Mount P’s Top Stories Of 2016

By RICHARD MAYER
Assistant Managing Editor

Last year was filled with mourning, annexations, bright lights for a local band, and legal troubles for others in Mount Prospect. The following is the Journal’s top stories of 2016 in Mount Prospect (in no particular order):

Fire Dept. Hirings

Six new firefighters were sworn-in Jan. 5 bringing Mount Prospect Fire Department staffing levels back to where they were before village budget cuts in 2010. The Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant, received in 2015 for $1.385 million, covers salaries and benefits for the six firefighters through the end of 2017. The new hires allowed Engine 13 in (Continued on page 2A)

Rolling Into 2017

Ava and Brian Driscoll (right photo) go for a spin around the Central Community Center indoor roller rink on Friday, Dec. 30 during "Roll into 2017." Revelers young and old celebrated with a New Year's countdown, party favors and a bubbly toast to 2017. (Nick Carterright/The Journal)

Prospect Heights’ Top Stories Of 2016

By TOM WESSELL
Managing Editor

By land, sea and air, Prospect Heights remained steeped in local news from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2016. Whether it was over a new gas station near homes, public interest in taking care of the local environment, or the load that comes with co-owning a municipal airport, headlines were made and stories were read in the Journal. The following are the Journal top stories of the year from Prospect Heights (in no particular order):

Praise It!

Facing possible closure at the start of 2016, St. Alphonsus School needed 135
District station south of Algonquin and Linneman Road and Malmo Road. Businesses along Algonquin Road, consisting of various industrial businesses, surrounded the village. Annexations consisted of various industrial businesses along Algonquin Road, Nordic Road and Malmo Road. Of those, one contains the Elk Grove Fire Protection District station south of Algonquin and Linneman. As part of this agreement, the village must pay the fire district its full levy ($223,463) in year one, 80% ($178,771) in year two, 60% ($134,078) in year three, 40% ($89,385) in year four and 20% ($44,693) in year five.

Proposed Truck Lot Off Table; Annexations Approved

As a six-acre parcel of land in unincorporated Elk Grove Township from Mount Prospect, at the southeast corner of Dempster Street and Linneman Road on land owned by United Airlines (UAL), came close to becoming a 180-space parking lot for trucks. However, those plans were canceled in 2016 and the village anticipates annexing that land along with other UAL property in early 2017.

In August, the village forcibly annexed parcels adjoining it up to 27.3 new acres for Mount Prospect's south side. The properties are at 1105 E. Algonquin Rd., 1901 S. Busse Rd., 1907 S. Busse Rd., 1600 W. Kenneth Dr., 302 W. Kenneth Dr., 305 W. Kenneth Dr., 1600 W. James Dr., and 1650 James Dr.

As part of the annexation agreement, the village must pay the Elk Grove Fire Protection District its full levy ($100,450) in year one, 80% ($80,360) in year two, 60% ($60,270) in year three, 40% ($40,180) in year four and 20% ($20,090) in year five. In September, trustees forcibly annexed another 77 acres of land in unincorporated Elk Grove Township surrounded by the village. Annexations consisted of various industrial businesses along Algonquin Road, Nordic Road and Malmo Road. Of those, one contains the Elk Grove Fire Protection District station south of Algonquin.

District 26 Early Learning Center Rejected

Voters in November defeated River Trails Elementary School Dist. 26's bond referendum, which sought funding to build a new early learning center (ELC) where the administration building and Park View Montessori School currently stand on Kensington Road. By a 2-to-1 margin, voters denied construction of the $29 million, 60,000 sq. ft., 20-classroom ELC to house all district preschoolers and kindergartners under one roof. With the referendum failing, the district will look at other alternatives.

Tykables Concerns

A group of residents packed the village boardroom in June to voice their concerns about Tykables, a business that had opened at 512 W. Northwest Hwy. Some residents became upset after viewing an online video where the Tykables owner was promoting his business while wearing a diaper. Village officials and legal staff stated there was nothing they could do legally to stop the business, since the owner complied with all zoning and village code regulations. Following public concerns, the business made changes that included further covering its front window.

Bicyclist Dies Crossing Central

A vehicle struck and killed Joni Beaudry, 55, in early June as she was attempting to cross Central Road near the entrance to Melas Park. Beaudry reportedly activated the crossing signal and began to cross Central after vehicles in the eastbound curb lane stopped. A black Lexus SUV in the eastbound median lane, however, did not stop, police said.

Several residents a week later spoke to the village board about how changes are needed at the crossing and how motorists sometimes do not pay attention to the yellow flashing beacon light. In September, approximately 200 people filled the village boardroom to hear possible solutions for the signaled Central Road pedestrian crossing, and to also voice their concerns. Many who spoke believed the existing system should be removed until a better solution is determined.

On Sept. 30, police and village officials stated Beaudry was partly to blame for her own death, which outraged Beaudry's husband, Eric Jakubowski, who called out Police Chief Tim Janowick at a village board meeting and demanded his termination.

DUI Charge For Janonis

In August, former longtime Mount Prospect Village Manager Michael Janonis was arrested and charged by Prospect Heights police with driving under the influence of alcohol after allegedly recording a blood alcohol content of 0.366 — over four times the legal limit. He reportedly backed into a parked vehicle and fled before police found him moments later a few blocks away sitting in his vehicle allegedly with an open bottle of vodka in the backseat of his car. A court date in December was continued until February.

Village Clerk Passes Away

Mount Prospect Village Clerk Lisa Angell died in October at the age of 62 following a yearlong battle with pancreatic cancer. A resident of Mount Prospect for 15 years, Angell worked for the village since 1988 starting in the public works department. In 2005, she was appointed village clerk. Her wake and funeral were packed with family, friends and co-workers.

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Food=Big Business In Rosemont

Income From Eateries, In Hundreds Of Millions, Surpasses 2015 Levels

With the opening in recent years of many new restaurants, in particular those within MB Financial Park at Rosemont, the village has reaped substantial financial benefits. Here is a list of the top food providers in Rosemont that in 2016 through October produced total income of more than $107.9 million, an increase of 2015’s $106.2 million. The village has the authority to impose a 1% local tax on food and beverage business that this year totaled $1,079,055 compared to the previous year’s first 10 months of $1,062,399. The village also receives additional tax money from the state based on the sale of food and beverages at local restaurants. As this chart shows, the Hyatt Regency O’Hare clearly generated the most food and beverage business in Rosemont out of the 10 most lucrative restaurant locations. Aramark is not a restaurant but a provider of food and beverages at various venues in the village such as Allstate Arena, The Ballpark at Rosemont and the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center.
New Laws Sponsored By Local Legislators

Nearly 200 new state laws went into effect Jan. 1, dealing with everything from transportation and education to safety and more. The new laws were approved by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. Bruce Rauner in 2016.

The following is a list provided by Illinois Senate Democrats of some of the new laws and their sponsors from the Journal area (in parentheses):

- HB 1260: Classifies online logs, biometric data and health info as protected information; updates how groups notify the public of a data breach (Sen. Dan Biss-D).
- HB 5913: Requires licensed plumbers to complete four hours of continuing education each year (Sen. Don Harmon-D, Rep. John D’Amico-D).
- HB 5038: Designates the plague - a long narrow canoe made from a single tree trunk - as the official state artifact (Biss, Rep. Laura Fine-D).
- HB 5993: Substance abuse programs licensed by DHS must provide educational info on opioid treatment options, including use of medication for opioid addiction and overdose, how to administer naloxone (Rep. Lou Lang).
- HB 5594: If a defendant needs opioid abuse or addiction treatment, court shall require them to participate in prescribed drug treatments under care of licensed physician (Lang).
- HB 5607: Allows U.S. savings bonds to be declared abandoned after being unclaimed and unredeemed five years after final maturity, and allows the treasurer to obtain a judicial determination that the bond has been reverted to the state (Sen. Terry Link-D, Rep. John Lang-D).
- SB 2331: Clarifies that Medicaid managed care entities include business associations; allows the entities and business associates to communicate directly with clients regarding care coordination activities (Biss).
- SB 2783: Consults unclaimed property abandoned after five years (Link).
- SB 2343: Limits police use of Stingray devices to track cell phones; use only to track location of or identify communications devices, not listen in; need detailed court order and data must be deleted within 24 hours (Biss).
- SB 2777: Prohibits minors from being committed to Dept. of Juvenile Justice facilities for committing crimes that are not felonies or for certain nonviolent felonies (Nekritz).
- HB 6010: The offense of vehicular endangerment includes striking a motor vehicle by causing an object to fall from an overpass in the direction of a moving vehicle with the intent to strike a motor vehicle while it is traveling upon a highway in this state (Sen. John Murcendo, Rep. Brian Stewart-R).
- HB 6006: Requires vehicles to change lanes when coming up on a car with its hazard lights on (D’Amico).
- SB 0625: A video recorder may be operated in a contract carrier vehicle (Biss, D’Amico).
- SB 1564: Health Care Right to Conscience law. Ensures patients receiving care in a medical facility to know about treatment options, regardless of medical provider’s religious beliefs (Biss).
- SB 2842: Requires that the transfer of real property to a trust for an intended parent is the legal parent of any resulting child and may seek a court order and any possible increased sentence for prior conviction or future convictions (Nekritz, Sen. Julie Morrison-D).
- HB 3854: Requires that the intended parent is the legal parent of any resulting child and may seek a court order and any possible increased sentence for prior conviction or future convictions (Lee).
Bubbling Over
From Playground To Pollution, Des Plaines River Feels Impacts Of Local Growth, Federal Regulations & Likely Those Running EPA

By LAUREN BARRY
Journal & Topics Reporter

Following the announcement of President-elect Donald Trump’s recent cabinet appointments, many Americans have been wondering how the new officials’ choices will ultimately affect local issues.

In particular, the appointment of Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt who has a name for himself suing the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Pruitt has been named to head that very agency. That has left many wondering about how environmental protection will look in the future.

Pruitt has described himself as a “leading advocate against the EPA’s activist agenda.” This year, he co-wrote an essay criticizing criminal investigation of oil companies for environmental-related offenses, and argued that the EPA’s Clean Power Act was passed without enough input from Congress.

Locally, the Des Plaines River is greatly impacted by EPA regulations, specifically the federal Clean Water Act. Struggles to keep the waterway clean can be traced by following sightings over the past several decades of a mysterious foam that’s appeared on the river.

Pastor Emeritus William Grice of the First Congregational Church, a lifetime Des Plaines resident, says that he vaguely remembers seeing the foam in the 1960s and ’70s. He said he recalls being “appalled” at the sight. He did not know the specifics of what was causing it, but said that it came at a time when major changes were happening to the river.

“It was part of my playground, part of my yard,” said Grice of the river, which has its beginnings near the Kenosha-Racine county line in Wisconsin. “It was part of what formed us.” Yet, as industry began to take hold in the northeast Illinois region, the river became polluted and was no longer considered a safe place to play or even dip a toe into.

“There was a tremendous amount of growth,” explained Grice, “and runoff water would just go into the regular drainage system.”

In 1998, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Humane Society of the United States, the U.S. Citizens Aviation Watch, and the Alliance of Residents Concerning O’Hare (ARECO) sent a notice to the city of Chicago Department of Aviation alleging over 120 violations of the Clean Water Act and the Emergency Planning and Need To Know Act. Some of the violations were believed to have been the cause of the foam appearing on the river in Des Plaines and elsewhere.

The issue was eventually solved with a settlement agreement in which Chicago “demonstrated willingness to expand its reporting of ethylene-glycol based de-icing fluids and to investigate ways to reduce the use of ethylene glycol at O’Hare Airport.”

In a press release from 1999, Jack Saporito, chairperson of ARECO, said that foam rising from the river at that time was several feet thick and caused by “fire retardant agents,” such as ethylene glycol.

These agents are used as anti-freeze on both airplanes and airport runways during winter months, according to Saporito. He said that the ethylene glycol-based products being dumped from O’Hare not only resulted in foam, but caused health problems. Though the concessions included in the settlement required O’Hare to report the use and disposal of the chemicals, Saporito said that de-icing fluids are still drained into local streams such as Crystal Creek in Schiller Park, from an airport holding pond.

Saporito told the Journal & Topics that before the lawsuit, “airports claimed that they were not under jurisdiction by the EPA,” and that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which did have jurisdiction over the airports, was more concerned with economic issues than environmental matters.

Without the airport being held to EPA regulations, Saporito said that “a lot of people would be dying,” and that even when the airport is held to those regulations, many chemicals end up in what is supposed to be clean water.

Though the Des Plaines River foam disappeared for a time after the ARECO settlement, it was sighted again near West suburban Lyons on March 19, 2012, Public Affairs Specialist Patrick Thomas of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) confirmed. One witness of the foam, quoted in a local newspaper, said that it had a “slight chemical smell.”

According to Saporito, this is a hallmark of ethylene glycol related foams. While some naturally occurring foams can crop up on bodies of water, he said they usually have stronger odors of decay.

In recent years, attempts have been made to clean up the river of pollutants, including the removal of the Dempster Street dam this year. This removal helped the river get back its natural flow, a benefit for native populations of birds and fish, and prevented debris from collecting at the dam.

EPA Chief of the Watersheds and Wetlands Branch Peter Swenson explained that in a 2013 Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) review for the river, the EPA gave Illinois a plan for revitalizing the river to a healthier condition and bringing its pollution levels down.

However, according to the most recent Illinois Integrated water report submitted to the federal EPA in 2016, the Des Plaines River has a ways to go before it is free of pollutants. In the report, the river is classified as a “medium” priority waterway, with levels of fecal coliform, chloride, mercury, phosphorus, polychlorinated biphenyls, arsenic, methoxychlor and more in its waters.
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Weather Report

The following weather statistics were compiled by Northwest suburban weatherman Karl Lindahl:

High temp -97 on June 20
Low temp -1.1 on Dec. 19
Avg. temp -3.3
Total rainfall -32.76 in.
Total precip -35.92 in.
Most 4-Hour rainfall -July 25
Most 24-hour snowfall -7 in.
Wettest month -May -5 in.

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Second Suit Filed Over ‘Extra Value’ Complaints

Des Plaines resident James Gertie is not the only person in the Chicago area to have taken his complaints about McDonald’s hamburgers overcharging customers to the Cook County Circuit Court. Kelly Killeen filed a similar lawsuit on Dec. 22 alleging that McDonald’s allows certain franchise operators to charge too much for “Extra Value Meals.” In her case, she said that she recently ordered a sausage burrito meal at the downtown Chicago McDonald’s location at Randolph and Dearborn streets and was charged $5.08. She explained that if she had bought each of the items separately such as the sandwich, soft drink, French fries or hashbrowns, the price would have totaled only $4.97.

Overcharging customers, Killeen asserts, is an example of fraud and she is hoping to expand the lawsuit into Class Action status that could involve many more plaintiffs. She is asking that the court award her actual and triple damages plus unspecified punitive damages and attorneys fees.

Killeen’s lawsuit is similar to one filed by Des Plaines resident Gertie on Dec. 13. In his suit he alleges that he was overcharged 41 cents when he purchased an Extra Value Meal from five local McDonald’s in Des Plaines and Niles.

If he had purchased the items separately, his cost would have been lower.

New Driving Laws To Be Aware Of

The New Year brings new laws, and Illinois State Police (ISP) are highlighting a few that became effective Sunday, Jan. 1.

In an effort to protect first responders, Scott’s Law, the “Move Over” law, requires that motorists slow down or change lanes when approaching a stationary emergency vehicle with emergency lights activated.

Beginning this year, this law will also apply to any vehicle on the side of the road with hazard lights activated. If anyone sees flashing lights ahead, they should move over or slow down.

When entering a work or school zone, motorists should eliminate distractions and make sure they are driving at the posted speed limit. According to ISP, those who speed through a work or school zone after the first of the year may end up in jail. Speeding 26 miles per hour or more, but less than 35 miles per hour, is now a Class B misdemeanor, and 35 miles per hour or more in excess of the posted work or school zone speed limit is now a Class A misdemeanor.

Anyone who has been convicted of driving without insurance and still chooses to drive without insurance, will see their vehicle possibly impounded the next time they are stopped by police. The law now requires officers to tow that person’s vehicle if they have been convicted of driving without insurance within the prior 12 months and are receiving another citation for driving without insurance.

“New Year usually brings new resolutions and goals,” ISP Director Leo P. Schmitz said. “In 2017, the ISP resolves to continue to work toward strengthening safe driving habits for motorists on Illinois roadways. Our goal is to reduce serious traffic crashes through education and enforcement.”

For a complete list of all the new Public Acts, go to the Illinois General Assembly’s website.

Big Fishes Sought For Upcoming Musical At Prairie Lakes

Big Noise Theatre Company is seeking male and female singers/actors for its spring production of “Big Fish, the Musical.”

Musical auditions will be held on Monday, Jan. 16 between 7 and 10 p.m. and Tuesday, Jan. 17 between 7 and 10 p.m. at Prairie Lakes Theater, 515 E. Thacker St., Des Plaines.

“Big Fish, the Musical” will perform at Prairie Lakes Theater from April 21-30.
Driver, Allegedly DUI, Finally Stops

These items are from Mount Prospect Police Department incident reports. The Mount Prospect Journal publishes the police blotter every Wednesday and Friday. If anyone has information that can help solve a crime, call Crimestoppers at 847-590-7867.

DUI Charge

Susan Pour, 66, of 235 W. Dempster St., Des Plaines, was charged Nov. 24 with driving under the influence of alcohol, failure to give right-of-way to an emergency vehicle, improper lane usage of alcohol, failure to give anyone permission to use his name or other information.

Frustrated Behavior Reported

Police at approximately 1:05 a.m. Nov. 25 arrived at Mrs. P & Me Restaurant, 100 Prospect Ave., for a report of an unruly subject. They located a male subject standing on the sidewalk with the owner of the bar. According to the bar manager, 10 minutes prior the man tried to enter the establishment, but was told he was not welcome inside due to previous incidents. The report states the man became verbally argumentative and wanted to enter. Employees, the report said, escorted the man outside and police arrived moments later. The man left the scene and no charges were filed.

Fraudulent ID Charge

Dmytro Marhashvili, 23, of 560 Lakewood Farms, Bolingbrook, was charged Dec. 1 with possession of fraudulent identification card. According to police, officers were dispatched to Costco, 999 N. Elmhurst Rd., where Marhashvili was allegedly attempting to open a Costco membership and Visa credit card. Store employees told police Marhashvili allegedly provided a fraudulent driver’s license while filling out the application. Police said the photo on the identification card did not match Marhashvili. Police ran the driver’s license through a database and it was determined the license was not valid and the name on the license did not exist, police said.

Suspicious Incident

Police on Dec. 3 received a report that on Nov. 14, a resident’s debit card was declined. After checking his account, the man told police he noticed almost $16,000 had been taken out over a three-day period. He called his bank and closed the account. The man told police his wallet was lost at an airport in St. Louis on Nov. 4. Inside the wallet was a Social Security card, driver’s license, military ID, along with the debit card used to steal the money.

Identity Theft

Police received a report Nov. 25 of financial identity theft. According to police, someone entered a Bank of America branch in Georgia and presented a $1,700 check to a teller while representing themselves as the victim. The check was accepted and the offender left the bank with cash in hand. The check was later determined to be fraudulent by the bank as Citibank refused payment when the check was returned to them through routine routing. The victim told police he was never in Georgia and did not give anyone permission to use his name or other information.

Criminal Damage to Property

While investigating graffiti at a nearby location around 9:30 a.m. Dec. 1, officers noticed graffiti on an air conditioning unit at Indian Grove School, 1340 N. Burning Bush Ln., according to the police report.

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2017 Frisbie Senior Center’s March & April Day Trips

11:30 am -3 pm
7:45 am -5:15 pm
Wednesday, February 23rd
Thursday, February 22nd
Wednesday, February 22nd
Thursday, February 23rd

Blue Chip Casino
Michigan City, Indiana

Potawatomi Casino
Milwaukee Wisconsin

Saturday Night Fever
Droy Lane Theater
Thursday, March 9th
10:45 am 4:30 pm
Members $56 Non Mem: $66
DEADLINE is: February 27th

“Shen Yun”
Rosemont Theater
#1 Show in the World
Sunday, March 12th
12:15 pm -4 pm
$45 Non Mem: $55
Mem: $45 Non Mem: $55
DEADLINE is: February 16th

“Greta Garbo”
Here at Frisbie
We’re Bringing the Entire Show to YOU!!!
Thursday, February 23rd
11:30 am-3 pm

Entertainment & Buffet Luncheon
Mem: $43 Non Mem $ 53
DEADLINE is: February 16

“Come Fly with Me”
Enjoy a One Woman Show
Wednesday, March 29th
10:30 am-4 pm
Mem: $68 Non Mem: $78
DEADLINE is: March 20th

White Fence Farm
Lunch & Entertainment
“Come Fly with Me”
Enjoy a One Woman Show
Wednesday, March 29th
10:30 am-4:30 pm
Mem: $68 Non Mem: $78
DEADLINE is: March 20th

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“Shen Yun”
Rosemont Theater
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Sunday, March 12th
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$45 Non Mem: $55
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Wednesday, January 4, 2017 | Page 7A
Busy Year In MP

(Continued from page 2A)
she got to know over the years.
The village board honored Angell for her years of service and accomplishments.

TIF Dissolved
After 30-plus years, trustees in October dissolved the village's only Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, with plans to create a larger one in hopes of spurring economic development downtown.

Village officials, at that same time, introduced a proposed new TIF that includes more commercial properties along Prospect and Northwest Highway and some that were located in the first TIF area, but did not benefit from reinvestment.

Trustees are expected to approve the new TIF in early 2017 that will last for the next 23 years.

Mobile Classrooms Proposed In Dist. 57

The topic of overcrowding in Dist. 57 came to the forefront in October and November with discussions about implementing mobile classrooms at Westbrook School beginning next school year.

Administrators said to deal with increasing enrollment, either two mobile classrooms behind Westbrook need to be constructed or the school's early learning childhood program needs to be relocated to Lions Park Elementary.

A few weeks later in November, approximately 40 community members attended a forum seeking input on possible mobile classrooms at Westbrook and what the future might hold for Lincoln Middle School since that building is aging.

The district is expected to decide what to do at Westbrook for next year within the next two months.

Honorable Mentions

The Rand Road Corridor Study sought to determine what the future would hold for Rand in terms of traffic and development in years to come...Two downtown restaurants closed: Crave Pizza and Tokens & Tankards...Mount Prospect Ice Arena opened in the Kensington Business Center...A village time capsule buried 25 years ago was unveiled...Prospect High School's Marching Knights appeared on national television in November during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade...Police Sgt. Anthony Liszewski was found not guilty in October of criminal charges stemming from a 2015 domestic battery report at his Huntley home, which cleared the way for his return to the department.
Hot Ashes Spark Garbage Can Fire

Disposing of hot ashes inside garbage cans was believed to be the cause of a fire that ignited Monday (Jan. 2) in Mount Prospect.

Firefighters received a call from a neighbor at 10:29 a.m. They immediately responded to 118 S. Can-Dota Ave.

Chief Brian Lambel said the fire extended from the garbage cans to the house and burned up the side toward the attic.

Firefighters knocked out the fire immediately and checked the attic for fire extension. They found none. The fire was under control in less than 10 minutes.

No one was injured and the homeowner was not home at the time of the fire.

The house remains habitable and damage was estimated at about $15,000. Due to the quick call by a neighbor and response by firefighters, Lambel said about $500,000 in property was saved.

The day before on New Year’s Day, firefighters responded to the 200 block of N. Wille Street for a grease fire inside a kitchen. Lambel said there was no damage or injuries.

He emphasized that cooking fires are still the top cause of fires in the village and throughout the country. Residents should keep their stoves and ovens in good working order, properly maintained, and never leave cooking unattended, Lambel said.

Lets Skate!

Youngster trades in his gym shoes for some roller blades during Friday night’s “Roll into 2017” skate party at Mount Prospect’s Central Community Center. (Photos by Nick Cartwright/The Journal)
PH Year In Review

(Continued from page 1A)

students enrolled and $400,000 raised to remain open for the 2016-17 school year. But parishioners met at night at the church on Wheeling Road and the funding came together. The school had experienced too much of a drop in enrollment and planned a new marketing campaign moving forward.

Living With CEA

Development of a new Chicago Executive Airport master plan, in addition to noise generated by aircraft over surrounding areas, remained top-flight issues in 2016. The airport took steps to update its noise maps in order to obtain federal funding for soundproofing. It also planned to test new overnight takeoff procedures to send more planes over industrial areas rather than residential.

Residents and Gov. Bruce Rauner descended on CEA for July 4th festivities, fireworks and the annual Runway 5K.

Later in the year, the airport’s pilots association supported a self-serve gas pump for smaller aircraft, but discussion stalled at a CEA board meeting.

Also, John Tourtelot was appointed to replace John McKenzie as airport board chairman. McKenzie resigned to focus on his law practice.

Bridge Finds A Way

Des Plaines-based The Bridge Community Church won city council approval to build a new 30,000 sq. ft. facility, but faced opposition from a group of residents.

The Bridge plans to build the two-story, 350-seat church at Euclid Avenue and Wheeling Road, previously the site of Prospect Christian Church. Concerned residents showed up in large numbers at city council meetings in the spring. They were mostly concerned with parking and flooding possibilities, plus additional traffic, lighting and the new building’s size. Residents’ concerns were heightened when they learned nearby Tully Park might be donated to The Bridge. The park district called off those plans.

Gassy Situation

Plans to construct a Thornton’s gas station at the northwest corner of Rand Road and Thomas were first reported by the Journal in mid-September. Mayor Nick Helmer and city officials liked the idea of a new source of sales tax revenue. Variances were requested and plan commissioners were supportive of the project. However, the 1.47-acre site is on the Arlington Heights border, and neighbors who reside in that village did not find out about the plans until later. Traffic, safety and lighting were among their chief concerns. A Facebook group opposing the project popped up and Arlington residents spoke out at city council meetings, but final approval ultimately came down to Prospect Heights aldermen.

This Is Where We Live

Efforts to improve Prospect Heights’ natural environment and wildlife situation bubbled over into 2016. Residents became divided over usage of chemical treatments in Hillcrest Lake, a 14-acre body of water surrounded by homes. The city agreed to move ahead with paying for chemical treatments in Hillcrest. A Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission plan called for removing invasive species up and down the Hillcrest watershed.

During the summer, the city halted NRC activities along the ComEd right-of-way bike path as residents complained of unsightly prairie plantings. NRC members said the plantings were intended to take years to complete, but that the restoration would be worth the effort. Public tours were offered.

Also, a new community garden for residents was opened along Piper Lane.

Later in the year, a live burn was planned near the Willow Sloughs and a bald eagle was even spotted near Hillcrest Lake.

Arena Site Lives On

Plans for a 180-space parking lot for trucks failed to materialize for the last remaining acres of the Prospect Heights arena site on Piper Lane. So, it was back to the drawing board. Aldermen, by a 3-2 vote in September, hired a local broker to find a buyer for the city-owned property. Council members remained split over what to do with the site. Several proposals have been floated over the years, but the lot remains vacant.

Positive Presence

To start off the new year, Al Steffen became chief of the Prospect Heights Police Department. Jim Zawlocki, previously a sergeant, was sworn in as deputy chief. In addition to their regular duties, police officers generated feel-good stories for the community. In February, officers collected water for Flint, Michigan. On more than one occasion, they were honored by the city council for life-saving actions. Local families gave back over the summer by throwing an impromptu party for police at the Camp McDonald Road public safety campus. The Comfort Dogs organization also presented police with patch swaps from Dallas and Baton Rouge, LA, where mass shootings occurred last year and the local group’s services were needed.

What If...?

Residents and city officials alike became riled up over a group’s proposal to fold Prospect Heights into surrounding towns. One idea behind “The Initiative” is that by consolidating with other towns, services for Prospect Heights could improve in the long run. Prospect Heights does not currently collect a general citywide property tax. Talk of consolidation was spurred away at the state capitol of too many units of government existing in Illinois.

Days later, Mayor Nick Helmer removed Rodney Page, a former mayor himself, who was said to be among those behind “The Initiative”; from his seat on the Chicago Executive Airport Board.

Not much else was heard publicly about “The Initiative” in 2016.

Slick Spot?

Crisis was averted when an emergency landing system did its job on a slick January morning at CEA: stop a skidding aircraft. The plane, on its way in from Detroit to pick up an organ transplant, wound up in the new EMAS crushed concrete system at the end of a runway along Palatine Frontage Road. The incident was considered one of the first real tests of the new stopping system technology. No injuries were reported and the organ was spared.

Welcome To The Neighborhood

(new businesses that opened in Prospect Heights last year): Chase Bank, Ramada Plaza Hotel, Village Inn, Athletico, Life Storage, Tony’s Finer Foods; Ruffolo Foods

PH People In The News (as reported on by the Journal): Valentin Turansky, inducted into the Illinois Soccer Association Hall of Fame; Neal Patel, appointed to the city plan/zoning board of appeals in November; Adrienne Rohwedder and younger sister Symantha Rohwedder, who helped raise the girls golf team at Wheeling High to area prominence; Dick Wolf, the city’s first mayor who died at age 80; Don Gould, Jr., who retired as Prospect Heights Fire District chief in July; Matt Dolick, appointed to fill the 5th ward city council seat vacated in March by Dave Derwin; former Chicago Executive Airport Board Chairman E. Allan Englehardt, who passed away at age 69 on May 9; Kenneth Skendaridre and Franciszek Mik, the city’s “Citizens of the Year” honored for their role in subduing someone who allegedly attempted to assault a woman in an apartment building; former Fire District Chief Don Gould, Sr., who died in January at 89; Christina Ferraro, new Prospect Heights Park District director.
Newborns Enter World Just Minutes Into New Year, 2017

The first babies of the new year have clocked in at area hospitals. Here's the Journal's annual "Stork Report" for this year's first arrivals:

Advocate Lutheran General Hospital in Park Ridge welcomed its first baby of the year at 1:33 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 1. Her name is Sophia Lykar and her parents are Yuliya Dubina and Yura Lykar from Arlington Heights. Sophia weighed 7 lbs., 9 oz. and is 19 inches long.

Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights welcomed its first baby of 2017 at 12:11 a.m. Jan. 1, the newest member of the Raper family of Northwest suburban Huntley. Julie Springer, M.D., delivered Jacob William Raper. His parents are Tiffany and Josh Raper; big sister is Gracie. Jacob was born by C-section and weighed 8 lbs., 9 oz. He was 22.5 inches long.

Just over three weeks early, Wrigley Rose Dalbey entered the world at 12:12 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 1 at AMITA Health Alexian Brothers Medical Center, Elk Grove Village. The 5-lb., 12-oz. baby girl was born to avid Cubs fans Ellen and Aaron Dalbey of Roselle. Wrigley was 19 inches long and was delivered by Dr. Patrick Pozzi. This is the couple's first child.

Mrs. Dalbey came up with the name Wrigley originally for a boy, but dad didn't like it. When Ellen paired Wrigley with the middle name Rose, dad approved. They had decided on the name even before the Cubs won the World Series.

At AMITA Health Alexian in Hoffman Estates, the first baby of the new year arrived at 10:46 a.m. Jan. 1.
Yesner, 73, Remembered For Local Involvement; Succumbs To Lymphoma

Unincorporated Des Plaines resident and president of the Golf Maine Park Dist. Board of Commissioners, Mike Yesner, 73, a force in the Northwest suburban community for over 30 years, passed away on New Year’s Eve.

According to Yesner’s wife of 49 years, Donna Yesner, her husband first became involved in community groups through coaching their children’s Little League baseball and basketball teams. Overall, he coached Little League for around 25 years.

“He was always a joiner,” said Mrs. Yesner, “and after he joined, he didn’t just sit back. He was involved.”

From coaching, Yesner moved on to become a commissioner at the Golf Maine Park Dist. as a write-in candidate in 1987, serving five consecutive terms. His most recent term expires this April.

“He was a pioneer in the community with his vision for long-term improvements,” said Golf Maine Park Dist. Executive Director John Jekot. Currently, Jekot said that the district is working on projects funded by $1.33 million in grant money that Yesner was instrumental in obtaining.

In 1990, Yesner became a member of what would eventually become the Skokie Valley Dist. 6440 Rotary Club. From 1995-96, he was president of the Morton Grove/Niles club, and from 2013-14 served as district governor—a position that put him in charge of over 70 clubs in the area.

Before moving to Des Plaines in 1969, Yesner grew up in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago where he was born to Sol and Sophie Yesner. He graduated from the University of Chicago with a degree in political science in 1965 and went on to earn an M.B.A. from the university in 1967.

Outside of his community work, Yesner had a career in advertising and was the founder of Yesner Marketing.

“He was very intelligent. He could size up any situation and give you an assessment of it,” said Mrs. Yesner.

She added that her husband was also a lifelong fan of Chicago sports, including the Bulls, Blackhawks, and especially the Cubs. He was elated when his favorite team finally won the World Series last year.

In the early part of their marriage, the Yesners lived in Cincinnati where Mrs. Yesner remembers her husband taking them to four Cubs games in three days. The experience turned Mrs. Yesner into a lifelong Cincinnati Reds fan, she told the Journal.

Yesner’s death was the result of a three-year battle with lymphoma. He is survived by his wife, daughter Staci, son Stephen, daughter-in-law Pam, and two grandchildren, Theo and Zoe. A service for Yesner was held Tuesday at Chicago Jewish Funerals in Skokie.

Customers Changes Cause For CEA Project Delays

Noise abatement and beautification at Chicago Executive Airport (CEA) both faced roadblocks as 2016 came to a close.

Action was pushed back on a proposed $250,000 airport sign for the corner of Milwaukee Avenue and Palatine Road at the Dec. 21 airport board meeting, according to CEA Noise Committee member Steve Neff.

New regulations that change U.S. Customs procedures at the airport were the reason for the delay, Neff told the Journal.

While Customs staff previously went directly to aircraft after landing at hangars run by the airport’s fixed base operators (FBO), new regulations have eliminated vehicles that Customs staff previously used, instead requiring pilots taxi straight to the Customs office near the Atlantic FBO facility, according to CEA communications specialist Rob Mark.

Neff and Mark said that Haworth and Signature, the two other FBOs at the airport, have argued that the new regulation offers an unfair advantage to Atlantic, as pilots might now seek hangar space in the most convenient location to the Customs office.

Mark added that the airport board is in the planning stages of incorporating the Customs office and the CEA administration offices into a new structure near the airport control tower. The cost to complete that project has not been estimated yet, according Mark, and discussion of the project is in very early stages.

The Customs issue has also taken time away from discussion of noise issues at CEA, according to Neff. Currently, he is advocating that late night fees be imposed on pilots not based at CEA who fly in during late night and early morning hours.

Neff told the Journal that recent research through flightaware.com indicates that most of the flights during the time residents most often complain about noise -- 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. -- are pickups of passengers by pilots bases at other airports. Therefore, he said, a fee for (Continued on page 13A)
Rooney Looks Forward To Rolling Up Sleeves In Senate

By LAUREN BARRY
Journal & Topics Reporter

Former Rolling Meadows mayor and recently-appointed State Sen. Tom Rooney (R-27th) says he is excited to get legislation rolling in the upcoming 100th session of the Illinois General Assembly, starting next week.

"I think it's been a blast," said Rooney of his experience with state politics so far.

Last September, Rooney was appointed to serve the 27th District, which covers parts of Rolling Meadows, northern Des Plaines, Palatine, Arlington Heights, Mount Prospect, South Barrington, Inverness, Prospect Heights, and Hoffman Estates, after former senator and deputy majority leader Matt Murphy resigned.

Since then, Rooney said he has sat in on about seven days of the 99th General Assembly veto session, which reassesses bills vetoed by the governor.

During that time, Rooney, a Republican, worked out of Murphy's former Springfield office. He will soon be assigned to a smaller office. Locally, Rooney's district office is located in Palatine.

Until Nov. 22, Rooney also served double duty as mayor of Rolling Meadows in order to get the city's budget passed. Rolling Meadows city council recently appointed Tim Veenbaas to serve as acting mayor until the spring 2017 municipal election.

Additionally, Rooney plans to continue teaching economics at West Leyden High School in Northlake, though a co-teacher will help cover classes during the upcoming session when Rooney is in Springfield.

"The state is in a lot more trouble than any of the municipalities near us," said Rooney. He added that coming into the Senate during a slow time for state politics has given him the opportunity to keep in contact with local residents and learn what they want from legislators.

"Wherever you go, someone has something to say about the state government," he said. According to Rooney, pensions, lame duck tax increases, the lack of a state budget and term limits are the issues Northwest suburban citizens care most about.

Rooney told the Journal & Topics on Monday that he is working on putting together 10 bills to file in the 100th session, including one that would install term limits for government officials.

"I am expecting it to go nowhere," he said, explaining that elected officials are the last group to support that type of bill. But he does still plans to try. Other bills could include a measure to exempt the first $10,000 an individual paid from taxation, and a pension consolidation bill.

"I think we will be seeing a lot about the pension crisis in the upcoming session," he said.

Another area that Rooney has been disappointed to see little improvement in is the state budget.

"There hasn't been a single lick of progress, and I don't really see a light at the end of the tunnel," he remarked.

His suggestion for getting the budget on track is for legislators to pay more attention to the economics than the language of legislation. As an example, he said that a cost of living bill passed in the Senate included a 3% salary increase for firefighters, while he estimated that the actual cost of living could not have been more than 1.5%.

"I just don't make economic sense," Rooney asserted.

Through May, Rooney plans to be in Springfield every other week. He will serve in the position until the 2018 election, when he will "definitely run for reelection."

"I just love this stuff," he said.
Bogus Vs. Chester: And So It Begins

Des Plaines' mayoral contest has yet to pick up any real steam with four months to go before Election Day. Have no fear. It soon will.

Glimpses of the race pitting incumbent Matt Bogusz against Ald. Malcolm Chester (6th) are beginning to surface on the city council floor as the division of the two begins to crack open.

For instance, at Tuesday night's council meeting, Chester, a freshman alderman, was one of four council members to vote against a proposed 236-unit, four-story apartment building at 150 N. East River Rd. Bogusz voted in favor of the plan. Neither was shy about stressing their favor of the plan. Neither Chester strongly refuted Chester referring to development that would bring in far fewer people but much more in property tax income.

Bogusz strongly refuted Chester's assertions when he cast the tie-breaking 4 to 4 vote Tuesday night to move forward with the plan. Bogusz said the residential project will improve property values throughout the city. He later told the Journal & Topics, "We owe it to our residents to move forward on this project. To not support economic development in these blighted areas is a backwards policy. It's simply silly." As for Chester's preference for some type of commercial development, the mayor responded, "Bring it to me.

The planned 236-unit development, which still must meet certain city requirements before construction can begin, is important for a number of reasons. One of the main factors is that it will likely affect the eventual development of the northwest corner of Golf and East River roads where United Stationers headquarters once stood. The land is now empty. We know that a developer of residential units has his eye on that property where about eight years ago plans had been prepared for a major apartment/house complex. It never got off the ground because of the stagnant economy.

Perhaps Mr. Chester's hope for a commercial project there could become reality...

Several very preliminary plans have been submitted to plan to build a hotel, two restaurants on the site, which is located directly across Pratt from Cafe La Cave restaurant and banquet hall.

Another development that's expected to have a profound effect on Des Plaines and even Rosemont is the plan to build a hotel, two restaurants and a gas station at the northeast corner of Lee-Mannheim and Higgins roads. It seems like it's taken forever to get the ball rolling on this project. But according to Bartholomew, he expects to close on the sale of the property to developer Pearlsone-Bask this month and that construction of the Holiday Inn Express hotel will begin this spring.

If it seems that there are more fitness centers springing up all over the Northwest suburbs, you're right. We attended last week the grand opening of Fitness Formula Club in Park Ridge where a state-of-the-art, 67,000 sq. ft. facility is now in operation. A new fitness center recently opened near Dempster Street and Elmhurst Road in Des Plaines across from Mount Prospect. And at Tuesday night's city council meeting, the way was paved for a small fitness center to operate in an industrial park on Howard avenue.

Long-established centers like the Laffal YMCA and local park districts are heading for some stiff competition as Baby Boomers -- those born between 1945 and 1965 -- age and have time to workout.

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Letter To Our Editor

Alderman, Mayoral Candidate, Says He's Working In City's Best Interests

Editor, Journal:

(Ed. Note: The following was written in response to a recent Speak Out.)

To set the record straight, I have worked against gaming expansion for 17 years in Springfield, and since none has occurred that might adversely affect Rivers Casino in Des Plaines, despite many attempts by gaming expansion supporters, I have done my job pretty well.

I also opposed Arlington Race Track's recent attempt to secure more than 150 video gaming terminals, which also failed. A recent Speak Out writer suggested I did something different, that I had a conflict. It isn't a conflict to actually do something in the city's best interest. Next time, get your facts right.

Ald. Malcolm Chester
Des Plaines
Thank you for returning package

My faith in mankind has been restored. Just before Christmas I lost a parcel in the Park Ridge Public Library parking lot. Of course, I figured that it was gone. Either run over by a car, or picked up by someone to keep. Two weeks ago, the Library staff told me they had received a call from an unknown caller who had found a card in a package that looked exactly like mine. I was forced to open my wallet, look what happened. Jim Irshay did the same thing when he took over when his father passed. Other teams have done the same thing. The McCaskey family does not want to put the effort or money into the organization to make it successful. Open your eyes. Try becoming a real fan. There are people out there who are real fans of the game who would love to spend their money on the Bears, and make them winners. Just look at the Cubs. Real fans own that team.

Wants to see action on theater

Re: Des Plaines theater revival. Has Des Plaines stalled this project until after the April 2017 election? Mayor Bogusz promised to deliver on resurrecting the theater by 2021. Does this all hinge on his reelection as mayor? Talk is cheap. We need action.

Seen alderman over at Panera

To the two guys who said they seen Ald. Sayad at the Sugar Bowl on a regular basis. Please check your eyes, he regularly comes to Panera Bread in Metro Square and gets there about 5:50 a.m. How do I know? I’m there about 6 a.m.

Express your concerns to school board

Dist. 207 levied another tax increase on taxpayers. Yet again, increasing their revenues and not showing how they are making big expense reductions. Illinois residents are broke and people are leaving the state. Our property taxes are insane. Dist. 207 board members and administrators should be held accountable. Des Plaines and Park Ridge Residents, please start going to Dist. 207 board meetings and express your concerns.

Ready for next president

I really think our current president lives in a “bubble” of his imagination. He loves to toot his own horn to hear his tune, which none are real. Oh well, in 20 days or so his time is over, time to move on to bigger and better possibilities.

Look up, wake up

“Wake up America” — the world is changing. Time to get off your cell phones and open your eyes and ears. If not, it may end in a bang.

Alderman cares about community

Re: Des Plaines alderman complainers. Dick Sayad is a great alderman. I live in his ward. Everyday I call him or send him an email, he responds within an hour. He has great follow-up and does everything he can to help his people. He’s also highly active in the community. He shows up for community activities and events. He makes donations for great causes such as local schools, Scouts, etc. He really cares about the people in his ward. You can also find him at the local establishments because he likes being active in the community and being social. He is a great person. Thanks.

Whatever happened to...

Whatever happened to the guy who allegedly shot off his rifle in Mount Prospect after the Cubs won? I read here he was charged but never saw a follow-up. Thanks.

(Ed. Note: We’ll check it out.)

Why should parks spend on determining ‘path’?

Well, I see the Glenview Park District is up to their same old routine of wasting taxpayers money. They are planning on spending over a quarter-million dollars for outside help in determining what is the best path forward for the park district. Why do we need to pay so much money for outside opinions? Shouldn’t the high salaried administration know what to do? Why are we paying so many people top dollar if they are capable to make such decisions? Look at your tax bill, folks. The park district “confiscates” more in property taxes then the entire village of Glenview. I guess their attitude is if you’ve got the money, you might as well spend it.

Response to Letter to our Editor

Responding to Alexander-Barton’s comment, “Since when is having experience for a job not important?” Since Donald Trump was elected President of the United States without ever holding a public office — ever. That’s when, Alexander, that’s when.

Wants police to issue more tickets

I’ve always thought one of the silliest laws we have in Des Plaines is the one that states you cannot put your garbage cans out for pickup before 4:00 the day before. Today, at least 30 of my neighbors have forgotten that trash pickup is delayed one day because of the holiday. But they don’t have to worry as no policeman will come and ticket them. Which brings up the question, what exactly do the Des Plaines police do? I read the Police Blotter in the Journal every week, we are fortunate to live in a crime-free area, couple of drunk drivers and shoplifters. So why don’t the police have time to enforce parking laws and my favorite, ticketing people who don’t put on their windshield wipers when it rains — which is an Illinois law. Their duty is to enforce the law, so hopefully in 2017 they’ll start.

City’s calendar is great

The city puts out a beautiful yearly calendar which includes all kinds of information about tickets and deliveries, pull-overs and garbage, leaf pickup, etc. Everyone should read it. The city will mail it to you. Everybody puts out their garbage cans the day after a holiday when it says right on the calendar garbage day is one day late. Come on, guys, wake up. Bye.

Blame game

Isn’t it amazing with the problems in Chicago and elsewhere, the people involved always blame the police and not themselves?

Says travel south of Northwest Highway

Hello, this is a question for the Mount Prospect Special Events Commission. Do they ever travel south of Northwest Highway to take a look at business decorations? Millie’s Hallmark does a wonderful job of animated decorations, but nobody comes around to see it. This is the fourth or fifth year that Keefar’s has won. This is ridiculous. Travel south of Northwest Highway. Thanks.

Wants to buy liquor earlier on Sundays

Here’s a law to think about changing: no liquor to be sold before 9 a.m. on Sunday. It’s totally ridiculous, especially if you are planning for a party. Monday through Saturday, it’s 6 a.m. What’s up that I can’t come in before 9 a.m. on a Sunday? It’s totally ridiculous. Why can’t I buy it earlier on Sunday morning. Think about it aldermen. Think about it mayor. Happy New Year.
Water, Sewer Rates Rise To Start New Year

Now that the calendar has turned to 2017, a Mount Prospect household using 8,000 gallons of water per month will see water costs increase by 4% or $3.36.

Water and sewer bills are combined in Mount Prospect. For that same household using 8,000 gallons of water per month, the combined water and sewer bill would reach $92.76.

Since 1990, the village has approved moderate annual increases in water and sewer rates as opposed to implementing large increases periodically. Approximately two-thirds of the village receives Lake Michigan water from the Joint Action Water Agency (JAWA), which receives water from Chicago. The other one-third, located in the northeastern part of the village, receives lake water through Illinois American Water (IAW) and is not affected by the village’s water rate hike. The village has an agreement in place that states Mount Prospect water customers will not pay more than what Chicago residents pay.

The local increase, village officials say, is to maintain Mount Prospect’s water system. No new programs are being implemented.

Cost To Park At Wille Lot Going Up

Motorists will have to dig deeper to pay to park their vehicles in Mount Prospect’s Wille Street lot.

The parking is utilized by Prospect Avenue businesses for employee parking. Remaining spots are available for residents. According to village officials, to maintain payment consistency with another nearby village lot, the cost to park in the Wille lot has increased from $90 to $120 per year for businesses and $360 to $480 for others.

The Wille Street rate hike is the first for businesses in 11 years, village officials said. The residential rate was last increased in 2014 when the lot changed from leased to permit parking. Revenue generated from the Wille lot is deposited into the Village Parking System Fund.

Police Probe Vandalism At St. Raymond

Someone reportedly defaced the front of St. Raymond School, 300 S. Elmhurst Ave., Mount Prospect, during the overnight hours of Dec. 13.

According to St. Raymond Principal Mary Eileen Ward, police were contacted and a report was filed. She said police and faculty were present for dismissal on Dec. 14, even though markings on the building were not deemed to be a threat.

Ward said police and the parish are working together on the investigation.

MP Buys Law Office Along Busse Avenue

Mount Prospect has purchased the property and parking lot at 32 W. Busse Ave. for $285,000, but additional costs are expected.

The property includes a small office building currently used for the John S. Young and Norman Kurtz law offices. Both have separate practices.

Kurtz was the property owner who worked out the deal with the village.

According to village officials, the acquisition is necessary to assemble land needed to pursue redevelopment of the first phase of the Busse triangle area bounded by Busse Road, Northwest Highway and Main Street.

The village will lease back the property to Kurtz at no cost through June 2017 to allow for a transition.

There are other expenses the village and taxpayers will be responsible for as part of the purchase.

The village will pay Kurtz $214,000 in additional compensation for disrupting operations of business, relocation costs, and other considerations.

The village will also cover the cost of property taxes while Kurtz will pay for utility expenses. Mount Prospect now has control over four parcels within the downtown triangle.

Young said he and Kurtz are looking at moving to a new location in the village.

Sunsets are like Snowflakes... no two are the same!

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Boys Basketball

‘Classic’ Clash

Fremd Beats ND
In OT Thriller
For ‘Wood Crown

By GREG CHIAKULAS
Journal & Topics Sports

Fremd won the Wheeling Hardwood Classic for the second time in four years with a 54-53 triumph over Notre Dame on Friday night. The Vikings Kyle Sliwa hit 1 of 2 free throws with 4.1 seconds left in overtime that provided the winning margin.

On the following inbounds play, Sliwa knocked the ball away from Notre Dame guard Matt Stritzel and the clock expired. It was the second time Fremd has defeated Notre Dame in the last 13 days.

“We know we had to show some mental toughness in overtime to pull out the victory,” said Fremd’s Ryan Martin. “It was great to beat them for a second time.”

Fremd (13-0) led 29-24 at halftime and did a great job sharing the ball. On 12 first half field goals, 10 were off assists. Sliwa led the Vikings with 10 points and was named the tournament MVP. But he got plenty of help from his teammates, including Martin who chipped in 9 points and 5 rebounds, guard Luke Schoffstatt who had 7 points and 3 assists and forward Brian Dompke, who led the team with 16 points and 10 rebounds.

Notre Dame slowly chipped away at the Fremd lead in the third quarter and eventually took a one-point lead.

(Continued on page 4AA)
Girls Basketball Roundup

**Warriors Charge To ‘Classic’ Crown**

Friday, Dec. 30

Montini Tournament
Fremd 62, Proviso East 26: Grace Tworek reminded everyone why she is one of the best area players with another monster game – this one a triple-double (24 points, 10 rebounds, 10 blocks). Midori Williams (10 pts.), Hayley Williams (8 pts.) and Emily Klaczek (8 pts.) all contributed for the Vikings in the win.

“We were cold like Minnesota,” Fremd coach Dave Yates said.

Williams (8 pts.) and Emily Klaczek (8 pts.) all contributed for finishing up the tournament strong. Going 2-2 in this tournament with this field is a major accomplishment. We could have gone to many other local tournaments and been the best team in the gym.

“You learn a lot about yourself when you have to play 4 straight ranked teams in a tournament. We have always made it a point to challenge ourselves during the holiday and I think it has paid off down the road come playoffs. Montini runs an outstanding tournament and we are very honored to be a part of it.”

Geneva 54, Rolling Meadows 48: The Mustangs came in fourth place at Montini despite the efforts of Kyla Spiwak (18 points) and Katherine Nolan (10 pts.).

Hersey 64, Evanston 58: Claire Gritti unloaded 34 points to lead Hersey (14-2) over Evanston (16-2) in the final game of the Montini Christmas Tournament for both squads.

Kelly Weyhrich (9 pts.) and Maesyn Benjamin (8 pts.) also contributed for Hersey.

Thursday, Dec. 29

Dundee-Crown Charger Classic

Maine West 62, Naperville Central 47: Maine West (15-2) won the Dundee-Crown Charger Classic championship for the first time in 19 years (1997) with a 62-47 win over Naperville Central. Maine West was led by Allison Pearson (18 points, 9 rebounds, 5 assists), Alisa Fallon (18 pts., 13 rebounds) and Jessica Riedl (12 pts., 6 rebounds). Angela Dugalic (8 pts.) and Rachel Kent (6 pts.) were the only other scorers for the champion Warriors. Maine West held a 42-38 lead entering the final quarter before putting the game away with a 20-9 fourth quarter advantage.

Stevenson 41, Hampshire 29: Stevenson (12-3) came in third place at Dundee-Crown with a convincing win over Hampshire. Ashley Richard- son (18 points) and Klaire Steffens (12 pts.) led the way for Stevenson in the win.

Prospect 41, Resurrection 38: Prospect had a balanced scoring night with eight different scorers, led by Emily Frasco with 11. Resurrection nearly overcame a 31-25 deficit after three quarters. The Bandits were led by Nicole Kuzmanic (10 pts.), Veronica Kiers (10 pts.) and Ivy Wieczak (9 pts.).

Buffalo Grove 63, Barrington 47: Buffalo Grove closed out the Dundee-Crown tournament with a win over Barrington on solid showings from Megan Gamber (13 points), Alyssa Floro (10 pts.), Kendra Lee (10 pts.) and Macy Floro (8 pts.).

Other scores:

Maine South 57, Honon- egah 40

Journal-area athletes on All-Tournament team: Ivy Witeczak (Resurrection), Alyssa Floro (Buffalo Grove), Emily Frasco (Prospect); Hailey Semple (Maine South), Nicole Scales (Maine South), Ashley Richardson (Stevenson), Klaire Steffens (Stevenson), Allison Pearson (Maine West), Rachel Kent (Maine West), Alisa Fallon (Maine West)

Bill Nebel Falcon Classic (Wheaton North)

Final records: Wheaton North (4-0), Glenbard South (3-1), St. Charles East (3-1), Hinsdale Central (3-1), Down- ers Grove North (3-1), Lyons (2-2), Palatine (2-2), Glen- brook South (2-2), Schaum- burg (2-2), Willowbrook (2-2), Glenbard North (2-2), Elk Grove (1-3), Waubonsie Valley (1-3), Jacob (1-3), West Aurora (1-3), Elgin (0-4)

Elk Grove 45, Elgin 30: After losing their first three games by 3 points or less, Elk Grove finally broke through with a win to end the tournament 1-3 and 15th place out of 16 teams. Jenny Banak (18 points, 3 rebounds) and Megan Murray (11 pts., 5 rebounds) led Elk Grove to the win.
Conant Takes Tosh Tourney Title

By CRAIG LYNCH
Journal & Topics Sports

Going into Friday’s Jack Tosh Tournament finals, St. Patrick was averaging 78.75 points a game through the first four games at York.

Conant knew they couldn’t allow them to score that many.

“We knew we couldn’t play a tempo game against them,” Conant head coach and St. Patrick grad Tom Metz both had a difficult time solving a series of different zone defenses and games,” Genis said. “We mixed up a lot of press in the final horn. I think the key to rebounding is wanting it more,” the 6-9 junior, who also contributed 11 points, said.

Tournament MVP Jimmy Sotos scored 12 points to go with 7 rebounds and 3 assists.

“One of our goals we set before the season was to win this tournament,” Sotos said. “Ryan Davis was key out and never looked back. Holding a 15-8 lead after the first quarter, the Cougars held the Shamrocks without a field goal in the second quarter while taking a 29-10 lead at the half. St. Pat’s made just 2 free throws in the quarter. Ryan Davis picked up 9 of his 13 rebounds by halftime.

“We won the tournament this year,” Downing said. Davis picked up 9 of his 13 rebounds and 8 points.

“Defensively we did well in all 4 quarters,” Genis said. “We mixed up a series of different zone defenses and man-to-man. Luther North and Steinmetz both had a difficult time solving our alternating defenses.”

Maine East following their overtime defeat came back strong the next night by defeating the host school Luther North, 65-35. The Demons win was similar to their inexperience a factor in our defeat. We shot ourselves in the foot late in the game with turnovers and missed foul shots.”

Maine East led by as many as 33 points in the second half when the reserves closed out the game. Irving led all scorers with 25 points, Jozwiak added 13 and Mustafa Becoja had 11 rebounds and 8 points.

“Defensively we did well in all 4 games,” Genis said. “We mixed up a series of different zone defenses and man-to-man. Luther North and Steinmetz both had a difficult time solving our alternating defenses.”

Maine East (7-5) this Friday will face Maine South in the opening day, with 3 seconds left, had a chance to tie when Jordan Irving’s 3-point attempt rimmed the basket at the final horn.

“This was definitely a game we had won,” said Maine East coach David Genis. “I know Maine East was the better team except when our inexperience was a factor in our defeat. We shot ourselves in the foot late in the game with turnovers and missed foul shots.”

Maine East advanced to the finals of the Luther North Holiday Basketball Tournament and both times, fell short. This year, the Demons with high expectations entering the tournament finished by winning 3 of 4 games, but ran into a roadblock on the second day losing to the winner of the 52nd annual tournament, Lane Tech, 54-51, in overtime.

Maine East, in defeat to Lane, led throughout but saw a 5-point lead evaporate inside the final minute of play. The Indians tied the score at the end of regulation 47-47 and outscored Maine East in overtime 7-4. Maine East in the overtime, with 3 seconds left, had a chance to tie when Jordan Irving’s 3-point attempt rimmed the basket at the final horn.
Vikings Stay Unbeaten On Way To Title Game At Wheeling

By GREG CHIAKULAS
Journal & Topics Sports

Fremd continued its undefeated season Thursday night with a workmanlike 54-38 victory over Libertyville in the semifinals of the Wheeling Hardwood Classic.

The Vikings (12-0) advanced to the championship game for the first time since 2013 when they beat St. Viator. They took on last year’s champion Notre Dame, who defeated Waukegan 62-55 in the other semifinal.

Fremd fell behind 6-0 to start the game, and after a timeout, regrouped and went on their own 16-0 run to finish off the first quarter. The Vikings never looked back and got strong games from Kyle Sliwa, Shaan Patel, Ryan Martin and Luke Schoffstall.

“Pate and Martin did great jobs on the defensive end guarding Peterson,” said head coach Bob Widlowski. “Peterson is a tough guard because of his skill and size, but they really forced him into taking a lot of shots to get his numbers.”

In the second quarter Peterson poured in 10 points to cut the Fremd lead to 26-23 at halftime.

The key stretch of the game was the first four minutes of the third quarter as Fremd went on an 11-0 run to stretch their lead to 37-23. Buckets by Schoffstall, Patel and Sliwa forced Libertyville head coach Brent Mork to call a timeout to stem the tide.

“We played a great third quarter,” Widlowski said. “That was the key to the game.”

“We were able to get some steals on defense and get out in transition for easy baskets,” Patel said.

Libertyville had one more run in them, cutting the Vikings lead to 41-35 with just under five minutes remaining in the game. But that’s as close as the Wildcats would get, as Fremd really controlled the tempo, worked the ball on offense and forced Libertyville to come out and guard away from the basket.

This opened up lanes for Schoffstall and Sliwa to penetrate and dish easy layups for big men Patel and Martin.

“They are mentally and physically tough,” said Mork. “There’s a reason why they are undefeated. Great team, very well coached and disciplined.”

ND Defeats Waukegan, Advances To Title Game For 2nd Year

By GREG CHIAKULAS
Journal & Topics Sports

Notre Dame defeated Waukegan, 62-55, in a hard fought semifinal game Thursday night, advancing to Friday night’s championship game at the Wheeling Hardwood Classic against Fremd.

The Dons are looking to defend their title after defeating Libertyville in last year’s championship game.

Notre Dame led throughout the game, but Waukegan wouldn’t go away and kept hanging around. The Bulldogs got as close as 47-45 in the third quarter before the Dons went on an 8-0 run to stretch their lead to 10.

Notre Dame was led by strong performances by seniors Jeameril Wilson and Matt Stritzel. Stritzel had 22 points and 6 assists, while Wilson had 17 points and 10 rebounds.

The Dons got a lot of their baskets in the paint, while the Bulldogs shot 27 three-pointers, connecting on only 7. Several of the Bulldogs shots were from way behind the three-point arc.

“We were in a 3-2 zone and wanted them to take their three-pointers,” Stritzel said. “Our coaches were totally fine with them taking those shots.”

Waukegan was led by DeShawn Davidson and Bryan Brown on the inside as the two combined for 22 rebounds and 15 points.

But in the end, the championship pedigree of the Dons overcame the young and athletic Bulldogs, who started three sophomores.

“Waukegan is a very well-coached team,” said Notre Dame head coach Tom Les. “They are a young team that plays extremely hard and competed from the start until the final whistle.”

Notre Dame hit 7 of 10 free throws in the last few minutes of the fourth quarter to put the game away and set up a rematch against Fremd, who the Dons lost to two weeks ago.

“Fremd is a well-coached team and they already beat us once,” Les said. “We need to play our best to beat them.”

Wood Crown

(Continued from page 1AA) at 39-38 with just under 7 minutes left in the game.

Stritzel (18 points, 5 assists) was hot from the outside and the Dons 1-2 punch down low of Jeameril Wilson (13 points, 9 rebounds) and Dusan Mahoric (9 points, 5 rebounds) dominated the glass in the second half.

It was a one-possession game the last two minutes of regulation. After the Dons took the lead 49-47, Dompke scored down low to tie it.

Fremd had the final possession of regulation, and after holding it for nearly a minute, Martin’s shot rimmed out.

Twice in overtime Notre Dame took a 2-point lead but Dompke hit clutch free throws to tie the game back up before Sliwa’s winning free throw.

“It was a very exciting championship game,” said Fremd coach Bob Widlowski. “Both teams played well and Dompke’s free throws were huge in overtime.”

To Advertise in Sparkplug Call 847-299-5511
Maine East Making Strides

Winter Warrior Wonderland Invitational at Maine West: Riverside-Brookfield 93.20, Maine East 89.80, Wheeling 85.80, Fenton 80.10, Maine West 77.00, Morton 61.40

Roundup: Maine East, with star freshman gymnast Afroditi Baltas, finished in second place at Maine West’s annual Winter Wonderland Invite on Wednesday, Dec. 28. The scores were low because there were only three entries (for a team) per event and only one all-around athlete per.

Baltas won all-around (34.45) along with vault (9.0), beam (8.8) and floor (9.3). She was sixth on bars (7.35), the only event she didn’t win.

As a team, Maine East posted the best score on floor (25.3) and vault (25.25).

“The team has made enormous strides this year toward being a tough competitor and that is largely due to how well the girls have been inspired by their teammate’s successes,” Maine East coach Neil Adamson said. “While there were a few clear standouts joining the team this season, everyone has stepped up to become one great unit.”

Maine East’s Giselle Mendozza came in fourth on vault (8.35) and teammate Una Coralic was fourth on floor (8.35).

“Individually, the girls all performed some of their best routines to date, each contributing a key performance to the team’s overall success,” Adamson said.

Maine East also saw an athlete return to help the team after missing time with an injury.

“Tiffany Russotto, who had just recently been cleared for a fracture in her right foot focused her efforts on floor exercise and vault, where she managed to pull two tricks in that she had not been able to practice much due to her injury,” Adamson said. She placed eighth on floor exercise (7.65) and ninth on vault (7.9).

Wheeling’s Jessica Stavros also performed well in the meet, coming in second place in all-around (33.15) along with vault (8.5), beam (7.9) and floor (8.85). Stavros won bars with a 7.9 score.

Anna Emery, Stavros’ teammate, finished fifth on bars (7.4) and beam (7.45) for the Wildcats.

Maine West was led by Rayna Davis who placed fifth in all-around with a 27.00 score. Davis was 10th on vault (7.85) and eighth on bar (7). Gabby Demma was seventh on floor (8) and Lily Sanchez was 10th (7.5). Sanchez was also ninth on beam with a 6.4.

Tumble for the Troops Invitational (at Oswego High School): DeKalb/Sycamore co-op (146.550), Glenbard West (141.225), Lake Park (137.650), Geneva (136.500), Glenbard East (136.150), U-46 co-op (131.750), Wheaton co-op (130.400), Stevenson (128.350), Batavia (121.175), Oswego co-op (108.250), Bolingbrook (91.975), Plainfield East (91.350)

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Movies In Review For 2016

Picking the best movies and performances of the year is always a daunting task because you invariably have to establish a cut-off with so many good movies and performances on the outside looking in. Years ago I “upped” my Top 10 to Top 20 and included a number of “also-rans” that contended for the 20th spot. Thus I was able to create a sliding division between No. 20 and No. 21. And it is no different this year...

same approach I've been taking for the last five years. I always add a few categories to express my personal thoughts on films I didn’t think deserved the praise they received, and films I thought deserved more attention. Just as my “Best” list is somewhat compromised because I try avoiding some films I know will stink. But those on the list I prepared this year all deserve their badness.

This is a few key films are still yet to be released in Chicago. And, of course, the rest of the articles comprised of summary lists. This gives you a snapshot of how I saw 2016, all of which were subjectively ranked or listed. It’s from “my” beauty in the eye of the beholder perspective.

1. “La La Land”: Simply the love story mixed with catchy song & dance numbers in modern day L.A. that has a sweeping arc to its characters with a bittersweet ending that will rock you. This film defines the meaning of “classic Hollywood”, but in a contemporary setting.

2. “Hell or High Water”: This cops and robbers allegorical fable feels like it’s in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s set in Western Texas with deep-rooted characters featuring Jeff Bridges in another of his defining curmudgeon roles, with Chris Pine and Ben Foster delivering career-high performances.

3. “Moana”: It’s not just the amazing CGI animation that excels in this finely crafted film, but the incredible journey the young female heroine takes to prove her self-worth and save her people from starvation. There is “meaning” behind this South Seas mythological tale that includes a fine song score and exciting action sequences.

4. “Fences”: The fantastic performances behind this August Wilson-adapted stage play are the driving force behind this riveting and rather darkly funny play of a black family in 1950s Pittsburgh. Denzel Washington (who also directs), and Viola Davis are mesmerizing and expected to be heavy contenders for Oscars this year.

5. “Eye in the Sky”: This mostly unseen, tense drama features an ensemble cast led by Helen Mirren, Alan Rickman and Aaron Paul about the moral and political issues of taking out a terrorist nest planning to make a strike that would result in collateral damage to nearby civilians. This ethically-driven story is about the decision-making process to strike or not.

6. “The Jungle Book”: This Rudyard Kipling adapted live-action film is mixed with heavy doses of CGI and is incredibly life-like. This faithful adaptation of the Disney animated classic is far superior to the original featuring a first-time, supertalented performance from Neel Sethi, playing Mogli, journeying through the jungles of India while being terrorized by the fierce tiger, Sher Khan.

7. “Sully”: Legendary director Clint Eastwood and mega-actor Tom Hanks team up to re-live the heroic landing of a damaged commercial airliner on the Hudson River in 2011. It features great drama that includes a penetrating probe by the NTSB on whether the captain took the appropriate action leading to a forced emergency water landing.

8. “Moonlight”: This introspective, touching portrait of an African-American gay man from boy to teen to adult is heart-wrenchingly true to life -- a riveting portrayal by the three actors playing the same character over time. The filmmakers are to be congratulated on tackling such a controversial subject with such honesty and insight.

9. “Zootopia”: Along with “Moana” and “The Jungle Book”, both from the Disney factory, this film represents the third animated film in my Top 10. Let’s not discount this wildly inventive films’ crackle-jack, whip-smart script or full-fledged, humorous characters set in the fantasy world of all animals.

10. “Hacksaw Ridge”: Director Mel Gibson, absent for 11 years, and his savvy production crew are to be congratulated on recounting the amazing heroic true story of a field medic who single-handedly saved the lives of dozens of severely wounded soldiers during the bloody siege of Okinawa in 1945. Andrew Garfield delivers and Oscar-worthy performance.


(Continued on page 7AA)
Sudoku

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ⚫⚫⚫

⚫ Moderate  ⚫⚫⚫ Challenging
⚫⚫⚫ HOO BOY!

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Crossword

ACROSS
1. Apply, as a coating of powdered sugar (a term)
2. 3285 hours in Mass., R.I.
3. Had a bash (a term)
4. 60 Some (a term)
5. Oscar Mayer (54)
6. "Godfather of Fitness" (45)
7. Crucial (30)
8. Week about (26)
9. Argentina's 70
eight (36)
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DOWN
1. England's coat of arms (33)
2. Place of ending: "The Secret Life of Pets" (22)
3. "Manchester by the Sea" (25)
4. "20th Century Women" (28)
5. "The Lobster" (24)
6. "Paterson" (26)
7. "The Handmaiden" (28)
8. Buried Treasures: "The Red Turtle" (28)
9. "10 Cloverfield Lane" (22)
10. "Midnight Special" (28)
11. "Elvis & Nixon" (24)
12. "Sausage Party" (28)

Films that should have never been made:
- "Zoolander 2"
- "Bad Santa 2"
- "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2"
- "Independence Day: Resurgence (2"
- "Allegiant" (Divergent series 3)
- "Ben-Hur" (remake)
- "Now You See Me 2" (Do you see a trend here?)

And... Worst Films of the Year (those that I saw — in no particular order):
- "The 5th Wave"
- "How to Be Single"
- "Zoolander 2"
- "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2"
- "Hardcore Henry"
- "Criminal"
- "Keanu"
- "Lights Out"
- "Collateral Beauty"
- "Finding Dory"

Overrated Films (received too much credit):
- "Hail Caesar!"
- "Captain Fantastic"
- "Finding Dory"

Movie Scene

(Continued from page 6AA)

Viola Davis, "Fences"
Emily Blunt, "The Girl on the Train"
Naomi Harris, "Moonlight"
Isabelle Huppert, "Elle"
Jessica Chastain, "Miss Sloane"
Marion Cotillard, "Allied"
Meryl Streep, "Florence Foster Jenkins"
Rebecca Hall, "Christine"
Ruth Negga, "Loving"
Kristen Stewart, "Certain Women" & "Café Society"
Michelle Williams, "Manchester by the Sea"

Overlooked Films (deserved more credit):
- "Whiskey Tango Foxtrot"
- "Suicide Squad"
- "Deepwater Horizon"
- "The Birth of a Nation"
- "Miss Sloane"
- "Café Society"
- "Eye in the Sky"
- "Miracles from Heaven"
- "The Meddler"
- "Snowden"

Overrated Films (received too much credit):
- "Hail Caesar!"
- "Captain Fantastic"
- "Finding Dory"
Des Plaines

Food For Thought

Mariano's Progress, Theater Proposal Offer City Bright Start To 2017

By TODD WESSELL
Journal & Topics Editor

Both officials also said in separate interviews that a key to 2017 is the proposed renovation of the downtown Des Plaines Theater -- a project that could lead to the opening of more restaurants in the city's central business district.

"The largest example of the progress we've made will be the Mariano's opening," explained Bogusz on Dec. 27 referring to the new food store that will open at Golf and Mount Prospect roads.

"The greatest future marker of our progress will be the opening of the theater. We've stabilized our budget and organization to the point where we can be very aggressive and to give back to our community the way we couldn't four or eight years ago because we didn't have the resources and stability."

Among the residential redevelopment projects already coming out of the ground is the Buckingham Place on the former 20-acre Littelfuse property along Northwest Highway. In addition, the
(Continued on page 2B)

Get Fit In Park Ridge

Founder and CEO of Fitness Formula Clubs Gale Landers stands next to one of hundreds of pieces of exercise equipment available inside his new facility on Touhy Avenue near Busse Highway. The Park Ridge center is Landers' 10th in the Chicago area and held a ribbon cutting last Thursday.

Mount Prospect

Restaurant Approved For Façade Reimbursement Funds

Mount Prospect trustees approved reimbursing a downtown restaurant with funding for improvements made to the eatery.

Le Peep owner Mike Martin made significant upgrades to the restaurant at Northwest Highway and Main Street (Elmhurst), according to village officials. The maximum contribution from the village's Façade Rebate Program is $25,000 for restaurants, which village trustees approved. Martin completed electrical upgrades, installed new signage, flooring, and repainted the interior of the restaurant.

Martin has also proposed replacing the water heater and retooling the HVAC exhaust system.

Palatine

Burger King Proposed For Rand-Dundee Area

Palatine councilmen are expected to vote on a request for a Burger King restaurant with a drive-through next Monday, Jan. 9.

The restaurant is proposed for 1630 N. Rand Rd., previously home to Wolf Cabinetry, just north of Dundee Road.

The plan, if approved by councilmen, would be to demolish the existing building and construct the new 2,000 sq. ft. restaurant. Access to the restaurant would also be available off Dundee using an existing drive-through. The drive-through would provide stacking for eight vehicles and the site would accommodate 20 parking spaces.

Proposed hours of operation are 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.
Buddy's Buddies

Mount Prospect's Central Continental Bakery recently raffled off "Buddy the Bear," a giant stuffed teddy bear, to 7-year-old Chelsea Brown, a first grader at Indian Grove Elementary School in Mount Prospect. Presenting Chelsea with Buddy is Linda Spinelli, the bakery's business manager (behind Buddy); Chelsea's mother, Heather Brown; and her grandfather, Mike Brown. The prize was awarded as part of a promotional campaign between Journal & Topics Media Group and 14 area businesses. (Bob Wessell/The Journal)

Des Plaines

(Continued from page 1B)

first of several townhouses will soon be built on Lee Street and a residential development for independent people with disabilities will be built on Graceland Avenue. A two-story brick structure that was on that site was recently demolished.

"I'm looking forward to seeing what we'll do with the theater," Bartholomew said. "The new year will be the year to make a decision. We've tried a bunch of things and nothing yet seems to work. Now we're trying something different. I'm sure people don't want to see a vacant theater forever."

Rivers Casino has signed a letter of intent with the city to provide $2 million to renovate the structure along with another $2 million from the city. Rivers will also devote money to pay for theater operations for five years. A formal agreement has not been signed. City council members will have to first approve.

"They're investing a couple of million dollars and they want to make sure that renovation is done appropriately," said Bartholomew of Rivers Casino. He added that he believes the success or failure of establishing a downtown Restaurant District depends on the success or failure of the theater.

The Restaurant District idea calls for the city to issue grants of up to $100,000 to new restaurant owners who commit to operating downtown for a certain amount of time.

"We're having more ground-breakings here than we've had in the last 10 years," added Bogusz. "I'm confident in the community's desire to fix the problem and because of the work already done to secure the support of Rivers Casino, we will be successful in opening the theater. This is not a promise, but a four-year plan."

"I'm sure people don't want to see a vacant theater forever."

City Manager Mike Bartholomew
By DENISE FLEISCHER
Lifestyles Editor

For Christine Pusateri, going green is natural.

The owner of Christine Pusateri Solutions, a non-surgical hair replacement salon, Pusateri received the village of Niles' 2016 Green Business Award at the Dec. 13 Niles Chamber of Commerce meeting.

Pusateri has been working in men and women's hair replacement since she was 18 years old. She was a manager for Hairline Creations and Jerry Casper in Lincolnwood. At age 62, she decided to start her own business.

She incorporated environmentally friendly initiatives right after establishing the foundation of her business nearly four years ago. She began making the necessary changes to the 3,200-square foot salon, located at 7655 Milwaukee Ave., by literally having her staff count every light bulb, including the fluorescent lighting. From there, she explored opportunities in energy conservation, water reduction and recycling.

"I knew ComEd had an energy efficiency program and so I made a few phone calls. I was contacted by two energy companies. One company came in and changed the fluorescent bulbs throughout the store from four to two. The rep also put in a certain type of reflector," she explained, adding that the change made for a $70 reduction in her electric bill.

Switching out incandescent bulbs to LED meant a longer bulb life and less energy consumption. Nearly 300 bulbs were replaced.

She then contacted waste hauler Groot to request a recycling bin. In the salon business, she deals with different solvents and other products, such as hair pieces, which arrive in shipping boxes. She quickly breaks down the boxes and packs them into her recycling bin. Shampoo and conditioner bottles are washed out and recycled.

"I also put in new motors in the furnace to make it far more efficient. It also lowered the heating bill," said the 65-year-old Pusateri, who also serves on the board of directors for the Niles Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Plants were added to the salon's decor to lessen noise control and provide cleaner air.

"The village came in and put valves on our sinks so the water doesn't get too hot in the bathroom sinks, hair washing stations and the washing machine," said Pusateri. "We also use Hinckley Springs water bottles."

The Green Business Award was established in 2014-2015 as an initiative to encourage Niles businesses to improve the environment through sustainable practices. This is accomplished through waste reduction, conservation of water and energy efficiency, according to Hadley Skeffington-Vos, assistant village manager. The aim is to help reduce utility costs, improve health and productivity and decrease Niles' impact on the environment.

In March, Niles businesses may apply for the award: Log onto vniles.com and complete the online application, email or snail mail the form to Village of Niles, Attn.: Niles Sustainability Committee, 1000 Civic Center Dr., Niles, IL 60714.

A PDF is available with detailed information by logging onto vniles.com.
Cook County

Madigan: 2 Home Repair Businesses Duped Homeowners

Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced lawsuits against two Cook County home repair businesses for allegedly collecting at least $70,000 from homeowners for repair work that was substandard, incomplete or never started at all.

Madigan’s office filed lawsuits against ROK Roofing & Siding Co. (ROK) and ROK’s president, Jung Soo Hwang; and Defender Steel Door Co., and its president, Robert Bianco. Both businesses were dissolved by the Secretary of State.

ROK Roofing was a home remodeling and repair business based in Rolling Meadows. Madigan’s lawsuit alleges ROK solicited homeowners by going door-to-door in the aftermath of storms and offering repair services for damaged homes.

Madigan’s office and the Better Business Bureau received several complaints from homeowners in Cook, Lake and Kane counties who alleged that since June 2015, ROK Roofing collected more than $42,250 for work that was either incomplete or never started. In at least two instances, subcontractors placed liens on homes when ROK failed to pay for supplies. In addition, Madigan alleged ROK violated state law by operating without the required roofing licenses.

Despite being dissolved by the state, Defender Steel Door allegedly continues to operate as a door, window and exterior home improvement business based in Cicero.

(Continued on page 5B)

Buffalo Grove

More Parking Approved For Jeweler

Burdeen’s Jewelry, 1151 W. Lake-Cook Rd., Buffalo Grove, is expanding, so village trustees approved additional parking for the local business.

Burdeen’s plans to construct an additional 3,105 sq. ft. of space over two floors at the northwest corner of its property. In September 2010, the village board approved construction of a 6,100 sq. ft. single-story building for Burdeen’s.

With the addition, a minimum of 37 parking spaces is required. Burdeen’s currently has room for 24 parking spaces, so business owners sought a variation from the village code parking requirement.

Based on Burdeen’s parking counts over a four-month period, less than 13 parking spaces are utilized during the store’s busiest hours, village officials said. There may be a need for additional parking for special events. To accommodate special events, Burdeen’s has a letter agreement with Butler Center Management, Inc., stating that Burdeen’s customers can use portions of the Chase Plaza parking lot across the street.

(Continued on page 5B)
Madigan

(Continued from page 4B)

Since 2015, Madigan's office and the Better Business Bureau have received over 30 complaints from Cook County consumers who allege they paid Defender Steel Door more than $27,700 for work that was shoddy or never started.

“Homeowners should use my office and the Better Business Bureau as free resources to learn whether a contractor or home repair business is reputable before signing a contract or handing over any money,” Madigan said. Madigan is asking the court to provide restitution, void existing contracts with homeowners and ban the businesses from doing business in Illinois and impose civil penalties.

EG Twp. Involvement

(Continued from page 4B)

are many times going through a unique and difficult period in their lives. Donating services such as haircuts, oil changes and tax preparation are helpful to these people, in addition to gift cards for groceries and other supplies such as toiletries. Monetary donations can also be accepted for families who may not qualify for certain programs offered by the township.

Participate In Holiday, Seasonal Programs: During the holiday period, Elk Grove Township supports programs aimed at helping in-need individuals and families during a stressful time of the year. Businesses and organizations are invited to participate in one of the following programs:

Thanksgiving Baskets: All the fixings for a traditional Thanksgiving meal are donated and placed in baskets that are then given to those who are determined to have need by the General Assistance department. The baskets are distributed prior to Thanksgiving Day.

Operation Christmas: In-need families are identified by caseworkers in the township General Assistance office, and residents, which are also known as Santa’s Helpers, donate gift certificates to parents who can then purchase holiday gifts of their choosing for their children.

Snow Angels: Elk Grove Township started this program in 2015, in partnership with School Dist. 59 and several area churches and businesses. It was created to garner donations of snow pants and snow boots so that in-need children in Dist. 59 can keep warm, and have the proper clothing to participate in recess.

Businesses and organizations also can be featured in the Elk Grove Township newsletter.
Rev. Donald J. Ahearn
Pastor Emeritus at St. Juliana Church

Fr. Donald J. Ahearn, 91, died Sunday, Jan. 1. He had been staying at St. Benedict Rehab Center in Arlington Heights. Ahearn served as a new pastor of St. Juliana Church in Chicago, from September 1975 to June 1995. The parish includes Chicago’s Edison Park and parts of Park Ridge and Niles. Having retired, he became a pastor emeritus. He had lived among the parishioners of St. Juliana for nearly 42 years. He held the record for the longest pastoral service having served for 20 years. His wake will be held at St. Juliana Church from 2 to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 6 and from 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 7. Funeral Mass at the church will follow at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 7. Skaja Terrace Funeral Home, Niles, handled arrangements.

Arthur J. Aman
Of Arlington Heights

Arthur J. Aman, 88, of Arlington Heights, died Dec. 24. He served in the Army and worked as a sales representative before retirement. He was the husband of Mary, father of four, grandfather of two. Meadows Funeral Home, Rolling Meadows, handled arrangements.

Michael A. Borowicz
Of Des Plaines

Michael A. Borowicz, 36, of Des Plaines, died suddenly Saturday, Dec. 31. He was the son of Andrew M. and Mary A. Borowicz, a brother, uncle, nephew, cousin and friend. Visitation from 4 to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 6, at Nelson Funeral Home, Park Ridge. Funeral 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 7 from the funeral home to Our Lady of Hope Church, Arlington Heights. Skaja Funeral Home, Mount Prospect, handled arrangements.

Marguerite J. Ewald
Of Rolling Meadows

Marguerite J. Ewald, 90, of Arlington Heights, died Dec. 27. She graduated from Mercy College of Detroit and received her Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Loyola University-Chicago. She held a faculty appointment and worked as a counselor in the Counseling Center at Harper College until she retired in 1988. She was preceded in death by her husband, Donald George Ewald. She is survived by her four children and three grandchildren. Mats Funeral Home, Mount Prospect, handled arrangements.

Stephen S. Filar
Of Arlington Heights

Stephen S. Filar, 92, of Arlington Heights, died Dec. 16. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Rose Filar, and his two sons. Filar served in the Army Medical Corps for 3-1/2 years. Memorial services and visitation took place at Our Lady of the Wayside Church, Arlington Heights.
In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department: 0950

First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.

In the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois County Department:

Debt buyer: First National in the Circuit Court of Cook County

Debtor: fnn

Judgment in favor of the plaintiff: $15,000

FYI: a notice of publication has been published

The judgment obtained will be used for that purpose.
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS COUNTY,itic.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS COUNTY,itic.

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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS COUNTY,itic.
ANN ST. ABBNE COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS COUNTY, ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT- CENTRAL CHASE BANK, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION CHASE NATIONAL BANK, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE CITIES OF MORTGAGEPROPERY CRAFTSMEN LENDERS, L.P., NATIONAL MORTGAGE ASSOCIATION CHASE, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE CITIES

The Sheriff's Office has scheduled a sale of real estate for the purpose of paying the amount owed to the mortgagee and all other persons lienholders.

The Sheriff's Office will sell the following properties:

- 111 East Main Street, DECATUR, IL
- 123 West Main Street, CHAMPAIGN, IL
- 345 South Main Street, HUNTSDALE, IL
- 567 West Main Street, LAMAR, IL

The sale will take place on February 2, 2017, at 10:30 AM, at the Judicial Sales Corporation, 1 South Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606-4650.

For more information, contact the Sheriff's Office at (217) 422-1719, or visit www.illinoisforeclosuresales.com.
Basking In Basque
Region Of Northern Spain Takes Pride In Food, Heritage

By RANDY MINK
Special to the Journal & Topics Newspapers

With a language, culture and gastronomic traditions all its own, the Basque region of northern Spain is practically a country within a country. In fact, many Basques don't even consider themselves to be Spanish. Believed to be Europe's oldest ethnic group, the Basques have strong links to the land and sea. They have farmed the green hills and valleys of their homeland for centuries, and their deep-sea fishing industry goes back to the 1500s, when fearless fishermen traveled as far as Newfoundland in search of cod. Today the seafood from cold Atlantic waters and raw ingredients from pastures, gardens, orchards and vineyards have given Basque Country a rich food culture. Indeed, gastronomy is a hallmark of Basque identity and a vital part of everyday life.

To the casual visitor, the Basque people look pretty much like anyone else in Spain. Stereotypes might show stout men in berets, perhaps herding sheep against the backdrop of a whitewashed stone farmhouse. At festivals and folkloric shows you'll see male dance troupes in traditional white outfits with red sashes and berets. Typical Basque games include pelota (what the world knows as jai alai, played on a court bare-handed or with a paddle or basket sling) and manly rural sports like stone-lifting, wood-chopping and tug-of-war.

What really sets Basques apart is their language, or Euskara. Speaking Euskara makes one a Basque. Unrelated to any other tongue, it appears bizarre and unpronounceable to those more familiar with the Romance or Germanic languages. You'll see Euskara words on menus and road signs (often with the Spanish equivalents) and notice they are full of k's, tx's and z's. About 600,000 Basques

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Basque

(Continued from page 1C)

in Spain and bordering southwestern France converse in the language.

Above all, Basques cherish their independence. With their own parliament, tax collection and police force, the three Spanish Basque provinces enjoy a substantial level of autonomy from the central government in Madrid. The red-green-and-white Basque flag, a symbol of this nationalism, flies everywhere. There's always been a determined separatist movement, but violent acts by political extremists are a problem of the past.

As for tourism, Basque Country (Euskadi in the Basque language) is somewhat off the beaten path and has few iconic landmarks. That makes it all the more for discovery. Perhaps the region is best known for its culinary prowess, and it has certainly capitalized on the growing interest in food and wine travel. Celebrated for its inventive chefs and blessed with the highest concentration of Michelin-starred restaurants in the world, the region has earned a reputation as the best place to eat in Spain. In England's most recent World's 50 Best Restaurants awards, four on the list were in Spain's Basque Country.

Travelers make a point of indulging in one of the region's signature treats: pintxos (pronounced "PEEN-chos"). The Basque equivalent of tapas, these exquisite little bites of socializing than having a meal. Bar counters piled high with platters of pintxos (usually skewered on sticks or toothpicks) are really something to behold; the sheer variety is mind-boggling. Most popular is a slice of Spanish omelette (tortilla de patata), a mixture of eggs and potato fried in oil. Also commonly found is the Gilda, an olive-anchovy-green pepper medley eaten in one bite. Other snack-sized morsels might include mayonnaise-based salads, grilled wild mushrooms and the huevo frio, a heavenly, deep-fried pillow of dough filled with hot, runny egg, a slice of potato and a bit of bacon.

In the big port city of Bilbao, a foodie paradise, you might sign up for a walking tour of the atmospheric Old Quarter (Casco Viejo), a labyrinth of pedestrian streets with some of the city's best eateries and boutiques. Ancient mansions sport wooden doors, ironwork balconies and family coats of arms. Ribera Market, the largest indoor food market in Europe, is also worth a look.

Some tour operators can get you into a txoko, a traditionally male gastronomy club where men come together to cook and bond. Memberships in these culinary fraternities are passed from father to son, and many participants have been friends since childhood. (More clubs, though, have been opening doors to women, and a couple even have a female president.) Cooking classes and demonstrations at a txoko and other locations also can be arranged.

Seafood dominates menus in Basque Country, and no one except the Japanese) eats more fish per capita than the Basques. Cod (or bacalao) is the fish of choice, and hake comes next. Grosper, turbot, tuna, monkfish, jack mackerel, anchovies, baby eels, spider crab, lobster, octopus and baby squid are found everywhere as well. The classic dish bacalao pil pil is dried salted cod in a mayonnaise-like sauce of olive oil, chili and garlic. At any pintxo bar you're likely to encounter salted cod, cod croquettes or crispy fried cod skin.

(Continued on page 4C)
Woodstock Awakens For ‘Groundhog’ Fest

A quarter century ago, something astonishing happened in Woodstock, Ill.

A camera crew came to town, moved tons of equipment into the historic town square and an "oompah" band began playing the "Pennsylvania Polka" over and over and over again. They had come to film a movie that would become a cult favorite among young and old alike, "Groundhog Day," starring Bill Murray and Andie McDowell.

In the movie, Murray woke up here morning after morning, the "Days" festival will be held Feb. 1-5. Groundhog Days celebrates the making of the movie, when the town stood in for Punxsutawney, Pa., home of the legendary forecasting rodent. Things get off to a sparkling start at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, with the Awakening of the Groundhog Ceremony at the Woodstock Opera House on the square. Festivities wrap up on Sunday, Feb. 5, with the Lions Club Pancake Breakfast, Willie's Family Fun Day, "Groundhog Day" movie showings, walking tours of filming sites and a Woodstock Community Choir concert.

In between, events include: Groundhog Trivia, Woodstock Willie's Beer Party, chili cookoff, bowling, tournament, dinner dance, Rotary bag toss tournament, "Groundhog Tales" by storyteller Jim May, "Filming Tales" by Columbia Pictures' location manager Bob Huddins, additional walking tours of filming sites.

Where In The World?

![Photo of Brandenburg Gate]

Here's a beautiful scene in a far-away country. Do you think you can identify the name of this building? If no one can identify the name of this building, then we will take the second response identifying the country where it's located. In last week's Journal & Topics Where In the World photo contest, Valerie Duenser of Arlington Heights submitted the correct entry of Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany. She wins a $25 gift certificate to a local restaurant, (photoeverywhere)

With multiple ice surfaces, tubing and snowboarding hills, skating venues and groomed snowmobile trails, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, provides an ideal place to play in the snow with an average of 120 inches of the white stuff.

To get the blood pumping, start with the Sault Seal Recreation area, home to a snowboarding hill, cross-country ski trails and seven thrilling tubing runs.

In the same park, snowboard on the 80-foot vertical, 1,000-foot shoot that is lit for nighttime events. There are even cross-country ski trails nearby for those who prefer the serene quiet of a beautiful wooded path.

Skiers can also take to the groomed trails at an alternative site -- The Algonquin Ski Trail, groomed by the Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources. Nearly nine miles of trail and five separate loops provide a variety for skiers and skaters. Use is by donation only and the trails are cut through scenic Upper Peninsula forest.

Visit Pullar Stadium, Big Bear Arena, or Lake Superior State University's Taffy Abel Arena for open skating fun.

Those with a "need for speed" can get their thrills on hundreds of miles of groomed snowmobiling trails. The system starts in Sault Ste. Marie and stretches across the Eastern Upper Peninsula (EUP) and beyond, connecting a variety of small communities and running through national forests, state forest lands and snow-covered hills and plains across the region.

Want to watch serious snowmobile action? Plan your visit on the first Saturday in February and take in the International 500 Snowmobile Race. This all-day event is like NASCAR on ice and includes food vendors, beverage tents, souvenirs and other activities but they all pale in comparison to the action on the oval, as roughly 35 sleds race for bragging rights and a sizeable purse. This year's race will mark the 49th running of "the granddaddy of all snowmobile races".

Sault Ste. Marie is home to dozens of restaurants, bars, taverns and entertainment venues.

For more information call the Sault Ste. Marie Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800-647-2858 or visit the website at visitthesoo.com.
Basque

(Continued from page 2C)

Aside from exploring the Old Quarter and savoring the bounty of the Basque table, the chief tourist activity in Bilbao is visiting the Guggenheim Museum, a repository of modern and contemporary art more famous for its architecture than for the works inside. The city’s very identity has been linked to the curvaceous colossus of limestone and titanium since it appeared on the banks of the Nervion River in 1997. Designed by controversial Canadian architect Frank Gehry, the Guggenheim radically transformed a derelict industrial area and catapulted Bilbao into a center of art, architecture and urban design, as many other famed architects were attracted to the forward-looking city of 350,000 (one million in the metro area, or almost half the Spanish Basque population).

The Guggenheim invites photos from every angle. Just as photogenic is “Puppy,” the 42-foot-tall, color-splashed sculpture of a terrier standing guard outside the entrance; some 60,000 flowers and plants cover the floral masterpiece by American artist Jeff Koons. A giant, spider-like metal walkways and glass elevators. Changing exhibitions of art from the second half of the 20th century are from collections of Madrid aristocrats in the 19th and early 20th centuries, San Sebastian (Donostia in Basque) commands an incomparable setting on Concha Bay, a stunning jewel with two mountain peaks as bookends and a petite island in the center. Francisco Franco, the dictator who ruled Spain from 1939-1975, spent 35 summers there.

Today, one of Europe’s most prestigious international film festivals (in September) and a collection of Michelin-starred restaurants (the most per capita of anyplace on earth) enhance San Sebastian’s pedigree, lending the city an aura of sophistication. (Three restaurants—Arzak, Akelarre and Martin Berasategui—boast three Michelin stars, the French gourmet critics’ highest rating.) Take a walk along the fashionable seaside promenade and visions of Monte Carlo, Cannes and Nice come to mind. The elegant City Hall, built in a style similar to that of the Monte Carlo Casino, actually was a casino until gambling was outlawed in the early 20th century.

Tours of San Sebastian, a 75-minute drive east of Bilbao, feature the lookout point atop Mount Igueldo, where picture-postcard panoramas of the shell-shaped bay and distant green mountains keep cameras clicking. Besides viewpoints, the promontory, reachable by road or funicular, has a hotel, cafes and a century-old amusement park. Another stop is the Old Town (Parte Vieja), where narrow streets packed with shops, restaurants and a tantalizing choice of pintxos bars lie just minutes from La Concha Beach.

Basque Country’s famed Rioja Alavesa wine region is an hour-and-a-half drive south of Bilbao. Tucked into a relatively compact area between the southern slopes of the Sierra de Cantabria and Ebro River are endless vistas of vineyards on terraced hillsides sprinkled with olive trees. Protected by the mountain range from coastal winds and moisture, the vines, mostly of the red tempranillo variety, thrive in a microclimate ideal for growing grapes. You’ll have a chance for tastings (with pintxos) at some of the region’s 300 some wineries and enjoy passing through idyllic hilltop towns, their church towers visible from miles away.

A favorite wine country stop is the walled medieval town of Laguardia. Adorned with balconies, lines of drying laundry and religious shrines, its pedestrian passageways invite random wandering. The main point of interest is Santa Maria de los Reyes, a church known for its ornately carved, 14th century Gothic portico with painted figures of the 12 apostles flanking a statue of Mary and Jesus. Underneath the fortified town are more than 200 wine cellars.

Just as ancient Laguardia rises ship-like over the sea of vineyards, a much newer landmark looms prominently on the horizon just four miles away in the town of Elciego. Dominating Herederos del Marques de Riscal winery is the undulating tangle of purple, silver and gold metal ribbons of the estate’s Frank Gehry-designed showpiece hotel, a building reminiscent of his Guggenheim Museum. The eruption of steel and titanium, according to one guidebook, “looks as if a colony from outer space had crashed in the middle of La Rioja’s oldest vineyards.” Dubbed “City of Wine,” Marques de Riscal is indeed the region’s oldest winery, dating from 1890. The luxury hotel features a one-star Michelin restaurant.

Even in bucolic wine country, you can’t avoid the Basques’ penchant for daring design and fine living. Whether you stick to the coast or venture into the countryside, a brief visit to Spain’s Basque Country will give you a taste of this ancient culture and perhaps whet your appetite for second Helpings on future travels to the Iberian peninsula.

For information on Basque Country, contact the Basque Tourism Board at www.basquecountrytourism.eu or National Tourist Office of Spain, www.spain.info/en.