

Gold Coast carjackers have extensive criminal backgrounds, both previously convicted of carjacking

BY CWBCHICAGO

The two men who went on a 20-minute violent crime spree in the Gold Coast last week developed extensive violent crime backgrounds as juveniles, officials said, with one being on parole and the other being off parole for about a month.

Those are some of the new details that emerged as Charles Benson, 20, and Demontae Watkins, 18, were detained by Judge Charles Beach at the Leighton Criminal Courthouse.

“Give me your keys, b**ch,” Watkins allegedly barked while pointing a handgun toward a 26-year-old woman in the 1500 block of N. State around 7:30 Jan. 16.

He and Benson pushed the woman to the ground and kicked her in the face but eventually ran away when another car scared them, according to Chicago police.

Minutes later, the duo allegedly tried to carjack a 41-year-old man near Gov. JB Pritzker’s mansion in the 1400 block of N. Astor. But



Charles Benson (L), Demontae Watkins, and a U.S. Customs and Border Protection helicopter similar to one that occasionally teams up with the Chicago vehicular hijacking task force.

Images courtesy Chicago Police Dept.; U.S. Customs and Border Protection

unable to operate the stick shift on his 2008 Audi, they took the victim’s money and credit cards and ran away.

A couple of blocks away, they successfully carjacked a 33-year-old food runner in the 1000 block of N. Lake Shore Dr., prosecutors said.

With Benson behind the wheel,

the car sped toward the South Side, setting off a series of CPD license plate readers along the way. Cops tipped off the vehicular hijacking task force, which was running a special operation that night.

According to CPD documents,

CARJACKERS see p. 12

Bus company sues Chicago over ordinance enacted to stop Texas migrant drop-offs

BY JONATHAN BILYK
Cook County Record

A Texas charter bus company has filed suit against the city of Chicago, claiming the city is unconstitutionally impounding buses transporting so-called “migrants” from Texas to Chicago and is discriminating against the “migrants” by trying to effectively dictate where they can go after they are released by border patrol agents.

On Jan. 5, Wynne Transportation, a bus service based in Irving, Texas, sued the city in Chicago federal court, asserting City Hall under Mayor Brandon Johnson overstepped its authority and has attempted to sidestep both thorny political questions and the U.S. Constitution in amending a city ordinance that the city claims gives them the authority to regulate the arrival of any bus, anywhere in the city.

The ordinance was enacted in December 2023 in response to the efforts of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott to alleviate the pressure felt by the state of Texas and American communities along the Mexico border to deal with an unprecedented surge of illegal immigration across the U.S. southern border.

Abbott and others have noted the surge is in large part the

result of policy choices put in place by the administration of President Joe Biden, who they say has all but invited people from throughout the world to simply walk across the Mexican border and then avoid deportation by claiming to seek asylum. Those entering the country in this way who are apprehended by border patrol officers are typically issued a notice to appear in court to judge their asylum claims. But with court dates years in the future, the so-called “migrants” are then allowed to roam the country freely, in the meantime.

In 2023, Abbott launched Operation LoneStar, which he said was specifically intended to transport “migrants” out of Texas to so-called “sanctuary” jurisdictions, like Chicago and New York, where Democratic officials, like Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker and Chicago’s mayors, including Johnson and former Mayor Lori Lightfoot, have castigated the alleged racism and xenophobia of Republican-led states, like Texas, for efforts undertaken to stem the flow of such illegal immigration and reduce the burdens placed by such largely unregulated immigration on their state and local communities.

While such “sanctuary” jurisdictions like Chicago have experienced but a small fraction of the

influx of immigrants that have been felt in places like Texas, the sudden surge has been enough to leave officials in Illinois and Chicago scrambling to find ways to care for the arrivals and, for instance, prevent them from freezing to death amid a typical Illinois winter.

As part of the haphazard response, City Hall under the Johnson administration altered a city ordinance regulating bus traffic, expanding its scope from merely giving the city authority to prevent charter bus companies from using city bus stops, to now allowing the city to fine bus operators and seize their vehicles if they drop passengers off anywhere in the city without permission from the city.

Under that ordinance, Wynne said some of the buses operated by its contractor bus charters have been impounded.

The company said the ordinance and the subsequent vehicle impoundments are all unconstitutional.

The lawsuit asserts the city enacted the ordinance specifically to attempt to avoid addressing outcry from the public over the city’s contradictory approach to dealing with the issue. On one hand, the city claims to be

BUS see p. 12



Dennis Watkins has established a permanent home for Chicago’s longest-running magic show, The Magic Parlour, at 50 W. Randolph St.

New location for famous downtown magic show

In a first-of-its-kind creative collaboration, third-generation magician Dennis Watkins has teamed up with Goodman Theatre and Petterino’s Restaurant to establish a permanent home for Chicago’s longest-running magic show, The Magic Parlour at 50 W. Randolph.

The space is adjacent to the Goodman Theatre, and situated in Petterino’s transformed lower-level area, which was previously used for banquets.

The move allows Watkins to build on his 15-years thrilling

guests with magic over his 1,600 live performances and hundreds of corporate events, including six marriage proposals.

Watkins previously hosted shows for more than a decade at the Palmer House, where the audience participates in much of the performance as he did classic sleight of hand, mind-reading and used magical wisdom passed down from his grandfather. Since opening at the Palmer House on New Year’s Eve of 2011, Watkins

MAGIC see p. 12

Winter’s here and the time is right, for skating on the pond



Hockey enthusiasts found North Pond completely frozen over last week, so they grabbed their skates and sticks and froze their faces off.

Photo by Jim Matusik

Annual meeting features Aldermen, a Congressman, and Coppers - oh my!

The Streeterville Organization of Active Residents [SOAR] is hosting their Annual Membership Meeting which will feature guest speakers aldermen Brian Hopkins [2nd], and Brendan Reilly [42nd], US Rep. Mike Quigley and CPD 18th District Cmdr. Michael Barz.

The meeting will be held 5:30 p.m. today, Wednesday, Jan. 24, at Harry Caray’s Chicago Sports Museum, 7th Floor, Water Tower Place, 835 N. Michigan Ave.

Practice patience for promise of flavor on cold winter's day



By Thomas J. O'Gorman

Recently, I was asked by a table-mate in an Italian restaurant what my favorite Italian soup was.

"Oh," I said, without a moment's hesitation, "Italian Wedding Soup." Second-guessing myself about food has never been an issue.

"Italian Wedding Soup?," my guest quizzed. "Don't think I ever had it?"

As they said that, I tossed-out a couple of classic ingredients in the soup. "Tiny veal meatballs?," I queried. "Zucchini?"

Still no recollection.

"In some towns that soup is the mark of distinction among folk who go to a lot of weddings. It's the top-of-the-line. Yellow squash, thinly sliced onion, trumpet mushrooms and some fresh rosemary."

Still no cognition.

Well, I still stand by what I said. "It's the top of the line."

If you've never concocted "Italian Wedding Soup," you should try it. There's room to experiment and feel great freedom attending

the soup pot.

Cut up some really good Italian sausage. Cut pieces of good fatty chuck roast (1-inch cubes, about 10 of them). Some old fashioned smokey bacon, cubed (just a little for flavor).

Homemade cheese stuffed tortellini. Celery. Carrots. Onions. Garlic. Cold thinly sliced beets, 32 oz. beef broth, 8 oz. mushrooms. Chopped garlic and 8 oz. red wine.

Use your sense of self-preservation to measure out how large your ingredients should be. I always add the tortellini, the cooked green peas and fresh chopped parsley as I serve the soup.

There is no better way to begin a fresh year, smack dab in the middle of 25 below zero wind and snow everywhere, than with bowls of "Italian Wedding Soup." As good as anything you may have cooked and eaten in the Kingdom of Italia.

I add one message of warning. Go slow. Sip precious good Italian wines while you create. And watch the process. Learn something new whenever you make this. Each time you toast something, add something, or blend something into the soup pot you create a new life.

So let it live. Taste. Savor. Reflect. I use an 18th century French silver soup spoon and luxurious tea cup to do this.

You will learn to enjoy it.

Sample the changes that cooking creates hour by hour. It will help you learn to uncover flavor. Patiently.

Now since the temperature will remain cold for a while, why not



Italian Wedding Soup

have a simple but elegant dinner, tomorrow night. This time be prepared and use some Christmas gifts. My friend Mark received a pot of habanero-laced raspberry jam. What a gourmand you'd be to truly enjoy this. This jam will lift dinner to heaven.

MAIN COURSE: Pork Loin Roast with rib bones. Size based on number of eaters. Tell your butcher how many eaters.

In the morning grind some sea salt on pork. Then coat the roast with the jam and let it marinate all day. Roast with fresh sage leaves and some thyme.

Bake three nice sized potatoes. Scrub the skin. Poke holes. Crush some sea salt on, then some lime juice.

MAIN SIDE: Creamed Cabbage. Blanch some finely chopped cabbage. Be careful with the dark green leaves. Into salt water for 12 minutes. Then rinse. In a large pot add some unsalted butter and fresh heavy cream, fresh ground pepper and a good hard grated cheese like Asiago. Place in a buttered dish. Bread crumb the top. Bake for 25 minutes until all melted and golden.

Bake some small baked apples with unsalted butter, sugar, nutmeg and cinnamon.

Some Italian rosé is perfect.

Now this dinner is the perfect way to enjoy January.

We will eat ours in my studio with paints everywhere and canvases hanging every which way. But that's ok because this dinner is perfect the way it is. Like dinner aboard the Queen Mary on your first night upon the sea. Rough it.

Don't worry about your clothes. Dinner jackets start on your second night. Just save room for a cocktail and canapé. The rest will all fall into place. Has to be a small dinner. Perspective is everything. Make this dinner a goal. Make it at each other's homes. Enjoy the way you tweak it. Donald Trump really doesn't have the power to alter the loveliness of the table and menu. Dinner for four. That describes the shape of the dinner. The contours of the guests. The crispness of the Irish Linen. The shine on the silver. The grandeur of the wine. And the slow pungent roast of the loin of lamb.

Remember, you want the meat to be juicy and medium. Queen Victoria would have had a kind word about this table setting, one of her favorites.

I encourage all of you to try both menu suggestions. The sound will be the most memorable. What stories you will have of the deep rich flavor of the spicy broth. And

if you can find the trumpet mushrooms, you will be amazed.

And wait until you taste the Pork Loin a la habanero.

The promise of a new year shouldn't be like a new job, a salary raise or losing 10 lbs. It should be more like the promise of flavor on a succulent roast of pork. Or the creamy, cheesy flavor mixes on the crunchy cabbage. The taste of a short-lived summer rosé haunting your dinner table. Or the nutmeg-infused tiny apples on your plate.

Cooking helps us physically see the promise of the New Year. No need to wait. Practice patience. Maybe you can already smell it roasting.

IT'S A PARADE: It's official, **Grace Claire O'Connor** has been chosen as Queen of the 2024 St. Patrick's Day Parade. The daughter of **Marybeth Sweeney** and **Dan O'Connor**, she is employed at Kirkland and Ellis. A 2023 alum of Northwestern Univ. One of four O'Connor siblings to so attend. The parade will march down Lake Shore Dr., noon on Saturday, March 16. **Peter O'Brien** is Grand Marshal. Former Congressman **Patrick Kennedy** will be the Honored Guest.

UNEXPECTEDLY: Well that made for more work. After work piled up, the Illinois Supreme Court last week announced the creation of the Pretrial Release Appeals Task Force. They are getting slammed with appeals from people ordered detained as a result of the implementation of the Pretrial Fairness Act in Sept. 2023. The dramatic increase in the number of appeals from pretrial release decisions meant working late and canceling some pickleball matches.

The Task Force will review pretrial release appeals and their impact on the caseloads in each of the five districts of the Illinois Appellate Court. The Task Force will hold its first meeting soon and will issue a report and recommendations within the next 40 days. Leading the Task Force will be Fourth District Appellate Justice **Eugene Doherty**. The other four are First District Appellate Justice **David Ellis**, Second District Appellate Justice **Margaret Mullen**, Third District Appellate Justice **Lance Petersen**, and Fifth District Appellate Justice **Mark Boie**.

FAREWELL: Sadly it's au renoir to the loveliest **Nikki Friar** who's moving on after packing up tartan kilt and all. This love is going to be missed, Gibson's **Peggy Ryan Lombardo**, **Al Menotti**, **Candace Jordan**, **Kathy Wolter Mondelli**, **Mickey Norten**, **Kathy O'Malley Piccone**, **Andrea Schwartz**, all gathered at Marchesa for a sweet good-bye.

JADE COURT: Thanks

to sharp-eyed Skyline reader **Jennifer Samuels** who corrected a grave mistake in these pages. My favorite Chinese restaurant in town is called Jade Court (1516 E. Harper Ct.), not Jade Garden. We must be confusing it with the famous Orange Garden in North Center. Jennifer went looking for it under the wrong name, found it and its correct name, and dined there. She agrees that the food is superior.

MILLENNIUM PARK: The 20th Anniversary celebration for Millennium Park will be July 18-21.

GEMS: FACETS has announced that their 2024 Screen Gems Benefit will honor **Jacqueline Stewart**, Director and President of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, on May 1, at the Arts Club of Chicago, 201 E. Ontario St. The event includes a special conversation



Grace Claire O'Connor

between Stewart and 2022 Screen Gems honoree **Chaz Ebert**. All proceeds will be directed to the Bross Scholarship Fund supporting under-resourced youth in Chicago. Tickets will go on sale Thursday, Jan. 18.

Stewart is a scholar, educator, programmer, author, film archivist, and you've

seen her on TV as the host of Silent Sunday Nights on Turner Classic Movies.

The 2024 Screen Gems Benefit Committee is co-chaired by **Judy Bross** and **Penny Brown**.

FILM: Chicago Filmmakers, in partnership with Doc Chicago, Chicago Film Archives, and The

FLAVOR see p. 8

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Money pouring into Chicago’s transfer-tax referendum fight

Advocates of new tax have raised over \$700K

Money talks, and after Mayor Brandon Johnson brought forward his plan to raise property taxes on real estate transactions the money started to pour into the battlefield. Property owners and managers are already sparring over a referendum campaign that will appear on this spring’s election ballot.

The money is being put to work quickly as the March 19 vote approaches. The money will fund the fight between the bill’s supporters - who were told the tax will fight homelessness - and a real estate industry concerned about the tax’s adverse effects.

According to Crain’s Chicago, Emma Tai, the former executive director of United Working Families, is leading the pro-tax effort. Her campaign committee has raised over \$700,000, including \$200,000 from SEIU Healthcare Illinois & Indiana, and \$500,000 from the Michael Reese Health Trust.

Tai promises to send volunteers out to knock on doors to inform Chicagoans of the need for more tax revenue.

Those opposed to the increased taxes is led by a group called Realtors in Opposition to Real Estate Transfer Tax, which

“Chicago is in competition for investment with every city now. We should be rolling out the welcome mat, not making it more expensive to live and relocate business here,” says The Chicago Assoc. of Realtors.

Crain’s says is affiliated with the Illinois Realtors association. The group reportedly spent \$242,000 on digital advertising and mailers in the third and fourth quarters of 2023.

The opposition’s efforts could be dwarfed by “dark-money” fundraising led by campaign veteran Greg Goldner, found-

er of Resolute Public Affairs, says Crain’s. Resolute Public Affairs allows contributors to shield their identities through legal loopholes. Goldner remains tight-lipped about specific fundraising figures and strategies, his involvement suggests a formidable opposition effort is underway.

Meanwhile, on Jan. 5, a lawsuit filed in Cook County Circuit Court that alleges the ballot language combines multiple questions in violation of the Illinois Constitution and state law, and asks a judge to bar it from appearing on the ballot, hoping to kill off the referendum. The lawsuit is backed by the Building Owners & Managers Assoc. of Chicago, the Chicagoland Apartment Assoc., the Neighborhood Building Owners Alliance, the Women Construction Owners & Executives, and the Chicago Caucus, among others.

The Chicago Assoc. of Realtors also opposes the proposal, saying that the tax is not a reliable source of funding for the issues the mayor is attempting to solve. “The housing market changes, and predictions can really miss the mark. The transfer tax is an unreliable and highly unpredictable source of revenue.”

The opponents warn that with the rise in remote work, people don’t have to live in Chicago. “Chicago is in competition for investment with every city now. We should be rolling out the welcome mat, not making it more expensive to live and relocate business here.”

Under Johnson’s Bring Chicago Home proposal, the city’s tax take would jump to two percent (from the current 0.75%) for sales between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, while rising to three percent for transactions greater than \$1.5 million.

The policy offers a tax break for smaller deals, as the rate would drop to 0.6 percent for property trades under \$1 million. But

How much?

Currently, city’s transfer taxes for all properties are 0.75%. The proposed resolution would create a tiered, marginal structure on these taxes. This means anything up to \$1 million would be taxed 0.6%.

Sales between \$1 million and \$1.5 million would be taxed 2% on the amount over \$1 million, while sales over \$1.5 million would be taxed 3% on the amount over the \$1.5 million mark.

For example, a property that sells for \$1.2 million would be taxed 0.6% on the first \$1 million, and then taxed 2% on the \$200,000.

Additionally there is another \$1.50 per \$500 tax collected for the Chicago Transit Authority; \$0.25 per \$500 for Cook County, and another \$0.25 per \$500 for the State of Illinois.

Patchwork aid system and uncertain funding leave thousands of migrants in limbo

BY ANDREW ADAMS
Capitol News Illinois

As Illinois faces sub-zero wind chills, thousands of recently arrived migrants are living in precarious situations throughout Chicago and its suburbs – overcrowded shelters, police stations, former convenience stores, library basements and spare rooms in churches, to name a few.

Many of these recent arrivals have come to the state with few possessions and in need of food and shelter, which city and state officials have scrambled to provide amid a lack of federal support.

Since migrants began arriving after crossing over the wide open southern U.S. border since Aug. 2022 – the state has already allocated more than \$500 million to set up emergency services, shelters and other supports. So far, more than 34,000 migrants have arrived in Chicago that officials know about, though many have since moved onto other states.

In Nov. 2023, Gov. JB Pritzker announced another \$160 million in taxpayer funds would be appropriated from the Illinois Dept. of Human Services’ budget to create more shelter sites overseen by the city of Chicago, provide direct aid and case management services and to launch an intake center.

But even that plan has not kept pace with

the influx of migrant arrivals to Illinois.

Now, as lawmakers return to Springfield for their spring legislative session, the question of what to do next hangs heavy in the halls of the state Capitol, with talks of new funding so far not yielding any specific proposals.

“We know this unprecedented humanitarian crisis is going to be critical to discussions on budget and other important issues this session,” House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch said Jan. 16, one day before announcing a nine-member working group to concentrate on the migrant issue.

“We’re going to keep all options on the table and have frank conversations with our caucus, the Senate president, Gov. Pritzker, and others,” Welch added.

The more than 34,000 migrants who’ve arrived in Illinois represents just a portion of the true number of migrants that arrived in Illinois over that time as the country’s southern border faces an all-time record influx of hundreds of thousands of illegals border crossers each month. Migrants are fleeing unstable Marxist political regimes and economic chaos in south and central American and Caribbean nations like Venezuela, Honduras, Cuba and Haiti. Refugees are also crossing the southern border, after arriving there from China, the Middle

LIMBO see p. 10



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Lunar New Year Parade Feb. 17 in Uptown



Uptown is letting out the dragons Feb. 17 as the local business, non-profit, and cultural organizations on Argyle St. for the 2024 Lunar New Year Parade.

Lunar New Year is a time for fresh starts—it's about sweeping away the bad luck of the previous year to make room for the good luck of the new year.

An annual tradition now since 1981, this is the city's official celebration of the Lunar New Year along the Argyle commercial corridor in Uptown.

To welcome the Year of the Dragon, they'll be hosting the Lunar New Year Parade 1 p.m. Saturday Feb. 17, at Argyle and Winthrop, featuring over 20 local community groups, cultural institutions, dancers and performers. In addition, a number of local organizations are planning pop-ups with family-friendly activities between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

The South-East Asia Center - Lunar New Year Celebration will take place before the parade at 11:30 a.m. at Furama Restaurant, 4936 N. Broadway, 2nd floor. To purchase tickets for this meal, call 773-803-5008, or email so@se-asiacenter.net.

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All across town last week landlords vigorously fought the battle of the "Siberian Winter" keeping buildings heated when snow piled up and temperatures fell to -10 degrees below zero.

Landlords step up to fight Chicago's "Siberian Winter"



The Home Front

by Don DeBat

Many of Chicago's small "Ma and Pa" apartment landlords vigorously fought the battle of the "Siberian Winter" last week when snow piled up and temperatures fell to -10 degrees below zero.

Despite the "evil" landlord stereotype painted by some rent-control advocates, the vast majority of small apartment managers stepped up to rally their loyal service trades in order to ensure their tenants were warm and comfortable. Furnaces were checked, serviced and repaired. Frozen pipes were defrosted, and sidewalks and snow-covered steps were shoveled and coated with ice-melt.

Before the blizzard, one conscientious and concerned Gold Coast Realtor, and owner of an Old Town six-flat, sent out the following e-mail to her tenants:

"Beginning Saturday, January 13 through Sunday, January 21, we will be experiencing sub-zero and extremely low temperatures,"

she wrote. "To keep your pipes from freezing during this frigid weather please leave the kitchen and bath cabinet doors open to allow more warmth to get at the pipes under the sinks."

Although this landlord pays the building's water bill, she advised renters to let faucets trickle in bathrooms and kitchens.

"By just leaving the faucets trickling, the movement of water will help prevent ice blockages from forming and prevent a burst pipe," she wrote. "Also, in order to work efficiently, the filter in your heating unit should be cleaned and replaced."

The proactive landlord advised tenants: "Please let me know if you are out of town so we can make arrangements. Thank you, and stay warm!"

An informal Home-Front column survey of nearly a dozen small building owners and managers—and their tradesmen helpers—revealed the following stories:

• **South Avondale:** When the owner of a three-flat was informed about a failed furnace, he jumped in his SUV, loaded in portable electric heaters and rushed to the property on Martin Luther King's birthday.

"I'm a young Realtor and small rental property owner with a wife who is nine-months pregnant, but you've got to react quickly in an emergency when your renters are freezing," he said. The Lincoln Park Realtor's wife gave birth to a nine-pound baby boy the very next day.

• **North Lincoln Square:** On January 15, the veteran owner of a four-flat was informed by his renter, a medical doctor in residence at Swedish Covenant Hospital, that her furnace had failed.

Within three hours of the land-

lord's call, Bob Jungles, of United Heating and Air Conditioning based in west suburban Addison, was on the building roof repairing the furnace in -7 degree below-zero weather.

Because the gangway-gate lock was frozen shut, and there was no access to the rear porch, one of the building's long-term renters who works from home, volunteered to invite the furnace-repair man in to bring his ladder and tools through her apartment to get to the roof.

Within three hours of the landlord's call, Bob Jungles, of United Heating and Air Conditioning based in west suburban Addison, was on the building roof repairing the furnace in -7 degree below-zero weather.

• Later the same day, Kenny Mendela of ASAP Appliance Service, arrived in sub-zero weather to over-haul and repair the building's coin-operated washing machine.

Meanwhile, Gerardo Martinez of Martinez Landscaping, and his snow removal team, were busy cleaning up six-inches of snow and spreading ice melt on the corner building's sidewalks and parking areas.

• **North Avondale:** On Tuesday, January 16, a young owner of a three-flat learned that pipes were frozen in his second-floor apartment. His trusted plumber was down with the flu, so the owner, a computer executive, loaded a portable electric heater, a box

fan and a hair dryer into his car and proceeded to melt the frozen kitchen-pipe problem. He blew warm air until 1 a.m. into the kitchen sink base cabinets to unfreeze the pipes.

• **Roscoe Village:** When he learned the sub-zero weather forecast, an experienced apartment manager immediately called two apartment renters who reside in the south end of a 16-flat he manages to alert them that they should to let their kitchen cold-water faucets trickle. Over the past several years, frozen pipes have been a problem because they bridge an open-air backyard gangway. Result: No frozen pipes.

• **Old Irving Park:** Later in the day, the same property manager rushed over to a six-flat in the neighborhood because the boiler wasn't generating heat. Luckily, the problem was just dead thermostat batteries. He also dealt with plumbing and electrical repair issues on the same trip.

Earlier, the manager already had assigned Jose Salgado's snow removal team, to shovel sidewalks and provide ice-melt at the corner property.

• **South Edgebrook:** Worried about the cold weather, an out-of-town owner of a single-family home asked his property manager to visit the property and turn up the furnace thermostat to 65 degrees from 60 degrees, let cold water trickle in the baths and kitchen, and make sure the snow was professionally shoveled. Mission accomplished.

• **Lincoln Park:** On Wednesday, January 17, the owner of a vintage four-flat asked his heating technician for emergency service on a faulty gas-forced air furnace, and trouble-shoot a water leak. United Heating came through again, and Salgado handled the snow issue.

Where would small landlords be during the "Siberian Winter" without their experienced managers and loyal tradesmen?

For more housing news, visit www.dondebat.biz. Don DeBat is co-author of "Escaping Condo Jail," the ultimate survival guide for condominium living. Visit www.escapingcondojail.com.

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Illinois program lets senior citizens defer up to \$7,500 per year in property taxes

BY MARIA PAPPAS

Illinois offers senior citizens a property tax relief program that works like a loan. The Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral program allows qualifying seniors to defer up to \$7,500 per year in property taxes.

The loan is repaid to the state when the property is sold or upon the death of the participant. March 1 is the last day to apply for the program and seek deferral for 2023 taxes that will be due in 2024.

- Qualifying participants must be:
- Homeowners who are age 65 or older by June 1;
 - Applicants with household income of \$65,000 or less;
 - People who have owned and occupied the qualifying property for at least the past three years.

Surviving spouses of previously approved applicants who are 55 or older within six months of the taxpayer's death are eligible for the program. Applicants must have fire or casualty insurance for the qualifying property and must not owe outstanding property taxes or special assessments.

To apply, seniors must submit forms available on the Treasurer's website at cookcountytreasurer.com. Applications also are available at the Treasurer's Office in the County Building at 118 N. Clark St. Applicants must submit copies, not originals, of required documents that include proof of birth date and proof of home



Maria Pappas

ownership.

By law, the state prohibits extensions beyond the March 1 deadline to apply. The state charges 3% interest per year payable upon death of the taxpayer or when ownership of the home transfers to a different owner. Participants may choose to pay off the loan sooner.

Additional requirements apply when a home is held in a trust. Visit cookcountytreasurer.com to learn more.

The state of Illinois pays the taxes that are deferred by program participants. The 3% interest rate charged for 2023 taxes due in 2024 is half the rate

charged in previous years when the state charged 6% interest.

Additional changes that recently took effect increased the household income eligibility threshold to \$65,000 from \$55,000 and the amount able to be deferred to \$7,500 from \$5,000. Illinois lawmakers approved the changes in 2022.

You can also visit cookcountytreasurer.com to download a copy of your tax bill and pay the First Installment of your 2023 taxes that are due March 1. From the homepage, click on the purple box that says Your Property Tax Overview. When you search for your bill using your address or Property Index Number, a picture of your property should appear.

The website is a convenient alternative to visiting the Treasurer's Office in person or paying your tax bill by mail. You may use the website to pay your tax bill electronically, to

find out if a refund is available because of previous overpayments or missed exemptions and to discover many other services.



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Cubs pop out in bid to defeat sports photog's lawsuit over Wrigley Field injuries

BY JONATHAN BILYK
Cook County Record

A sports photographer, who works for the Associated Press, who was injured while covering a game at Wrigley Field in 2018 has won a new chance to take a swing at the Chicago Cubs in court, after an Illinois appeals panel said the Cubs can't use an arbitration clause attached to media credentials to sidestep the lawsuit.

On Jan. 16, a three-justice panel of the Illinois First District Appellate Court sided with plaintiff Charles Arbogast in finding the arbitration clause cited by the Cubs was out of play.

The ruling was issued as unpublished order under Supreme Court Rule 23, which may limit its use as precedent.

The decision, however, overturned the ruling of Cook County Judge Catherine A. Schneider, who had initially sided with the Cubs in a ruling last February.

The ruling would have allowed the Cubs to force Arbogast and his attorneys to take his legal claims against the Cubs to an arbitrator, rather than moving forward in court.

The legal action began in 2020, when Arbogast first filed suit in Cook County court, asking the court to order the Cubs to pay for injuries Arbogast said he suffered on July 26, 2018, when he fell from a stack of pallets photographers used in the first base photo well when shooting games at Wrigley Field.

The Cubs asked the court to dismiss the lawsuit, asserting an arbitration clause included in the terms and conditions of Arbogast's press pass should block him from bringing his claims to a jury.

The courts initially sided with Arbogast on the question in rulings issued in 2021. In later hearings, however, Judge Schneider agreed with the Cubs that the arbitration clause should

hold sway.

Arbogast's lawyers, however, argued the media credential issued by the Cubs and accepted by Arbogast, subject to the terms and conditions of a written agreement, did not amount to a legal contract. But if it did, they argued, the arbitration clause still should be ignored, because the clause

The justices said the relative difficulty associated with locating the clause was similar to those allegedly encountered by sports fans who may be injured while attending games.

was not prominently displayed or readily explained, so it should be held to be "procedurally or substantively unconscionable" and thus invalid.

On appeal, the justices again tallied the score for Arbogast on the question.

In their decision, the justices noted the user agreement for media credentials issued by the Cubs is only available online through a site known as MLBPressbox.com. Then, they said, that agreement was not displayed prominently enough among "multiple other hyperlinks" on the site.

Further, they noted, the

arbitration clause was "buried" in Paragraph 22 among the 25 paragraphs of the agreement's terms and conditions.

The justices said the relative difficulty associated with locating the clause was similar to those allegedly encountered by sports fans who may be injured while attending games. They noted an Illinois appeals court, in the case known as *Zuniga v Major League Baseball*, similarly ruled in 2021 in favor of a fan who claimed the arbitration clause they allegedly agreed to when purchasing a ticket was similarly "unconscionable" for many of the same reasons.

"Whereas the back of the ticket in *Zuniga* at least mentioned 'arbitration,' here, plaintiff had to jump through many hoops before learning that he was agreeing to arbitration by using his media credential," the appeals court said.

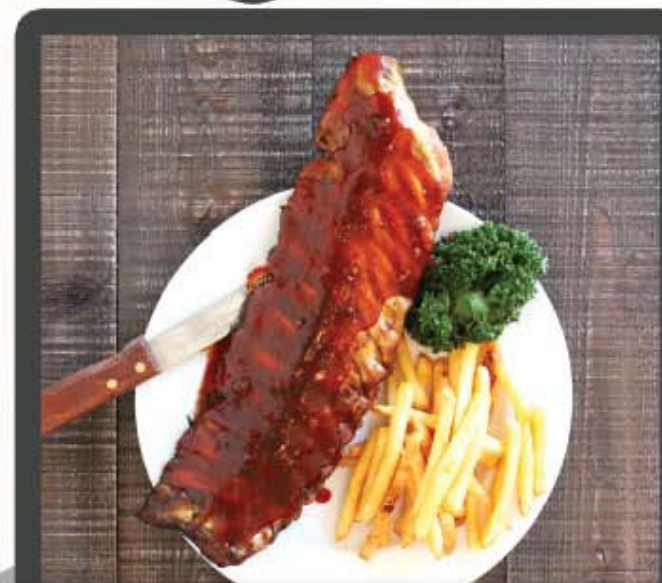
Citing the *Zuniga* decision, the appeals panel said: "... Considering all of the circumstances in this case, plaintiff 'cannot fairly be said to have been aware that he ... was agreeing' to binding arbitration through the use of the media credential."

The panel sent the case back to Cook County court for further proceedings.

The decision was authored by Illinois First District Appellate Justice Mary Ellen Coghlan.

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Police Beat...

Commercial burglary spree downtown

Police are warning downtown businesses of a rash of recently reported restaurant burglaries. In each incident, offenders forcibly enter into businesses in the early morning hours by prying open patio doors. Once inside, the offenders ransack the business taking cash registers and cash.

Incidents include one on the 200 block of N. La Salle St., Nov. 29, 2023; 200 block of N. La Salle St. on Dec. 8; 700 block of N. Wells St., Tuesday Dec. 19, 2023; 500 block of N. Clark St., Tuesday Dec. 19, 2023; 800 block of N. State St., Wednesday Dec. 20, 2023; 0-100 block of West Kinzie St., Monday Dec. 25, 2023; 1500 block of N. Wells St., Monday Dec. 25, 2023; 600 block of N. Franklin St., Tuesday Dec. 26, 2023; 600 block of N. La Salle St., Friday Dec. 29, 2023; 300 block of N. Orleans St., Saturday Dec. 30, 2023; 300 block of N. Orleans St., Wednesday Jan. 3; 200 block of N. La Salle St., Jan. 4; 400 block of N. Clark St., Monday Jan. 8; 600 block of N. Orleans St., Tuesday Jan. 9; 0-100 block of W. Kinzie St., Tuesday Jan. 9, and on the 300 block of W. Hubbard St., Thursday Jan. 4.

The offenders are described as three to four male, African American, 30-35 years of age, 5'-6" to 5'-8" tall, weighing 160-170 lbs., and one female African American, 20-30 years of age.

Liquor store robbers go on another spree, slipping away from cops who witness one holdup

For the third time in eight days, armed men went on a liquor store robbery spree Jan. 15, according to Chicago police. Cops happened to be outside one of the stores as dispatchers broadcast a report of a robbery in progress at the business, but the offenders escaped after running through a gangway.

The robberies began around 8:43 a.m. at Mr. P Beverage Depot, 2006 W. Division.

"Give me everything! Don't move or I'll shoot!" a robber announced while he and three accomplices displayed pistols, according to a CPD media statement. They demanded cash, punched the clerk in the face, and fled.

The same scenario unfolded 20 minutes later at Before You Go Liquors, 1917 W. Fullerton.

Finally, at 9:20 p.m., the group robbed Clybourn Market, 2807 N. Clybourn. They also forced one of the store's customers to go to its ATM and withdraw cash. Unlike the first two robberies, they did not punch the Clybourn Market clerk in the face.

Immediately after a dispatcher broadcast details of the Clybourn Market robbery, a sergeant reported that he and other officers were outside the store and saw the robbery in progress, according to CPD radio traffic.

"We're right in front," a sergeant radioed. "There's somebody in there. There's somebody in there. Get somebody over her right now. They're running out. They see us."

Officers said the group ran through a nearby gangway toward an alley: four black males, one wearing a gray hoodie, and three wearing black hoodies with jeans. The cops searched a building in the area but came up empty-handed.

CPD's community alert said the robbers were 20 to 25 years old, slim, and 5'-9" to 6 feet tall.

Tips about the crimes can be shared with detectives at 312-744-8263 or 312-746-7394. Refer to crime pattern #24-CWP-003.

More liquor stores were robbed Sunday, Jan. 7. Those were all committed by two armed men who entered the stores and demanded cash at gunpoint. Like the more recent hold-ups, the crew only took cash, not merchandise.

J&R Liquor, 2401 N. Ashland, was the first store to get robbed when the gunmen entered around 8:45 p.m. Following that, a robbery occurred at Gold Crown Liquors in Wrigleyville, 3433 N. Sheffield. Two masked men took cash at gunpoint and fled around 9:20 p.m. Finally, around 9:50 p.m., two men robbed Liquor Expo, 2154 N. Halsted.

The crime sprees are the latest in a string of similar incidents targeting liquor stores and, sometimes, taverns in the city. Robbers have been hitting several businesses in quick bursts, only to return and do it again within days.

Woman get's 28 years for shooting man outside a River North bar

When prosecutors charged Maria Gomez with shooting a man at point-blank range outside a River North bar in the summer of 2021, her attorney argued that she acted out of "intense provocation."

That defense failed to hold up in the long run. On Jan. 18 she received a 28-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to three felonies before Judge John Lyke.

Prosecutors said Chicago police surveillance footage showed Gomez wearing a leopard print dress as she fired a gun in the 400 block of N. La-Salle around 10:21 p.m. Aug. 29, 2021.

Moments later, the 32-year-old victim walked up to a group of people standing outside Boss Bar, 420 N. Clark, and asked for help. He had been shot in the neck.

As three bystanders treated the bleeding man's injury, Gomez walked up and shot the victim again at point-blank range in his back, according to prosecutors. The bullet plunged through the man's back, lacerated his liver, and exited through his abdomen, prosecutors said.

Once again, the shooting was captured by surveillance cameras.

Police heard the gunfire and responded to the area. Witnesses directed them to Gomez, wearing a leopard print dress and flip-flops, about a block away. The officers allegedly found a loaded handgun in her purse. They located a shell casing outside the bar and five more on LaSalle St.

Gomez pleaded guilty Jan. 18 to armed violence, which was reduced from attempted murder; aggravated battery with a deadly weapon, which was reduced from aggravated battery by discharging a firearm; and being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Lyke sentenced her to 28 years for the armed violence count and five years concurrent for the other two charges, according to court records.

In 2015, Gomez was convicted of misdemeanor battery for biting someone's finger off during an argument, according to prosecutors. The case was initially charged as felony aggravated battery causing great bodily harm, but prosecutors agreed to downgrade the offense in a plea deal.

Man stole car, sped away from cops while on ankle monitor for two stolen car cases

A Chicago man has been charged with stealing a car on the North Side while wearing an ankle monitor for two additional stolen motor vehicle cases he has picked up since last

Police warn of cell phone deceptive practices

The Chicago police are warning residents and businesses downtown and on the North Side of a recent increase in Deceptive Practices, where offenders are approaching individuals requesting to use their mobile devices for charitable solicitation purposes, such as for "Bucket Boys," a "Child Killed or Shot" or children's charity fundraisers.

Once the victim hands over their mobile device, the offender accesses the device to transfer unauthorized amounts of money via a bank app, Pay Pal, Apple Pay, Zelle or Venmo. In some cases, the app is deleted from

March. Jonathan Curtis, 19, is now jailed as a public safety threat and a flight risk in two of the three cases.

North Riverside cops arrested Curtis on March 2, saying he struck one of their patrol cars with a stolen Jeep Cherokee and also possessed a loaded firearm, according to court records. After appearing before Judge Sheree Henry, he posted a \$500 bail deposit and went home on an ankle monitor the next day.

Two months later, Judge Geary Kull ordered the sheriff's office to remove Curtis' ankle monitor.

And, two months after that, on July 13, cops arrested Curtis for allegedly possessing a stolen Toyota Camry in the 600 block of N. Lorel. Prosecutors charged him with possessing a stolen motor vehicle and fleeing and attempting to elude.

Judge Kelly McCarthy held him in lieu of a \$6,000 bail deposit, which kept him in jail until his case was reviewed after the elimination of cash bail in September. He went home on an ankle monitor in October.



Jonathan Curtis

Just over two months later, on Dec. 28, Chicago police officers allegedly saw Curtis enter a Hyundai Elantra that its owner left running in the 5500 block of N. Campbell.

They followed the car until Curtis got out in the 1600 block of W. Juneway Terrace.

The report said he returned to the vehicle about 30 minutes later, and they tried to pull him over, but he sped through two red lights, so the officers ended the pursuit.

Curtis' ankle monitor GPS records show he was "present at the exact date and time of both the motor vehicle theft and the eluding incident," according to a CPD report.

Officers arrested him to face charges in the third case earlier this month after he appeared at the Maywood courthouse for the North Riverside matter. He's charged with aggravated possession of a stolen motor vehicle and aggravated fleeing.

His next court dates in the three cases are Jan. 24 and 25, and Feb. 2.

Streeterville Taco Bell clerk killed, shooter dumped her in alley six weeks after getting probation for a gun charge



Jamari Champion

ShotSpotter detected 12 rounds fired. By May, he had a deal: The case would be dismissed if he completed 50 hours of community service and kept his nose clean for two years.

Barely six weeks after Judge Peggy Chiampas handed him that second chance, prosecutors say, the 19-year-old shot and killed his girlfriend, after she left work at a Streeterville Taco Bell.

the mobile device preventing any notifications of the transaction.

Incidents include one on the 1100 block of N. Clark St., Saturday Nov. 18, 2023; the 1000 block of N. State St., Saturday Dec. 2, 2023; 1900 block of N. Mohawk St., Tuesday Dec. 26, 2023; 1100 block of W. Armitage Ave, Saturday Jan. 6; 669 N. Michigan Ave. 1:04 p.m. Jan. 13; another at 3519 N. Clark St. 2 a.m. Jan. 13, and one at 3204 N. Clark St. 11:01 a.m. Jan. 3.

The offenders are disarmed as one to four male African American offenders, 16-45 years of age.

He is now in jail, charged with first-degree murder, and detained as a public safety threat by order of Judge Charles Beach.

Early on July 8, Porsche Dixon, 22, took the Red Line home from her job in Streeterville. Champion met her as she walked home from the train, something he did from time to time, prosecutors said in a court filing.

This time, though, video from the 9600 block of S. Perry allegedly showed Champion grab Dixon by her neck and choke her. As she fell to the ground, he shot her once in the back of the head with a .45-caliber handgun, the filing said.

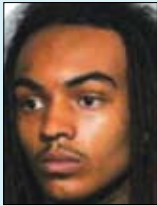
Champion scooped up Dixon's body, walked out of camera range, dumped her in an alley, and ran into his nearby home.

A SWAT team searched the house later that day, but an arrest warrant wasn't issued until Aug. 31, 2023, nearly two months after the shooting. Investigators finally caught up with Champion this month.

Judge Beach pointed to a host of evidence that supported his decision to keep Champion in jail on the murder charge: Champion "made admissions" to the crime on Facebook Messenger; he had been seen choking and pointing a gun at Dixon before; and the crime was caught on video. Champion's next court date in the murder case is Jan. 24.

Man gets three years for 8-on-2 beat-down on Red Line; but he won't spend any time in prison

A man accused of being in a group of eight people who robbed two CTA Red Line passengers in downtown Chicago has been sentenced to three years. But he will not serve any time in



Travonte King

prison after receiving credit for the days he spent on electronic monitoring while the case was pending. The victims were seated across from each other on the train near State-Chicago when someone reached into one of the victims' pockets and took his wallet early on May 27, 2022, prosecutors said. When the other victim intervened in the theft, an entire group of people began punching and kicking the second man.

CTA surveillance video allegedly showed Travonte King swinging at both victims and taking the second man's watch, prosecutors alleged during an initial bail hearing. Both victims suffered bruising and soreness but were not seriously injured.

Investigators distributed frames from the CTA video to police across the city to see if anyone recognized the robbers. A detective and other cops who had previous encounters with King recognized him, thanks to his distinctive tattoos.

King was on an ankle monitor from shortly after his arrest until he recently pleaded guilty to aggravated battery of a transit employee, according to court records. Judge Jennifer Coleman sentenced him to three years with 554 days of credit for time he spent in jail and on electronic monitoring. Com-

bined with a 50% sentence reduction for good behavior, the credits off-set his three-year sentence.

Prosecutors dropped robbery and mob action charges in their plea deal. None of the other seven assailants have been charged.

Another man accused of robbing a Red Line passenger downtown has been sentenced to 4½ years in prison. Darius Clay, 32, has pleaded guilty to robbing a 29-year-old man on the Grand Red Line CTA platform on New Year's Day 2023.

Prosecutors said the victim was sitting on a bench around 3:30 a.m. when Clay sat down next to him and struck up a conversation. Clay then stood up, punched the victim, and threw him to the ground, officials said.

While the victim was down, Clay allegedly went through the man's pockets and then fled with the victim's backpack. But the victim got up, picked up his phone, and chased after Clay. He managed to take a picture of Clay's face before Clay attacked him again and escaped on a train.

Chicago police transit officers who saw the picture recognized Clay at the Grand station a few weeks later and took him into custody.

With the state's standard 50% sentence reduction for good behavior and credit for time spent in jail, Clay is expected to be paroled on Feb. 23. Judge James Obbish handled the case.

Six years for driver who dragged Chicago cop with his car during Lakeview traffic stop

The man accused of dragging a Chicago police officer with his car during a traffic stop in Lakeview has been sentenced to six years in prison.

Cops pulled Terrelle Bailey over in the 3200 block of N. Sheffield for reckless driving in Oct. 2022. Prosecutors said he threw the Range Rover into reverse when an officer asked him to step out.

The vehicle dragged the officer, who was leaning into the driver's side. He suffered injuries to his neck, shoulder, and arm, prosecutors said.

Bailey's SUV backed into a Chrysler 300 and then hit a CPD squad car before slamming into a Lexus and a Cadillac parked nearby, a Chicago police crash report said.

He ran from the crash and hopped into a construction site along the L tracks north of the Belmont CTA station. Cops found him, but a second officer suffered a dislocated elbow while trying to climb the fence to get to him, according to prosecutors.

Officers found a loaded handgun inside a storage panel on the driver's door of Bailey's car.

Last week, Bailey pleaded guilty to aggravated battery of a peace officer and aggravated unlawful use of a weapon in a vehicle with a previous conviction. Judge Michael Hood sentenced him to six years on each count, to be served concurrently, according to court records.

Bailey, initially charged under the alias "Michael Franklin," will receive a 50% sentence reduction for good behavior and another 161 days of credit earned since being arrested.

— Compiled by CWBChicago.com

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Letters to the Editor

Why are we perpetuating slavery and pollution?

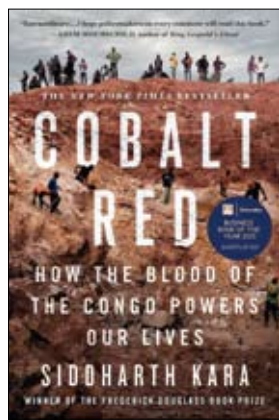
The Governor and the Chicago Public Schools announced they are buying 50 electric school buses.

Why? Is this the next Solyndra solar panel debacle?

The lithium and cobalt needed for the batteries, and our smartphones, laptops and tablets, are mined by slave labor using children in Central Africa. Is that now OK because the child slaves are held by China in Africa?

About 75% of the world's cobalt is mined in the Congo and the batteries are manufactured in China. And apparently the world cannot get enough of it.

The extraction methods for lithium and cobalt are energy intensive and lead to air and water pollution, land degradation (destroying rainforests), and potential for groundwater contamination. The toxic metals threaten humans and animals.



The book "Cobalt Red" exposes the toll taken on the people and environment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by cobalt mining.



Photos courtesy Siddharth Kara

Central Africa has been looted by colonizers for centuries, first for slaves, ivory and gold and then rubber, copper, palm oil and minerals, and now cobalt. And we are

part of the looting.

The smallest cars that use electric batteries put the equivalent pollution into the atmosphere of driving an internal

combustion engine 80,000 miles just to manufacture the batteries.

The school buses will be 12 times the size of small cars, 12 times the battery weight on the roads and put 12 times the amount of pollution into the air.

How are electric vehicles recharged? At EV stations which get their electricity from the local utility, some that burn coal and natural gas to produce the electricity.

Why not just buy buses that run on natural gas?

And why are we putting ourselves at the mercy of the Chinese and paying three times the cost for these buses?

Which Chicago and Illinois politicians, or their families have invested in Chinese companies?

Mike Sullivan
Avondale

I like it!

My late wife and I moved to Crilly Court in Old Town back in 1971. Now I have an apartment at 1660 N. LaSalle Dr., the building most affected by the Fern Hill/Walgreens/Moody Church project. And you know what? I like it!

Replacing two unsightly gas stations and a surface parking lot with handsome office and retail spaces will improve safety and increase property values in the neighborhood. My view will be blocked a little but no one's views are guaranteed. 1660 blocked views when it was built.

A developer who has the confidence to invest in our city in these challenging times should be applauded.

Paul Kuhn
Old Town

Red flags up over Fern Hill plans

As an Old Town resident of 50 years, I am concerned with Fern Hill's proposed project. Based on past performance, many of us have lost confidence in the ability of Fern Hill to develop a project of the size and complexity proposed. Fern Hill's past relationship with the Old Town community has been marginal at best.

They might dispute this, but I'm not referring to the number of Zoom meetings but the lack of transparency, caliber and content of them. Before this project proceeds, and given the developers performance to date, I believe there needs to be some investigation done on Fern Hill and other real estate development projects they have done in Chicago.

It's time for Moody Church, who is deeply involved in this project, to be more transparent regarding their business and financial relationship with Fern Hill and their founder Nick Anderson.

After the startling withdrawal of the former architect, David Adjaye, recent presentations made by the new architectural firm GREC have been feeble and uninspired at best. The building design projects the impression that it is "off-the-shelf," lacking in innovation and relies solely on color elements as a substitute for imaginative architectural design.

This proposed 36-story high-rise, with 500 units, brings with it a density outside Old Town's ability to successfully integrate it into existing infrastructure. This is a community that cannot provide current residents with access to an adequate, full-service grocery store or a pharmacy that's efficiently managed. It's concerning that the building's additional retail space will become just another empty Old Town storefront. Empty retail space that's vacant for years is self-defeating.

Additionally, the announcement of

the new high density high-rise project at Clybourn and Halsted will just exacerbate existing as well as future infrastructure problems.

With only 150 parking spaces allocated to future building tenants, and twice that number allotted to the Moody Church, it seems out of balance. It's obvious that Moody wants 300 parking spaces for those attending Sunday service(s) and special occasions. With access to the building's garage on southbound LaSalle, you can anticipate frustrating traffic snarls and back-ups that could back up as far as Lake Shore Dr. This project will disrupt traffic and CTA service at the "crossroads" of Old Town and beyond. It raises an appropriate question. Is it in Old Town's best interest to disrupt an entire community in order to build a parking lot that offers nothing to the community except the potential for gridlock and 300 parking places for Moody Church?

For context, let's note that the former Treasure Island retail space on Wells St. is not rental space. It is a condominium formerly owned by Treasure Island that is a part of the 1660 N. LaSalle Dr. building, purchased by Fern Hill about three years ago when Treasure Island closed. Fern Hill, after three years of ownership, has finally moved their plans for the space out of the realm of hearsay into the light of day. Their plan is to move the Walgreens store into the vacant Treasure Island space while the proposed project is under construction.

I am not convinced Fern Hill is concerned with or taking into consideration the unintended consequences associated with their plan. The move offers a financial benefit to Fern Hill and Walgreens during the construction of the high-rise. However, there are important security issues that will affect nearby homeowners and resi-

dents. We are all aware of past mob looting and a recent shooting in a Walgreens store. This brought the specter of gun violence and lax security very close to home here in Old Town.

The parking lot at the rear of the former grocery store is part of the Fern Hill condo parcel. The semi-enclosed, covered lot is poorly lit and provides excellent cover for loitering, drug dealing and other criminal activity.

Additionally, it is open and immediately adjacent to the west parking lot of the 1660 building which will require increased insurance and security costs due to the increase in crime risk. In an effort to prevent this move, I am asking Ald. Brian Hopkins not to approve/request any rezoning that will facilitate this store relocation.

I look positively at thoughtful community enhancing development. I'm adverse to recent developments that have scarred Old Town with an abundance of derelict storefronts and empty retail space. This is self-defeating and raises red flags and it is reaching the point where Old Town needs urban renewal more than it needs additional development. Fern Hill is suggesting that after Walgreens returns to its newly built space at Wells and North Ave., they will "take a look" at leasing the space to a grocery concern. Due to a loss of confidence in Fern Hill, we cannot trust this to happen.

Having seen this proposed project stumble along for the last few years, community residents recognize that this project has all the potential of being harmful rather than an asset to the community. The recent in-person meeting with Anderson

and Fern Hill with members of the Old Town Triangle Assoc. made it evident that this project is looked upon with negativity by the community. I hope that we can halt this development and consider one that's less impactful and directed by an alternative developer that will provide fresh ideas and a new start.

It is incumbent upon Moody Church to be more mindful of this community, more transparent with planning and development and to work with the community directly to facilitate a new vision as they will be the primary benefactors of this development in Old Town.

Jim Mancuso
Old Town



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Disco Inferno at Navy Pier Jan. 27

Navy Pier is inviting cooped-up Chicagoans to bundle up, brush off their dancing shoes and dig out those silky nylon Qiana shirts with medium-wide collars for a first-of-its-kind Winter Disco experience in the Navy Pier Beer Garden, 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 27.

“A Party Called Tribe” has assembled a top-notch lineup of local DJ talent for the free outdoor

event, including M-dok, Syko, Ceasedays, J.Star, and special musical guest Club Crib Ent. Beyond the body heat generated on the dance floor, revelers will be able to cut the chill with a variety of warm beverages available for purchase, from hot chocolate and coffee to their boozier counterparts, Irish Hot Chocolate, Winter’s Coffee, and Garden Tea.

Andersonville coffee and cake break on Feb. 9 to 11

Even on the coldest day the Andersonville community is the hottest neighborhood in town. And next month Andersonville is hosting Swedish-inspired Fika Fest.

The fest features a weekend of fika-themed events and promotions Feb. 9 to 11, including the return of the Coffee and Hot Cocoa Crawl and The Great Andersonville Puzzle Exchange.

The Swedish concept of “fika” (pronounced fee-kah) translates directly to “a coffee and cake break,” but it’s about so much more. It represents an important idea or state of mind in Swedish culture. When you fika, you spend time with friends, colleagues and strangers, share in common interests and knowledge and give yourself a moment to have a break and socialize. When you fika, treat yourself to something cozy.

And that can be done with the coffee and cocoa crawl. Guests can embrace the warmth and coziness of fika with the return of the Coffee and Hot Cocoa Crawl 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 10.



Visitors will choose from two routes that invite participants to explore specialty offerings including coffee, hot cocoa, bakery items. Each attendee will receive a commemorative mug. Tickets are \$25 and can be ordered at www.andersonville.org/events/fika-fest/coffee-cocoa-crawl/, or by calling 773-728-2995. Children under 10 are free with paid attendee (mug not included). Check-in begins at 9 a.m. at Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark St.



Tom Palazzolo

FLAVOR from p. 2

Gene Siskel Film Center, presents a weekend with seminal local filmmaker and artist, **Tom Palazzolo**, 5 p.m. Jan. 27, at The Chicago Filmmakers Firehouse Cinema, 1326 W. Hollywood, in Edgewater. Palazzolo, who was recently in the news after he was discovered to be the “unknown artist” behind a popular Wrigley Field painting, has left an indelible impression on the Chicago film scene. In the field of documentary filmmaking, Palazzolo’s early embrace of experimental and avant-garde techniques contrasts with his periods of verité work and later forays into narrative surrealism.

Palazzolo’s DIY ethos and aesthetics have influenced generations of cinematic artists. This event continues Chicago Filmmakers’ 50th Anniversary programming, with retrospective screenings held to celebrate prominent local filmmakers who have made a significant impact on the Chicago Filmmakers community.

SIS: Ann Gerber’s younger sister, **Esther Ruth Wortell**, died on Jan. 9. A graduate of Senn High School, she went on to become a Chicago grade school teacher and a columnist with her “Live and Be Well” column, which ran in several North Shore newspapers, including Wilmette where she lived for 57 years.

Services were held Jan. 16. **CLOSURE:** The Honey Berry Cafe closes after a short span of life. But my heart is broken that **Charles Masson**, after 60 years, is finished with Le Grenouille in New York. It has closed. Favorite hot spot for the Hibernia magazine staff with our publisher, famed Kevin Kelly.

WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN: **Julia Jacobs** with **Annissa Lambirth-Garrett** at the Union League Club of Chicago with gifts to lift the professional abilities of women in the

workplace.

CHICAGO CABARET: **Barb Bailey** has announced that **Sonia P. Oyola** has joined her Valentine’s Show, Feb. 15, at Davenport’s Piano Bar. showstopper **Denise Michaels**, **Irene Michaels** and **Irene Mojica** will also join the show.

WHO’S WHERE: **Mark O’Malley** and wife, **Patricia Treacy** managed to dry their Christmas dampness from Dublin in sunny Spain on the Costa del Sol but not before they were at the famed Dublin pub Doheny & Nesbitt and were quietly lifting a few with **Michael D. Higgins**, the President of Ireland... Happiest birthday to Chicago’s grand gentleman **Ken Norgan**, who has few rivals crossing the globe bringing friendship and delight to all he meets... **Bobbi Panter** in Geneva, mourning the loss of her longtime friend **Kelly Collins**, who’s friendship was so foundational... **Paul Hansen** and diva **Barb Bailey** at Davenport’s on Milwaukee Ave. for the start of the great music in the new year, a fabulous cast of super talented singer/comedians **Daryl Nitz**, **Dan Michel**, **George Howe** and **Laura Dellis**... Kathy Wolter Mondelli taking in the Chicago Bulls with Kathy O’Malley Piccone and team owner **Mickey Norton**... **Stacey McLean** celebrating a birthday with **Paul R. Iacono**, **Julie Jacobs**, **Denise Tomasello**, Kathy O’Malley Piccone and **Sherry Lea Fox** at Gibson’s... Bravo! **Sam Lessin** is running for Harvard Board of Overseers you can help, your vote is important... Chicago designer **Sylvia Wilczynska** brought Chicago temperatures to the Alps and headed over to a little hidden gem in the mountains for lunch and Genepi... **Jane Justic** in Naples, FL, for a fun night in Pelican Marsh with friends and great music and food from Court-side... **Matt** and **Molly Tully**, groom and bride, finishing up a honeymoon in the Seychelles

Islands and South Africa... **Dr. Rose Gomez** out shushing in the picturesque Swiss snow... writer **Sherrill Bodine** is perched right on the edge of a salty tale, she’s at sea, must make provisions for the unplanned war at the moment between the Ecuadorean government and the drug lords, perhaps a whole day of champagne cocktails with the deck boys would work... WGN Legal expert **Karen Conti** and husband, **Jerry**, have been in South Africa on a wild beast with choice wines... **Jim Kinney**, **Brian White** joined **Janet** and **Rodger Owen** and a host of friends for Trivia Night at the Colony in Palm Beach... **Helma Wandelaar** was dearly loved by **Shelley Howard**, who we all miss, she has been traveling in Carlingford, Ireland.

SWIM CHAMPS: Attorney **Jack Goggin** (a high school swimming champ) flew in from Steamboat Springs, CO, to join his princely Fenwick classmates of Westside Irish pedigrees, for the 60th anniversary of the 1964 National Champion Aquatics Team, led by beloved coach **Dan O’Brien**, whose career at Fenwick spanned 55 years. A ceremony and celebration was held Jan. 20 during the Dan O’Brien Relays Swim Meet.

JAMES JOYCE: True readers of Irish writer James Joyce commemorated the 83rd anniversary of his death in Zurich, Switzerland, on Jan. 13, 1941, when, after having abandoned his Paris apartment, he exiled himself to Swiss neutrality. He left his daughter, **Lucia Joyce**, in a French madhouse in Normandy. He would die quietly away from Paris.

*At that hour when
all things have repose,
O lonely watcher of the skies,
Do you hear the night wind
and the sighs
Of harps playing unto
Love to unclothe
The pale gates of sunrise?
When all things repose,
do you alone
Awake to hear
the sweet harps play
To Love before him on his way,
And the night wind answering
in antiphon
Till night is overgone?
Play on, invisible harps,
unto Love,
Whose way in heaven is aglow
At that hour when soft lights
come and go,
Soft sweet music in the air above
And in the earth below.*

- James Joyce, “At That Hour”

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Disney on Ice warms the hearts of old and young



(L-R) Mickey and a few old friends. The vibrant colors of “Encanto” were a welcome sight on this gloomy winter day. We loved the skating antics during “Raya.”

BY FELICIA DECHTER

Disney has brought on the magic once again.

Its latest Disney on Ice show, “*Magic in the Stars*,” got three generations of my family to come out into the bitter cold last week. We ranged in age from 65 to two-years-old, and although there was a 63-year age gap between the oldest and youngest, the undeniable magic that Disney brings was felt by all.

Disney thrives on giving people an enchanting escape from reality. It aims to make us happy. And even if it was just for one night, we escaped the winter doldrums with some old, comforting buddies like Mickey and Minnie, Goofy and Pluto, Donald and Daisy, Cinderella, Snow White,

Belle, Aladdin, Tink, and Jiminy Cricket, who welcomed us and reminded us that fantastic, magical things can happen if you wish for them.

There were newer friends too. Skating gracefully and swiftly were Moana, Raya, Tiana, Elsa and Anna, Mirabel and Bruno (But we don’t talk about Bruno). And the lovely Asha, from the new Disney movie, “*Wish*,” made her on-ice debut.

We witnessed skilled and eloquent figure skating and high-flying acrobatics from the aforementioned, as well as unexpected stunts, innovative lighting, thrilling special effects, eye-catching costumes, and stunning set designs. Buzz Lightyear, Woody, Jessie, Rex and Hamm hit the ice, as did Lightning McQueen and

Tow Mater. In fact, “*Magic in the Stars*,” features the most Disney characters ever assembled in one show.

There’s no doubt in my mind that for a few nights this week, the United Center will become the happiest place on Earth, thanks to Disney and the characters we know and love, who always remind us to never stop wishing, dreaming, and making beautiful memories.

Produced by Feld Entertainment, “Magic in the Stars,” runs Thursday through Sunday at the United Center, 1901 W. Madison St. Tix are available at Ticketmaster.com or at the UC Box office.

Exhibit recounts 100 years of West Rogers Park Jewish history

Celebrating the longest-standing Jewish neighborhood in Chicago history, “Then and Now: 10 Decades of Jewish Community in West Rogers Park,” a photo retrospective produced by the Jewish Neighborhood Development Council of Chicago [JNDC] and Chicago Jewish Historical Society, is now available for online viewing.

The exhibit features rare, annotated photos stretching back to the early 1930s when Jews started trickling into the neighborhood, many from Chicago’s West Side.

The images cover the founding of the first synagogue, bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies, the “Golden Age” of Devon Ave. in the ‘50s and ‘60s and at Mather High School, adapting to demographic changes, a growing Orthodox community, and the impact of community activism to enhance and strengthen the neighborhood.

Images for this exhibit were contributed by many individuals

with fond neighborhood memories. Some still live in West Rogers Park today, and some moved away decades ago.

“West Rogers Park is the home of the memories of tens of thousands of Jews throughout the metropolitan area,” said JNDC President Beverly Siegel.

The exhibit opened on Oct. 23, 2022, at Chicago Public Library Northtown branch to a standing-room-only audience, featuring award-winning author Joseph Epstein speaking on “Growing Up Jewish in West Rogers Park.”

It ran there through Feb. 2023, due to popular demand and has since been featured at other venues in Chicago, as well as in Northbrook, Skokie, and Highland Park, with other programs and exhibitions planned.

JNDC advocates for priorities aimed at ensuring the sustainability of West Rogers Park and surrounding communities. One of JNDC’s major advocacy achieve-

ments is the successful campaign that fueled the City’s decision to build a state-of-the-art library in West Rogers Park, which opened at Pratt and Western in 2019.

“Then and Now: 10 Decades of Jewish Community in West Rogers Park: may be viewed at www.jndcchicago.org/#wrp.



Bill Birch, right, filmed and interviewed John F. Kennedy as a network cameraman for NBC. He also started and ran the network news bureau in Chicago. A documentary film following Birch’s career will be shown at the Edgewater Branch of the Chicago Public Library on Jan. 27.

It’s happenin’ at the Edgewater Library

During January, the Edgewater Branch of the Chicago Public Library, 6000 N. Broadway, is offering more new programs to the community.

Each month a small bag of books in different genres will be given away—selected in a random drawing from those who enter. In January, for example, the genre is mystery books; in February, the genre will be fiction. To see pictures of the books that will be given away each month and other details, view the Friends of the Edgewater Library website at foelchicago.org.

Musicians of all levels who play acoustic instruments are invited to participate in a music jam session at the library 4-5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 25. Participants may bring portable keyboards/pianos, guitars, ukuleles, mandolins, violins and other string instruments, brass and woodwind instruments. No electric guitars, electric basses or drum kits. Music will be provided; listeners also are welcome.

Children ages 6-13 are invited to bring their family, meet new friends and challenge librarians during the Saturday Board Game Stop. Each month different board games will be featured, including checkers and group games like Uno. The program will be held

noon-2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 27, on the first floor of the library.

A film documentary, “*American Cameraman: Bill Birch*,” also will be shown on Saturday, Jan. 27. The film and discussion will be held 2-3:30 p.m. in the Betty A. Barclay Community Room on the second floor. The film follows the career of William Birch who saw history from behind the lens as he covered presidents from Truman to Reagan, the rise of Fidel Castro and the riots in Selma.

A Tween Book Club for children ages 10-13 begins 4-5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 30. Each month, participants will read a different book on their own and then discuss it as a group. This month, the book selection is *Small Spaces* by Katherine Arden; copies are available to check out at the Children’s Department Desk on the first floor.

Other activities at the library include movies, crafts, knitting, chess, story time for children and other books clubs. For more information, see Events on the Chicago Public Library website, chipublib.org.

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Back by popular demand, cheerleading classes are back at Chase Park, 4701 N. Ashland, in Ravenswood.

This beginners class explores the fundamentals of cheerleading and will culminate in a showcase performance that combines the elements of cheer that are included in a performance routine.

All participants will learn basic cheer motions, including proper arm and hand placements, as well as the names for each motion; the correct approaches for basic cheer jumps including the T-jump, star jump, tuck jump, toe touch, and the hurdler, sideline chants that can be performed at a football or basketball game.

It's a start for those who want a future on the field and teaches the basics of stunting progressions and drills (based on age level and skill level), proper stunting positions for the bases, backspots, and flyers, and beginning stunts for a stunt group, dismounts from the stunts and the cheerleading style of dance.

Got a loud voice? Are your parents always telling you to "use indoor voices?" Well then cheerleading is for you. Students will also learn now to use the voice and facials in a performance.

Classes run from Feb. 27 to April 11, and space is limited. Classes are for youths ages 5 to 7, 8 to 9, and 10 to 12. To register stop by the park or visit www.DayOffCamp.com.

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Superior St. closed this weekend

Superior St. east of Fairbanks Ct. will be closed to traffic this weekend to the east drive of 345 E. Superior St. (former the Rehab Institute of Chicago Hosp.) from Friday, Jan. 26 through Sunday Jan. 28 for a large crane required to lift replacement building chillers and cooling towers for the Tarry Building, 300 E. Superior.

The sidewalk on the north side of Superior St. at the Tarry Building will also be closed for pedestrian traffic during these dates from 6 a.m. through 8 p.m. Emergency egress for the complex will remain open and will be protected by an overhead canopy at the sidewalk as required.

For more information contact Jay Baehr at j-baehr@northwestern.edu, or Keith Barr at k-barr@northwestern.edu.

**Your assumptions
are your windows on the world.
Scrub them off
every once in a while,
or the light won't come in.
— Alan Alda**



(Inset) Mugshot of Jamie Miller, who has been charged in the killing of Andrew Hulburt outside the House of Blues, 329 N. Dearborn St.

Man charged with murder of concert-goer outside House of Blues

BY CWBCHICAGO

A South Side man has been charged with first-degree murder in connection with the death of a man outside the House of Blues on Nov. 15.

Jamie Miller, 29, appeared for a detention hearing at the Leighton Criminal Court-house on Jan. 20, Chicago police said.

In a brief media statement, CPD said Miller is one of the men who “participated in” the murder of 47-year-old Andrew Hulburt.

Hulburt was leaving the Skinny Puppy concert at House of Blues, 329 N. Dearborn St., just before 11:30 p.m. when two men solicited money from him, according to police and his friends. One of those men punched Hulburt in the head. He fell, struck his head on the pavement, and later died.

House of Blues staffers tried to revive him by administering CPR, but he didn’t make it.

People who work in the Marina City complex told this reporter that the men who approached Hulburt outside the House of Blues regularly work people for money in the area and along nearby bar strips.

Miller’s arrest record in Chicago is mostly for misdemeanors, including a handful of violations for soliciting without a license.

BUS from p. 1

welcoming to such immigrants. On the other, the city, stung by the financial and logistical burden imposed by the surge in unexpected arrivals and the need to redirect city resources away from current city residents, is taking steps to discourage their arrival altogether.

But political questions aside, the lawsuit asserts the city’s ordinance unconstitutionally intrudes on the federal government’s sole authority to regulate both immigration and interstate commerce.

Further, the lawsuit asserts the city ordinance violates out-of-state bus companies’ equal protection rights, by singling them out for such treatment.

And the lawsuit claims the city’s ordinance violates the rights of immigrants, who they say have all chosen voluntarily to travel to Chicago.

“Rather than welcoming migrants and giving them sanctuary, Chicago is turning its back on those wishing to travel here by enacting an ordinance that targets the transportation companies that transport migrants from our southern border to their desired destination - Chicago - in violation of Plaintiff’s constitutional rights,” the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit asks the court to declare the ordinance unconstitutional and void and require the city to pay unspecified compensatory damages to Wynne for the city’s actions against its buses and contractors, plus pay attorney fees.

“Drew was the kindest person I’d ever met,” wrote Kris Decklever, a friend of Hulburt who launched a GoFundMe to help Hulburt’s mother with expenses. “Growing up, he was a friend to everyone, and one of my best friends. I was always welcomed at his house by his mother Anita and his father Phil.”

“We drifted apart as adults do, but we picked up as we had never been apart,” Decklever remembered. “He will be greatly missed.”

CARJACKERS from p. 1

two helicopters, one run by Chicago police and the other by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, tracked the car as Illinois State Police troopers pursued it on the ground.

Benson reached speeds of “90+ mph in a 55 mph zone” on the Dan Ryan near Garfield, prosecutors said in his detention petition.

Man was part of crew that burglarized pricey Loop steakhouse three times



(Inset) Mugshot of Avery Carpenter, who robbed Prime & Provisions, 222 N. LaSalle St.

BY CWBCHICAGO

Just one day after Chicago police warned the public about a group of burglars who had broken into a Loop business three times, officers made an arrest in the case.

Avery Carpenter, 25, is charged with breaking into Prime & Provisions, a high-end steakhouse at 222 N. LaSalle, two times. He has not been charged with a third burglary at the same location.

Police said two or three men broke through the windows and doors of a business in the 200 block of N. LaSalle and stole computer equipment and bottles of alcohol. Break-ins were reported at 2 a.m. on Nov. 29, 6:27 a.m. on Dec. 8, and 5:16

a.m. on Jan. 4.

CPD did not identify the business by name, but it is listed as Prime & Provisions in police and court records.

Cops patrolling the Jackson Red Line CTA station saw Carpenter on a north-bound train around 11:30 a.m. Jan. 16, the day after CPD released its alert. They recognized him as someone who had been identified as one of the burglars, according to his arrest report.

They took him into custody and charged him with two counts of burglary. Prosecutors say he participated in the December and January break-ins, taking bottles of alcohol each time. Judge Susana Ortiz released him on electronic monitoring.

Both men bailed out of the car near 7000 S. Wood. The CPD helicopter led officers to Benson, who was hiding under a stairwell, while a state police dog found Watkins lying in some bushes with a loaded handgun near his feet, the CPD reports said.

Judge Charles Beach detained both men, citing their extensive criminal backgrounds as one reason they did not qualify for pretrial release.

Benson had been off parole for about 30 days at the time of the crime spree, Beach wrote in his detention order. Benson’s background includes unlawful use of a weapon, which is what he had been on parole for; a 2023 domestic battery arrest with an order of protection; and juvenile adjudications for vehicular hijacking, possessing a stolen motor vehicle, robbery, reckless conduct, and aggravated robbery with a firearm, Beach wrote.

Watkins is currently on parole, according to Beach’s order. The judge noted Watkins had a 2023 juvenile adjudication for vehicular hijacking with a firearm and a total of eight arrests. Those arrests included allegations of assault, domestic battery, electronic harassment, criminal damage to property by explosion, and two counts of criminal trespass to a vehicle.

MAGIC from p. 1

has offered a close-up magic experience with only 60 guests per show.

The Magic Parlour has gained popular acclaim for Watkins, following the opening. Earnings for The Magic Parlour are nearly 90% ahead of the same time period in previous years, with Watkins and his new permanent home hailed as a star attraction in its elegant underground Loop parlor.

With the increased capacity in the new venue, and an expanded weekly schedule, Watkins says he “never could have imagined what was in store as we set out to open [up in this] new home. The end of 2023 was unforgettable for me. I am humbled to work alongside my partners and owe an endless debt of gratitude to the folks who helped bring this beautiful space to life.”

A co-founder of The House Theatre of Chicago, Watkins has collaborated as an actor, writer, director and/or designer on 30+ world-premiere plays with companies including Lookingglass, Steppenwolf and Goodman Theatre.

“For 15 years, I have performed The Magic Parlour show in various venues in Chicago, and together, we have created lasting memories—and, of course, magic,” he said.

To purchase tickets, call the Goodman Theatre Box Office at 312.443.3800 or visit TheMagicParlourChicago.com. The Magic Parlour is recommended for audiences ages 12+; the experience is designed for adults.

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