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THE SEARCH GOES ON..FINALLY

by Andrew Tallackson

They persevered.
They adapted.
They triumphed.
To the casual observer, nothing appeared out of the ordinary during La-

and flexibility of everyone involved.

Prior to March, when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in global self-isolation practices, four candidates in the “Bravo Maestro!” conductor search had appeared with the symphony since 2018: Russell Ger, Maria Mercedes Garcia Diaz, Alexander Platt and Carolyn Watson. Waiting in the wings

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Porte County Symphony Orchestra’s Nov. 7 concert. A seamless night, in fact. The musicians were in fine form, treating the audience to exceptional music over the course of 75 minutes.

But the program, delayed from earlier this year because of COVID-19, was a meticulously calculated event designed to incorporate every safety measure possible while *still* achieving a relaxed, delightful experience. And with conductor candidate Christopher Fashun applying a light, playful touch to the evening’s theme, “The Great American Songbook,” the evening was the ideal antidote to a year fraught with perpetual challenges and uncertainty.

“This was a six-month wait for me to be with this orchestra,” Fashun said after arriving at the podium. “I told the orchestra earlier, the music is bringing people together, and we so need to be brought together, even if we have to distance. The power of music to bring us together in our community is so powerful, and so thank you for making this happen tonight.”

That LCSO managed to kick off its 48th season with a performance live-streamed from LaPorte Civic Auditorium was a tribute to the ingenuity



Conductor candidate Christopher Fashun takes a break from conducting to play temple blocks during LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra’s performance of George Gershwin’s “I Got Rhythm” on Nov. 7 at LaPorte Civic Auditorium. All concert photos by Bob Wellinski

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were Fashun and Wilbur Lin. But with the pandemic in full swing by mid-March, LCSO, like every other arts organization, placed its slate of events on hold. As the year progressed, LCSO staff experimented with online streaming platforms, and with a considerable degree of success, to present its annual Hoosier Star fundraiser and children's concert.

So how did they pull off the Nov. 7 concert? First, by restricting the in-person audience to board members, sponsors and a few other guests. The orchestra layout saw mostly the string section on the main floor, wind and percussion musicians above them on the stage. No longer sharing musical stands, each performer was spaced 6 feet apart. No congratulatory handshakes during the concert; instead, COVID-era elbow taps.

During rehearsals, one of which was held in new performance space at New Prairie High School,

masks were required as often as possible, with the temperatures of each musician taken at the start of each practice.

"I'm really thrilled about tonight," LCSO Executive Director Tim King told *The Beacher*, relief evident in his voice. "I was scared we couldn't do this one because the COVID cases are going up. I feel hopefully when we get to March, we might be in better shape when that person (Lin) comes in."

Asked if, back in March, amid COVID's earliest days, he feared the conductor search might not conclude in the near future, King's response was a mix of good humor and playful exasperation.

"I thought, if we have to go into another year, I'm going to get in a car and drive to Canada and not come back," he said, laughing. "But we were able to work it out. I feel so much better about that. We will be able to choose someone by April. It would be a year longer than we wanted it to be, but at least it won't be too much longer."



This photo taken from the balcony at LaPorte Civic Auditorium conveys how LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra staff followed social-distancing protocols for the concert.

Interim Music Director Chuck Steck, shortly before the Nov. 7 concert began, praised the musicians for their flexibility.

“The musicians of this orchestra have really come through,” he said. “They have been enthusiastic and patient. Communication has been great on all levels. They want to play. They are ready and have lived with all these adjustments.”

The orchestra’s first rehearsal for the concert, Steck continued, was the equivalent of old friends performing together again, albeit at a distance.

“Not being able to play the same way, not having a stand partner — the whole thing has been a period of adjustment,” he said.

Fashun, however, just rolled with it, King said.



Conductor candidate Christopher Fashun guides the musicians through the concert.

“He was like glass the whole time. Just smooth,” the executive director said. “He was like, whatever you need to do, just tell me and we’ll make it work.”

Right before the start of the concert, in fact, Fashun praised the orchestra for achieving an event that felt effortless in execution.

“You have to understand the extraordinary circumstances they had to overcome to make music together, and not just make music, but make high quality music,” Fashun said of the musicians.

Amid the performance and during an interview with *The Beacher* afterward, Fashun comes across as a good-natured fellow with not an ounce of pretention. His resume conveys a man versatile in his studies, interests and musical passions. He lives in Holland, Mich., with his wife and daughter, serving as the director of orchestras and music director of the Brazilian Music Ensemble at Hope College.

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In 2018, he received a U.S. Postdoctoral Fulbright Award in All Disciplines, living and researching Afro-Brazilian music in Salvador da Bahia in 2019. He frequently serves as a guest conductor, clinician, adjudicator and percussionist. He's also a violist and percussionist.

What he brought to the Nov. 7 concert was an element of fun. A bounce. A jazzy swing to an evening that celebrated classics from George and Ira Gershwin, Irving Berlin and Cole Porter. The strings were in top form: lush and elegant. The winds and percussion grounded each work with steady, muscular precision. The voice of guest soloist Debra Bordo shimmered through selections that included "Summertime" and "Begin the Beguine." A *wow* moment arrived during George Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm":



Guest soloist Debra Bordo performs with LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra during the Nov. 7 concert.

Fashun turned from the orchestra and tapped away on temple blocks.

"I was going to try tap dancing, but I could not logistically figure how to work out," he said, laughing, after the concert.

The program lineup, which concluded with George Gershwin's unforgettable "American in Paris Suite," was right in Fashun's wheelhouse.

"The inspiration (for the concert) is a reflection of my childhood," he said, adding he was a child of the '80s. "I wasn't listening to the top 40s or hair metal bands. I was listening to classical, jazz, folk, popular musicals. For me, this embodies all of that — great show tunes, the Great American Songbook."

The week before the concert, Fashun said his wife and daughter drove here from Holland, Mich., gorgeous Indian Summer temperatures affording the chance to walk about the city. He met with symphony donors, as well as LaPorte Mayor Tom Dermody, who presented him with a LaPorte Slicers T-shirt.

An avid cyclist, he brought his bicycle with him, going on a 19-mile ride prior to Thursday's rehearsal. He arrived that evening wearing a LaPorte Proud T-shirt.

"It's just been sort of a magical week," he said.

LCSO even arranged Zoom sessions with students at Valparaiso High School as part of a music clinic.

"I was really impressed by how he really connected with the students," King said of Fashun. "He gave the orchestra director tips about a certain piece, and you could hear the improvement afterward from the first time they played over the second and third time they played it."

What would Fashun bring to LCSO if chosen as its new conductor? He pauses before replying.

"I'd just bring me," he said. "I'm sort of a renaissance person. I like to try new things. I try to hold on to tradition, but I like to infuse new creative things into it. That's me."

(The final concert in the "Bravo Maestro!" series, which features Wilbur Lin, is Sunday, March 14, 2021. The theme is "Beethoven's Belated 250th Birthday.")

LCSO: CANDIDATE ROSE TO THE MANY COVID CHALLENGES

by Connie Kuzydym

LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra took on the enormous task, in these unprecedented times, of affording Christopher Fashun his time at the podium. In the end, the concert was well-received by the small group of attendees made up primarily of board members, sponsors and their families.

"It (the atmosphere) was joy, because when was the last time we've heard live music indoors," LCSO Executive Director Tim King said. "I think they were so thrilled to be there and hear good, live or-

chestral music from their orchestra."

For the majority of the musicians, they had not been together since last December.

"It was like being home again," Interim Music Director Chuck Steck said. "Being in a building they knew. Understanding it was different. Understanding they were going to have to work harder. But as someone said, 'You know, we could be home now. Instead, we'd much rather be here doing this. This is fun. It's hard work, but it's fun.'"

Tim and Chuck both agree how important hearing audience applause is for the musicians, along with feedback. The crowd may have been limited, but their enthusiasm was not, making it feel like a much-larger group was present.

Fortunately, due to the spaciousness of LaPorte Civic Auditorium, the LCSO could maintain the necessary space to properly social distance.

“South Bend, Northwest Indiana, Southwest Michigan — none are performing. If they’re doing stuff, it’s smaller chamber music,” Tim said. “We’re the only ones out there within hundreds of miles, that I know of, that are doing full orchestra concerts. One of the reasons is, they physically don’t have the space. They perform on auditorium stages. We can spread out in the Civic. They’re in concert halls where they can only have 15-20 people.”

The time leading up to the Nov. 7 performance was a work in progress. The Civic had completed an upgrade to the sound and lighting system to accommodate LCSO performances. Who could have fore-



LCSO Executive Director Tim King.

seen a performance where half the musicians are on stage, the other half on the floor in front of the stage?

Fortunately, four rehearsals were held at LaPorte Civic to allow for trial and error, laying the groundwork not only for the Nov. 7 concert, but also future ones if COVID restrictions continue.

During rehearsals, Christopher was interrupted numerous times as adjustments were made to the seating, sound and lighting. To his credit, he worked within the established parameters, going with the flow and positively dealing with the various disruptions.

At the second rehearsal, Tim says, it was obvious the musicians understood what the conductor wanted and practiced what they needed. Christopher was impressed and appreciative that Thursday night’s rehearsal was light years from Wednesday night’s. It was like a different orchestra.

“Musicians had one night to bump it up, and they did,” Tim said. “Typically, they rehearse on Tuesday night and then meet again with the conductor on Friday night.”

A challenge for the musicians was, those on stage could not hear well those on the floor.

“When you’re performing, you’re not alone. The music that you do is always with someone else, some way, and usually it’s close by,” Chuck said. “It’s

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either that somebody else in the orchestra is playing the same thing that you are doing, or they're playing something that complements what you do or supports what you do. You find a way so that you know your part is fitting with all those other parts. That was a challenge."

Another challenge for musicians: They could only see Christopher's eyes because he wore a mask. Typically, a conductor's facial expressions guide the players.

"The conductor met the challenge by being very clear and concise with how he conducted with his beat pattern and his gestures," Chuck said. "He had to be clear with what he said, how he communicated, what he communicated to us, understanding we are relying on his ears to make sure that this is going together.



Masks were to be worn as often as possible during the performance.

"Now, he had the advantage of being in front of us all, and he could hear us all, and by the time the sound system was dialed in, he had a better understanding of what was going on. That was even more important for us to rely on him to help us, to guide us."

Christopher's overall experience was different from the other candidates as well. Typically, the week leading up to the concert is a flurry of activities, from meet and greets to high school visits. Instead of visiting four high schools, he Zoomed with the Valparaiso High School orchestra.

Tim and Chuck say Christopher brings to the table something the others did not: string and percussion knowledge.

"He's a rare bird because he's both a percussion performance person and a viola performance person," Chuck said. "He was able to talk to the orchestra at a couple different levels and say the right thing. Say what needed to be said...so I think there's



Spacing out the musicians to ensure enough distance between them was a top priority for the night.

a great deal of expertise there that he has. Also, he has experience as a band director. Band and orchestra directors don't work the same...so their perspective is different."

Christopher has an affable personality, according to Tim.

"He would say, 'I love world music, and I would like for you to like it, too. So why don't we just try some of this and see what you think'. He invites versus it being an edict, which is no longer popular with audiences," Tim said.

Despite all the challenges for Christopher, Tim and Chuck are confident through the standardized evaluation sheets that his performance will be judged like the other candidates.

When the musicians evaluate the conductor, they take many things into consideration, such as their demeanor, conducting gestures, was their beat clear and steady. So far, each candidate has

been significantly different, according to Chuck. He and Tim also agree that in the end, it will be difficult to choose who will lead the LCSO.

Tim and Chuck also praised the board of directors for being especially supportive of the Nov. 7 concert. Now, they are gearing up for the Holiday Pops concert, then the March concert featuring Wilbur Lin.

Looking back at their journey, the two old guards — their moniker — have learned a lot about live streaming.

"Surround yourself with a bunch of 20-30 some-things," Tim said. "That is the best thing we have

done is surrounded ourselves with the guys from Duneland Media. Our sound and lighting guys are all younger. They kept saying to us, we can do this."

"It was a big hill to climb," Tim said. "We did. We climbed it."





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A Place to Call Home

by Kim Nowatzke

Michigan City native Jim Mohamed may have left his hometown as a teen, but his heart still has deep roots here.

That love for his birthplace was one of the reasons he created the Facebook group, "Michigan City, IN..A place to call Home" on Sept. 21, 2013. He'd been involved in a few of the original Facebook pages and groups dedicated to Michigan City, but wanted to create something that focused more on nostalgia for his hometown, provided a platform to share vintage photos and served as a place to reconnect with friends.

"I started with 14 people and didn't think I would get that many more," Mohamed said.

Today, there are 13,642 members of "Michigan City, IN .. A place to call Home" whose "About" section reads: *"Michigan City is a special place to call a hometown. This group is dedicated to all that live or have lived in this city by the lake to share memories, photos and thoughts of its rich history. We are bonded by our love for a town that has provided the memories and friendships of a lifetime...and still does. 'Anyone Here From CITY?'"*

From Oct. 13 to Nov. 9, there were 11,299 active members. Activity peaked at 7,900 members in one day during that period. Mohamed, who is the only site administrator, gets about 30 membership requests daily. There currently are 6,460 members in Michigan City, 1,194 in LaPorte, 114 in Trail Creek, 150 in Westville, 207 in Indianapolis and 174 in Chicago.



This photo of the 700 block of Franklin Street, looking north in 1960, has appeared several times on the Facebook page courtesy of the late Michael Fleming.

Mohamed, 70, lives in Crown Point. He was born at St. Anthony Hospital in 1950 and lived on Hancock Street and later Wabash Street. He attended Park and Marsh elementary schools, Elston Junior High School and Elston Senior High School. When his father, John Mohamed, accepted the director of art education position for the Gary Community School Corp. in November 1967, Jim had to transfer to Merrillville High School, unable to complete his senior year at Elston High School.



Jim Mohamed

"My dad had been an art consultant for Michigan City Area Schools," he explained.

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“A lot of people knew my dad as the art teacher for the schools.”

Jim Mohamed went on to college, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communications from Indiana University in 1972. In 1983, he moved to Teaneck, N.J., where his uncles and cousins lived, and where he met his future wife, Eileen. They married in 1991.

“I still consider myself the luckiest man ever since,” he said about that union. They adopted their oldest children: a natural brother and sister from Vladimir, Russia. They also were a foster family for 13 years and adopted two younger daughters they are still raising. Jim enjoyed a career in real estate, as well as in advertising at *The Post Tribune*, *The Times of Northwest Indiana* and other papers. Now retired, Jim serves his community by substitute teaching for the Crown Point Community School Corp.

Old photographs are the mainstay of “Michigan City, IN .. A place to call Home.” Mohamed, who “somehow ended up with all the family photos” from his very large Michigan City family, owns 270,000 of his own. Some of these make it into posts on the Facebook page.

Many other photographs were the property of Michael Fleming, who became a moderator on the Facebook page not too long after it began. Over the years, Fleming contributed some from his vast col-



Two people walk along on East Seventh Street past the Spaulding Hotel going to Franklin Street after the Big Blizzard on St. Valentine's Day weekend in 1958.

lection of archived *News-Dispatch* photos of which he purchased the rights.

Fleming, who passed away in 2019, regularly contributed photos to historical articles that appeared in *The Beacher*.

“He could see what I was doing with the group,” Mohamed said. “He was really adamant to giving credit for the posted photographs.”

He mentioned how the late Fleming also was instrumental in digitizing old photos at Michigan City Public Library by volunteering for the project.

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The opening day of Morrison's in April 1965 at Washington and May streets. This posted photo was courtesy of the late Michael Fleming.

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A Place to Call Home Continued from Page 9

On “Michigan City, IN .. a place to call Home,” members enjoy vintage scenes of a bustling Franklin Street, famous blizzards, restaurants and department stores in their heyday, the state basketball championship gleaned by Elston High School in 1966 and old newspaper advertisements.

One can discover what the peristyle, World War I monument and bandstand in Washington Park looked like in 1948, recall the massive Gardena Park swing sets in 1967 and pick out their classmates in decades-old school pictures.

“We try to keep it as accurate as possible,” Mohamed said. “Michigan City has a very rich history. A lot of younger kids are realizing that Michigan City has such a rich history.

“You can’t put enough on about Elston High School.”

He noted that “Michigan City, IN .. a place to call Home” has fully digitized Elston, Rogers and Michigan City high schools yearbooks, as well as those for area parochial schools on the site. Members can find them under the headings “Media” and “Albums.”

Also popular are “role call” posts where members who are alumni of a designated school make a comment. He said he’s still waiting for Marsh, where he attended grades three through six, to win one.

Other posts are lighthearted polls on the best bakery, best penny-candy store and other popular places.

It’s not uncommon for members to see photographs on “Michigan City, IN .. a place to call Home” of their relatives they have never seen before.

“It’s very gratifying. There always seems to be a message that I get when I post faces in the crowd,” Mohamed said.

He is partial to posts from the ’60s.

“We lived in the golden years – the ’50s and ’60s. I miss the lighthouse foghorn – you could hear it all over town — and trains in the distance when I slept with the windows open. When I drive by, I still see Ames Field – the original one. I can still hear the kids and the people.”

For him, the iconic tree on U.S. 20 that stretched across the road as you neared his hometown was an exciting welcome sign.

“Coming into Michigan City,” he said, “has always been magical to me.”

He recalled simpler times when there was a



This photo of a St. Bernard in the back of a station wagon was taken just before the 1966 Elston state finals tournament on March 17, 1966.



This vintage photo shows Jim Mohamed with his brothers in summer 1957 when they lived at 113 Hancock St. They are (from left) David, Jerry and Jim. The photo, shot at 116 Hancock St., was taken for a national Lebanese magazine that was writing a feature on their father as a Lebanese educator.

strong spirit of camaraderie in Michigan City, regardless of nationality, race or religion.

“Everybody in Michigan City got along so well – we were one big family. Michigan City has always had a huge heart – had always took care of themselves,” he said. “It has given us a lifetime of memories. We can’t thank it enough.”

The only rules, set in the beginning, for the group are listed on the page as “No Advertising, No Politics, No Bullying. This is a closed group about history and nostalgia.”

Mohamed said his biggest challenge is “keeping politics off of it,” and he’s had to mute members for a few days, explaining why and reminding them of the rules. Those situations aside, Mohamed is pleased with his growing venture.

“To me, the whole thing is about nostalgia,” he said. “It’s very gratifying. It has defined itself. I wanted to have a feel-good site. It’s a fun group.”

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Smart Start Book Drive

A month-long Smart Start Book Drive, which aims to build an age-appropriate library for Head Start of LaPorte County preschoolers, runs through Thursday, Dec. 10, at the Head Start office, 811 Royal Road.

New and gently used books suitable for preschool-aged children are welcome.

The drive is an internship project created by Jaelyn Nowatzke, a senior Purdue University Northwest student completing her bachelor's degree in Human Development & Family Studies. Nowatzke is fulfilling an internship requirement at Head Start of LaPorte County this semester.

Email nowatzke@pnw.edu for more details.

Fall Cleanup in Long Beach

Fall leaf cleanup is under way in Long Beach, with trucks making rounds, only collecting leaves raked to the road's edge, through Friday, Dec. 4.

Some delays might occur due to projects in Long Beach involving large trucks and/or equipment. Do not use brown leaf waste bags, and do not put yard plantings' clumps, twigs/tree branches or large stones/rocks in leaf piles because they damage leaf vacuums.

There is no need to call town hall for scheduled pickups because there isn't a definite timeframe in any certain neighborhood. However, all leaves will be picked up before the trucks leave town Dec. 4. If leaves are raked to the street by the end of the day Nov. 29, they should make the final pass.

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Thanks to Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte support, expanded outreach efforts by Lubeznik Center for the Arts served more than 800 LaPorte Community School Corp. students.

Those children experienced tours, family days and an eight-week Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math camp for second- and third-graders at Kingsford Heights Elementary School. More than 83 percent of students visiting LCA indicate a desire to return or experience additional cultural institutions.

Building on that success, LCA is using Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte support to further expand its focus in LaPorte.

Due to challenges raised by COVID-19, the current exhibit, "Well Behaved Women: 100 Years of Suffrage," and other exhibits scheduled this year will have video tours and curriculum resources for teachers. LCA also plans to offer the on-site STEAM Camp in spring 2021, and will continue to provide virtual and in-person outreach as health conditions allow. LCA Education Director Hannah Hammond-Hagman is overseeing the program.

"Our entire staff is excited about the long-term possibilities for connections made through this expansion," LCA Executive Director Janet Bloch said in a press release.

LCA's Virtual Learning Tour program already has launched with a comprehensive video tour and discussion from "Well-Behaved Women." The free

30-minute program features six artists and artworks, and a step-by-step instructional video for students to create a related art project using readily available classroom materials.

LCA also offers an accompanying Educator Curriculum Packet with discussion questions for mul-



LCA Education Director Hannah Hammond-Hagman is overseeing the outreach efforts.

iple grade levels, breakout activities and additional information and resources for further classroom learning. Additional Virtual Learning Tours will be made available for upcoming LCA exhibits.

Any interested school or educator should contact LCA Education Coordinator Laurel Iazard at education@lubeznikcenter.org for free access to the video link and curriculum packet.

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Chesterton Art Center members will exhibit their work in the two main galleries through Jan. 13, 2021, at the center, 115 S. Fourth St. Artist members create works in all mediums, including painting, drawing, photography, mixed-media, fiber, jewelry, ceramics, sculpture and greeting cards. Works are sold at all price points. Pictured is member and watercolor artist Sally Hooker. Regular business hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. Call (219) 926-4711 or visit www.chestertonart.com for more details.

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“The Life Ahead” is One of the Year’s Best

by Andrew Tallackson



Madame Rosa (Sophia Loren) takes into her care 10-year-old Momo (Ibrahima Gueye) in “The Life Ahead.”

“The Life Ahead” is a minor miracle of a movie, one in which the Oscar buzz surrounding its star is legitimate, and a child who’s barely acted before delivers the year’s most astonishing performance.

This is not the first time Romain Gary’s 1975 French novel “The Life Before Us” has been told: first in 1977 as “Madame Rosa,” then as a 2010 TV movie. Unfamiliar with either, I cannot speak to their effectiveness. What “The Life Ahead” achieves is a deeply moving friendship that defies all convention, with Italian filmmaker Edoardo Ponti at the helm of a story in which his mother, the great Sophia Loren, proves age is just a number. At 86, her star wattage shines brighter than ever.

She plays Madame Rosa, a prisoner at Auschwitz and former Paris call girl who in her final years cares for the children of local prostitutes. The latest charge ushered into her care is 10-year-old Momo (Ibrahima Gueye), whose mother died at the hands of his father, and who has been living with a doctor now unable to care for him.

The film becomes an astute, largely unsentimental character study of these two individuals. As an actress, Loren still has plenty of fire in her belly. She plays Madame Rosa as a woman with no patience for BS. She’s seen it all, and when children test her, particularly Momo, she stands her ground, chipping away at youthful defiance with a stern and steady hand. She also retreats to a room deep within her cellar: a respite from memories of Auschwitz that plague her more than ever. Loren’s eyes, which slip



“The Life Ahead”

Running time: 94 minutes. Streaming on Netflix. In Italian with subtitles. Rated PG-13 for thematic content, drug material involving minors, some sexual material and language

into a trance-like state, are a roadmap of despair. A lesser storyteller might have lapsed into flashbacks, but Ponti trusts that his mother, her face, can say all that needs to be said.

Momo, by comparison, can scam his way through any challenge, having sold drugs for a local dealer. But through a kindly local merchant (the wonderful Babak Karimi) and especially Madame Rosa, he softens. Gueye, as Momo, is a natural, navigating through moments of joy, sadness and deepest pain with ferocious intensity. This kid will rattle you to the core. That’s especially true of the lump-in-your-throat conclusion in which Momo honors a promise he made to Madame Rosa. Seated together, hand in hand, in her cellar refuge, the image of police footsteps ascending the stairs to her apartment draws a brilliant parallel to the Nazi Gestapo. It blindsides you, to be honest. I was a wreck.

The movie could not possibly move you any further, right? Well, along comes the final image: a virtuosic use of symbolism. For Momo, “home” is just around the corner.

Expect “The Life Ahead” to land near the top of my list for the year’s best pictures.

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Fearful “Clouds” is a Downer? Give This Uplifting Movie a Chance

by Andrew Tallackson

My wife frequently likes to joke that, as a journalist, glaringly obvious details pass me by when we're out in public. My playful response is that when “off duty,” so to speak, I prefer to stay so. Otherwise, consider me fairly observant.

Having said that, how in the heck did I miss the incredible true story behind Disney+'s “Clouds”? Back in 2012, Minnesota high-schooler Zach Sobiech, told he had months to live — a year at best — composed the song “Clouds” with his gal-pal, Sammy. First posting it on YouTube, the song went viral, a BMI studio recording of it hitting the Billboard Hot 100. It was an iTunes sensation as well. All this before his passing at 18 in May 2013.

Zach's story was ripe for the Hollywood telling, and it also falls into a category of movies that make me nervously itch. The kind that wring every possible tear out of a tragic illness. “Terms of Endearment,” I can handle, because it speaks to the best and worst in us. Weepers like “Love Story” and “Beaches,” no, because they embrace yucky soap-opera sentiment. “Clouds,” while not the teen gold standard achieved by 2014's “The Fault in Our Stars,” stands tall because it's about living, not dying. About living every last moment to the fullest.

The film is based on the non-fiction book by Zach's mother, Laura, titled Fly a Little Higher: How God Answered a Mom's Small Prayer in a Big Way. The director is Justin Baldoni, an actor best known for playing Rafael Solano on The CW's “Jane the Virgin,” and he respects the Sobiechs enough to never sanitize their story. This is a warts-and-all look at the family's ups and downs amid Zach's final year, with Baldoni using many real-life family, friends and acquaintances in scenes, especially during crowd shots and a Jason Mraz concert in which the pop singer appears as himself while performing “I'm Yours.”

As “Clouds” begins, Zach (Chicago native Fin Argus) has been battling osteosarcoma, a bone cancer mostly affecting children, since 14, undergoing numerous rounds of chemotherapy in the process. Despite having lost his hair, his skin the milky complexion of someone undergoing cancer treatments, he's a typical teen, performing a randy version of “Sexy and I Know It” at a school talent show. His longtime best friend, Sammy (Sabrina Carpenter), secretly loves him, but respects his decision to date the more attractive Amy (Madison).

Typical teen stuff, as far as movies go, even with Zach's cancer diagnosis. But Zach, played by Argus with enormous determination, anger and optimism, refuses to see himself as a martyr. Humor is his defense mechanism, music his refuge.



Zach (Fin Argus) and Sammy (Sabrina Carpenter) record the YouTube video that will make them famous in “Clouds,” now streaming on Disney+.

Prepped for his first date with Amy, he's rushed to the hospital when a coughing spell spins out of control. Turns out, a lung has collapsed, requiring surgery. And it is here he learns his disease is now terminal. With 10 to 12 months remaining, the best option is to make life comfortable for him.

The movie carefully charts Zach's existential collapse — high school, college applications feel pointless — along with the crumbling state of his parents' marriage. Dad (Tom Everett Scott) throws himself into work as an escape. Mom is the emotional warhorse, riding the same emotional roller coaster as Zach. She's played by Neve Campbell with zero trace of the “Scream” queen she once was. Now in her late 40s, her trademark jet-black hair died and styled to resemble the requisite suburban mom, there is an aged sobriety to her performance that is deeply affecting: a woman weary from the battle, but charging forward nonetheless.

Movies like this, which do not shy away from the tragic realities of impending death, can be brutal...

unless they find a way to leave audiences uplifted. The second half of “Clouds” recounts Zach appreciating how precious life is, deciding he wants to leave his mark through a song about dying that still makes people happy. And, indeed, the scene when “Clouds” first airs on the radio not only gives you a giddy boost, but it also may be a tribute to Everett Scott because of his link to Tom Hanks' classic “That Thing You Do.” Both scenes celebrate the joy of music, the thrill of knowing your music now has the ability to reach untold thousands.

As “Clouds” arrives at its big catharsis, in which Zach performs his hit song for the last time at a benefit concert, I braced for a scene so saccharine diabetics might experience an assault on their insulin levels. But Baldoni goes for a gentle payoff that, in its own quiet way, is far more moving than any overblown, operatic finish.

“Clouds” initially was slated for a theatrical release through Warner Bros., but was purchased by Disney for a streaming release on Disney+ because



Neve Campbell is a powerful source of strength as Zach's mother.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

“Clouds”

Running time: 121 minutes.

Rated PG-13 for brief strong language

of COVID-19. In a way, it is a more fitting venue because more people have the opportunity to experience it. It is one you won't soon forget.

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“Shaun of the Dead” Creators Return With



The motley crew of paranormal investigators in “Truth Seekers” include (from left) Astrid (Emma D’Arcy), Gus (Nick Frost) and Elton (Samson Kayo).

by Andrew Tallackson

British humor is not for all tastes. The sillier, more outrageous variety, sure. Who doesn’t get a kick out of a Monty Python movie or decades-old Benny Hill sketch? A lot of it, though, is just, well, different. The comic sensibilities, the timing — the British march to a beat altogether unique. Less in-your-face. Dry, in some cases practically parched.

Simon Pegg and Nick Frost, though, are another story: dork connoisseurs of American pop culture. Their movie knowledge is infinite, their playing grounds horror/sci-fi/comedies. Consider their resume: zombies (“Shaun of the Dead”), cops and robbers (“Hot Fuzz”), end times (“At World’s End”), aliens (“Paul”). Their forte is contrasting crude American behavior with stuffy British etiquette. And the characters they play? The arrested development type: overgrown man-children dodging the nagging requirements of adulthood.

The latest from these two, the Amazon Prime series “Truth Seekers,” pokes fun at reality TV shows that claim to expose spooky secrets. You know the type, those sleuthing shows where dweebs in night-vision goggles stumble through creaky old houses, never discovering anything remotely supernatural.

And while this Prime series, each episode arriving in short, 30-minute bursts, is not as laugh-out-loud funny as their previous efforts, leave it to Pegg and Frost to create a horror-comedy series where the characters are so endearing, they trump the gaggle of scares that haunt them.

Frost stars as Gus Roberts, a broadband installer for Britain’s top Internet provider who dabbles in ghost-hunting on the side. His boss, Dave (Pegg), doesn’t mind him using company equipment for his passion because he remains his top employee.

Right off the bat, “Truth Seekers” reveals its American influences. No Jane Austen social commentary here. Gus is fixated on snagging more hits on his “Truth Seekers” YouTube page. The bigger the audience, the better the personal validation. His partner in crime is a sweet, slightly overweight black fellow whose name happens to be Elton John (Samson Kayo). His past is laced with supernatural twists, which may account of his unwitting ability to discover secret passages. Completing the trio is the mysterious Astrid (Emma D’Arcy), who appears to have been chased by ghosts in her home, and at a hospital, in the past.

Each episode delivers a new site to explore, wheth-

Sweetly Comic Series “Truth Seekers”

er it be an elderly woman confused as to why her dog does not bark when called (the pooch has been missing since 1965), or voices trapped in a World War II radar-jamming device, or a horror-themed hotel with — and I love the title — a “Nightmare on Elm Suite” room.

The reoccurring thread between all the supernatural activity is paranormal author Peter Toynbee (Julian Barratt), whose plans involve a wicked plot to achieve immortality.

The irony of each episode is how little we care about the alleged ghosts under exploration. The show does not allow for elaborate effects, so the big finish to each investigation feels underwhelming. Now, whether that is because the show’s budget is too slim remains to be seen. I suspect, though, that “Truth Seekers” is more intrigued by these oddballs who, on any other day, have little in common, but whose unresolved pasts bind them together. More so with each passing episode. Gus, Elton and Astrid are lonely, craving human interaction. They wear their hearts on their sleeves, and they are so desperate for credibility through their YouTube page, they will film practically anything. Hence, Gus hilariously capturing on video Elton picking up dog poop as a sign of “the Beast of Bodmin Moor,” a legendary phantom wild cat in Cornwall.

The show’s unlikely characterizations extend to

the supporting players. My favorite invention is the unexpected friendship between Gus’ father-in-law, Richard (“A Clockwork Orange” psycho Malcolm McDowell) and Elton’s agoraphobic cosplaying sister, Helen (Susie Wokoma). These two are absolutely wonderful together: sweet, withdrawn outcasts who have more in common than they realize. The closer they become, the more Gus and company incorporate them into their investigations. And that’s where the joy of “Truth Seekers” emerges: watching this improbable group take on threats far greater than their ability to vanquish them.

By the eighth episode, what happens to Peter Toynbee was of little consequence to me. I just did not want anything bad to happen to Gus and his pals, especially Richard and Helen, who find themselves too close for comfort in an empty warehouse where Peter stages his shenanigans.

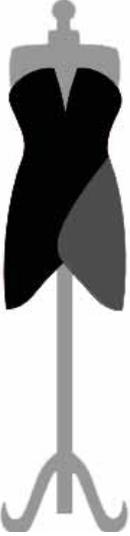
The last image of “Truth Seekers” leaves the door wide open for Season 2, with one doozy of a revelation. No word yet from Amazon Prime as to whether it has renewed the show. It would be a shame, though, if another batch of episodes never comes to light. Pegg, Frost and everyone involved in the show have tapped into something special.

□

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



“Truth Seekers” has a sweet side with the introduction of Gus’ father-in-law, Richard (Malcolm McDowell), and Elton’s agoraphobic sister, Helen (Susie Wokoma), who become unlikely friends. The series is streaming on Amazon Prime.



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The library is open, but with restrictions in place. Until further notice, hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday. There is no public seating. The library also follows LaPorte County Health Department's Public Health Order Face Covering Mandate by requiring masks inside the building. Every individual must wear a face covering over his/her nose and mouth at indoor areas open to the public. The circulation and reference desks will have masks available for \$1.

The following services have been temporarily suspended: public programs and meetings; literacy tutoring; MakerSpace/3-D printing; study rooms; homebound service; interlibrary loan; puppets; puzzles; blocks and children's AWE computers in Youth Services; Ellison die cut machine; public faxing; microfilm use; magazine/book sale; and acceptance of donations.

Access is limited to the computer lab: One session (up to one hour) per person per day is allowed. Due to social-distancing guidelines, only one person at a station at a time. Children are not allowed in the computer lab with parents/guardians.

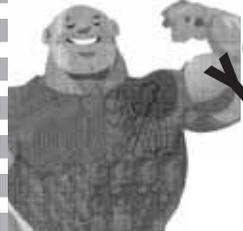
One computer is reserved for genealogy research, with time limited to one hour per person per day.

Four charging tables allow a limit of 30 minutes per use (no seating is available at these stations).

WiFi is available throughout the building and exterior/parking lot.

The following virtual programming is scheduled:
• **Storytime and Crafts to Go at 10 a.m. Wednesdays.** A new storytime video, aimed at children through age 5, will be posted on the website at 10 a.m. Wednesdays. Each video is available for two weeks at the following link: www.mclib.org/parents/story-time/. New take-home crafts are available Wednesdays to accompany the virtual storytimes. Visit the Youth Services desk to get them. Contact the Youth Services department at (219) 873-3045 for more details.

Michigan City Public Library is located at 100 E. Fourth St. Visit www.mclib.org for more details.



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Former LB Resident Turns 100



Lillian Coffee is photographed with her two daughters-in-law, Luanne and Barbara, at Barbara's home in North Carolina.

Philanthropic Educational Organization Chapter BR is celebrating the 100th birthday of Lillian Coffee, a former local club member and Long Beach resident now living with family in North Carolina.

Born on Nov. 14, 1920, in Elyria, Ohio, Lillian was the oldest of four children and the only girl. After high school, she attended business school. Continuing her education at 49, she completed a marketing course in Chicago and for a few years worked at Charles Stevens Department Stores.

After her marriage to Leo Coffee Sr. on Oct. 16, 1942, her family grew to include four boys, 11 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren. Three of her four daughters-in-law are P.E.O. members.

Friends describe Lillian as a generous, loving, faithful woman personifying the ideals of P.E.O. and a good cook. She enjoyed reading, gardening, decorating and entertaining friends and family. She was an active member of her church, often teaching Bible study classes. She also is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and has been a P.E.O member for more than half her life, honored at the 2015 state convention as a Golden Girl.

Several parties are being held where she lives with her eldest son, Leo Jr., and his wife in North Carolina.

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Learning Center Webinar Series

Honoring November as National Native American Heritage Month, Dunes Learning Center will continue the online webinar series “Indigenous Perspectives for a Sustainable Environment” from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Mondays.

The series examines the strengths and limitations of using western science, and how indigenous science can help manage resources for a sustainable future. Topics include language and cultural bias, food systems, land-management techniques and gardening.

The facilitator is Billie Warren, a citizen of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi who also is Bear Clan. She has been an educator, environmentalist, humanitarian and beadwork artist for more than 20 years. She founded the nonprofit organization Jibek Mbwakawen Inc., which aims to improve the environment by connecting people to the land from an indigenous perspective. She has a Bachelor of Arts from Indiana University-Northwest and is pursuing a graduate degree.

The schedule is:

- Nov. 23: “Food Sustainability and Sovereignty.” Discover the scientific food systems of traditional “wild” food, and how these sustainable indigenous systems can benefit the environment. The speaker is Elena Terry, executive chef/founder of Wild Bearies, a non-profit catering organization, and coordinator of the Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance Culinary Program.
- Nov. 30: “The Art of Indigenous Gardening.” Learn the history of sustainable indigenous gardening, including planting, harvesting and seed saving. The speaker is Gina Roxas, Prairie Band of Potawatomi medicinal gardener project manager.

The full series costs \$40, or \$10 for each. Visit tinyurl.com/y4onxf7v to register.



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Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

(Never known to fail.)

Oh, most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh, Star of the 'Sea, help me and show me, herein you are my mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth! I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor me in

this necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. Oh, show me herein you are my mother. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (3x). Holy Mother, I place this cause in your hands (3x). Holy Spirit, you who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can attain my goal. You who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances in my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things as you confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you in Eternal Glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. The person must say this prayer 3 consecutive days. After 3 days, the request will be granted. This prayer must be published after the favor is granted.

Hey U.G.L.Y. Contest Winner Named

Marsh Elementary School student Zoey Moyer won Hey U.G.L.Y.'s 17th annual international acronym contest.

Moyer converted the negative word "hate" into "Hope Always Trumps Evil."



Marsh Elementary School student Zoey Moyer.

The contest is part of a curriculum Hey U.G.L.Y. offers to schools and youth-serving organizations. It aims to empower youth to be part of the solution to bullying, substance abuse and suicide. Moyer's insights earned her \$100, an official T-shirt and a certificate of excellence.

The awards were made possible by a donation from Dean

Klassman, of Klassman Financial. The judges represented an independent panel of journalists and writers: Lisa Barron, writer/producer for Weigel Broadcasting/CBS Television; Rieva Lesonsky, former editorial director of *Entrepreneur Magazine*; Paul DeCeglie, a writer for *Pattaya Today*; Jay LaRico, freelance writer and author of The Choice of Angels; and Sporty King, poet, author and professional speaker.

Hey U.G.L.Y.'s annual contests are under way, with a May 31, 2021, deadline. Visit <http://heyugly.org> for more details.

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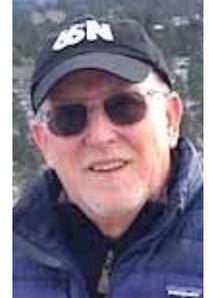


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First Barker Prize Recipient Named

Thomas McCormick, praised for taking on leadership roles that benefit Michigan City residents, is the first recipient of the Barker Prize through The Barker Welfare Foundation.

The prize honors the memory of John H. Barker and Catherine Barker Hickox. The winner, chosen by directors of The Barker Welfare Foundation, must be a resident of, or own a business in, LaPorte County.



McCormick

McCormick served as a board member and officer of Citizens Concerned for the Homeless Inc. He was a board member of the Share Foundation for the Handicapped, Michigan City Economic Development Corp. and Michigan City Chamber of Commerce. He was instrumental in raising the needed funds to increase the size of the Social & Learning Institute Inc. building, and helped create the Interfaith Community PADS Inc.

McCormick has served as a director and treasurer of the Barker Welfare Foundation for more than 25 years, also serving as a Foundation representative on the Michigan City Barker Civic Center Commission and as treasurer of The Friends of the Barker Civic Center.

In addition, he managed the 2010-2015 restoration and preservation of the Barker Mansion exterior, and continues to be involved in the preservation and restoration of the interior and gardens.

Mayor Duane Parry read a proclamation naming Nov. 6 as Thomas P. McCormick Day in Michigan City. In recognition of his contributions, the movie room on the lower level of Barker Mansion will be renamed "The Thomas P. McCormick Theater."

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American Red Cross

The American Red Cross LaPorte County Chapter will sponsor the following bloodmobiles:

- Bethany Lutheran Church, 102 G St., LaPorte, 1-6 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 24.
- LaPorte County Fairgrounds, 2581 W. Indiana 2, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 25.

Donors must be in good general health and feeling well, at least 17 (16 with parental consent) and weigh at least 110 pounds. Call (800) 733-2767 or visit red-crossblood.org for more details. Visit rcblood.org together for more details.

Fernwood Botanical Garden

- **Fall Yoga from noon-1:15 p.m. EST Friday, Nov. 20, and Wednesday, Nov. 25.**

Join instructor Deirdre Guthrie, in person or through Zoom. All levels are welcome. Visit <https://spore-studios.com/yoga/> for details or to register.

- **Holiday Market Pop-Up Shop: The Pewter Shop from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST Saturday, Nov. 21.**

The Pewter Shop highlights pewter vases, wall pieces and ornaments. Additional pieces will be available for direct purchase in the gift shop during the holiday season from Amy Greely Studio, Lynne Tan, Treasureology, GrownUp KidStuff and Tid-dleywink Toffee.

Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve is located at 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Call (269) 695-6491 or visit www.fernwoodbotanical.org for more information and to confirm the status of classes.

Public Art Committee

The Michigan City Public Art Committee will meet through Zoom at 10 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 19. The link is tinyurl.com/y4joqj3p



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Activities to Explore

In the Area:

Nov. 21 — Kids Night Out, “Puzzle Night,” 4-7 p.m., LaPorte County Family YMCA, 901 Michigan Ave. Info: Kids Night Out-Puzzle Night on Facebook.

Nov. 21 — Turkey Trek, 10:30 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Nov. 21 — Acorn Live Stream: The Empty Pockets perform Abbey Road, 8 p.m. EST. Tickets: \$15. Reservations: tinyurl.com/yxa2cdns

Nov. 22 — J.D. Marshall Shipwreck History Hike, 2 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Through Dec. 31 — New exhibit, “New Views,” Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays/11 a.m.-4 p.m. weekends. Closed Tuesdays. Info: www.lubeznikcenter.org, (219) 874-4900.

Through Jan. 4, 2021 — Works by Jamie McNeil, Queen of All Saints Catholic Church Legacy Center, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Gallery hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Info: jessicar@qas.org.

In the Region

Nov. 20, 25 — Fall Yoga, noon-1:15 p.m. EST, Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve, 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Registration: <https://spore-studios.com/yoga/>

Nov. 21 — Holiday Market Pop-Up Shop: The Pewter Shop, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. EST, Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve, 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Info: www.fernwoodbotanical.org, (269) 695-6491.

Through Nov. 28 — Five-women exhibit, Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, Mich. Hours: noon-4 p.m. EST Fri.-Sun. Info: (269) 983-3688.

Through Dec. 20 — Elkhart Juried Regional Art Exhibition, Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St., Elkhart. Hours (all times Eastern): 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Fri., 1-4 p.m. Sat.-Sun. Info: info@midwestmuseum.us, (574) 293-6660.

Through Jan. 3, 2021 — “A Christmas Story” Comes Home Exhibit,” Hammond’s Indiana Welcome Center, 7770 Corinne Drive. Center hours: 9 a.m.-4 p.m. daily. Info: www.achristmasstorycomeshomes.com

Through Jan. 13, 2021 — Members Art Show, Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. Regular business hours: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. Info: www.chestertonart.com, (219) 926-4711.

Want your event listed in Activities?

The weekly deadline is noon Thursday
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Indiana Dunes National Park

The National Park Service will target about 897 acres with four prescribed fires this fall at Indiana Dunes National Park.

“Prescribed fire maintains the natural and cultural landscape, while reducing the threat from wildfires,” Dan Plath, IDNP chief of resource management, said in a press release. “Managing the smoke impact on our neighbors during these burns is very important to us.”

Two fires are planned in the park’s west end:

- North of the Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education and west of North Lake Street in Gary — a 158-acre area of Black Oak Savannah.
- Along the south side of U.S. 12, from the Lake-Porter County Line Road, east towards Ogden Dunes and Stagecoach Road — the 562-acre Tolleston-East area.

In the east half of the park, prescribed fires are:

- Around the Indiana Dunes Environmental Learning Center in Porter — about 167 acres south of Oak Hill Road and west of Howe Road.
- In Beverly Shores, about 10 acres immediately surrounding the Central Beach parking lot.

A map of the prescribed areas is available at <http://bit.ly/INDUFall2020>

Clear management goals and objectives are in place for each area. A designated set of conditions must exist, including ideal wind speed and direction, and relative humidity. Weather conditions will be monitored to ensure the fire is completed safely.

Porter County residents can receive free prescribed fire notifications through Porter County’s “Alert Porter County” system. The information can arrive through text, email or voice message. Visit <http://www.portercounty911.org> to sign up. Updates also are posted on the park’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/IndianaDunesNPS



The Visitor Center is at 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. The Paul H. Douglas Center is at 100 N. Lake St. in Gary’s Miller Beach neighborhood. Call (219) 395-1882 for more information.

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On November 19, 1893, *The New York World* became the first newspaper to issue a color supplement: four pages printed in five colors.

On November 19, 1954, the New Jersey Toll Road Authority installed the first automatic toll collector.

On November 19, 1959, Ford Motor Co. announced a halt to the production of the “Edsel,” a medium priced car and proven marketing disaster.

On November 19, 1969, Apollo 12 astronauts Charles Conrad and Alan Bean made man’s second landing on the moon.

On November 19, 1985, at a summit meeting in Geneva, President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev met for the first time.

On November 20, 1620, Peregrine White became the first child born to English parents in the New World. He was born aboard the *Mayflower*, the day after it arrived off Cape Cod.

On November 20, 1789, New Jersey became the first state to ratify the Bill of Rights.

On November 20, 1925, Robert F. Kennedy, brother of President John Kennedy, was born in Brookline, Mass.

On November 20, 1953, Texas oilman Hugh Roy Cullen gave \$2.25 million to the University of Houston after its football team beat Baylor University.

On November 20, 1967, the Census Clock at the Commerce Department ticked past 200 million.

On November 20, 1992, fire seriously damaged the northwest side of Windsor Castle, the favorite weekend home of Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II.

On November 21, 1766, the first permanent theater building in the United States, Philadelphia’s Southwark, opened with “The Gamester.”

On November 21, 1783, Francois Pilate de Rozier and the Marquis d’Arlandes traveled five miles (at a height of 300 feet) in the first manned hot-air-balloon voyage.

On November 21, 1871, New York’s Moses Gale was granted the first patent for a cigar lighter.

On November 21, 1877, Thomas Edison announced the invention of the phonograph, which he described as a “talking machine.”

On November 21, 1922, Georgia’s Rebecca Felton was sworn in as the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate. She was appointed to serve the remaining term of the late Sen. Thomas Watson, and served for just one day before his elected successor took office.

On November 21, 1980, on the CBS soap opera, “Dallas,” 83 million TV viewers found out it was

Kristin Shephard who shot J.R. Ewing.

On November 22, 1718, English pirate Edward Teach, usually referred to as “Blackbeard,” was killed during a battle off the coast of Virginia.

On November 22, 1906, delegates to the International Radio Telegraphic Convention in Berlin adopted “SOS” as the call letters for the new international distress signal. While it was primarily designed for ships at sea, it also could be used for any call for help.

On November 22, 1909, Miss Helen Hayes made her stage debut in the play “In Old Dutch,” which opened at New York’s Herald Square Theatre.

On November 22, 1928, in Paris, Maurice Ravel’s “Bolero” was first performed.

On November 22, 1963, President John Kennedy was assassinated as he rode in a Dallas motorcade. Texas Gov. John Connolly, riding in the same car as the president, was seriously wounded.

On November 23, 1835, Henry Burden, of Troy, N.Y., received a patent for a horseshoe-making machine.

On November 23, 1889, the jukebox made its debut in San Francisco, at the Palais Royale saloon.

On November 23, 1936, the first issue of *Life*, the picture magazine created by Henry Luce, was published in Chicago.

On November 23, 1969, the world’s first earth-to-space news conference was held on board the Apollo 12 Space Ship.

On November 24, 1859, British naturalist Charles Darwin published On the Origin of Species, explaining his theory of evolution through natural selection.

On November 24, 1869, women from 21 states gathered in Cleveland to draw up plans for organizing the “American Women Suffrage Association.”

On November 24, 1963, in Dallas, Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John Kennedy, was shot to death by Jack Ruby.

On November 24, 1971, a hijacker, who went by the name of “Dan Cooper,” parachuted from a Boeing 727 over Washington state with \$200,000 in ransom money. Cooper, who is popularly — albeit incorrectly — referred to as “D.B. Cooper,” has not been heard from since.

On November 25, 1884, John Meyenberg, of St. Louis, received a patent for evaporated milk.

On November 25, 1920, radio station WTAW, of College Station, Texas, broadcast the first play-by-play description of a college football game. The game was between Texas A & M and the University of Texas.

On November 25, 1922, in Egypt, King Tutankhamen’s tomb was opened for the first time.



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Email Jennifer.willey@hotmail.com

YMCA Kids Night Out

Kids Night Out, "Puzzle Night," is from 4 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, at LaPorte County Family YMCA, 901 Michigan Ave.

The evening includes themed arts and crafts, games, swimming and other activities. A small dinner is provided.

Visit Kids Night Out-Puzzle Night on Facebook for more details.



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Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter

The Searcher by Tana French (hardcover, \$27 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook. 451 pages.)

Do you ever think about where you'd retire to if having the choice? In this latest from best-selling author Tana French, Great Britain is the destination for retired Chicago cop Cal Hooper.

After 25 years as a detective, Cal decides it's time to retire. His daughter, Alyssa, is grown and on her own in Seattle, and his marriage to Donna is dead and buried. Having had enough of the mean streets of the big city, Cal longs for a simpler, quieter life.

"That's what I came looking for...a small place. A small town in a small country. It seemed like that would be easier to make sense of. Guess I might've had that wrong."

Wrong, indeed. Stay tuned.

The west of Ireland appeals to him, and soon a real-estate agent has him packing his bags and updating his passport. He purchases a DIY cottage on a pretty bit of land near the village of Ardnakelty. He is surrounded by sheep and cattle farms in a place where the most noise comes from the rooks nesting in the backyard.

To Cal, the place is his Garden of Eden...but Cal, even Eden had its snakes...

Cal makes friends with Noreen, who owns the market store where you can buy everything from batteries to butter. She also has an unmarried sister she knows would be perfect for Cal.

Cal's closest neighbor is Mart Levin, the bachelor, close to Cal's 48 years. He's a talkative Irishman (aren't they all?!). He's full of advice, and also wants to get Cal married. What? Is this a town of match-makers?!

French sets the place, the time and the people beautifully. After about 50 pages, I had settled comfortably into Ireland — a true blood-pressure lowering moment. Closing my eyes, I could picture the countryside and feel the sun on my face, smell the peat bogs and hear the gentle bleating of the sheep.

Cal meets the rest of the village's characters at the local gin mill where stories are swapped, world events sorted out, songs sung and local gossip is always top of the list — like trying to make sense of a Yank moving into a cottage that's been empty and neglected for some years. How long will he last? Bets are soon made. The town's rumor mill is truly fascinating to observe.

Working out his backyard on a damaged desk left behind in the cottage, Cal has the cop's instinct that

he is being watched. This goes on for several days, until he announces he knows someone is there and to come out. Who comes out is Trey Reddy, a 13-year-old from a dirt poor family of five brothers and sisters and a mother. The father is like the wind — he comes and goes as he pleases.

Trey is nosy about the new Yank and the fact that he's an ex-cop. Being a detective, Cal is patient with getting information out of people. Trey is curious and cautious, and after some days of slow progress in which Trey comes around to helping with fixing up the old desk, the real reason for wanting to know Cal comes out. Trey's older brother, Brendan, is missing, and Trey is afraid something bad happened to him. Since Cal's a cop, why doesn't he find out? Trey just wants to know if Brendan is safe somewhere, or if he is dead.

Will Cal find out what happened? Only thing I can say is that there is more than one surprise along the way. First, Cal wants to get to know more about Trey, then find out what happened the days before Brendan disappeared. Cal gets the names of Brendan's mates and talks to them. Wow. What a group. But Cal knows he can find out good information from what someone doesn't say as opposed to

what they actually say. And, something Cal doesn't expect — he likes Trey's company, and the careful and precise work performed on the old desk.

Then, Cal arrives at an interesting conclusion — Noreen's sister, Lena, is...interesting. After a visit with her to look at some puppies she wants to sell, the Irish rumor mill cranks up to maximum speed and the pair is as good as married! Cal will have to put a stop to that rumor — but does he want to?

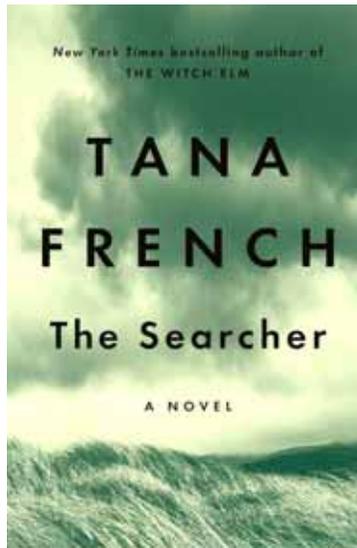
However, Lena will have to be put aside for the moment as the search for information about Brendan heats up, and Cal finds out some would want him to stop looking and asking questions that don't need to be answered. And why is that? Such a lovely, quiet Irish village — what secrets does it hold?

The atmosphere is heavy with inconsistencies, the characters, well, some of them, are not what they seem to be, and Cal finds himself unable to stop looking and questioning. There's something in Trey's demeanor that won't allow Cal to call it quits.

There also is a big reveal near the end that will shock Cal, but one thing for sure is that this is a village that needs to heal.

Did you ever read a book you didn't want to end? That's the way I feel about this one.

Till next time, happy reading!





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