie Gamroth believes everyone deserves a good holiday.
River dam removal efforts stall

Lack of state budget keeps project on hold

BY GENEVIEVE BOOKWALTER
Pioneer Press

Efforts to restore the Des Plaines and North Branch of the Chicago rivers to a more free-flowing state have been held up as money to pay for dam removal is stalled with the Illinois state budget.

Nearly a dozen dams once pooled water along the Des Plaines River from Chicago to Wisconsin. All but two of those scheduled to be removed have been torn down, officials said. Two also remain to be torn down on the North Branch.

But a date to resume dam demolition has not been set.

"It's all dependent on funding. Whenever we get a capital bill with money," said Rick Gosch, division manager with the Office of Water Resources in the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. "We have no idea when that might happen."

The dams remaining on the Des Plaines River include Touhy Avenue Dam near Park Ridge and Dam No. 4 near Rosemont. Removal of the eight Des Plaines River dams in Cook County was estimated to cost $6 million in 2012.

On the North Branch of the Chicago River, only one of the three dams scheduled to be removed in Cook County has actually come down: the Winnetka Road Dam in Winnetka, according to state officials. The other two, at Tam O'Shanter Golf Course in Niles, superintendents have been held up as money on contractors, Gosch and others said.

The removal is important, supporters say, because removing dams helps fish and other critters as the river returns to its normal path. It ensures a smoother ride for canoeists, kayakers and others traveling on the river, and provides a safer environment for those who might take a dangerous fall over a dam or get caught under the churning water.

Many of the dams were built in the 1920s and '30s for farm irrigation or as fords to cross the river, according to Chicago Tribune reports. Others helped mask the smell of raw sewage, which emitted less of an odor as it decomposed in the waters' depths. Still others were built merely for aesthetics.

Work to remove small dams often involves heavy equipment tearing down a structure all at once or in stages, depending on the water sediment flow, according to the nonprofit group American Rivers.

As the dams come down, fish and other aquatic wildlife are quick to return, said Steve Pescitelli, stream specialist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Six weeks after the former Hoffman Dam in Riverside was removed from the Des Plaines River in 2012, the number of fish species found upstream doubled from 12 to 24, Pescitelli said. After a dam removal, the total number of fish usually "goes up by a factor of six."

Among other improvements, the Des Plaines River is seeing a return of channel catfish and sucker fish species, Pescitelli said, which could not swim over the dam.

"We were finding them and the fishermen were catching them too," he said. At Tam O'Shanter Golf Course in Niles, superintendent Jim Stoneberg said he's been waiting for work to begin on removing the dam that sits behind warehouses and distribution centers off Howard Street.

"It was all planned for removal last winter," Stoneberg said. "But about a month before they were going to start, we got a call."

The river provides a bit of tranquility as it flows behind the bustle of nearby businesses. The dam pools water used to irrigate the golf course, Stoneberg said, and state officials assured him that he still will receive the water he needs to keep grass growing once the dam is torn down.

Stoneberg said he supports removing the Tam O'Shanter Dam and remembered his grandfather catching walleye in the North Branch of the Chicago River.

"Those days are long gone," Stoneberg said.

The Tam O'Shanter Dam in Niles sits on the North Branch of the Chicago River. Removal of the dam is currently held up by the state budget crisis.
Two years later, village officials to decide fate of flag display

Some Lincolnwood residents spoke out against trademark of diversity month

BY NATALIE HAYES
Pioneer Press

Lincolnwood's Human Relations Commission has decided the village should reinstate its annual Lincoln Avenue flag display—the trademark of the town's long-running diversity month—two years after village officials suspended it indefinitely.

The village board overhauled the tradition of displaying the flags of more than 60 countries every August along one of its busiest thoroughfares after the display came under scrutiny in the summer of 2014. Then, residents packed into village hall for a public hearing, with many decrying the Palestinian flag's presence among other countries.

The majority of residents and officials who have publicly spoken out against the flag display, including Village Trustee Ron Cope, have said that anger and resentment now overshadow the original intent of Diversity Month to celebrate the many cultural backgrounds of the people of Lincolnwood.

"I'm opposed because I believe it has done nothing but invoke hostility," Cope said while speaking as an audience member at the Dec. 12 meeting at village hall. "Two years ago at a meeting at village hall, the mayor called for people to come forward to speak in favor of or against it, and ultimately it came down to one flag—the PLO."

Commissioners voted 6-1 to allow the village board to come up with new regulations to allow the flag display to continue.

Rebecca Kohn, chair of the commission, abstained from the vote.

The controversy started with a handful of people who police Chief Bob LaMantia said called the police department in August 2014 to ask the village to take down the Palestinian flag.

The complaints about the flag snowballed, prompting Lincolnwood Mayor Jerry Turry to call a special meeting to address the issue.

The meeting grew so heated at one point that the mayor threatened to kick out one person who shouted "terrorists" toward one side of the room where a group of people wearing Muslim attire was sitting. Others who spoke at the meeting said the Palestinian flag was being unfairly singled out.

Despite what transpired that night, Lincolnwood kept Palestine's flag flying along with the others until the display was taken down at the end of August 2014 when Diversity Month came to a close.

The flags never returned the following year. A streetlight replacement project planned for the stretch of Lincoln Avenue where the flags would usually hang was the village's explanation for not having the flags in 2015, but officials declined then to say whether the tradition would be retired permanently.

The Human Relations Commission—a volunteer-based advisory board formed by the village—tested out new events to celebrate diversity this past year, including a gathering of religious leaders at the Community Center in September called "Coffee with the Clergy" and a cultural dance event at Proesel Park the month prior.

But as commissioners attempted to highlight the town's diversity throughout the year instead of having the flag display be the focal point, members of the village board ultimately asked the commissioners to come up with a recommendation to either discontinue the tradition or to send the flag issue back to the village board.

"If it continues, there will have to be some policies in place to make sure the village isn't exposed to inappropriate flags," LaMantia said, referring to a future decision trustees could make following the Human Relations Commission's decision.

Lincolnwood resident Dale Wickum, who spoke in favor of reinstating the flags at the Human Relations Commission meeting, said the Palestinian flag shouldn't have been singled out.

"The diversity of Lincolnwood is why we moved here in the first place," Wickum said. "What kind of public perception are we sending by taking the flags away? That Lincolnwood will buckle under the demands made by a small group of people?"

His wife, Nancy, agreed. "Having the flags on Lincoln Avenue is a beautiful thing that gives people a sense of pride," she said.

The Human Relations Commission started the flag tradition 12 years ago by allowing residents of the village to buy flags representing their cultural heritage. The display grew larger each year as more residents bought flags.

Many residents have since begun to wonder what happened to the flags they purchased, Trustee Craig Klatzko said at the commission meeting.

The next step is for the village board to consider at its Jan. 7 meeting a new policy to regulate the flag display, according to LaMantia.

Natalie Hayes is a freelancer.
Self-storage, warehouses banned in some areas

Lincolnwood trustees act to limit businesses on main roads that don't generate sales tax revenue

BY NATALIE HAYES
Pioneer Press

The village of Lincolnwood has addressed concerns about businesses that don't generate sales taxes crowding the town's commercial areas by adopting an ordinance to prohibit some of them from opening along main arterial roadways.

At a Village Board meeting held earlier this month, trustees unanimously approved an amendment to the village's zoning code that bans self-storage facilities and warehouses from opening new facilities within commercial zoning districts.

Lincolnwood's proximity to Chicago and quick access to major highways makes the town a desirable locale for the three public storage companies that currently operate in the community, according to village officials. At least one self-storage operator earlier this year had been eying an open property on one of the village's main commercial streets, prompting the village to consider implementing a ban, said Steve McNellis, community development director of Lincolnwood.

Because storage facilities don't contribute to the village's pot of sales tax revenue and generally aren't aesthetically pleasing, the village would rather reserve arterial roadways for other types of businesses, he said.

The zoning change approved at the Dec. 6 meeting means self-storage companies won't be able to open within the two types of zoning districts where those types of businesses have historically been allowed — areas zoned for manufacturing/business and office uses, according to the amendment.

The village had been considering a zoning change for the past five months. The approval of the ordinance follows a moratorium on storage facilities the Village Board approved in July to allow village staff time to review related zoning regulations in nearby towns and to allow the Plan Commission time to come up with recommendations on how to proceed, officials said.

Out of the eight nearby towns the village looked at, only Wilmette maintains an all-out ban on storage facilities, while other communities allow them in at least one zoning district, according to a report from McNellis.

"In most of the (nearby) communities, (storage facilities) are in industrial hubs, in areas that are completely disconnected from the major commercial corridor or commercial downtown, but that's a different story in Lincolnwood where the (manufacturing) districts are adjacent to the commercial areas," McNellis said.

Unlike Lincolnwood's neighbors, McNellis said, the areas of town where storage facilities are permitted are sometimes "right in the middle" of the commercial zoning districts, he said.

Lincolnwood's newly-adopted restrictions target open commercial space along West Touhy, West Devon, North Lincoln and North Cicero avenues.

Lincolnwood's trio of storage facilities are 90 percent full, according to village officials, and paid a combined $267,660 in property taxes in 2014 — with 10 percent of that amount going to the municipality, according to information provided by the village.

Morton Grove adopts rules, application process for massage establishments

BY BRIAN L. COX
Pioneer Press

Morton Grove is beefing up the way it regulates massage therapy establishments including fingerprinting and photographing applicants and collecting an annual application fee — among other changes.

Village Board members voted unanimously at their Dec. 12 meeting to adopt the new regulations, which officials said are intended to give the village better oversight of massage therapy establishments.

"The regulation of massage establishments is a matter of growing importance to public health safety and the welfare of residents," said Trustee Bill Grear. "And is intended to prevent the spread of diseases through unsanitary practices and... abate nuisances and unlawful activity."

The new ordinance states how, anywhere in the village, anyone interested in opening a massage therapy establishments applies for an application, what happens in the application process, the level of licensure needed and business hours of operation. It also requires that a massage therapist be licensed by the state on-site, Village Administrator Ralph Czerwinski said.

"It delineates those things because the state of Illinois currently licenses the massage therapists but doesn't say how that massage therapist application is applied inside the business, so there is a gap," Czerwinski said. "This is somewhat of a specialized business and we wanted to make sure that the state-licensed massage therapist was applying that properly inside the facility."

The ordinance says applicants must pay a $1,000 application fee and must also pay $500 to cover the cost of processing applicants' fingerprinting and photographs.

Czerwinski said there are four massage therapy establishments in Skokie, Lincolnwood, Wilmette and other nearby communities before drafting the Morton Grove ordinance.

The ordinance also outlines how licenses can be revoked.

Brian L. Cox is a freelancer

Some Lincolnwood residents to allow streetlights to be installed on their property

BY NATALIE HAYES
Pioneer Press

Residents along a stretch of Touhy Avenue have signed off on allowing the village of Lincolnwood to install light poles on their property, fulfilling a state requirement for a special project.

The village is preparing to install new streetlights along Touhy between Hamlin Avenue west to Cicero Avenue as part of a five-year, $5 million streetlight replacement plan. Some private property owners in the affected areas had to agree to allow the light poles to be installed on their properties so the village could adhere to Illinois Department of Transportation rules.

IDOT requires street lights to be placed a certain distance away from the curb in order to reduce the likelihood of a vehicle striking a pole during an accident. The section of Touhy where the streetlights will be installed lacks sufficient space in the public right-of-way to accommodate the installations, village officials said.

As a result, the village has requested utility easements from six property owners along Touhy to meet the IDOT requirements.

The easement agreements, approved as part of the Village Board's Dec. 6 consent agenda, give the village the right to install, operate and maintain the street lights on private property.

"IDOT has very specific requirements for how streetlights are installed on their rights-of-way," said Tim Wiberg, the village manager. "All property owners have been notified and they signed the requisite easement documents."

The phased streetlight replacement plan was launched in 2007 with the goal to replace and add streetlights along several arterial roadways in Lincolnwood in order to meet current safety standards. The affected roads include Touhy, Lincoln, Cicero, Pratt, Devon, Crawford and McCormick avenues, village documents indicate.

Aside from Touhy, the remaining parts of the project are scheduled for 2018 and include Devon west of Lincoln and Lincoln, north of Touhy.

Natalie Hayes is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.
Lincolnwood's Turry seeking 4th term, but has challenger

Will be opposed by trustee with public safety concern

BY NATALIE HAYES
Pioneer Press

Lincolnwood Mayor Jerry Turry announced his bid for re-election to a fourth term three months ago, and had no apparent challengers, until now.

A year into his first term as trustee, Barry Bass has announced his decision to leave his seat on the board next year to run as an independent candidate for mayor in the April 2017 election.

Concerns about an increase in burglaries and robberies reported in Lincolnwood during the past few months were listed as a top reason for his decision to run. The village should do more to help the Police Department fight crime, he said.

"Now that we have these two beautiful bike paths open, there are even more opportunities for crime," Bass said.

"We need a mayor with a holistic vision to dig in and improve the services the village provides to its residents," he added.

If elected to another

Des Plaines man sues McDonald's franchisee over value meal prices

BY SAMANTHA BOMKAMP
Chicago Tribune

A Des Plaines man has filed a lawsuit against a local McDonald's franchisee, alleging the restaurant operator engaged in deceptive business practices because "Extra Value Meals" cost more than the items ordered separately.

James Gertie claims that Karis Management Co., of Des Plaines, which operates about 10 locations in the area, charges $5.49 for two cheeseburgers, medium fries and a medium fountain drink when purchased individually, but the value meal costs $5.90. Gertie bought the two cheeseburger value meal at five McDonald's locations across Des Plaines and Niles operated by the franchisee in October and November, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed last week in Cook County Circuit Court, seeks class-action status.

A Karis representative declined to comment.

Natalie Hayes is a freelancer.
IDOT employees punished for false reports

Two supervisors and four drivers were fired

BY MARY WISNIEWSKI
Chicago Tribune

Six Illinois Department of Transportation employees were fired and eight more were disciplined this year after a state investigation discovered that Emergency Traffic Patrol drivers had filed hundreds of false reports about helping stranded motorists on Chicago-area expressways.

The investigation of IDOT's Emergency Traffic Patrol Division by the executive inspector general's office ran from 2012 to 2016. The probe concluded that several IDOT drivers made up reports about helping motorists to make it look like they were doing more work than they were, the inspector general's report said. In other cases, the drivers recorded inaccurate information in reports about people they actually had assisted.

One of the drivers who was fired, John Shealey, repeatedly filed reports using false license plate numbers, the report said. Shealey could not be reached for comment. The inspector general's report was completed in January but not made public until Friday, after disciplinary measures were taken.

The report found that the drivers were pressured to perform a certain number of driver assists per day, and that program supervisors failed to ensure the work was being done honestly. It also found that Emergency Traffic Patrol managers "either knew of or suspected the reporting of false assists by drivers but did nothing about it, or chose to purposely insulate themselves from the knowledge of this systematic problem."

Two supervisors and four drivers were fired. Two other supervisors received 15-day suspensions, and six drivers received 10-day suspensions, according to a Sept. 28 letter from Bruce Harmoning, chief of IDOT's Bureau of Investigations and Compliance in the Office of Finance and Administration. The inspector general's office included the letter in documents it released on Dec. 16.

Harmoning told Hickey in an Aug. 11 letter that Emergency Traffic Patrol management had implemented controls to prevent fraudulent reporting by drivers and that all drivers had been retrained. Emergency Traffic Patrol officers are supposed to assist stranded drivers on state highways. Shealey had been investigated by IDOT auditors for filing false reports and was suspended for 10 days in 2012.

A supervisor who was fired, Zenon McHugh, admitted to investigators that he had heard "shop talk" among drivers about falsifying assist reports but had not inquired about them.

McHugh could not be reached for comment. But IDOT later issued a statement: "The inspector general investigation was on-going when the new administration arrived. Once we had the results, (IDOT) began to take immediate action and worked independently to institute several changes to ensure that this never happens again..."

mwisniewski@chicagotribune.com

Northbrook police: Dog awakes residents, who hear thieves at work

BY IRV LEAVITT
Pioneer Press

Northbrook residents reported burglaries of six cars in the same neighborhood early on Dec. 10, including one case where residents heard the thieves busting around inside their attached garage.

In that incident, residents of the 1400 block of Juli-Lyn Lane were awakened by their dog barking at about 2:30 a.m., and they soon heard people inside the garage. One of the residents told police they banged on the connecting door, and the people inside fled. Responding police officers found two unlocked cars in the garage had been burglarized. They said they found a garage door remote control unit in the driveway, and speculated that thieves had found it and used it to open the garage door.

While investigating the case, officers reported noticing a garage door open in the nearby 4200 block of Walters Avenue. They found the vehicle inside had been burglarized. The homeowner reported that a garage door had been left open and the car unlocked. Credit cards left in the car were stolen. Police also found that three vehicles left in a driveway in the 3900 block of Walters were burglarized. The glove compartments of a 1996 Saab, 2004 Honda Odyssey and a 2004 Chevrolet van were all ransacked, but nothing appeared missing.
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Skokie cops host holiday shopping event with area school children

Police union's third annual event renamed Cops and Kids

BY LEE V. GAINES
Pioneer Press

Dozens of children accompanied by Skokie police officers in navy blue Santa hats loaded up Walmart shopping carts with holiday gifts for themselves and their families as part of an annual charitable event held recently.

The shopping sprees marked the third annual Cops and Kids event hosted by the Skokie Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 68 at the Touhy Avenue Walmart. Skokie's FOP raised more than $6,000 to fund the event and about 75 children participated, according to Skokie Officer Damon Nikolopoulos. From mid-morning to mid-afternoon elementary-school-aged children zipped around the store with police officers in tow.

Skokie Officers Steve Bush and Terrence Alexander founded the annual tradition three years ago under the moniker ’Shop With a Cop.’ The name recently changed because someone in another state held a copyright on the phrase, according to Nikolopoulos.

The event was renamed "Cops and Kids," and Skokie's FOP copyrighted the new moniker to prevent a similar issue from cropping up in the future, he said.

"It brings tears to your eyes. It's priceless. It's something we're glad we're able to do," Alexander said.

Officials at 10 elementary schools in Skokie School District 68, Skokie/Morton Grove School District 69, Fairview South School District 72, East Prairie School District 73, Skokie School District 73.5 and Evanston/Skokie School District 65 and five private schools were asked by the event organizers to pick one "well-deserving" child in each grade from 1st through 5th to participate in Cops and Kids, Alexander said. Bush said they leave it up to the school districts to decide which children should participate because they know the kids and their needs best.

Children are paired with police officers to shop for gifts the child and his or her family needs or wants, Bush said. This year, the children were allowed to select up to $100 worth of items, and 35 Skokie Police Department employees volunteered to shop with the kids and help them wrap the gifts they selected, Alexander said.

"This is probably one of the most heartwarming experiences I've personally been involved with."

—Anthony Scarpelli, Skokie police chief

"I've been with the department for 35 years and this is probably one of the most heartwarming experiences I've personally been involved with," Scarpelli said.

Ten-year-old Skokie resident Aaron Thach came to Cops and Kids with his mother and two brothers. A 5th-grader at Fairview South Elementary School, Thach said he didn't want to spoil the Christmas Day surprise by telling his brothers what he picked out for them. He said the experience made him "excited" for the holiday.

Thach's mother, Solahema Meng, said the boys' father passed away last year and this event "is something that helps them feel loved and cared for."

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D219 drops Columbus Day for more 'indigenous' recognition

Indians dropped as Niles West mascot in 2000 in favor of Wolves

BY BRIAN L. COX
Pioneer Press

Niles Township High School District 219 has joined a growing list of school districts, municipalities and states across the country that are changing course on what is now called Columbus Day and replacing it with "Indigenous People's Day."

The NTHS District 219 Board of Education voted unanimously during its Dec. 13 meeting to drop the day, which is recognized in the month of October, from the school calendar.

"We heard from students, and they were voicing their support for this type of change," Superintendent Steven Isoye told the school board. "Both campuses have provided you with letters of support from their students governing bodies."

The change will take place starting in the 2017-18 school year. Indigenous People's Day recognizes all people native to North America and complements the school district's diverse student body, said Anne Roloff, Dist. 219 assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

"As we see our communities continually becoming more diverse we want to be sensitive to the needs of our community members and also be realistic about what history has taught us and knowing that Columbus may not have been ... he was certainly controversial," Roloff said, referring to the fact that many historians say that explorer Christopher Columbus, for whom the holiday is named, did not discover North America after all. "We feel that celebrating ID Day, who are the people who lived here prior to Columbus, is a much better and much more appropriate celebration of our communities."

In 2000, Niles West High School changed its school mascot from Indians to Wolves because it was thought that the school's Indian mascot was offensive to indigenous populations, officials said. They also said the district is in line with various cities and states nationwide that have made a switch to Indigenous People's Day, citing the fact that native people were here long before Columbus.

"We felt it would be a much better way to celebrate the legacy of the indigenous people who live here prior to Columbus, is a much better and much more appropriate celebration of our communities."

School board members also approved a slew of new courses that will be offered next year, including an advance placement 3-D design class, a yearlong college level art course that focuses on three-dimensional design curriculum through the production of ceramics, sculpture and mixed media sculpture.

Additionally, other new courses approved include Asian-American studies, advance placement Spanish culture and literature and others in manufacturing, advanced math and sciences, welding and jazz band.

Roloff said the courses were selected by the district's Curriculum Standards for School Improvement program, which included getting input from students and parents.

"We absolutely listen to them," she said. "They provide a unique perspective that we often miss as educators: the student experience in the classroom. We really appreciate what the students share with us as well as what the parents have to say."

Brian L. Cox is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

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The following items were taken from Niles, Morton Grove and Lincolnwood police department reports. An arrest does not constitute a finding of guilt. Only a court of law can make that determination.

**Niles**

**BATTERY**
- Ching Lee, 42, of the 9200 block of Hamilton Court, unincorporated Maine Township, was charged with driving under the influence and leaving the scene of an accident on Dec. 4. Police said Lee was involved in a hit-and-run crash in the 9000 block of Milwaukee Avenue. Lee is scheduled to appear in court Jan. 6.

**PROPERTY DAMAGE**
- Christmas light wires were reportedly stolen Dec. 1 outside a home in the 8700 block of Elmore Street.

**PUBLIC INTOXICATION**
- Police on Dec. 4 were called to a restaurant in the 9000 block of Golf Road for a report of an intoxicated man throwing items around. Police ticketed the man for public intoxication. A worker at the bar in the 9100 block of Golf Road was also cited with over-serving the man earlier, police said.

**RETAIL THEFT**
- Manuela Szunkler, 35, of the 6000 block of West Belmont, Chicago, was charged with retail theft Dec. 7 after allegedly stealing merchandise valued at $287 from a store in the 200 block of Golf Mill Center.

**BATTERY**
- Emilio E. Alvarez, 29, of the 1400 block of Hoffman Avenue, Park Ridge, was charged with battery Dec. 7 following an incident in the 6100 block of Capulina Avenue. Police said Alvarez chased a juvenile and grabbed the juvenile's sweatshirt, causing a red mark on his neck. Alvarez is scheduled to appear in court Jan. 13.

**THEFT**
- Eighteen boxes of ceramic tile, valued at $8,000, were reported stolen Dec. 1 from a job site in the 7400 block of Waukegan Road.

**BURGLARY**
- Two homes in the 5400 block of Warren Street were burglarized Dec. 5, police said. Items reported missing from the homes include jewelry, a camera, keys, a computer, private documents, and personal belongings.

**DRUGS**
- Irfan A. Noomohammad, 33, of the 7300 block of Foster Avenue, Morton Grove, was cited with possession of drug paraphernalia Dec. 8 in the 6000 block of Dempster Street. Police said Noomohammad was stopped for a traffic violation and officers found a device used to smoke marijuana in his vehicle.

**THEFT**
- Jockess M. Miller, 25, of the 4800 block of South Seeley Avenue, Chicago, was charged Dec. 6 with theft by deception following an incident at a retail establishment in the 6300 block of Oakton Street. Police said Miller bought items using counterfeit $100 bills. Miller is scheduled to appear in court Jan. 24.

**DUI**
- Andrew Sang Han, 23, of the 360 block of Vola Drive, Wheeling, was charged Dec. 4 with driving under the influence of alcohol in the 4000 block of Pratt Avenue. Police said Han was found sleeping behind the wheel of his vehicle and Han allegedly failed sobriety tests.

**DRUGS**
- Andrew J. Rivera, 23, of the 6000 block of North Kilpatrick Avenue, Chicago, was cited Dec. 10 with possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia in the 4600 block of Devon Avenue. Police said Rivera was pulled over for speeding and failed the sobriety test.

**THEFT**
- A package was reported stolen Dec. 6 from a residence in the 3500 block of Pratt Avenue. The package, which police said was taken from the front doorstep, contained merchandise valued at $438.

**CATALYTIC CONVERTERS**
- Catalytic converters were reported stolen from two vehicles on Dec. 7, police said. The vehicles were parked in the 4400 block of Greenleaf Avenue and the 7500 block of Kolinmar Avenue.
State agencies to act on drug interactions

Rauner orders greater accountability actions

BY RAY LONG AND SAM ROE
Chicago Tribune

Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner has ordered state agencies to examine how to bolster accountability at drugstores and protect the public's health following a Tribune investigation that found pharmacists failed half of the time to warn about dangerous drug interactions.

The Republican governor's move came as the longtime Democratic chair of an Illinois House health committee began crafting legislation on Dec. 19 to set minimum staffing levels at pharmacies to prevent pharmacists from racing through prescriptions like an "assembly line."

The newspaper, in stories published online Dec. 15 and in print Dec. 18, found that 52 percent of 255 pharmacies tested by reporters sold risky drug pairs without mentioning the potential for harmful or even fatal interactions.

"The Tribune's investigation revealed a troubling potential that some pharmacists are not complying with state law," Rauner's office said in a statement. "The governor has asked state agencies to investigate what additional action, if any, could be taken either administratively or through legislation to hold wrongdoers accountable and protect public health."

Drug interactions, in which one drug alters the effect of another, have been a major public health problem for years, but little progress has been made in reducing the risks.

Rep. Mary Flowers, D-Chicago, called for the minimum staffing levels as part of a multipronged bill she hopes will overhaul how pharmacies, the last line of defense for patients seeking safe medications, handle prescriptions.

The Tribune report "really opened my eyes, and I'm sure it has opened up a lot of people's eyes," she said.

Flowers, who chairs the Health Care Availability and Accessibility Committee, said she would seek in the new legislative session starting in January to have minimum staffing levels at pharmacies to prevent pharmacists from racing through prescriptions like an "assembly line."

Turn to Drugs, Next Page

PHIL VELASQUEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Gov. Bruce Rauner on Dec. 19 asked state agencies to study ways to improve accountability at pharmacies following a Chicago Tribune investigation on local drugstores' high failure rate in advising their customers of bad drug combinations.

Trib Books

Holiday Cookies: Prize-winning Family Recipes from the Chicago Tribune contains more than 100 recipes and mouthwatering photos of winning cookies from nearly three decades of the newspaper's annual Holiday Cookie Contest. From Sparkly Oatmeal Cookies to Coffee Toffee, the book captures generations of beloved family recipes.

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Chicago Tribune
State law requires checks on prescriptions

Drugs, from Previous Page

pharmacists file reports with the state when doctors prescribe medications that are risky when taken together, to require pharmacy computers to clearly define the most dangerous interactions and to require doctors to tell patients when the medicine combination needs to be changed.

She also wants signs prominently posted at pharmacies that provide a state hotline number for patients to call if a pharmacist failed to catch a bad drug interaction or if a pharmacist fails to tell a patient about the potential for a major drug interaction. In addition, Flowers said she wants to study whether standards are strong enough for pharmacy technicians in Illinois.

The Tribune testing represents the largest and most comprehensive study of its kind. In response to the findings, three of America's biggest pharmacy chains - CVS, Walgreens and Walmart - said they would take steps to improve patient safety at stores nationwide. In the Tribune tests, CVS failed 63 percent of the time, Wal-Mart 43 percent of the time and Walgreens 30 percent of the time.

Flowers said in an interview that she feared the speed required for pharmacists to keep up with their workloads may cause "repercussions."

"Just like a person speeding up and down the highway, sooner or later there's going to be a crash," she said. "They're moving way too fast."

In Illinois, pharmacists who detect a serious interaction are supposed to contact the prescribing doctor to see if the order is correct or if an alternative therapy is available, according to the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation. Pharmacists then should alert the patient.

But in the Tribune tests, many pharmacies dispensed dangerous drug pairs without verbally warning the tester or attempting to contact the doctor about the potential interaction.

Illinois law also requires pharmacies to conduct several drug safety checks on prescriptions, including whether the dose is reasonable and whether the medication might interact with other drugs the patient is taking. Yet the Tribune found that pharmacists rarely asked what other medications testers were using.

And though Illinois requires pharmacies to "offer to counsel" patients on all prescriptions, pharmacists throughout the industry often address this requirement by having technicians ask patients at checkout, "Do you have any questions for the pharmacist today?" or sometimes simply, "Any questions?" Some states require actual counseling, at least on a first-time medication.

State Rep. Lou Lang, D-Skokie, said in an interview that he has met with union members who have expressed concerns about the number of hours pharmacists are often required to work and that they wanted to cut hours in order to minimize the chances of errors.

"We want to make sure that people that are filling prescriptions are well-rested and well-treated and not filling prescriptions at a time that they are doing so to the detriment of public safety," Lang said. "For instance, we don't allow pilots to fly more than a certain number of hours a day or a week because we want them well and alert because they are flying precious cargo - human beings - in those planes."

Despite the ongoing difficulties in state budget negotiations, Rauner said his administration would "look forward to working with members of the General Assembly on a bipartisan basis to explore all options" to see what can be done to prevent dangerous drug interactions.

Carmen Catizone, executive director of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, previously told the Tribune he would like to see all states require pharmacists to provide counseling about first-time medications and changes of doses.

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CHICAGO TRIBUNE media group
Lake military families treated to holiday meals

BY YADIRA SANCHEZ OLSON
News-Sun

The holiday spirit of giving was alive and well Dec. 14 at the Forest City Community Center in Great Lakes, as an annual event providing meals for military families returned to the housing community for service personnel.

During Operation Homefront's Holiday Meals for Military program, 200 families at the North Chicago base were treated to a variety of gifts that were handed to them at different stations, but not before a heartfelt thank you was said with a smile by volunteers.

The event saw small and large families in groups come inside from the bitter cold with their little ones ready to eat cookies and make crafts. And to see Santa, who was on hand lending an ear to their Christmas wishes.

Most families pre-registered for the event, which provided to-go bags of nonperishable food items that included drinks, meals and breakfast treats, as well as coupons redeemable for perishable groceries necessary for a full holiday meal.

In hopes of making the military families' holiday season just a little bit brighter and provide them with a sense of community, a number of organizations and businesses, both local and international, partnered for the occasion.

Chicago-based Beam Suntory and Waukegan's Wal-Mart are the two major sponsors of the program.

On Dec. 14, 9-year-old Devin Wilburn excitedly grabbed a bag of marshmallows he saw peeking out of the filled-to-the-brim bag of food his dad was carrying.

"We really appreciate this. This helps us save money that we can maybe spend on their presents," said Devin's mom, Sheena.

Aside from the meals, cleaning supplies donated by the Procter & Gamble and age-appropriate school kits provided by the Back 2 School Illinois organization were distributed.

For mother of four Jill Eaton, the program was a nice way to kick off the season of giving.

"It's awesome that people do this for us," Eaton said, while her 6-year-old daughter, Gwyn, chomped on the last part of a candy cane and played with her "Support the Troops" necklace that was provided by a volunteer and hung around her neck by her mom.

The Holiday Meals for Military program began for Thanksgiving 2009 as the result of a chance encounter in a New York supermarket by Libertyville resident Ken Ruff, vice president of national accounts on-premise at Beam Suntory, and the wife of a soldier who couldn't afford a small piece of meat and a few other groceries.

Ruff said he paid the $12 worth of the groceries then, and since that time, the holiday meals program has grown from initially providing 500 meal kits to military families to providing more than 10,000 this holiday season, across the world.

On Dec. 14, Ruff was there with his daughter, helping other volunteers carry bags to the families' vehicles.

"Every event is different; but it's always about the families," he said.

Events like the one at Great Lakes take place each year during Operation Homefront's "Giving Strength" campaign during the first two weeks in December.

Yadira Sanchez Olson is a freelance reporter for the News-Sun.
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Hairdressers must watch for domestic violence

New Illinois law requires staff training

BY VIKKI ORTIZ HEALY
Chicago Tribune

In 13 years as a professional hairstylist, Christine Walker has listened to clients vent about all sorts of personal drama: work stress, trouble with teenagers, extramarital affairs.

But starting Jan. 1, Walker, who works at Belle De Jour Salon in Lemont, will be required by law to have special training on how to handle conversations about domestic violence and sexual assault.

Under the new measure signed into law by Gov. Bruce Rauner last summer, the state's 88,000 licensed beauty professionals must take a one-hour course designed to teach them to recognize signs of domestic violence and ways to address it. Stylists will be required to complete the course while applying for a new license, and then as an additional hour added to the 14 hours of continuing education required for license renewal every two years.

The law includes barbers, cosmetologists, aestheticians, hair braiders and nail technicians and will be enforced by the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation.

Illinois is the first state to adopt such a mandate, according to Illinois state Rep. Fran Hurley, who sponsored the bill that led to an amendment in the Barber, Cosmetology, Esthetics, Hair Braiding and Nail Technology Act of 1985. Hurley and other legislators worked closely with Chicago Says No More, a nonprofit organization that works to combat domestic violence and sexual assault, to develop the law.

"There's an openness, a freeness, a relationship that lasts years or decades between the client and the cosmetologist," Hurley said. "They're in a position to see something that may or may not be right."

Although the measure does not require stylists to report incidents to authorities, advocates hope the training will ultimately help lower incidents of domestic violence by making more people conscious of the problem, and offering victims one more place they can turn for help, especially when many do not seek help from authorities, said Kristie Paskvan, founder of Chicago Says No More.

According to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 103,546 domestic violence offenses were reported to law enforcement in Illinois in 2015. That's up from 99,795 offenses reported the year before.

And from July 1, 2015, to this past June, there were 49 domestic violence-related deaths in Illinois, including three children, according to the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

By learning signs of domestic abuse, statistics about its prevalence and the resources available, hairstylists and other cosmetologists will be able to help victims trying to navigate difficult and sometimes dangerous situations, Paskvan said. The group also is considering future efforts to have other occupations, such as bartenders, included in domestic violence training.

"This is a person who is literally grooming you, so it's a relationship that's kind of special," Paskvan said. "Just getting people the information gives them a different perspective."

But not all hairstylists are eager to have the added responsibility.

Annie Papageorge, owner of the Steven Papageorge Salon and Beauty Academy in Evanston, said the training puts enormous pressure on stylists, who did not get into their line of business to be on the lookout for crime.

"You could make or break somebody's family," she said. "It's heavy on the heart."

Charles Ifergan, owner of three salons in the Chicago area, said he, too, was concerned about the added responsibility being required of his 120 employees. Ifergan, a veteran stylist, said relationships between stylists and clients have evolved over the decades. In the 1960s, '70s and '80s, clients came once a week to have their hair blown out. Today, clients and stylists may see each other only once every few months because people tend to care for their own hair at home, he said.

"You do not have the in-depth relationship that we used to have," Ifergan said. "It's hard for me to believe that a client would report (domestic violence) to a junior stylist."

But Walker, the hairstylist in Lemont, said she could see why a hairstylist could be an ideal person to turn to during domestic violence situations. While a victim may not feel comfortable turning to a close friend, he or she may feel safe sharing with someone more removed from the situation.

"We always say we're not just hairdressers," she said. "We're your therapist, sometimes your doctor, we have a lot of different hats."
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Hope makes the story of Christmas holy

RANDY BLAER

A lot of Christmas stories get told this time of year. There is the classic tale of jolly old St. Nick and his eight tiny reindeer in "A Visit from St. Nicholas." There's Ralph and new classic story of his desire to get a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas in the simply named "A Christmas Story." Of course, "A Christmas Carol," which tells how Ebenezer Scrooge has a change of heart, is nearly everyone's favorite. Not only does it give us the word that is synonymous with misery, but also most of the other holiday traditions we enjoy this time of year.

Those stories are entertaining and informative. Scrooge tells us redemption is possible, while Ralph teaches us that our heart's desire is not always what we really want or need, and jolly old St. Nick? Well, there is nothing like the wonder of a child this time of year, is there?

But it is good to go back to our roots for when it all began. Yes, I'm talking about the original Christmas.

And whether you take it as Gospel as the coming of the Christ, or just an ancient story that teaches a lesson, as any other myth, it is worth examining as Christmas Day approaches. There are many aspects of the original story to examine. There's the journey of the Magi, who come to worship the infant king. There's the story of the slaughter of the Innocents when Herod learns the new king is to be born in Bethlehem. And there is the part of the story where Mary and Joseph cannot find any room at the inn.

But the part of the story I like to review is the part played by the real main character of the whole thing. That would be Mary, the young girl who becomes the mother of Jesus. Everything starts with Mary. She is the essential person in the story who makes everything happen.

Without Mary, there's no tale to tell.
So let's take a look at our main character.
Mary is a teenager, an unwed mother to be. In our day and time, there are a lot of people who can identify with that. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 249,078 babies born to teenage mothers in 2014.

Mary learns of her situation from a messenger of the Lord, who outlines the entire plan for her. She's to have a son and name him Jesus and, well you know the rest.

But there is key scene we need to remember. It's how Mary responds to the news. She is deeply troubled, the scripture tells us. Who wouldn't be?

She's a kid, just a teenager. She's not married yet, just engaged. Pregnancy at this point in her life will lead to shame, ridicule, probably divorce and poverty. She'll be an outcast in a community with no safety nets for outcasts.

It's a lot to ask. No. When you think about it, it is everything to ask.

Nothing in our story can happen unless Mary agrees. So how does she respond to this request to suffer, to venture into the unknown of ridicule and shame, in other words, a whole world of trouble?

"May it be to me as you have said." Mary says yes.

I sometimes like to wonder if there were other girls up for the role, other young women who might have said, "No way," or "I don't think so," to this news of supernatural intervention in human affairs.

But Mary said yes.

I like to think that's what makes it holy. Not that God did something wonderful or caused a miracle. He can do that anytime. He's God.

No, the holy part is that a human being, and therefore all the rest of us human beings, are invited to participate in the whole deal. Nothing will happen unless we agree to our role. And some of us, like Mary, say, "Yes," to an idea that makes no sense.

Yes, that's the holy part. Merry Christmas.

Randy Blaser is a freelance columnist for Pioneer Press.

What are your Christmas tree traditions?

PAUL SASSONE

We disagree.
If it were up to me, nothing new would be hung on our Christmas tree. I like ornaments that have been with me many and many a Christmas. If I could have the same Christmas tree year after year after year, I would.

My wife — who also loves our old Christmas ornaments — is more reasonable. There should be room on the tree for both new and old ornaments, she believes.

Hence, we have more up-to-date ornaments — pickles and tigers and Santas and birds and airplanes and flowers and other things that weren't consid-

ered as Christmas tree ornaments when I was a kid.
And back then was the real Christmas. Don't you agree?
Round.
Back then most Christmas tree ornaments were round. Round glass balls. Some ornaments were in the shape of ice icicles or tear drops.
Bells, too. Ornaments could look like bells.
I have several of each in my collection. And I make sure they go on the tree first and in a prominent place.
One of my favorites is a blue plastic bell. Close examination of the bell's surface reveals a crusty white substance. This is the residue of the year my mother decided to flock our Christmas tree.
Flocked trees were all the rage back then. But flocked trees were expensive. So, my mother bought a couple of cans of Flock-o — or whatever it was called — and sprayed the whole tree. The spray hardened into a dull white crust that permanently adhered to some ornaments — the bell and a small green wreath I also still have.

The pride of my ancient ornament collection is a small red leather-like boot. It's kind of dried out. But there is a space for an inscription near the top of the boot. And in my Aunt Mary's small, precise hand-writting you can see she inscribed "Baby Paul's First Christmas."

Now, that's tradition! Well, that's my tradition, anyway.

And that boot always gets pride of place on the tree. My wife understands what it means to me, how it is a tangible, evocative object that recalls for me a time and place and people gone but joyfully remembered.

My wife hangs some of her family's ornaments near my boot. I'm glad they are round glass ornaments.

Well, that's my Christmas tree.

There's yours is loaded with tradition and good memories, too.

Paul Sassone is a freelance columnist for Pioneer Press.
Finding comfort in a blended holiday

PAT LENHOFF

The holiday bonanza soon kicks off, bringing with it joyful and diverse celebrations in homes across the country. Christmas Eve coincides with the first night of Chanukah. It will be the first time in my 43 years of practicing Judaism that I can recall that happening. Then we have Christmas Day, followed by Kwanzaa and finally the start of the new year. Homes around the globe will glow with the lights of the menorah, Christmas tree and the Kwanzaa candelabra, all at the same time.

In our family, I volunteered to play host for the Chanukah/Christmas Eve gathering. I've had some fun trying to play off the restaurant craze of fusion dishes as I try to figure out how to combine latkes and kugel with some of our family's traditional Christmas favorites. Those dishes include my grandmother's whipped red Jello fluff and my great-aunt's creamy chicken noodle dish.

Even ham was up for consideration, but the prospect of serving ham on a Jewish holiday became a bit unsettling despite the fact that a good ham sandwich is enjoyed by most on any other day. I opted for the works-with-everything turkey option.

The dictionary definition of "fusion" says it's a means of merging diverse, distinct, or separate elements into a unified whole. Perhaps that is what those cutting-edge chefs do when practicing fusion cuisine. But my purpose for creating the evening's menu is not to blend those different holiday elements into a muddled unidentifiable mess. Rather, it's to allow each dish to shine on its own, all the while sharing the same table together in a heartwarming example of how to retain individuality but coexist happily.

It could be said that vision is sappy and sophomoric. Maybe a bit Pollyannish. What does food have to do with peaceful human coexistence anyway? To me, it's a fitting metaphor for what I've been blessed to experience in my own family, and how much I wish the same for other families who share blended backgrounds.

It's elementary to what is needed for understanding and mutual respect, both for our differences and our similarities. It is especially needed in these confrontational times after an election that often brought out the worst in both our candidates and some of our citizens. It's time to step back and embrace life's special celebrations that can both heal and provide inspiration.

The story of the sacred oil miraculously lasting eight days, which is symbolized by the menorah lights at Chanukah, is a proud reminder of how Jews over millennia have withstood persecution. It could be said that vision is sappy and sophomoric. Maybe a bit Pollyannish. What does food have to do with peaceful human coexistence anyway? To me, it's a fitting metaphor for what I've been blessed to experience in my own family, and how much I wish the same for other families who share blended backgrounds.

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The story of the sacred oil miraculously lasting eight days, which is symbolized by the menorah lights at Chanukah, is a proud reminder of how Jews over millennia have withstood persecution. It's a blessing that all three of these special holidays will be celebrated together this year.

Happy Chanukah, Merry Christmas and Happy Kwanzaa!
Books to put under the Christmas tree

SARA CLARKSON
Dateline

I wasn't old enough to understand the significance of Bruce Springsteen's powerful song and album "Born to Run" in 1975, but he was certainly part of my playlist by the time "Born in the USA" came out. Imagine my surprise one day when I was loudly humming along to "Born in the USA" and one of my kids said, dumbstruck, "You know Bruce Springsteen?"

Heck yeah. Of course his eponymous autobiography "Born to Run" is already wrapped and under the tree addressed to my husband from SC (Santa Claus, but go ahead and compare those initials to my own).

I like Bruce Springsteen, but my husband is a huge fan of Springsteen's energy, honesty and integrity as well as of the story his songs tell. All of those qualities are evident in his autobiography, too. Before wrapping it, I carefully flipped through the book and then several hours later put the paper on it. It is going to be good, and the critics have generally loved it.

I have "Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of Family and Culture in Crisis" by J.D. Vance for my mother who is interested in all things political and sociological. Vance and his family hail from Kentucky, a town called Jackson in the Appalachian Mountains, though he grew up in Middletown, Ohio. Poor, like generations before him, he sought to improve his lot and enlisted in the Marines after high school and later ended up going to Ohio State University before earning his law degree from Yale. His memoir is engaging and informative, and his point of view valuable in a time of increasing divide between the haves and the have-nots.

For my youngest sister who likes Russia and only wants to read fiction, I am getting "A Gentleman in Moscow: A Novel" by Amor Towles. Towles' first published novel was "The Rules of Civility" in 2011, and while I thought it was going to be a philosophical etiquette book, it was instead a page-turning novel of manners and social achievement in 1930s New York City.

Towles' newest work is set in The Metropol Hotel, a luxurious beacon in 1922 Russia. There Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov is essentially under house arrest and comes to rely on a girl named Nina.

Bruce Springsteen narrates the audio book edition of his memoir "Born to Run," who has a skeleton key to the all the hotel rooms. The novel has been compared to a cross between "The Grand Budapest Hotel" and "Eloise." Sounds like good winter reading.

Pay attention Santa, I have my own list. Please bring me "Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood" by Trevor Noah. Noah replaced Jon Stewart on The Daily Show, so right off the bat Noah has a point of view, and just as like Stewart's wit and acuity, Noah has his own biting wit and acuity. I particularly like the fact that he is a foreigner commenting on what he sees here in the U.S.

As someone who lived outside the United States for nine years, I appreciate an outsider's point of view, especially from someone who was raised in "post-Apartheid" South Africa. He still grew up amid a kind of racism we can't even imagine, and I rather like his outrage.

I also admit to liking his South African "accent," and in his memoir he talks about how and why his mom emphasized how important it was to for Noah not just to learn to speak English but to speak it correctly, eloquently and with distinction. Language would be a tool for his advancement. That is not something we — in our Blue Ribbon School district and access to books and media — think about often.

I have also asked Santa Claus for "Commonwealth" by Ann Patchett. "Bel Canto," one of her earlier novels, is one of my top 20 books, so anything Patchett writes from to essays to soup labels is something I am going to read. Patchett can tell a story and create compelling characters, and I believe that is what happens in this story of a family and its relationships over time.

Bibliophile or not, God bless us, every one!

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The Top 10 TV shows of 2016

From paranoid androids in "Westworld" to doubting spies in "The Americans"

BY JENNIFER THOMAS
Pioneer Press

There are more TV shows than ever before and no shortage of moving, funny, adventurous shows to choose from in 2016. Here are 10 of the year's best.

10. "The Girlfriend Experience" (Starz) - Very few female characters are allowed to be the way law-student-turned-escort Christine (Riley Keough) is allowed to be. She is detached, unsentimental, ruthlessly practical, occasionally arrogant, but also naive at times. The most alive Christine seems is when she's playing the part of the girlfriend for pay. It's a role she plays so well that you wonder if one of the things she likes about being an escort, aside from the money and freedom, is that it lets her explore intimacy and connections without commitment. "The Girlfriend Experience" is part character study and part thriller and best experienced as a binge watch.

9. "The Night Of" (HBO) - The first episode of "The Night Of" was one of the best episodes of TV this year. It immediately puts us in the passenger seat of a runaway train that starts when quiet, college student Naz (Riz Ahmed) begins the night by taking his father's cab to go to a party and ends it being accused of murder. The investigation into the murder of the woman he meets isn't really the show's strong suit; much more fascinating is seeing how the descent into the justice system changes Naz, how the odds are stacked against him and how the odds are stacked against him. The investigation into the murder of the woman he meets isn't really the show's strong suit; much more fascinating is seeing how the descent into the justice system changes Naz, how the odds are stacked against him and how the odds are stacked against him.

8. "This Is Us" (NBC) - "This Is Us," is a show that felt lived-in immediately. Almost all of the major relationships — whether between siblings, husband and wife or parent and child — felt very believable. The show also has an interesting structure, weaving in and out of the past and present in the lives of a couple and their three children — twins and an abandoned baby they adopted who was born on the same day. And it explores some very relatable storylines — general ones like jealousy, and specific ones like being an adopted child, especially a black child adopted into a white family.

7. "Stranger Things" (Netflix) - "Stranger Things" is a warm hug of nostalgia and present in the lives of a couple and their three children - twins and an abandoned baby they adopted who was born on the same day. And it explores some very relatable storylines — general ones like jealousy, and specific ones like being an adopted child, especially a black child adopted into a white family.

6. "Atlanta" (FX) - The basic premise of "Atlanta" is very much reality based — 20-something Earn (Donald Glover, also the show's creator), is smart, but sometimes aimless, and he's trying to get back on his feet and provide for his daughter by managing the career of his rapper cousin Alfred, stage name Paper Boi. But then each episode is tweaked to bring in some thing wacky and usually very funny. Some episodes are fairly straightforward and portray Earn's struggles to make money or his on again/off again Vanessa (Zazie Beetz) trying to decide if she's living up to her own potential to the excellent Brian Tyree Henry as Alfred/Paper Boi, who makes use of his intimidating appearance, but is also genuinely saddened when people see him as a thug. "Atlanta" can be compared to any show, it might be "Seinfeld." But whereas Seinfeld satirized the absurd by treating it with sincerity, "Atlanta" uses absurdity to satirize the serious.

5. "The Americans" (FX) - "The Americans" is a rare show that gets better every season. The motives of undercover Russian spies Phillip and Elizabeth living in 1980s America were pretty opaque initially, but as the show has gone on, they've given us more insight into how and why they were recruited and their doubts. But "The Americans" doesn't water down Phillip and Elizabeth's actions to make them totally sympathetic. They still do horrible things that have horrible consequences for innocent people, this season more so than ever, including for their teenage daughter. Which leads the two to ques-
Show, from Page 22

tion even more whether the ends truly justify the means. "The Americans" might be set in the 1980s, but it keeps on being relevant with insights into radicalization, terrorism, and, ahem, relations with Russia.

3. "Game of Thrones" (HBO) — For the first time this year, "Game of Thrones" the TV show advanced beyond the material laid out in "Game of Thrones" the book series. The shows creators know from author George R.R. Martin how the book series will end, but having more freedom to tell their TV story really seemed to get things moving this season. No more characters spinning their wheels in remote places far from the action. Part of the appeal of "Game of Thrones" is how wonderfully it balances devastation, delayed gratification and sweet, sweet revenge. Season 6 lacked some of the gut-punch shocks of seasons past, but it also paid off big dividends from the look at Hodor's surprising and heartbreathing backstory to a few truly reprehensible characters getting their glorious comeuppance. And now the remaining players in the fight for the Iron Throne are on course for what it sure to be a spectacular political collision.

2. "The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story" (FX) — With a pretty incredible cast — especially Sarah Paulson as Marcia Clark, Sterling K. Brown as Christopher Darden and Courtney B. Vance as Johnnie Cochran — the series was an entertaining and addicting look into the mountain of evidence collected against O.J. Simpson, somehow still played out like a thriller where the verdict could go either way.

1. "Better Call Saul" (AMC) — "Better Call Saul" is deeply funny, dark, clever, heartwarming and heartbreaking. Ethics-challenged lawyer Saul Goodman was a hilarious character in the "Breaking Bad" universe, but I never would have guessed at the depths capable of his backstory and how much I would come to love him born as Jimmy McGill (Bob Odenkirk). The second season was a smartly plotted story of Jimmy constantly fighting to be seen as legitimate, but also recognizing his greatest talent is in playing the con man. And while the stone-faced McGuyver-of-hitmen Mike Ehrmantraut (Jonathan Banks), played out a story more in keeping of the "Breaking Bad" roots, it worked well within the "Saul" universe. On the Jimmy front, this year's story was almost all domestic, with a clever battle ofwills between Jimmy and his brother Chuck (Michael McKean), who has let his frustration at watching Jimmy cut corners consume him. The fourth major player was Jimmy's friend and sometime love interest, the loyal and level-headed Kim (Rhea Seehorn) who, like Jimmy, often feels she's not being recognized. The character of Kim and Seehorn's portrayal was a huge asset to the show this season. Her struggle in a mostly male-dominated law firm, her need to work harder than everyone else to get thrown scraps and her brief power rush when she plays along with one of Jimmy's cons made her vulnerable and relatable.

And although we all knew going in how the trial ended, "The People v. O.J. Simpson" somehow still played out like a thriller where the verdict could go either way.

"Better Call Saul" still has hope.
In Chicago theater, 2016 was the year of “Hamilton.” But that high-profile attraction landed at a moment of rich, diverse and emotional exploration. Here are my 10 best shows of the year, followed by 10 more that should have made the list.

1. “The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window,” Goodman Theatre: Director Anne Kauffman reminded us that Lorraine Hansberry’s genius was far more pervasive than just “A Raisin in the Sun” in this astonishingly prescient 1964 drama set in Greenwich Village as America was on the cusp of change.

2. “Hamilton,” PrivateBank Theatre: No production in living memory has arrived in Chicago with the level of anticipation of the first post-Broadway production of the most successful musical in a generation. Lead producer Jeffrey Seller and his creative team did not disappoint, offering a dynamic and dedicated company that throws itself into Lin-Manuel Miranda’s extraordinary piece.


4. “Hand to God,” Victory Gardens Theater: Thanks in no small measure to a stunning performance from Alex Weinman, director Gary Griffin’s production set in a church youth group eschewed the excess of the original production in favor of a closely observed study of ordinary Americans struggling with insecurities and loneliness.

5. “West Side Story,” Paramount Theatre, Aurora: Director Jim Corti’s “West Side Story” was as stark and overtly expressionistic a take on this iconic 1950s musical as I’ve seen, coming with a deep undercurrent of sadness, a sense that we all were watching the early days of gang violence in America that just a generation or two later would consume our city with the death of young people.


7. “Man of La Mancha,” Marriott Theatre: A radical and progressive reinterpretation, director Nick Bowling’s production was unlike any previous production of the perennially challenging musical, especially in its treatment of Dulcinea, played, with spectacular ferocity, by Danni Smith.

8. “Mary Page Marlowe,” Steppenwolf Theatre Company: Tracy Letts’ strikingly loving new play took an ordinary American woman and ennobled her by serving up this Mary Page Marlowe to seven distinguished actresses.

9. “King Lear,” Belarus Free Theatre: The actors from Belarus who risk everything for their art are frequent visitors to Chicago Shakespeare Theater. But none of their work here has exceeded the force of this extraordinary “King Lear,” seen through the lens of an oppressive dictatorship.

10. “Learning Curve,” Albany Park Theatre Project and Third Rail Projects: “Learning Curve,” a show that occupied a real, shuttered school, did more to impress upon adults the importance of public education than all the TED Talks and policy statements in the world.

4 things to know about depression

Symptom checklists often leave out a few of the nasty little surprises that this jerk of an illness has in store for you.
Kid-assembled soup mix a thoughtful gift

By Judy Buchenot
Naperville Sun

With Christmas just a few days away, most everyone is scrambling to get those last few hard-to-find gifts for folks like the kids’ teachers and your great-aunt who has everything. The gift should be thoughtful yet affordable.

The Hannah Circle, a women’s group at Wesley United Methodist Church in Naperville, has a great suggestion that is family-friendly and useful.

It all started when the group wanted to do a fundraiser at the church that would involve their children.

“Someone suggested soup mixes in a jar and so we came up with two recipes that were easy enough for kids to put together,” said Melissa Muehsler, church member and Naperville resident.

The group bought the ingredients and then set up an assembly line with each ingredient in a separate bowl. Children were assigned to each bowl and were shown how to measure ingredients to go into the jar. Each jar was fitted with a funnel. After a few tries with various funnels, it was obvious that the widemouth canning funnel was easier to use than a narrow funnel. Within 20 minutes, the team of children made a dozen jars of soup mix.

Quart and pint canning jars were used to hold the mixes, but any clean jar that is the right size and has a lid can be used.

“It's like doing a whole bunch of teamwork,” said Isaac Janusauskas as he waited for his turn to add his ingredient.

The group chose two different soup recipes. One was for Hearty Friendship Soup that makes a family-sized batch of soup. It requires some additional ingredients to be added to the mix. The second soup was a potato soup that is scooped out for an individual serving and requires only boiling water to complete.

Hearty Friendship Soup

1 1/2 cups dried split peas
1/4 cup beef bouillon granules
1/4 cup pearl barley
1/2 cup lentils
1/4 cup dried onion flakes
1 tablespoon dried Italian seasoning
1/2 cup uncooked long-grain white rice
1 cup uncooked rotini

1. In a 1 quart jar, layer the split peas, bouillon, barley, lentils, onion flakes, Italian seasoning and rice. Put pasta in a plastic bag and place in jar. Put lid on jar to seal.

2. Create a label for the jar with the following:

   Additional ingredients
   for soup:
   1 pound ground beef or turkey
   14 ounces diced tomatoes
   Pepper and garlic powder to taste

   To prepare soup: Remove pasta and set aside. In a large pot over medium heat, brown meat with pepper and garlic. Drain. Add diced tomatoes, three quarts of water and soup mix. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 45 minutes. Stir in the pasta, cover and simmer 15 to 20 minutes more. Soup is ready to enjoy.

Potato Soup

1 1/4 cups instant mashed potato flakes
1 1/2 cups dry milk powder
1 tablespoon chicken bouillon granules
2 teaspoons dried minced onion
1 teaspoon dried parsley
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 teaspoon ground turmeric
3 tablespoons bacon bits
3 tablespoons chives

1. Combine potato flakes, dry milk, bouillon, onion, parsley, pepper, thyme, turmeric, bacon bits and chives in a bowl. Gently stir to mix. Divide in half and place in two pint jars.

2. Attach the following instructions: To serve, place 1/2 cup soup mix in bowl. Stir in 1/4 cup boiling water until smooth. To make a thinner soup, add more water.

Melissa and Angie’s Culinary Cue

Although very young children can help make these mixes, adult supervision is important. Be sure to have an adult with each young child to make sure the right amounts make it into the jar. Sometimes young children are having so much fun that they are tempted to add more than is needed in the recipe.

Judy Buchenot is a freelance writer.
It's that time once again. I've gazed into my culinary crystal ball in search of discovering the hottest food trends for 2017. Obviously, I have no guarantee if I'm on the right track, but I have high hopes I'll be proven right over the next 12 months. Look for my 2016 trends of fried chicken sandwiches and Korean Gochujang to continue growing in popularity in the New Year, but leave a little room in your belly for gluttonous freakshakes, lovely Filipino lumpia rolls and an Israeli inspired brunch dish. While you're at it, you can help prove me right by dining-in at your local butcher shop and washing your meal down with something other than soda, preferably a tasty beer brewed by a woman!

**The root to leaf movement:** Just like the beloved meat-focused nose-to-tail movement, waste-conscious cooks are embracing whole vegetable cookery. Root to leaf eating forces cooks to make use of delicate herb flowers, tough vegetable stalks and often discarded leafy greens like beet, carrot and turnip tops. While this financially sound and environmentally friendly practice is already favored by restaurant chefs, look for recipes geared toward home cooks to make the most of vegetables in 2017.

**Female brewers:** Brewing didn't become the male-dominated industry it is today until the start of the industrial revolution in the late 1700s. Long before our image of a beer-maker became a bearded, flannel-clad, boot-wearing hipster-dude, women brewed beer as part of their daily chores. The craft beer movement, with its array of brew styles and complex flavor profiles, is drawing more women into the field. Look for female brewers to gain more recognition than ever in 2017.

**Keep your fork:** The stuffy formality of fine dining will relax even more in the new year. Look for restaurants to suggest you hang onto your fork between courses by offering a place for you to rest it on the table. Tiles, wooden boards, small dishes or proper fork rests will keep your used silverware from touching the table after use.

**Butcher to table:** Knowing your butcher is even more important as less familiar meats like goat and rabbit gain popularity. To help carnivores navigate the world of meat look for savvy butchers to create welcoming and delicious dine-in experiences in their shop.

**Doner kebab:** First served in Turkey, Doner kebab is a well-known German street food and beloved late night snack. Similar to gyros, kebab sandwiches feature beef, chicken or lamb spiced with loads of salt, cinnamon and cumin. Shaved from rotating spits, the meat is piled on flat bread before being garnished with sauces, lettuce and tomato. Look for kebab shops to pop up in 2017.

**The rise of Filipino cuisine:** This lesser-known Asian cuisine is gaining in popularity. Filipino dishes are a blissful marriage of Chinese, Spanish, Mexican and even American influences. Look for heavily marinated pork dishes cooked in adobo, flavorful garlic rice, ube (purple yam) and lumpia (spring roll) to tantalize your taste buds in 2017.

**Freakshakes:** These crazy milkshakes of Australian origin are getting loads of attention in London at the moment. Topped off with cookies, brownies, sprinkles and fruit, I predict these elaborately garnished super messy milkshakes will make big waves in the United States in 2017.

**Down with soda:** 2016 marked a 30-year low in soft drink sales nationally, and in November Cook County passed a new tax on sugared beverages including soda. Health-aware consumers will continue to snub sugary pop in exchange for fruity agua fresca and carbonated water alternatives.

A freakshake takes a shake to epic proportions, in this case one made with bananas and peanut butter and skewered bacon, mini cupcakes, peanut butter cookies and brownies.

A freakshake takes a shake to epic proportions, in this case one made with bananas and peanut butter and skewered bacon, mini cupcakes, peanut butter cookies and brownies.
How to get cat to use litter box

By Marc Morrone
Tribune Content Agency

Q: A few months ago my 4-year-old cat started pooping in my bathtub. She continued to pee in her litter box. When we blocked off the tub she continued to poop on the floor next to the tub. She still continues to pee in the box, which we keep clean. I would prefer not to change her litter brand due to asthma. We currently use feline pine, which can easily be cleaned up and dumped in the toilet. Her litter box is lined and we've done nothing to change anything we've used. Other than diapers or potty training, do you have any suggestions? Thank you. — Sharon Wilson, Chicago, IL

A: Well if it is your destiny to have an issue like this with your cat, then a pooping issue on washable surfaces is a lot easier to deal with, as you have more animals that choose to poop in the bathtub. At any rate, for whatever reason, she does not want to poop in the litter box. This is quite clear. Most cats prefer to bury their waste so that other cats do not know they have been in that area, but this behavior is instinctive, so most domestic cats may not feel this way.

So the best advice I can give to you is to re-create the bathtub for her to poop in but have things under your own terms. Continue to keep the bathroom door closed and put a litter box right next to the one now that she poops in but instead of litter just try lining it with a flat sheet of newspaper or a puppy wee-wee pad.

Most likely when she goes to the litter box to pee she will explore the new box next to it with a smooth surface. She prefers now and most likely she will take advantage of it to poop in. Then you can just dispose of the paper and line it with a new sheet for the next time.

This may not be the answer that you wanted to hear but compromise is still better than losing, and cats rarely lose, so it must be you that compromises.

Q: We have a mini-dachshund that is now 2 years old, and he is the best dog in the world except when we try to cut his nails. As soon as he sees the clippers in our hands he runs and if we confront him he turns into a snarling wolf and he has no hesitation in biting us when he is in this red zone. We tried to put a muzzle on him and then come out with the clippers, but he fought the muzzle so hard that he got his foot stuck in the strap and broke his dewclaw off, and there was blood everywhere. His nails grow very quickly and they curl around into circles and cannot be comfortable for him. We were wondering if you had any tips that we could use to make the situation easier.

— Gary Sims, St. Paul, MN

A: This is not an easy question to answer. Cutting the nails of a dog that does not like the process is sort of like music — there is music that is good, and there is music that is not good, and it is hard to describe what you can do to make the music that is not good, better.

Either you can cut a dog's nails or you cannot, and it sounds like you cannot in this case. I doubt I can tell you what to do to make the situation better under the circumstances and a dachshund is one of those breeds of dogs that do need frequent nail cutting.

Of course if you had nothing to do all day, you could train the dog with positive reinforcement training methods to happily accept nail trimming. However it can take weeks and weeks of training to do this, but any animal can be trained to do anything as long as the animal understands that whatever it is that you are training it to do is in its best interest or has some kind of tangible reward.

In your case I can advise you, but I cannot really answer your question. I do not think there are any tips I can give to you to make such a job on a dog that is so afraid easier on you. There just are not enough hours in the day, and the dog is in set in his ways. If he were younger or a bit less dramatic than the situation would be different.

The best advice I can give you is to just wave the white flag of defeat and take the dog to a groomer or your vet and have the job done professionally. It will cost money to do this but in the end it will be easier on both of you.

Q: There are flocks of wild quaker parrots in the few years we have lived in our home. Last month we noticed an all blue quaker parrot flying in the garden and then when we went back a few days later the bird was not to be seen. How does a blue bird appear in a group of green ones and what could have happened to it?

— James Prince-Westport, Connecticut

A: What you saw is a color mutation — the color green is a combination of the primary colors blue and yellow, and when a mutation in the genes of the bird removes the yellow color, the result is a blue bird.

What actually happened to the bird I cannot say — a mutation like that in a wild population usually does not survive as the blue bird stands out in the flock of green ones and attracts the attention of predators, such as hawks who can zero in on and catch it easier than if it was chasing the green ones.

The domesticated quacker parrots that we keep as pets are bred in the blue colors as well as yellow, white, and combinations of these colors, but those birds are bred in controlled settings, thus not subject to natural selection as the bird that you saw was.

Marc Morrone has kept almost every kind of animal as a pet for the last half-century and he is happy to share his knowledge with others. Contact him at petexperts2@aol.com.
Dear Help Squad,

On Nov. 15, 2016, I purchased a NordicTrack treadmill at the Sears store in Niles. The sales clerk suggested I also buy the Sears protection plan, which would give me an annual maintenance checkup and repair coverage for five years. I paid the additional $274.99.

The week of Nov. 7, 2016, I tried many times to schedule my annual maintenance appointment but all I got was endless telephone holds and referrals to other numbers. The only person I managed to speak with told me Sears no longer did protection plans for treadmills. The sales clerk who initially tried to help said the store was still selling the protection plans.

On Nov. 15, 2016, I went to the Niles Sears store and asked a clerk in the treadmill department to schedule the appointment for me. He tried but had the same experience as I, so he called his supervisor. The supervisor spent over an hour trying to reach someone to make the appointment. She also tried to get me a refund. In an attempt to clarify what might have happened with Elizabeth's protection plan, Shoulders explained the following: Icon is the provider of protection agreements for all Sears online and in-store purchases of NordicTrack products. However, the same protection plans for Icon’s Proform line are provided by Icon when purchased online, and by Sears when purchased in-store. According to Shoulders, Elizabeth was sold the correct protection plan, but was provided the wrong plan documents.

Once this got straightened out, Icon arranged for a service technician to contact Elizabeth for her annual tune-up. Elizabeth said she was given a number to call to schedule all future maintenance and she was also provided the Icon representative's direct line should there be any additional problems.

Her next report: “The NordicTrack serviceman was at my house this morning. Thank you again very much for your assistance!”

Cathy Cunningham is a freelance columnist for Pioneer Press.
And the Biblio Award goes to ... 

By John Warner
Chicago Tribune

At this point, you've probably read a lot of "Best Books" lists, but this is no "Best Books" list. It's the Sixth Annual Biblio Awards, in which I idiosyncratically tell you about the books I read that you should also read if you know what's good for you.

As you well know, books are specific and peculiar, so every award is custom-made.

There's too much to discuss for a single column, so I'm going to keep going until the orchestra plays me off the stage.

**Book About Education You Should Read If You Care About Education, Which You Should, Because Education Matters to Everyone:** Four-way tie: "I Love Learning: I Hate School: An Anthropology of College" by Susan D. Blum; "Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream" by Sara Goldrick-Rab; "The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them" by Christopher Newfield; and "For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood ... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education" by Christopher Emdin. Education is in real trouble, folks, but not the kind of trouble that's often presented by so-called "reformers." In reality, they are the trouble. Collectively, these books show why it's so important to put the public back in public education.

**Book You Shouldn't Read Before Bed Unless You're a Fan of Nightmares:** "Listen to Me" by Hannah Pittard. Builds almost unbearable tension from a single drive through a dark night. Runner-up: "Sweet Lamb of Heaven" by Lydia Millet. Both thriller and horror in one weird, awesome package.

**Book That May Restore Your Faith in Humanity:** "The Nix" by Nathan Hill. Flawed characters, as we all are, but well-meaning in their fumbling toward understanding. May engender a good, cathartic cry. Runner-up: "Dear Fang, With Love" by Rufi Thorpe. A story of a previously absent father trying to do right by his apparently troubled daughter.

**Book That Will Shake Your Faith in Humanity:** "Loner" by Teddy Wayne. A portrait of "toxic masculinity" in the form of a Harvard freshman with a dangerous obsession. Runner-up: "Dear Mr. M." by Herman Koch. As with Koch's best-selling sensation "The Dinner," we spend time experiencing the ways people can be cruel to each other.

**Book That Will Make You Nostalgic for the '90s:** "Seinfeldia: How a Show About Nothing Changed Everything" by Jennifer Keishin Armstrong. A thorough exploration of the famous sitcom, I dare you to read this without running to the television to find some Seinfeld reruns. Runner-up: "Powerhouse: The Untold Story of Hollywood's Creative Artists Agency" by James Andrew Stedman. An oral history ofCAA, the most powerful agency in Hollywood, chock-full of anecdotes about stars such as Tom Cruise when they were young and hungry.

**Worst Book by Best Author:** "The Mandibles: A Family, 2029-2047" by Lionel Shriver. Shriver has written some of the best books, but this is poorly conceived and even more poorly executed.

**Book That's Quite Long, but Reads Really Quickly:** "The Terranauts" by T.C. Boyle. Boyle's riff on the Biosphere 2 project told from three perspectives - two "terranautes" inside the structure, and one outside - turns into a quasi-potboiler that will have you saying, "No way!" in the best way.

**Book That Will Convince You of the Strange Power of the Teenage Human Female:** "Girls on Fire" by Robin Wasserman. Does what good books can achieve, makes you intimate with something you previously didn't know existed, but instantly believe to be true. Out of room this week. More thrills, spills and chills to come next time.

John Warner is a freelance writer whose most recent book is "Tough Day for the Army.

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**Book recommendations from The Biblioracle**

John Warner tells you what to read next based on the last five books you read

1. "The Empathy Exams" by Leslie Jamison
2. "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini
3. "Unbroken" by Laura Hillenbrand
4. "Just Mercy" by Bryan Stevenson
5. "The Road" by Cormac McCarthy

Interesting mix of fiction, narrative non-fiction and essays. For Anthony, I'm recommending a book that is categorized as fiction but actually blends all these things, "The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien.

1. "The Complete Maus" by Art Spiegelman
2. "Moonglow" by Michael Chabon
3. "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald

I feel like Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse Five" is a necessary balm for just about any moment, but a particularly good fit with this list.

1. "The Light Between Oceans" by M.L. Stedman
2. "Me Before You" by Jojo Moyes
3. "In a Dark, Dark Wood" by Ruth Ware
4. "All the Light We Cannot See" by Anthony Doerr
5. "Before the Fall" by Noah Hawley

The first two books on the list have been recently adapted into movies, which brings to mind another book that is now also a movie. I can't say whether Ang Lee's filmed version is any good, but "Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk" by Ben Fountain is one of my favorite books of the last 10 years.

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**What should you read?**

Send a list of your last five books to ersrow@chicagotribune.com. Write "Biblioracle" in the subject line.
ALL THE TRIMMINGS:
Of a timely sort

BY GAIL GRABOWSKI | EDITED BY STANLEY NEWMAN

Across
1 Falling-out
5 Make a mess of
10 Make a mess of
14 Aids in a crime
19 Natural skin soother
20 Licorice-flavored herb
21 Cannonballs, for instance
22 Morocco's capital
23 Textile factory
24 ...one's time (waited)
25 Data in coll. transcripts
26 Playground assertion
27 Human dynamo
29 Forcefully attacks
31 Tortuous journey
32 Capture
34 Tried a new hue
35 Obstructive beast
36 Camper's stove fuel
38 Thorn in one's side
39 Bibliography abbr.
42 Basement racer, perhaps
44 Episodic story line
45 Scored 100% on
49 ...Park (Edison lab site)
51 Hotel employee
55 Aladdin prince
56 Sra. Perón's homeland
57 Tibet's capital
59 Low-fat
60 Pulls suddenly
62 Darkened
64 Interior design
66 "Take this"
67 Rural storehouse
68 Original locale of Muscle Beach
72 Much of the Old World
75 Centers of activity
77 Major blood vessel
78 Rec-room scrape
80 Yellowish brown
82 Big brute
83 Parisian school
85 One-liner
86 Parisian "Cool"
87 Archer's equipment
91 Complaints, so to speak
93 Medieval drudge
95 Finish with
96 Be sorry about
98 Telly watcher
99 Essay page
101 Church officer
105 Ornamental shrub
109 Arm art
112 Talent series once hosted by Ed McMahon
115 Talent series once
116 Sushi staple
117 Strong ox
118 Sweater size
119 Not minding one's manners
120 Sleepyhead in an Everly's tune
121 Nile queen, for short
122 Rippily fabric pattern
123 Isn't oneself
124 Formally establish
125 Part of S&L
126 Range rover
127 Track event
128 Many Hamlet characters
129 Ending like -trix

Down
1 Stallone's commando
2 Homeric epic
3 Imprudent activity
4 Blat
5 Chatty get-together
6 Consolidate
7 Calf-length skirt
8 Tech support caller
9 Support for a statue
10 Loose overcoat
11 Tennis official
12 Celebrity's projection
13 Quick bite
14 Ascended
15 "You shouldn't do that"
16 Fine wood
17 Fashion sense
18 Gave up a seat
28 CIA forerunner
29 Antidrug cop
30 Bingham of Baywatch
33 Antidrug cop
36 Tourney passes
37 Golden St. campus
38 Wheat husk
39 Cyberzines
40 Country singer Gibbs
41 Thin pasta
42 2009 Peace
43 Video arcade pioneer
44 Video arcade pioneer
46 Domino product
47 Beast on Michigan's flag
48 Belltile, so to speak
50 Long-established
52 Big name in wrap
53 Lowly worker
54 "Science Guy" of TV
55 Low-fat
57 Tibet's capital
58 Sound of steam
61 Syrian ... Republic
63 The Winds of War
64 Was bold
65 CPR expert
66 Transport by truck
67 Struggling with choices
68 New Basketball Hall of Fame
69 Keep bothering
70 Struggling with choices
71 A Beautiful Mind star
73 Tehran native
74 Uneasy feeling
76 Preschooler's dinner wear
78 Rec-room scrape
79 Masterpiece
80 Bout ends
81 Color-chart listing
82 Was indebted to
83 Hence
84 Edible ears
85 One-liner
86 Parisian school
87 Archer's equipment
88 New Basketball Hall of Famers
89 Limp as
90 Took a trial break
91 Stumbling block
92 Stumbling block
94 "Without a doubt!"
95 Formally establish
96 Be sorry about
97 China-shop purchases
98 Telly watcher
99 Essay page
101 Take one's sweet time
102 Antarctic explorer Shackleton
103 Limp as
104 Canonized femme: Abbr.
105 Parts of mushrooms
106 Wine grape
107 Non-studio film
108 Nephew of Donald Duck
109 Brief moment
110 First acrylic fiber
111 Porthole view
112 Excellent
113 Lake McConaughy, for instance
114 Airport shuttle
115 Talent series once
116 Sushi staple
117 Strong ox

Last week's answers appear on the last page of Puzzle Island

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Quote-Acrostic

1. Define clues, writing in Words column over numbered dashes.
2. Transfer letters to numbered squares in diagram.
3. When pattern is completed, quotation can be read left to right. The first letters of the filled-in words reading down form an acrostic yielding the speaker's name and the topic of the quotation.

Clues

A. Overly self-involved
B. Thins down
C. Basic nature
D. Carreras or Domingo
E. Become upset: 2 wds.
F. Cause of a starting effect: hyph.
G. Be set for life: 3 wds.
H. Power or right
I. Hold back
J. Rudder necessity
K. In general: 3 wds.
L. Sudan language
M. Total or whole
N. Calder construction
O. Contain
P. Elaborate art style
Q. Casual
R. Kind of obedience
S. Infections of words
T. Food
U. Artist's workspace

Words

1. 59 19 2 84 45 76 32 164 111 136
2. 158 137 8 85 67 142 117
3. 50 106 94 120 134 63 83
4. 123 148 97 60 49
5. 1 46 89 12
6. 30 151 77 42 116 122 144
7. 17 7 62 156 44 90 141 113
8. 147 14 110 34 21 87 101 118 133 166
9. 131 100 163 108 75 58 88 146 41
10. 68 16 56 40 105 165 29

Across

1. Flower part
2. American Indian
3. Farewells
4. Worship
5. French money
6. Harden
7. Polaris
8. City of Light
9. One of the Carolines
10. __trite
12. Moslem VIP
13. Apportion
14. Appear
15. City of Seven Hills, to her natives
16. Old-fashioned tear-jerker
17. Black's partner in the Irish revolution
18. Abet
19. Ennui
20. Place to eliminate moisture
21. Sista
22. Red dye
23. Ages
24. Lefties
25. In days of __

Down

1. Criticize
2. Tokyo's former name
3. Rocky pinnacle
4. Bohemian
5. The Merry Widow composer
6. Congal
7. Type of Lousianan
8. Doodads and knickknacks
10. Collection of sayings
11. Serving vessel
12. Originated
13. Famous opener
14. Mineral spring
15. Involve
16. Horse breed
17. '60s dance craze
18. Cupid
19. Baseball nine
20. Resident of Mayfair
21. Inlet
22. Lease
23. Be set for serving
24. Spain's last queen
25. Some are from Canada
26. City on the Rhine
27. Small amt.
28. Colorado park
29. City of Seven Hills, to her natives
30. Old-fashioned tear-jerker
31. Black's partner in the Irish revolution
32. Abet
33. Ennui
34. Place to eliminate moisture
35. Sista
36. Red dye
37. Ages
38. Lefties
39. In days of __
40. Famous opener
41. Mineral spring
42. Involve
43. Horse breed
44. '60s dance craze
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59. Abet
60. Ennui
61. Place to eliminate moisture
62. Sista
63. Red dye
64. Ages
65. Lefties
66. In days of __
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Section 2
Thursday, December 22, 2016
Crossword

By Jacqueline E. Mathews. © 2016 Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All rights reserved.

47 Kareem — Jabbar
50 Invoice
51 Give a name to
54 Burn
57 Additional amount
58 Deceased
61 Nimble
62 from; talk out of
63 Worry

Solutions

1 Weather word
2 Zealous
3 Refusing to quit
4 Parched
5 Pinch pennies
6 Assumed name
7 Church season
8 Children's running game
9 2017 and others: abbr.
10 Wooden shoes
11 Not brand new
12 Shopping center
13 Exclusively
14 Once more
15 Ravel at the edges
16 Learned; 59 Reed or Fargo
17 —livered; 59 Reed or Fargo
18 Sounds familiar
19 Strong
20 Transparent
21 Shortcoming
22 Divine
23 Accepted standards
24 Individuals
25 Ran up a tab
26 _ for; summon
27 _ for; summon
28 _ for; chooses
29 _ for; chooses
30 Strong yearning
31 Narrow Street
32 Inexperienced
33 Argument
34 Fraternity letter
35 _ for; chooses
36 Reclines running game
37 Courted
38 Novelist Bellow
39 Topographic
40 Makes tea
41 Hoodwink
42 Magazine editions
43 Built to last
44 Make a sound; verb
45 Car from Italy
46 Small pitchers
47 No ifs, _ or buts
48 Track
49 Short rest
50 Crooked
51 Nimble
52 Good morning
53 Finest
54 Starfish
55 Peculiar
56 Miser
57 Initials for actor
58 Deceased
59 Reed or Fargo
60 Small pitchers
61 Nimble
62 from; talk out of
63 Worry

"Lend Me Your Ears"

"Funny Business"

"Double Talk"

"Backlash": Today bacon appears in every upscale restaurant course from cocktails to cupcakes. This veritable bacon bubble has lost bacon its novelty and coated fine dining with a ubiquitous veneer of porky grease.

Last week's Sudoku

This week's Jumble

ALWAYS UPHILL VERIFY GENTLE INCOME KIDDED

The difference between the dark side of the moon and the light side is —

LIKE NIGHT AND DAY

chicago
tribune.com/games

Interactive puzzles and games
The word vulnerability has somewhat of a negative connotation. That said, as a relationship expert, I find the word to be one of my favorites. Why? Because I believe the best romantic relationships are those in which both partners have the courage to show vulnerability. It is then that they are sharing their authentic selves, which results in a deeper, stronger and more meaningful connection.

So when I received an email advertising T-shirts and a card game called "Vulnerability Is Sexy," I was curious and wanted to learn more. Vulnerability is sexy? Isn't that kind of an oxymoron? Vulnerability can be scary and uncomfortable and awkward. How is that sexy?

Those are the questions that led me to call and talk with Corey Blake, founder and CEO of Round Table Companies, his Highland Park-based creative branding and publishing company that produces the newly launched Vulnerability Is Sexy products.

Blake, who started the company 10 years ago, said his products were born out of a need not just for couples, but for company employees and people in business to engage with each other more and connect on a more meaningful level, which in turn leads to more opportunity and potential for success in the workplace.

"We are all carrying these vulnerabilities, these things we are hiding from one another because we are afraid of judgment or because we are afraid someone will reject us if we share those. We see that as a darkness or a weakness, so our default is to remain disengaged," Blake said. "Vulnerability is an invitation to really be with each other, fully present without judgment and just to listen. Not to rescue or solve or fix anything, but to be with you while you share. If we can be in that space regularly, life is very different."

Vulnerability Is Sexy, which is meant to be played with two to 14 players for about an hour, consists of 150 questions (one question on each card). The questions, which were created by Blake and his team members, are broken down into three categories: "break the ice," "get vulnerable" and "laugh a little." Players can choose just how vulnerable they want to get.

Questions include: "What was your personality like as a child?" "When have you felt the most alone?" "What's the biggest mistake you've ever made in a romantic relationship?" and "What would cause you to immediately grab hand sanitizer?"

"What we are seeing happen is, people belly laugh together, they cry together and they feel connected and close to those they are playing with," said Blake, who said he tested the game out on dozens of audiences before launching it. "There is an appreciation for each other, respect, likability and lovability. It helps you determine who you are aligned with and who gets each other. So for a business, it is huge because it helps people attract relationships that will be the best fit."

Blake, who has been married for 11 years, said Vulnerability Is Sexy is also designed for playing in a family setting, at girl's nights out, and of course in romantic relationships.

I decided to play Vulnerability Is Sexy with my pre-teenage daughter and teenage son during dinner a few nights ago. After initially hearing, "Mom, why are you making us do this?" several times, both ended up enjoying the experience and so did I. The game fostered lots of sentimental memories, giggling and laughter, and also sparked special conversations that would not have otherwise taken place.

Playing the game made me realize that vulnerability is scary for kids, too, and that maybe opening up and sharing during childhood could cause people to take more risks as adults when it comes to vulnerability.

Being vulnerable means really putting yourself out there when you're unsure of how others will react. Is that easy to do? Hell no, but the payback can be amazing. If you have the guts to share your authentic self and you receive acceptance or respect or admiration from the people or person with whom you shared, you will not only feel immensely validated, but truly connected. I think that's pretty sexy.

Jackie Pilossoph is a freelance columnist.
ASK THE DOCTORS

Yearly mammograms aren’t necessary for all women

By Dr. Robert Ashley

Dear Doctor: Do I really need a yearly mammogram?

Dear Reader: This might be hard to accept, but if you’re a woman at low to average risk of breast cancer, you probably don’t need a yearly mammogram. That’s not to say we shouldn’t give mammograms to those who didn’t.

Now let’s look at just how much benefit. The public health advocacy group the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force calculated that, if 10,000 women between the ages of 39 and 49 had regular mammograms for 10 years, it would prevent three breast cancer deaths. For the same number of women between the ages of 50 and 59, there would be eight fewer breast cancer deaths and for women between 60 and 69, there would be 21 fewer breast cancer deaths over that 10-year time period.

In short, the overall death rates were not significantly different between those women who had mammograms and those who didn’t. This has especially been shown in studies in Canada and Sweden that compared the impact of annual mammograms with yearly breast exams from a health professional. In a 22-year Canadian study of 89,000 women, no difference in death rate was seen among women who had regular mammograms compared to those who had yearly breast exams with a health professional. This may point more to the importance of getting a yearly breast exam than the benefit of getting a mammogram.

Mammograms also have downsides. A primary one is that they have many false positives, leading to more imaging, breast biopsies and significant anxiety for patients.

That’s not to say mammograms aren’t useful. They do find breast cancers. But doctors and their patients need to discuss their risks and benefits.

If you’re a woman who has a mother or a sister with breast cancer, or if you have the BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation that increases breast cancer risk, then a yearly mammogram after the age of 40 is a good idea.

However, if you’re at average risk of breast cancer and between the ages of 40 and 49, there is only a small statistical benefit in having a mammogram, which should be balanced with the risks of testing.

If you are between the ages of 50 and 69, the benefit of a mammogram may overcome risk. At that age, you should get a mammogram every two years. If you’re older than 70, keep in mind that breast cancer rates increase up to the age of 80, so the screening could have a benefit. But that benefit must be weighed against the likelihood of dying from something else. Here again, the recommendation is for a mammogram every two years, but you should discuss your individual needs with your doctor.

Breast cancer screening is still evolving. In time, the recommendations may change yet again.

Robert Ashley, M.D., is an internist and assistant professor of medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Send your questions to asktheDoctors@mednet.ucla.edu, or write: Ask the Doctors, c/o Media Relations, UCLA Health, 924 Westwood Blvd., Suite 350, Los Angeles, CA, 90095.

PEOPLE’S PHARMACY PRESCRIPTIONS AND HOME REMEDIES

Oxygen lifts headaches, but Medicare won’t pay

By Joe Graedon and Teresa Graedon

Q: My husband was diagnosed with cluster headaches in 1999, a few months after receiving a pacemaker. The first eight years, he tried 31 different prescriptions, and nothing worked.

Finally, a doctor prescribed oxygen, and it was such a relief. Until then, he was suffering through headaches for months on end. He also lived on Excedrin Migraine, around 10 pills a day. Breathing oxygen provided relief within minutes.

He retired in March 2015, and Medicare refuses to pay for oxygen for headaches. His cluster headaches are back. A neurologist prescribed prednisone, but the effect is only temporary. They will come back.

Unfortunately, Social Security does not stretch far enough to afford the oxygen the ages of 60 and 69, he will have to go back to Excedrin again.

A: Oxygen inhalation is considered a first-line treatment for cluster headaches by the American Headache Society. PM every night (for the diphenhydramine). Over time, she began experiencing memory loss, enough that it affected her work and home life. After reading one of your columns this year, we connected the dots, and she abandoned the sleep aid. It is about six months later, and she feels that she has nearly entirely recovered her mental acuity. I’m writing to express our thanks.

A: Diphenhydramine is a sedating antihistamine that is found in almost all over-the-counter "PM" pain relievers. It also is found in some OTC sleeping pills and allergy drugs like Benadryl.

A recent review of sleep medicines for older adults concluded: "Diphenhydramine should be avoided in the elderly" (Clinical Therapeutics online, Oct. 14, 2016). The authors note: "Grogginess, drowsiness, confusion and memory loss have been well described with use of diphenhydramine. Community-dwelling older adults were shown to have reduced alertness, diminished memory task performance and impaired episodic memory with diphenhydramine."

DPH, like many other drugs, affects brain function through the neurochemical acetylcholine. You can learn about other medications that contribute to confusion and memory loss in our Guide to Drugs and Older People. Anyone who would like a copy, please send $3 in check or money order with a long (No. 10), stamped (68 cents), self-addressed envelope to: Graedons’ People’s Pharmacy, No. O-85, P.O. Box 52027, Durham, NC 27717-2027. It also can be downloaded for $2 from our website: www.peoplespharmacy.com.

Q: Using old-fashioned Listerine for my itchy scalp worked wonders. Thank you for writing about this remedy.

A: The original maker of Listerine used to advertise its product for "infectious dandruff." While the Food and Drug Administration no longer allows this claim, the ingredients in Listerine do have antifungal activity.

In their column, Joe and Teresa Graedon answer letters from readers. Send questions to them via www.peoplespharmacy.com.
Celebrate the holidays with wine: chicagotribune.com/offthevine
4 things to know about depression

By Nicholas Padlak
Chicago Tribune

Let's just get this out of the way up top: I have depression.

That doesn't mean that I'm weeping incoherently as I write this. Or that I need an emergency visit from Clarence Odbody, AS2. And it doesn't mean that I'm just a sad guy.

It means that I have a diagnosable illness recognized by the medical profession and the National Institute of Mental Health that affects my life every day, just as it does about 350 million other people in the world, according to the World Health Organization.

There are handy guides all over the internet that provide checklists of symptoms. Here's a little taste of what NIMH lists on its website www.nimh.nih.gov:

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood.
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism.
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness.

The list goes on, and it's very helpful.

But here's the thing about those symptom checklists: They leave out a few of the nasty little surprises that this jerk of an illness has in store for you.

I'm here to tell you a few things about depression that you may not realize.

1. You're not the only one.

We all like to think that no one has ever felt the way we've felt in the history of the world, even though if you watch any John Hughes movie, you'll find that this is not the case.

And this is definitely what people struggling with depression think.

When you're depressed, you feel unbelievably terrible. You might not want to get out of bed. You might have a tough time concentrating. You might not want to eat. You might feel restless. You may even have actual, physical aches and pains. Surely, no one could have ever felt as low and empty as you do now, right?

Your situation, your pain, is not unique.

This is a good thing.

Because doctors can diagnose and treat an illness that they've seen before.

2. Nondepressed people really don't understand.

Friends and family members who have never grappled with depression will find it tough to understand what you're going through.

Some people might try to empathize and help, which is great. Other people might think they're being helpful by saying things like "Get over it" or "Just buck up."

 Heck, even the great Lloyd Dobler told his obviously depressed sister to "decide to be in a good mood and be in a good mood."

The point is that you're likely surrounded by a lot of people who have no idea what you're going through.

When 350 million people have an illness, though, you also are likely surrounded by at least a few people who do know what you're going through.

You can talk to someone who understands. You can find online depression support groups. You can talk with a therapist. And then, when you're feeling better, you can offer your help to someone else.

3. Your depression is smarter than you.

Anything you try to come up with to outwit depression, that little jerk comes back with something cleverer.

"I'm going to make a list of the good things in my life," you say.

"I really like my job." Yeah, but it doesn't pay enough to cover all that student loan debt.

"I have a spouse/partner/family who really loves me." Oh, gimme a break. Remember that big fight you had last week?

This is the beginning of the end, and you know it.

The bright side: With therapy, self-care and, maybe, medication, you can start outwitting that little voice until eventually you drown it out.

4. Every day is a struggle.

If you don't fight back against your depression — actively fight back every day — then it will sneak up and punch you in the back of the head.

"But I'm cured," you say.

"I went through therapy, and I'm feeling better. That's great, but your depression isn't cured; it's just in remission."

Because that little jerk never really goes away. And, honestly, this is the worst and most, well, depressing part of depression. You may have locked him up, but he's got a rock hammer, pressure and time, and eventually he will tunnel his way back into your consciousness — unless you keep fighting him.

Your therapist can recommend daily habits and tasks to help with your symptoms.

For example:

- Actively taking notice of the things that you're grateful for.

- Keeping a journal of your emotions and activities.

- Meditating.

- Exercising.

There are handy lists all over the internet about depression. But symptom checklists leave out a few of the nasty little surprises that this jerk of an illness has in store for you.

Sunday, December 22, 2016
Georgian-style mansion in Glencoe: $4,595,000

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Agent: Wendy Friedlich of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Glencoe office, 312-618-5751

At press time, this home was still for sale.
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FAMILY FRIENDLY

Ring in the new year with as a family in Park Ridge

BY MYRNA PETLICKI
Pioneer Press

Everybody has fun at the Park District of Park Ridge's annual New Year's Eve Celebration. "It's not just a mom and dad with their children," said recreation supervisor Mary Bart. "We have grandmas, grandpas, aunts and uncles."

This year's event is 5-8 p.m. Dec. 31 at Centennial Fitness Center, 1515 W. Touhy Ave.

"We have all kinds of inflatables, bounce houses, mini golf," Bart said. "We'll have a photographer taking family photos so they can have a remembrance of their wonderful evening."

The band 45rpm will perform.

There's also a "fabulous dinner," Bart reported. "We've got a huge assortment of food." That includes chicken, Italian sausage, meatballs, pasta with Alfredo sauce, mostaccioli, and mini hotdogs and chips, plus a dessert buffet.

"At 8 o'clock we do a balloon drop with confetti canons, party hats and blowers," Bart said. "The whole family can ring in the New Year together."

The cost is $18 per person. Reservations are required by Dec. 23.

For details, call 847-692-5127 or go to www.prparks.org.

Tiny tot time

The littlest revelers will be found at Itty Bitty New Year, 10 a.m.-noon Dec. 29 at the Exploritum, 4701 Oakton St. Skokie. There will be a DJ, games, prizes, crafts, family entertainment and a countdown and balloon drop at noon. The cost is $13 for resident children; $16 for nonresident children; $2 for ages 16 and over.

For details, call 847-674-

PARK DISTRICT OF PARK RIDGE

Every member of the family will have a great time at the Park District of Park Ridge's annual New Year's Eve Celebration 5-8 p.m. Dec. 31 at Centennial Fitness Center, 1515 W. Touhy Ave.

1500, ext. 2700 or go to www.skokieparks.org/exploritum.

Free to learn

Children and students can visit the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Educational Center, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, for free during Winter Break at the Museum, through Jan. 2. There will be family activities all day. Kids 8-12 will learn how to defend others in the Harvey L. Miller Family Youth Exhibition.

For details, call 847-967-4889 or go to www.ilholocaustmuseum.org.

Set sail

The third installment in "The Chronicles of Narnia" series will be shown at 1 p.m. Dec. 28 at Niles Public Library, 6960 Oakton St. You don't have to have seen the earlier installments to enjoy "The Voyage of the Dawn Treader."

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

Shedding light on Kwanzaa

The first day of Kwanzaa will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Dec. 26 at Fountain Square, Davis Street between Orrington and Sherman avenues, in downtown Evanston. The Kinara will be lit and the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa will be recited. There will also be music and singing.

For details, call 847-448-8254 or go to www.cityofevanston.org.

Taste the season

Pair your holiday with wine that shines

How to host a wine tasting party

Great wine selections for your holiday dinner or party

Where to buy Midwest produced wines locally

Gift ideas for the wine enthusiast

Advice for selecting Champagne for New Year's Eve

Presented by Binny's

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The money raised provides life-changing programs that offer tutoring and mentoring for kids, a supportive place to go when coping with domestic abuse, and job training and literacy classes so the unemployed can find jobs. It's a great way to help those in Chicagoland who need it most.
FACES & PLACES

FALL FETE RAISES $224,000 FOR LAWRENCE HALL.

David Dickow and Katrin Eisenberg of Park Ridge, from left, MaryBeth Czengros, Maura Koutouljian, artist Marketa Sivek, Beth Clark and Beth Treacy were among 340 guests at the Fall Fete benefiting Lawrence Hall, a children and family service agency in Chicago on Sept. 24. The event, held at Zhou B Art Center, Chicago, raised $224,000 to fund the agency's services. More at www.lawrencehall.org.

ELVIS TRIBUTE SHOW AT NORTH SHORE CENTER

"The closest thing to the King" Shawn Klush will be one of the headliners in the Elvis Tribute Artist Spectacular, 7:30 p.m. Jan. 5 at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie Blvd., Skokie. He'll be joined by Cody Ray Slaughter and Ryan Pelton in a celebration of the King's 82nd birthday. Special guests DJ Fontana and Elvis' back-up singers, the Sweet Inspirations, all accompanied by the Fabulous Ambassadors Band. Tickets are $22-$55. Call 847-673-6300 or see www.northshorecenter.org.

GALA RAISES $36,000 FOR REMBRANDT MUSICIANS

Pianist Yana Reznik of Chicago, from left, Carol Cook, Rembrandt violist, of Chicago, and Rembrandt violins John and Karyn Macfarlane of Niles were among 86 music aficionados at the Benefit Gala and Auction supporting the Rembrandt Chamber Musicians held Oct. 30 at Sunset Ridge Country Club, Northfield. The Gala also honored Steve Robinson, retired Executive Vice President and General Manager of WFMT, and raised $36,000 to support the ensemble. More at www.rembrandtchamberplayers.org.

MIC WANT KIDS TO FIDDLE AROUND

Kids can try out violins or any of a number of real instruments during the Music Institute of Chicago's Musical Petting Zoo and Registration Days in January. The events are free and open to the public. Families will also learn about options for lessons and classes. Petting Zoo days will be: 2 p.m. Jan. 8, at the Evanston East Campus, 1490 Chicago Ave.; 2 p.m. Jan. 21 at the Highland Park Library, 494 Laurel Ave. and 2 p.m. Jan. 22 at the Winnetka Campus, 300 Green Bay Road. More at www.musicinst.org.

Share your event

We want to publish your photos. To submit, visit community.chicagotribune.com or email sburrows@pioneerlocal.com.
SKOKIE
Three-bedroom, two-bath ranch built in 1956 on double lot. Open floor plan for living and dining rooms, hardwood floors under carpeting. Two baths with one being a shared master bath with separate shower stall, ceiling fans, sprinkler system, gas line grill and flood-control system. Landscaped yard with patio and greenery.
Address: 8548 Central Park Ave.
Price: $274,000
Schools: Niles North High School
Taxes: $7,656
Agent: Judy Reich, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Edgebrook

WHEELING
Address: 803 Reef Court
Price: $314,999
Schools: Wheeling High School
Taxes: $2,734
Agent: Connie Hoos, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage

LAKE ZURICH
Four-bedroom, 2.5-bath traditional design home built in 1991. Finished basement, marble flooring, two-story foyer. Formal dining area and living room with plush carpet, den, family room with floor to ceiling windows, fireplace and bar area, second-floor master suite with vaulted ceilings, walk-in closet and private bath. Finished basement, newly/fully fenced yard.
Address: 1257 William Drive
Price: $475,000
Schools: Lake Zurich High School
Taxes: $13,521.33
Agent: Jane Lee, RE/MAX Top Performers

HIGHLAND PARK
Five-bedroom, four-bath home built in 1924. Open floor plan, master bedroom, hardwood floors. Mud room connects to two-car garage. Original fireplace separates living room and office. Wooden staircase, bedrooms have natural light, private entrance to bonus room.
Address: 1940 Elmwood Drive
Price: $825,000
Schools: Highland Park High School
Taxes: $13,006
Agent: Carol Ring, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Glencoe

Listings from Homefinder.com

John Hall Homes has perfect communities with the quality, unique style and luxurious ambiance to match. Come visit our model homes and uncover the lifestyle you've been looking for.
Some holiday multitasking with 2 friendly modernists

**By Cindy Dampier**

Chicago Tribune

Sure, lines to see Santa are long, and getting a perfect gift for your cousin is tricky, but nothing triggers more anxiety come holiday time than the thought of guests. Which is why we've collected a little hosting advice from the founders of Blu Dot (www.bludot.com), John Christakos and Maurice Blanks. "We're the friendly modernists," says Christakos.

Blu Dot prides itself on a minimalist look, married to total practicality. That's precisely the sort of thing you might need if holiday visitors are bearing down on your place. Here's a plan, courtesy of two smart, design-minded furniture guys.

First, take a breath. Next, take a drink. (We say opt for whiskey.) Third, consider these simple ideas.

**Grab a few little friends:** Small ottomans, stools or benches can be useful in many spots around the house — in a mudroom or hallway for pulling on shoes, at the foot of a bed or coffee table, and be topped with a tray to create a stable surface. With its sliding wood top, Blu Dot's Swish Console Desk allows you to easily hide your papers and laptop before guests arrive.

**Set the table:** When it comes to multitaskers, no piece of furniture holds a candle to the dining room table. Christakos and Blanks say the simpler the table, the better your house will function.

"Suppose you're having all these family members for dinner," says Blanks, "and the other 404 days you're not having anyone over, but you want to have that table be functional." A table with simple lines can transition into a workspace and be paired with different seating, like dining chairs or a task chair.

**Think clean thoughts:** Blanks, who likes the idea of being able to tuck away necessary clutter such as bills and your laptop, points to Blu Dot's Swish Console Desk as a solution, with a wood top that slides closed to hide your daily mess.

Emptying a drawer near your bill-paying spot or adding a good-looking lidded storage box can also create a clutter-hiding space. Sweep papers and laptop inside when the doorbell rings.

**Try some trays:** If you're looking to make really small, smart changes, consider a stylish, hardworking tray. Drop it on an ottoman or coffee table, and it becomes a quick way to serve food and drink. Left near the front door, a tray becomes a target for keys or mail and can be whisked out of sight when company's coming.

Sitting on a kitchen counter, a tray can make the cheese and crackers look like a well-planned appetizer, or corral the DIY cocktail station. Propped against the backsplash, trays can double as artwork (Blu Dot's nifty set of 100% cotton tray becomes a target for DIY).Think clean thoughts:

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**With its sliding wood top, Blu Dot's Swish Console Desk allows you to easily hide your documents or laptop before guests arrive.**

**Drop these stylish trays on an ottoman or coffee table and top with decor or drinks.**

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**COMMUNITY REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS**

**Some holiday multitasking with 2 friendly modernists**

**BY CINDY DAMPIER**

Chicago Tribune

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First, take a breath. Next, take a drink. (We say opt for whiskey.) Third, consider these simple ideas.

**Grab a few little friends:** Small ottomans, stools or benches can be useful in many spots around the house — in a mudroom or hallway for pulling on shoes, at the foot of a bed or coffee table, and be topped with a tray to create a stable surface. Which comes in handy "when you have the big crowds and everybody's eating in their laps," says Blanks.

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**COMMUNITY REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS**

**ADDRESS** | **BUYER** | **SELLER** | **DATE** | **PRICE**
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
747 S 5th Ave, Des Plaines | Nora V Quindao | Nicholas Ulbert | 11-14-16 | $235,000
1084 W Grant Dr, Des Plaines | Dale M Stryz | Mark Ganchoski | 11-14-16 | $249,000
2880 Eisenhower Dr, Des Plaines | Elizabeth Mcdonnough & Francis P Demuzio | Eugene Navarrete | 11-15-16 | $272,000
648 Polyeusian Dr, Des Plaines | Cathy Thomas & Susan Thomas | Vincent M Marcella | 11-15-16 | $280,000
179 W Millers Rd, Des Plaines | Sunny Patel & Sumita Patel | Salvation Army | 11-15-16 | $290,000
1595 Birch St, Des Plaines | Harri Rihani & Sari Rihani | Right Residential Fund I | 11-15-16 | $357,000
113 Ashland Ave, Des Plaines | Michael D Mulhern & Meghan G Mulhern | US Bank Na Trustee | 11-17-16 | $507,000
2301 Central St #2E, Evanston | Maribeth P Trainor | Mark L Horwitz | 11-15-16 | $195,000
422 Kneeny St, Evanston | Srikant Reganti | Intercounty Judicial Sales Co | 11-17-16 | $310,000
1615 Monroe St, #3S, Evanston | Danielle L Schaefer | Robert A Ship | 11-14-16 | $195,000
3500 Church St, #34A, Evanston | Teresita C Juan | Nilda Gomez | 11-15-16 | $158,000
722 Minim Ave #3E, Evanston | Giri Peradiz | Alliance For Revitalized Community | 11-16-16 | $168,000
2216 Lake St, Evanston | Janella T Heard | Donald M Edwards Estate | 11-16-16 | $175,000
1222 Chicago Ave #701, Evanston | Alice Christoph | Lisa K Alworth | 11-14-16 | $295,000
400 Main St, #5C, Evanston | Yelena Dligach | Jian Wang | 11-17-16 | $222,000
2005 Lake St, Evanston | Karla Tanos Kosie & Sefanar Koshura | City Capital Holdings LLC | 11-17-16 | $240,000
1478 Brown Ave, Evanston | Jose Alfredo Alanis & Cetaralis Perez | 11-17-16 | $240,000
832 Forest Ave, Evanston | Amy Walker | Aaron Roger Mat | 11-14-16 | $255,000
1830 Ridge Ave, #403, Evanston | Gabrielle C Nagle | Jeffery Johnson | 11-16-16 | $267,500
104 South Blvd, #4A, Evanston | Donald Sobczak & Susan Sobczak | 11-16-16 | $271,000
2129 Dobson St, Evanston | Jistikost | Suzanne Clasenni | 11-16-16 | $295,000
2665 Hillside Ln, Evanston | Andrew Lemen & Melone F Lemen | James R Stecon | 11-17-16 | $420,000
2415 Noyes St, Evanston | Richard A Lehner & Grace G Lehner | Susan D Schultz | 11-17-16 | $425,000
2721 Simpson St, Evanston | Henry Thompson & Elizabeth Thompson | Robert Killian | 11-16-16 | $518,000
421 Sherman Ave, Evanston | Carter Howard | Roger F Cain | 11-16-16 | $560,000
4233 Asbury Ave, Evanston | Melissa Breier & Katherine L Stuckemeyer | Robert P Toton | 11-15-16 | $865,000
585 Galilee Ave, #304, Morton Grove | Sung Han Han & Jennifer Yil | Afshin Asadneh | 11-17-16 | $210,000
630 Concord Dr, #603, Morton Grove | Genny Noort & Mary Lou Noort | Zhushong Caio | 11-16-16 | $524,000
729 Lyons St, Morton Grove | Marc Lyne & Voila Kakaletis | Ims T Dono | 11-15-16 | $268,000
7412 Arcadia St, Morton Grove | Havaan Gura | Hall Trust | 11-17-16 | $275,000
5702 Arcadia St, Morton Grove | Erin Janush & Caryn Mullaney | Sur Investment Group Inc | 11-16-16 | $410,000
8135 Gross Point Rd, Morton Grove | Wessy Zabi & Zabbi Nader | 11-16-16 | $595,000
9408 Neenah Ave, Morton Grove | Ketan Mehta & Kirti K Mehta | Brandon Schwartz | 11-14-16 | $520,000
9126 W Terrance Dr, #5L, Niles | Kassides Crespo | Lubove Silovolva | 11-14-16 | $598,000
8815 W Golf Rd, #3D, Niles | Denis Memesdorfo | Midwest Investment Group LLC | 11-11-16 | $118,000
8801 W Golf Rd, #5D, Niles | Hermenefigo P Varg & Martha Y Salas | Christopher Schmidt | 11-16-16 | $148,000
6755 N Milwaukee Ave, #310, Niles | Ranoal Varga & Christina Varga | Edwin J Kiebski | 11-14-16 | $186,000
8229 N Ridgewood Ave, Niles | Sami W Korel & Alba Ishaya | See Hyon Kwon | 11-17-16 | $220,000
8201 N Milwaukee Ave, Robert Elisha | Dinnamon Trust | 11-16-16 | $238,000
8022 N Orleans Ave, Niles | Roman Avallodo & June E Avallodo | Right Residential Fund | 11-15-16 | $380,000
6952 N Laddington Ln, Niles | Mark S Mitchell & Dawn M Mitchell | Cynthia J Tahney | 11-17-16 | $622,000
635 Parkwood Ave, Park Ridge | Ivetina Ivanova | Judicial Sales Corp | 11-15-16 | $234,000
1740 Park Road, #100, Park Ridge | Daniel L Mortland & Mary K Mortland | 11-14-16 | $236,000
905 Goodwin Dr, Park Ridge | Oscar Salas Castillo | Kamar Lawrence | 11-14-16 | $275,000
417 N Northwest Hwy, Park Ridge | Marek Solczak | Weil Fargo Bank Trustee | 11-16-16 | $340,000
305 N Northwest Hwy, #102, Park Ridge | Jeffrey Brian Cook & Cariee Gene Cook | Brightline Mews Ventures LLC | 11-15-16 | $515,000
1122 S Western Ave, Park Ridge | Leonard Randazzo | Edmund Cusano | 11-14-16 | $522,000
732 Ottawa Ave, Park Ridge | William Patrick McGeorge | Pennymac Corp | 11-17-16 | $575,000
116 N Prospect Ave, Park Ridge | Frank J Sensenbrenner Ill & Margaret Ryznar | Josephine Kettering | 11-16-16 | $674,000
425 S Home Ave, Park Ridge | David Goyert & Tiffany Goyert | Clear Vue Opportunity LLC | 11-15-16 | $712,000
46 Meacham Ave, Park Ridge | David Kirk & Jon Kirk | Hinkley Park Development LLC | 11-15-16 | $733,000
501 S Chester Ave, Park Ridge | Terrence Bannon & Barbara A Killan | James Coakley | 11-14-16 | $980,000

**HOME REMEDIES**

**Durable, versatile option for kitchen sinks: fireclay**

**BY ED DEL GRANDE**

**Tribune News Service**

**Q: I have been looking into kitchen sinks, and fireclay kitchen sinks keep popping up. What exactly is a fireclay kitchen sink, and can you tell me a little more about them?**

**A: Two very popular choices for kitchen sinks are cast iron and stainless steel. But there are other very good material choices for kitchen sinks out there, and fireclay is one of them. Basically it's a heavy-duty ceramic product where the clay and glaze are fired together at very high temperatures and fused together.**

Fireclay is used often to create farmhouse or apron-style kitchen sinks because of its beauty and versatility. Because it is a very durable clay product, textured designs can be embedded in the kitchen sink as well to create a strong artistic impression.

**Q: I plan on remodeling my bathroom and want to install very elegant plumbing fixtures. Also, I want to conserve water and plan on installing a very efficient toilet.**

**A: In today's green building market, just because you want to save water does not mean that you have to sacrifice good looks. Many of today's high-efficiency toilets, shower heads and faucets available in classic styles?**

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Thursday, Dec. 22

Photos wanted for art project in Des Plaines: The public is invited to participate in a community photo project in Des Plaines called "On the Street Where You Live, Work, and Play." Submit photos of your house, favorite building, or other interesting structure located in Des Plaines. Community members can upload as many as three photos to desplainesmemory.org. Once uploaded, the photos are posted online. Photos can also be scanned at the History Center if needed. 10 a.m. daily, Des Plaines History Center, 781 Pearson St., Des Plaines, free, 847-391-5399

Connecting Cultures: 40 Years at the Mitchell Museum: The latest exhibit unveiled is "Connecting Cultures: 40 Years at the Mitchell Museum." The exhibit celebrates four decades of thought-provoking exhibits, lectures, and performances through photographs and memorabilia. There is also a dazzling display of 45 objects donated by key collectors and Native artists who have presented at the museum. 10 a.m. Thursday, 10 a.m. and 10 a.m. Monday-Wednesday, Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, 3001 Central St., Evanston, $3 children, seniors, $5 adults; Tribal Members Free, 847-475-1030

Contemporary Native Women Opening Doors to Change: Join the Mitchell Museum for the opening of its latest exhibit, "Contemporary Native Women Opening Doors to Change." 10 a.m. Thursday, 10 a.m. Friday and 10 a.m. Monday-Wednesday, Mitchell Museum of the American Indian, 3001 Central St., Evanston, $3 children, seniors, $5 adults; Tribal Members Free, 847-475-1030

Wonderland Express at Chicago Botanic Garden: Chicago Botanic Garden hosts its annual Wonderland Express presented by ComEd, with 750,000 lights illuminating the entrance of this 100 percent LED exhibition. Tour the magical landscape of model railroads winding through Chicago landmarks. Redecorate buy one, get one free admission voucher at the Visitor Center Information Desk. Visit ComEd.com/HolidayLights for special offers. 10 a.m. daily except for Christmas Day, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, $16-$53, 847-835-5440

The Hunter and The Bear: 7:30 p.m. Thursdays, 7:30 p.m. Fridays, Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.

Tuesdays and 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays, Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Court, Glencoe, $35-$80, 847-224-6000

Holiday Store at The Grove: Escape the mall and find the holiday spirit at The Grove. Discover unique gift items for all those special people on your list, including personalized ornaments, home accessories, gifts and crafts. Proceeds from the sale benefit The Grove. 10 a.m. Thursday and 10 a.m. Friday, The Grove, 1421 Milwaukee Ave., Glenview, free, 847-399-6096

Glenview Ice Center Winter Carnival: The times vary through Sunday, Jan. 8 at Glenview Ice Center, for The Winter Carnival which features: daily family public skate sessions, two charity hockey games, hockey/figure skating lessons and much more. Some events are free and several require pre-registration. Pick up a complete schedule after Thanksgiving at the Glenview Ice Center or online at glenviewicecenter.org. For more information, please call 9 a.m. daily, Glenview Ice Center, 1851 Landwehr Road, Glenview, free, 847-724-5670

Parkinson Wellness Recovery Brain-Body Training: Parkinson Wellness Recovery/PWR is Parkinson specific exercise, scientifically designed to target symptoms of PD. It includes boxing training for endurance, agility and stability. The instructor is Drew Surinsky, an exercise physiologist. 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. Thursdays, 1 p.m. Fridays, 1 p.m. Monday and 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. Tuesday, Glenview Park Center, 3700 Chestnut Ave., Glenview, $12-$17, 847-502-0630

Winter Art Show Call for Student Submissions: Artwork submissions are being accepted through Jan. 25 for this Winter Art Show in February. All students who participated in a Park Center Visual Arts Class for fall or winter sessions are eligible to submit one of their favorite pieces for the show. For more information please see your instructor. The Winter Art Show preview night for family and friends is Friday, Feb. 3 from 6-8 p.m. Art will be on display and open to the public throughout February. Noon daily, Glenview Park Center, 2400 Chestnut Ave., Glenview, free, 847-724-5670

Be A Santa To A Senior with Home Instead Senior Care: This season, many area seniors who are alone or impoverished will receive some holiday cheer thanks to the Be a Santa to a Senior program sponsored by Home Instead Senior Care-Northbrook. Choose an ornament, buy the items listed and return them unwrapped by Dec. 23. 6 a.m. Thursday and 6 a.m. Friday, The

Abington of Glenview, 3901 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-418-3300

A Podcast Listening Party: Come hear some of the podcasts that are capturing the imaginations of listeners everywhere — The Moth, Serial, Fresh Air, Reply All, The New Yorker Radio Hour, or Wompmo: A Serialized Mystery to name a few. After listening to one 30-minute podcast, discuss the show and talk about similar podcasts you can try. 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

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. A drop-in visit is meant to last about 15 minutes. Activities are repeated each week from Tuesday to Thursday. The Wonder Ground is a STEAM play-ground for kids. 4 p.m. and 4 p.m. Tuesday, Niles Public Library, 6960 W. Oakton St., Niles, free, 847-663-1234

Age of the Dinosaurs: Incredibly lifelike moving and roaring exhibits feature heartwarming stories of Jurassic family life. Interactive remote control a robotic skeleton, build a dinosaur, dig for fossils and more. 10 am. daily except 10 a.m. daily except for Christmas Day, Northbrook Court, 2036 Northbrook Ct, Northbrook, $6 general admission, 847-612-7861

Karaoke Thursdays: Enjoy some great pizza and sing a tune or two. 7 p.m. Thursdays, Perry's Pizza and Rib's, 711 Devon Ave., Park Ridge, free, 847-823-4422

Santa HQ at Fashion Outlets of Chicago: Fashion Outlets of Chicago has partnered with HGTV to introduce Santa HQ: a thoroughly modern, extra-ordinary experiential visit with Santa for shoppers to enjoy this holiday season. The new Santa HQ invites families to experience the wonder of Santa's workshop utilizing digital tools to offer an augmented reality environment and a new and enhanced social media experience. 11 a.m. Thursday, 10 a.m. Friday and 10 a.m. Saturday, Fashion Outlets of Chicago, 5220 Fashion Outlets Way, Rosemont, $39.99, 847-928-7500

Skating in the Park: The park's great outdoor skating rink allows visitors to skate under breathtaking landmarks. Redeem buy one, get one free admission voucher at the Visitor Center Information Desk. Visit ComEd.com/HolidayLights for special offers. 10 a.m. daily except for Christmas Day, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, $11-$13, 847-835-5440

Free Menorah Lighting Kit Available: Lubavitch Chabad of Skokie is again providing free menorah lighting kits for this Hanukkah season. To receive your kit, call or contact us via the website. 9 a.m. daily, Lubavitch Chabad of Skokie, 4059 Dempster St., Skokie, free, 847-677-4770

Brush with Nature 2016 Exhibition: Come to enjoy the artwork on display. Local artists include: Adrienne Aaronson, Stephanie Rose Bird, Tiger Lily Cross, Jan Flapan, Steve Johnson, Mary Longe, Debra Nichols, Fred Polito, Naomi Pollock, Amanda Roman and Ray Vleck. 8 a.m. daily, Emily Oaks Nature Center, 4650 Brummel St., Skokie, free, 847-674-1500

LinkedIn 2: A hands-on workshop for participants with 50 percent or more profile completion that describes the more advanced uses including networking, researching companies, and applying for jobs. To register for Career Moves workshops, visit https://jyschicago-syhum.formstack.com/forms/career_identity. 1 p.m. Thursday, Goldie Bachmann Luftig Building, 5150 Golf Road, Skokie, Workshop fees: Career Moves clients: $10 per workshop and non-clients: $20 per workshop, 847-745-5460

Wilmette Public Library Fiber Group: Join us as we knit, crochet, needlepoint or any type of fiber art. We share ideas, have knit-alongs, group projects and occasional classes. New members welcome. 10 a.m. Thursdays, Wilmette Public Library, 1242 Wilmette Ave., Wilmette, free, 847-859-6356

2017-2018 Connecting Kids Preschool Openings: This high-quality community preschool provides for children with special needs, as well as for typically developing children, to prepare children for District 39 kindergarten classrooms. Reserve a spot for your child in next fall's 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old classes. Contact Julie Pease, Early Childhood Coordinator, at 847-256-0211 ext. 6463, or visit the school district website to download a registration form under the "parents" tab. 8:30 a.m. daily, Romona Elementary School, 600 Romona Road, Wilmette, call Early Childhood Coordinator, 847-256-0211

Free Walking Clinic: Learn to get the most benefit out of walking as exercise in Glisson Park. A certified, personal trainer teaches the class, which includes a warm-up, stretching, inclines, steps, balance and coordination. All fitness Turn to Calendar, Next Page
Friday, Dec. 23

Friday Night Meltdowns: This is a great night out for teens to join in an awesome skate and dance party! A DJ plays today's hits and disco lighting shines on the ice throughout the night. Call for more information. 8:15 p.m. Fridays, Glenview Ice Center, 1851 Landwehr Road, Glenview, $8 per person; $4 for rental skates, 847-724-5670

Freezin' Fridays During Winter Carnival: Drop the kids off and finish your holiday shopping while they play broomball, ice skate, make craft projects and meet new friends. Lunch is provided. Walk-ins are welcome on a space available basis for $60 per child. Freezin' Fridays is part of the Winter Carnival. 9 a.m. Fridays, Glenview Ice Center, 1851 Landwehr Road, Glenview, $60, 847-724-5670

Gentle Yoga: Due to high demand, two yoga sessions are now offered. Space in each session is limited to the first 50 people. Yoga instructor Olga Rudjak leads a series of yoga sessions for improved physical strength, relaxation and mental clarity. Exercises are done in a chair or standing on the floor, 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Fridays, Northbrook Public Library, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, free, 847-272-6224

Share the Warmth: Volunteers wanted — join a group of warm, friendly, supportive women (men welcome) to prepare one-of-a-kind fleece blankets for chemo patients. Add a crocheted edge to fleece and send free blankets to new adult chemotherapy patients. A basic crochet stitch can be taught if needed. Bring lunch. Attendees often gather until 2 or 3 p.m. Donations are welcome to this 501(c)3 non-profit organization. 9 a.m. Fridays, North Shore Senior Center, 161 Northfield Road, Northfield, free, 847-293-6755

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

TopGolf's Winter Break Academy: TopGolf's Winter Break Academy is an exciting four-day program that offers junior golfers everything they need to learn about golf on chipping, putting and full swing, also the rules and etiquette. Each Academy is designed and taught by John Teaching Professionals. 9 a.m. Thursday and 9 a.m. Monday-Dec. 29, TopGolf Wood Dale, 699 W Thorndale Ave, Wood Dale, $99, 630-595-4653

Saturday, Dec. 24

Christmas Eve Service with Choir and Orchestra: Your family is invited to celebrate Christmas in a warm, traditional setting filled with carols and candlelight, choir and orchestra. 5 p.m. Saturday, First Congregational Church of Evanston, 1445 Hinman Ave, Evanston, free

Christmas Eve Worship: Join for worship on Christmas Eve at 4 p.m., 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. as the children offer a Christmas pageant at the early service and each child receives a gift at the early service. All worship services include brass and choirs, candles and communing. The nursery is available for each service and all are welcome. 4 p.m. Saturday, Lutheran Church of the Ascension, 600 Sunset Ridge Road, Northfield, free, 847-446-3835

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, 9050 Woods Drive, Skokie, free, 847-967-4800

Christmas Eve Early Service: This family-friendly Christmas Eve service is open and welcoming to all ages. Join us as the children participate in the telling of the Christmas story. 4 p.m. Saturday, Winnetka Congregational Church, 1200 Hibbard Road, Wilmette, free, 847-446-4300

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service: This traditional candlelight Christmas Eve service features the choir and the wonderful gifts of guitarist Jack Cimo. 10:30 p.m. Saturday, Winnetka Congregational Church, 1200 Hibbard Road, Wilmette, free, 847-446-4300

Christmas Eve Dinner at Restaurant Michael: Christmas Eve features three entree selections including the roast beef tenderloin and chive-scented potato croquettes, vegetable bouquet and "eggless" bernaise as well as several first course selections.

A deposit of $19 per guest is charged upon securing your reservation. 4 p.m. Saturday, Restaurant Michael, 64 Green Bay Road, Winnetka, $69 per guest, 847-441-3100

Sunday, Dec. 25

Christmas Day at Di Pescara: Treat yourself to a festive meal, featuring Di Pescara's cold water lobster tail special, served with house-made Mac and Cheese. The regular menu is also available. Noon Sunday, Di Pescara, 2124 Northbrook Court, Northbrook, $32.95; Regular Menu Pricing Varies, 847-498-4321

Allgauer's Christmas Champagne Brunch: Gather with friends and family for Allgauer's spectacular, award-winning Christmas Champagne Brunch featuring over 100 decadent items ranging from unlimited Bubbly Champagne and Mimosas! 10 a.m. Sunday, Hilton Northbrook Hotel, 2855 Milwaukee Ave., Northbrook, $40 adults; $18 children 4-10 years, 847-664-7999

Hanukkah Wonderland at Rubavitch Chabad of Skokie: Your family will enjoy activities and crafts including time-tested favorites and exciting new ones: dreidel bounce, baby/toddler zone, face paint, make your own doughnuts, Hanukkah loom, duct tape crafts, wood etching take a picture with Judith Maccabee, dreidel crafts, making cards for Israel, Hanukkah gelt, live presentations and more. Reserve in advance via the website. 10:30 a.m. Sunday, Rubavitch Chabad of Skokie, 4059 Dempster St., Skokie, Admission is $10 in advance, and $12 at the door, 847-677-1770

Monday, Dec. 26

"Die Fledermaus (The Bat)": One of music theater's most beloved works is Johann Strauss' ode to champagne and indiscretion. Husband and wife meet at a party neither is supposed to be attending — and he unwittingly woos his disinterested mate. 2 p.m. Monday, 8 p.m. Dec. 29, 8 p.m. Dec. 31 and 2 p.m. Jan. 1, Cahn Auditorium, 600 Emerson St, Evanston, $34-$96, 847-920-5360

Alliance Francaise Cafe Conversation Apero: Meet fellow Francophones for mid-evening conversations, in French. Order your wine, biere, cafe, the, charcuterie, fromage, ou patisserie and find this group in the main seating area. Facilitated by one or more of the native-speaking or fluent-speaking AF leaders. Listening in French is encouraged, and all levels are welcome. RSVP to alliancesf@yahoo.com four or more days beforehand. No membership required for newcomers. 7 p.m. Monday, The Glenview Grind, 1837 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-328-9516

Yarn Gang: Kids in grades 1 and up are invited to try their hand at knitting, crocheting or other yarn crafts. 4 p.m. Monday, Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

Knitting Roundtable for Adults: Ronnie Rund, an expert knitter, shows attendees how to knit or how to solve knitting challenges. Bring one's current project(s) and needles. 2 p.m. Monday, Morton Grove Public Library, 6140 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

Hanukkah Booth at Westfield Old Orchard: Show your Jewish pride. Visit the Hanukkah booth at Westfield Old Orchard Mall. Enjoy Hanukkah activities, entertainment, kosher refreshments, Jewish holiday spirit and lighting of the menorah. 10 a.m. Monday, Jan. 1, Westfield Old Orchard, 4999 Old Orchard Center, Skokie, free, 847-677-1770

Tuesday, Dec. 27

Rotary Club of Evanston Light-house: This community leadership group boasts 80 members and meets every Tuesday. 7:15 a.m. Tuesday, Hilton Garden Inn Chicago North Shore/Evanston, 1818 Maple Ave., Evanston, free

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

Master Class: Fabric/Rope Drop Analysis: Designed for the intermediate student, this workshop with Charlie Faraday provides an introduction to the study of drops on fabric or rope. Why drops work, how they work, and what can go wrong are studied in detail. 9 a.m. Tuesday-Dec. 30, Actors Gymnasium, 927 Noyes St, Evanston, 847-328-7975

Tuesday Morning Music: Garden visitors can enjoy free hour-long meditative musical performances on Tuesday mornings in the McGinley Pavilion overlooking Evening Island. Music varies from string quartets to Native American flutes, and are focused towards an older crowd. After the concert, visitors can board a 25-minute narrated tour on the Bright Encounters Tour, a close-up view of the gardens on Turn to Calendar, Next Page
CALENDAR

the main island, or the Grand Tram Tour, an overview of the Garden's history and highlights. Tram tickets may be purchased in the Heritage Garden or any ticket location. 10 a.m. Tuesday, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, free, 847-835-5440

Beginning Square Dance Classes: Have fun and learn to square dance; beginner lessons are sponsored by the Glenview Square Dance Club and Glenview Park District. No experience necessary. No partner required. Thursdays, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Glenview Park Center, 2400 Chestnut Ave., Glenview, free, 847-965-4220

MGPL Kids: Listen Up! Drop-in story and play time for preschoolers with a parent or caregiver. Call 847-929-3102 or visit www.mgpl.org/kids for more information. 4:45 p.m. Tuesday, Morton Grove Public Library, 1640 Lincoln Ave., Morton Grove, free, 847-965-4220

Life Transitions Group: A support group for men and women who have been widowed for one to four years. The group is volunteer-facilitated and held on the fourth Tuesday of each month, 7 p.m. Tuesday, Park Ridge Nonprofit Center, 720 Garden St., Park Ridge, free, 847-825-3123

Join Lubovitch Chabad of Skokie Chanukah Lounge: This annual Hanukkah event is for adults. Enjoy the Chanukah Lounge with Mystery Dinner Theater at the Grand Tram Station! Participate in a live mystery theater with lessons and performance. For reservations, please call 847-724-5670. 7 p.m. Tuesday, Morton Grove Park Center, 2400 Chestnut Ave., Glenview, free, 847-965-4220

Chanukah Lounge with Mystery Dinner Theater: Enjoy an evening of mystery and entertainment - a relaxed atmosphere with an open bar and delicious dinner. This is a rollicking Puerto Rican holiday favorite. Please register at www.lubovitchchabad.org/Chanukah 7:15 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 29, Three Crowns Park Retirement Home, 2323 McDaniell Ave., Evanston, free, 847-328-8700

Super Silly Dance Party Ages 2 and up with Adult: Bring your best moves and dancing shoes. Be ready to burn up loads of extra energy by dancing. This is followed by enjoying hot chocolate and treats. Please register at glenviewpl.org/register or call. 6:30 p.m. Dec. 29, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

Warm up on a cold winter day! Use cocoa, marshmallows, chocolate chips and sprinkles to make a tasty hot cocoa in a cone creation and decorate your own recipe tag. The perfect gift - or simply treat yourself. Please register at glenviewpl.org/register or call. 2 p.m. Dec. 30, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

Friday, Dec. 30

Teen Advisory Board Volunteer Opportunity Grades 9-12: If you have an interest in teen services at the Library and would like to help plan programs, discuss books that you love, and have fun brainstorming with your peers and Library staff, join in a TAB meeting. Share your ideas! For December's meeting, please bring a book you have been reading that you would like to share with the group. Service points are awarded and pizza is served. Register at glenviewpl.org/register or call. 2 p.m. Dec. 30, Glenview Public Library, 1930 Glenview Road, Glenview, free, 847-729-7500

Hogwarts Potions for Grades 3-6: Is it magic? Is it science? Join us as we investigate to find out. Rest assured, Professor Snape won't be leading the program. (This is Harry Potter-related, if you did not know.) Please register at glenviewpl.org/register or 847-729-7500

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Ring in the New Year at Pinstripes Northbrook: Enjoy champagne, music, bocce, bowling and two balloon drops (including one at 8 p.m. for children) to ring in the new year. 7 p.m. Dec. 31, Pinstripes, 1150 Willow Road, Northbrook, No cover, menu items vary, 847-480-2323

Noon Year's Eve Celebration for All Ages: Join the library staff for a New Year's celebration where attendees count down to noon! The event offers: crafts, games and fun that culminates in a dance party/balloon drop at high noon. Registration is required. 11 a.m. Dec. 31, Northbrook Public Library, 1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, free, 847-272-6224

Hilton Northbrook's New Year's Eve Gala: Party all weekend! This New Year's Eve gala package includes: butler-passed hors d'oeuvres, decadent four course dinner, five-hour open bar and champagne toast at midnight, party hats and favors, dancing with an elite DJ, deluxe overnight accommodations, full use of fitness center, indoor pool, whirlpool and sauna and late check-out of 2 p.m. 7:30 p.m. Dec. 31, Hilton Northbrook Hotel, 2855 Milwaukee Ave., Package $375 per couple, 847-509-7072

New Year's Eve with Bub City and Joe's Live: Feast on Bub City's Southern BBQ dinner buffet, enjoy tasty premium libations and dig into a late-night breakfast all while taking in a Joe's Live performance of Rod Tuffcurls and the Bench Press. Bonus: There will be a confetti blast at midnight and revelers' NYE tickets are good for $10 off brunch the next day at Bub City. 9 p.m. Dec. 31, Bub City, 5441 Park Place, Rosemont, Menu Pricing Varies, 847-261-0399

New Year's Eve at Hofbrauhaus Chicago: To ring in the New Year, Hofbrauhaus Chicago hosts two New Year's Eve celebrations at their Haus from 2 p.m. until 2 a.m. Hofbrauhaus Chicago presents a family friendly "Munich-style" celebration with a magic show. At 5 p.m. there will be a toast to Germany's New Year with a complimentary glass of champagne or sparkling wine for the little ones and a parade. At the stroke of midnight there will be a champagne prost for 2017 along with a spectacular fireworks display. 2 p.m. Dec. 31, Hofbrauhaus Chicago, 5500 Park Place, Rosemont, free, 847-671-2739

Ring In the New Year with Jeff Dunham: Comic/Ventriloquist Jeff Dunham, along with his cast of hilarious characters have embarked on the second leg of their "Perfectly Unbalanced" International Tour. The show is packed with new surprises and old favorites. 3 p.m. Dec. 31, Allstate Arena, 6920 Mannheim Road, Rosemont, free, 800-745-3000

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. Dec. 31, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, 9503 Woods Drive, Skokie, free, 847-967-4800

Restaurant Michael's New Year's Eve Celebration: The New Year's Eve dinner will feature three entree selections including the roasted filet of beef tenderloin and truffle mousse "en bocche" with a pinot noir sauce as well as several first course selections including the seared medallion and strudel of foie gras. 5 p.m. Dec. 31, Restaurant Michael, 64 Green Bay Road, Winnetka, $89, 847-441-3100

New Year's Eve at Topgolf: Join in this New Year's Eve night of fun and an abundant amount of glow sticks and other glow-y things. Reserve an all-inclusive bay package for your group that includes party favors and unlimited Topgolf from 9 p.m. to close. Pricing and packages may vary by location. 9 p.m. Dec. 31, TopGolf Wood Dale, 699 W. Torndale Ave., Wood Dale, $175-$375, 630-595-4653

Sunday, Jan. 1

Skate in the New Year - Public Ice Skating Session: Skate with the Ice Queen at Glenview Ice Center. Come to the public session of ice skating, as part of Glenview Ice Center's annual Winter Carnival. 1 p.m. Jan. 1, Glenview Ice Center, 1851 Landwehr Road, Glenview, various, 847-724-2800

New Year's Day Brunch at Pinstripes Northbrook: Enjoy a decadent brunch, including kids' options and a chocolate fountain, to bring in the new year. 9:30 a.m. Jan. 1, Pinstripes, 1150 Willow Road, Northbrook, $30 per person for adults; $15 for kids 6-12; free for kids 5 and under, 847-480-2323

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MOVIES

NOW PLAYING

"Moana" ★★★
PG, 1:53, animated
Featuring songs by "Hamilton" creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, the new animated musical adventure "Moana" is bright, busy, enjoyable and progressive without being insufferable. Moana, voiced by Hawaiian actress Auli'i Cravalho, is the daughter of a Pacific Islands chief, who leaves her island on a long journey. After a brush with death, she washes ashore on a small island where she meets the Polynesian demigod Maui, voiced by Dwayne Johnson. The score's signature power ballad, "How Far I'll Go," may well take its rightful place alongside "Frozen's" big hit, "Let It Go," in the female-empowerment earworm department. I prefer Miranda's contribution; like the rest of "Moana," it works. — Michael Phillips

"Office Christmas Party" ★★½
R, 1:45, comedy
When it comes to big, brassy studio comedies, a filmmaker can do worse than to gather the brightest, funniest stars, situate them in an odd yet relatable situation and let 'em rip. That's what directors Josh Gordon and Will Speck do with "Office Christmas Party," the delightfully debauched holiday desecration. Working from a screenplay credited to no less than six writers, the greatest strength of "Office Christmas Party" is its casting. If you've got fabulous weirdos Kate McKinnon and T.J. Miller in lead roles, there are bound to be more than enough laughs. "Office Christmas Party" delights in a grotesque carnival of the worst behavior and still has its heart firmly in the right place. — Katie Walsh

"Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" ★★★
PG-13, 2:13, action/adventure
In handsome, generally diverting fashion, "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them," directed by Potter alum David Yates and adapted by J.K. Rowling from her 2001 book, takes us not to Hogwarts but to 1920s America. Eddie Redmayne, costumed like the winner of a Jazz Age "Doctor Who" contest, plays shy, sweet Newt Scamander, a "magizoologist" by training and a Hogwarts-bred wizard who devotes his life to the collection, care and feeding of a wide variety of beasties. Potter fans will likely enjoy this first of a planned quintet of "Fantastic Beasts" outings. — M.P

"Arrival" ★★★
PG-13, 1:56, sci-fi
The alien spacecraft in "Arrival" arrive by the dozen, looking like the latest in KitchenAid gadgetry writ large. Director Denis Villeneuve is one sleek craftsman: every subtle camera crawl, each darkness-shrouded visual composition in "Arrival" conspires to unsettle us and hold us in a state of dread or wonder, without being cheap about it. Louise (Amy Adams), a linguistics professor, is brought in to translate the otherworldly beeps and pops and guttural somethings emitted by the inhabitants of the spacecraft. Shot by cinematographer Bradford Young, "Arrival" will cast a spell on some while merely discombobulating others. Right there, I'd say that indicates it's worth seeing. — M.P

"Doctor Strange" ★★★
PG-13, 1:55, action/adventure
"Doctor Strange," starring Benedict Cumberbatch as a neurosurgeon who learns to bend time, space and his narcissistic ways, can't escape all its Marvel corporate imperatives and generic third-act battles for control of the planet. But this latest in the Marvel movie landscape is fun, light on its feet, pretty stylish and full of tasty, class performers enlivening the dull bits. I wish Rachel McAdams had additional scenes, but some of her screen time, no doubt, went instead to sight gags featuring the Cloak of Levitation, a supporting player of wit and distinction, emblematic of the best of "Doctor Strange." — M.P

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Pitch limits seen as good step, but not solution

Rise of year-round baseball complicates effort to reduce arm injuries

BY DAN SHALIN
Pioneer Press

On the day the IHSA Board of Directors approved the organization’s first baseball pitch-count rules last week, the IHSA executive director seemed to acknowledge that the new legislation alone would not reverse the rise in arm injuries among teenage pitchers.

"Ultimately, the high school season encompasses a short window," executive director Craig Anderson said in a statement. "We hope that youth and travel baseball organizations will follow our lead to help protect these pitchers and their arms."

Starting this spring, high school varsity pitchers will be limited to 105 pitches per outing, the IHSA announced on Dec. 12. A pitch limit is now required in every state after a mandate from the National Federation of State High School Associations.

"I think it's a move in the right direction, but it's a small piece of the puzzle," Mundelein baseball coach Todd Parola said.

Increasingly, teenage players not only compete for their high school, but also play on travel teams in the late summer, fall and even winter and also attend college showcases throughout the year in order to face the best competition and catch the eye of college coaches. Often, the talent evaluators at showcases bring out radar guns to measure pitching velocity, which can lead to pitchers extending themselves to the maximum on every throw.

"When I first started, kids threw a lot more pitches and innings (in high school), way more than they should have, and we never had arm injuries," said Parola, who is entering his 23rd season as the head coach at Mundelein. "But kids were done in July and they didn't pick up a ball for six months. They'd shut down and give the damage time to recover. That's the bigger issue, these kids don't take time off."

Notre Dame baseball coach Nelson Gord said he cautions his pitchers to choose their offseason activities wisely.

"I don't think anything will stop (year-round baseball), so it has to come down to the players standing up for themselves and families educating themselves and realizing more is not always better," he said.

Gord, who also is the founder and director of the Illinois Indians travel baseball program, said all high school and club baseball coaches must work together to help ensure the safety of their players.

"There is no reason for high school coaches and travel coaches to point fingers at each other," he said. "Nobody wants to see kids get hurt. We need to work together as a baseball coaching community, not working against each other. Nothing comes of that."

Fifty-seven percent of all Tommy John surgeries performed between 2007-2011 were done on 15- to 19-year-olds, which represented a 9-percent increase per year, according to research presented at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's annual meeting in 2015. The annual growth rate for those surgeries among other age groups was just 4 percent.

"As these rules become part of the high school game, it's going to be harder for a travel coach to say (to a pitcher), 'You can throw more pitches for me (than for high school),'" said Dr. Preston Wolin, director of sports medicine at the Chicago Center for Orthopedics at Weiss Memorial Hospital. "They won't let our son throw this much in high school, and parents will say, 'They won't let our son throw this much in high school, why should we do that to our kids?' It will be harder to justify."

Wolin said he hopes high school pitch-count rules will help bring more awareness to the overuse issue and eventually play a role in getting high school and club coaches, college scouts, parents and athletes on the same page when it comes to the issue.

"I think that's a lot of the parents wanting their kids to go to a ton of showcases, half of those are pointless," said Laing, who returned successfully from his surgery to pitch two additional seasons. "A better way to do it is to go to camps at individual colleges. But when it comes down to it, if you're good, you'll get seen. Shows are more of a money-making thing than anything else."

Wolin said the example of concussion-awareness to show just how the youth sports culture can evolve.

"When I first started taking care of high school football players, (coaches) said a kid (who got hit in the head) just got his bell rung or got dinged, but I don't see that happening anymore," Wolin said. "The coaches understand about the effect of concussions."

"The fact that we have a process now requiring a protocol following a concussion has had a huge effect on the way the game is played and looked at by everybody: players, coaches, administrators and parents. It's huge."

Dan Shalin is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

Twitter @Pioneer_Press
When Anthony Norris Jr. walks into a gymnasium, he's typically clutching a football or basketball. Then he gets to work.

But on the night of Dec. 8, the two-sport Mundelein junior had no intention of working up a sweat when he strolled into the brightly lit gymnasium at Libertyville High School. Instead of throwing a football or shooting a basketball, Norris held a black pen, which he used to fill out questionnaires.

He also answered questions, not about his 40-yard dash time, but about his grade-point average.

"How are you doing in school?" a football coach from Wisconsin-Eau Claire asked Norris.

"Pretty good," Norris said. He has a 3.4 GPA.

"How did you do on the ACT?"

"I haven't taken it yet."

"How are you doing in school?"

"I'm going to check out a couple of schools," Norris said. "I have to look through this stuff and email coaches and set up visits," Anthony Norris Jr. said.

But before they left, Anthony Norris Sr. remembered another school on his son's radar. An Ivy League school.

"We got an email this morning from Pennsylvania," Anthony Norris Sr. said. "The email said they have him on their radar and are looking to continue the recruiting process."

"Another one to look at," Anthony Norris Jr. added. "I have to see what schools would be good for me."

Thanks in part to the Libertyville college fair, they'll have plenty of options to consider.

Jon J. Kerr is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.
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Notre Dame basketball takes advantage of its size

BY STEVE REA
Pioneer Press

Notre Dame boys basketball coach Tom Les takes pride in annually rolling out a team that outworks its opponents, excelling in the areas that often don't appear in the box score.

That trademark tenacity remains firmly in place, but the Dons possess another enviable attribute this winter - height.

Depending on matchups, Les often employs a starting five with four players standing at least 6-foot-5. And with the vast majority of its rotation consisting of battle-tested seniors, Notre Dame appears well positioned to achieve its sixth 20-win season in the last seven years.

Controlling the paint has been one of the chief reasons the Dons have won eight of their first nine games. They held the advantage on the glass in each of those outings, including their 72-64 East Suburban Catholic road win over Carmel on Friday.

"It gives us a huge advantage around the basket," Les said. "We normally don't have this type of size, so it's been a little different. It's even allowed us to change the tempo we play at."

Despite the shift in pace, the Dons (8-1, 1-1) are still a far cry from deliberate on offense. But there is a renewed emphasis on being patient in their half-court sets.

That's a sensible approach given the strong likelihood that at least one of Notre Dame's "bigs" will spend most possessions being shadowed by someone several inches shorter.

The senior trio of 6-foot-9 Sean Johnson, 6-6 Jeameril Wilson and 6-5 Chris Heinichen all possess different proficiencies and they're often joined in the lineup by junior Dusan Mahracic, a 6-8 exchange student from Montenegro.

Wilson, an athletic wing, is perhaps the Dons' best player in the open court. Johnson provides a traditional, back-to-the-basket post player, while Heinichen, who's made almost 70 percent of his shots from the field, is a forward who does a lot of dirty work around the basket.

"We pound it inside as much as we can, and that leads to a lot of high-percentage shots," said Heinichen, who resides in Chicago's Edison Park neighborhood. "We still have to give the effort but maybe not as much as other teams because of our size."

In Friday's game, Notre Dame's 50-point second half helped overcome a slow start, which included four missed first-half layups. Led by starting senior guard Matt Stritzel's 20 points, including 16 in the second half, five Dons finished in double figures. Wilson added an 18-point, 11-rebound effort.

"We know we can score at will with our height," said Wilson, who resides in Norwood Park. "We see the lineups and it's something that coach reminds us about all the time."

Being the taller, more physical team pays dividends for all the Dons on offense, not just the ones who stand at least 6-5.

In half-court situations, with defenders often choosing to pack themselves into the lane, there can be a number of open jump shots for Stritzel, a 6-1 sharpshooter averaging 20 points per game.

Even when Stritzel and Malik Jenkins, a 5-10 senior guard who transferred from Evanston, aren't making their outside jumpers, the potential for extra possessions and put-backs is high.

"Teams double-team down low and that leads to kick-outs to shooters like me," said Stritzel, who resides in Norwood Park. "It's to the point where if teams face-guarded me, we'd just throw it inside. It's 'pick your poison.'"

Steven Reaven is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

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Xidis makes instant impact for Niles North gymnastics

Freshman raising the bar for Vikings teammates

BY DAN SHALIN
Pioneer Press

With her solid individual scores and big skills, freshman Zoe Xidis has raised the Niles North girls gymnastics team's overall score and served as motivation for the other Vikings gymnasts.

"I think Zoe coming in has been a big push for the girls," Vikings coach Jacqueline Sanchez said. "With her skills, it's been pushing the girls more to up their game and get those big skills. They want to match her and really pull together and keep increasing our team score."

The Vikings' 132.55-118.50 win over Highland Park on Nov. 29 in the season-opener was, according to Sanchez, Niles North's highest score in four years.

The Vikings have not equaled that score in three subsequent dual meets, most recently a 142.55-126.50 loss to Glenbrook South on Dec. 15, which dropped the Vikings to 2-2.

Sanchez said she believes the team can score 134 or 135 points by the end of the season. Xidis can help the Vikings get there by refining her skills, according to Sanchez.

"Zoe has a lot of potential, so we've been trying to hone her execution and technique, because she has the big skills," Sanchez said.

Xidis agreed she has some work to do when it comes to perfecting her routines.

"I have skills that are bigger than most people on the team, that are harder, but I'm sloppy and sometimes that's why my execution scores are lower," said Xidis, who lives in Morton Grove.

Xidis said studying video of her routines and Sanchez's coaching have helped her identify areas in which she can clean up her performance.

Another recent addition to the Niles North training regimen has been the use of ankle and wrist weights, which Sanchez said have been helpful in training for all events.

Xidis said she's been using ankle weights in training for parallel bars, which have helped her learn to rotate her hips and keep her feet from hitting the ground.

"Sometimes I touch my feet (on the floor) before I do a skill (on the low bar) and that's a deduction," Xidis said. "The ankle weights work on that and help keep my feet off the floor. I take them off when I do a (full) routine (in practice) and it helps."

Xidis' bar routine was one of Niles North's highlights against Glenbrook South. She avoided touching her feet on the ground and had her best bar routine of the season, according to Sanchez, scoring a team-best 8.40.

Xidis also led her team on floor exercise (8.85) and tied senior Kaylie VanDoren for the team-best on vault (8.40). Junior Athena Xidis, Zoe's older sister, finished second on the team on floor (8.70) and beat her younger sister on beam (7.40 to 6.70).

Kyra VanDoren, Kaylie's twin sister, was the top Vikings gymnast on the latter event (8.40).

Athena Xidis said the Xidis sisters are always cheering for one another.

"I wouldn't say we're competitive against one another," Athena Xidis said. "We're both trying to do our personal bests. I want her to get higher scores (than before) and I'm sure she wants the same for me. We don't pay that much attention to who (gets the better score). We're sisters, so we're always supporting each other."

Dan Shalin is a freelance reporter for Pioneer Press.

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Niles North's Zoe Xidis performs on the balance beam on Dec. 15 in Glenview. She scored a 6.70, but Glenbrook South won the dual 142.55-126.50.
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

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Niles... Truly spectacular Brick Colonial with many fabulous upgrades! Located in Maine South School District 207! Beautiful kitchen with heated ceramic tile floor, 4 bedrooms & 4 baths. Beautiful 26' family room with vaulted ceiling and stone fireplace. Master bedroom suite with full bath. Trey ceilings in all bedrooms. Brick driveway, brick walkways and gorgeous brick patio in large yard. Zoned heat. Full unfinished basement awaits your finishing touches. 2 car attached garage with direct entry to house. Park Ridge Schools & Niles Free Bus! Call to see today! ....................... $647,000