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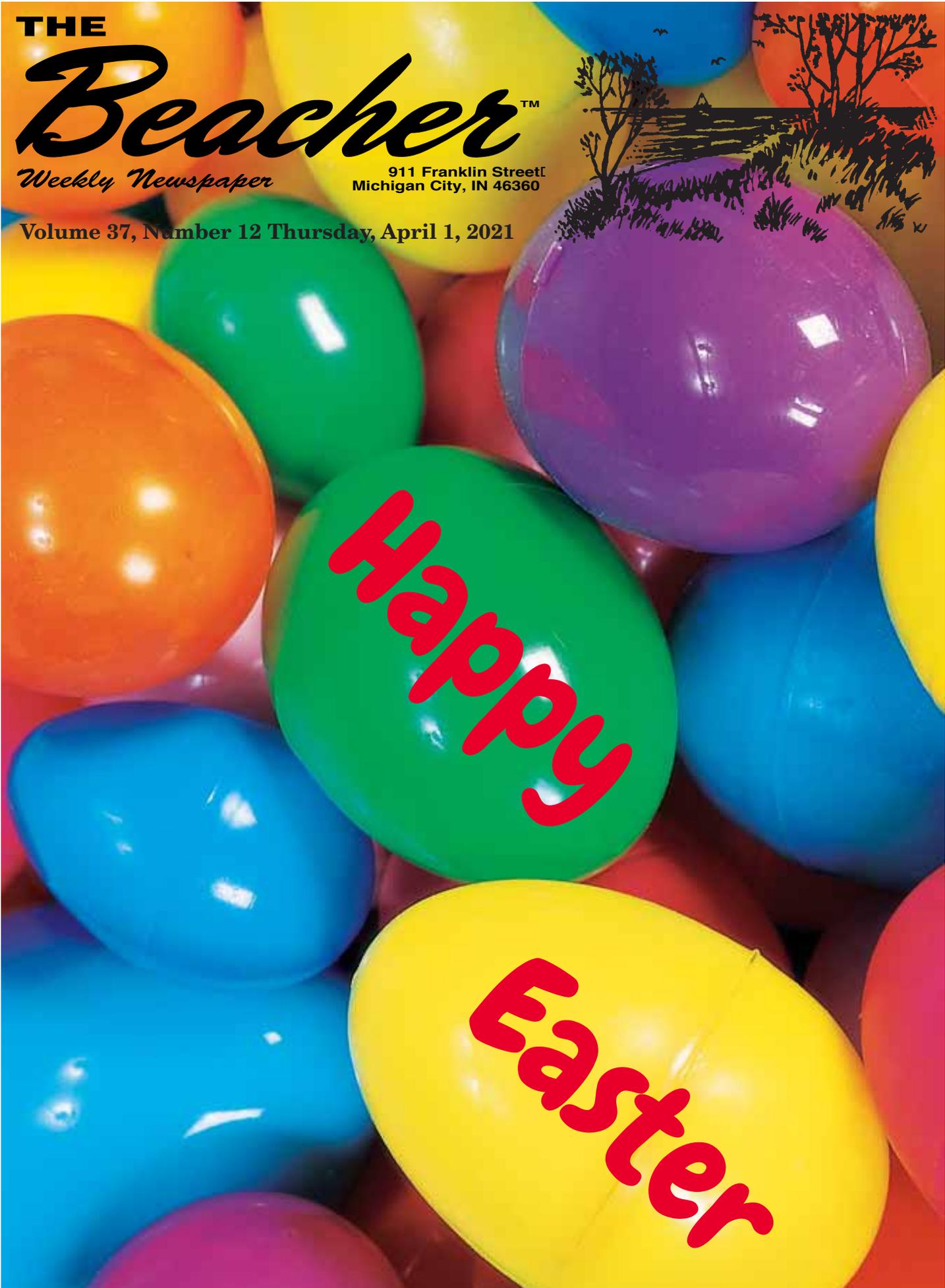
911 Franklin Street
Michigan City, IN 46360

Volume 37, Number 12 Thursday, April 1, 2021



Happy

Easter



THE Beacher

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A Learning Experience

by Kim Nowatzke

Editor’s note — This is the next in an ongoing series of articles exploring life in LaPorte County since the COVID-19 pandemic.

“One mark of a great educator is the ability to lead students out to new places where even the educator has never been.” Thomas Groome

As our nation passed what most refer to as the first anniversary of a year profoundly affected by COVID-19, local teachers reflect on leading their students through an educational experience no one ever expected or imagined. Parker Sterling, Barker Middle School’s band teacher, described it as “the most interesting and unique first two years of teaching that I could ever have imagined.”

Ask Megan Edinger, a Coolspring Elementary School first-grade teacher, the most important life lesson she learned and she’ll tell you “that our stu-

dents, teachers and parents have all risen to the challenge of what last year brought us. It has been challenging at times, but we have embraced it, and our kids still were able to learn and grow.”

The first change for Michigan City Area Schools arrived March 16 when the school district shifted to eLearning – virtual instruction already in place for inclement weather and professional development days. Students continued with eLearning until the last day of school, May 13.

MCAS students returned to school Aug. 24 for the 2020-2021 school year, but this time participating in MCAS Online, a program incorporating live classes at set times taught through Zoom. The district shifted to in-person instruction five days a week Oct. 19-30 for students whose families elect-



Notre Dame Catholic School students such as these sixth-graders have received in-person instruction for all of the 2020-2021 school year.

ed to send them back in person. But as COVID-19 numbers climbed again, an in-person hybrid schedule, with attendance online and in-person, was implemented from Nov. 2-13.

Due in large part to a staffing shortage caused by teachers quarantining or caring for those in quarantine, MCAS returned to a full online schedule Nov. 16 through Jan. 29. In-person instruction on a hybrid schedule resumed Feb. 1 and, finally, for five days a week Feb. 16.

While the majority of students have returned to in-person instruction, there are still 1,500 remote learners, either through MCAS Online or another program, the Michigan City Virtual Academy, which doesn't follow a traditional school-day schedule and is more self-paced.

Sara Rathbun, who teaches social studies and religion to sixth- through eighth-graders at Notre Dame Catholic School, said the last 12 months taught her "that teachers and students can be flexible and roll with the punches."

Her parochial school began online learning March 16 and continued in that format for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. On Aug. 26, Notre Dame Catholic School started the 2020-2021 school year in-person and currently still is.



Seventh-graders Jada Lemons (front), Lily Mrozinski, Laniah Davis (far back) and Samaria Smith (far right) participate in a Barker Build Day at Barker Middle School.

As in-person instruction transformed to learning remotely last spring, continuing for most of the 2020-2021 school year for a majority of area schools, the change brought about its own set of challenges, surprises and even unexpected positives.

"It was almost like I was a first-year teacher again — learning new ways to teach, learning new

Continued on Page 4

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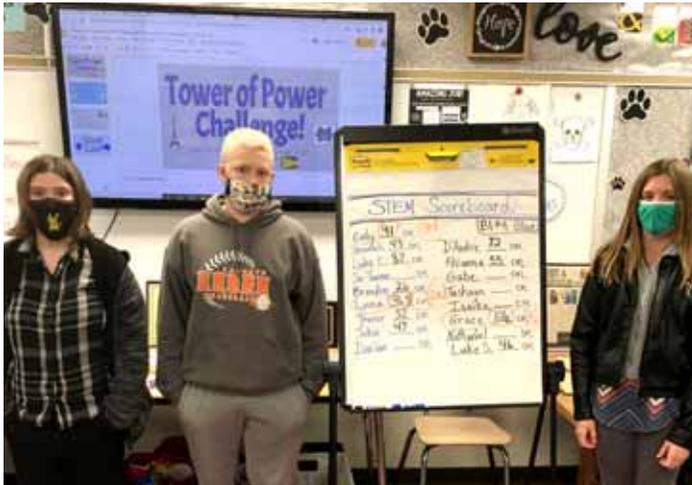


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A Learning Experience Continued from Page 3

ways to make connections to students, learning how to get kids the information in different ways, learning how to motivate students,” Christina Parsons, a Barker Middle School seventh-grade math teacher, said. “This experience was very different from previous years of teaching. During the pandemic, I was reminded how important it is to take time to talk to the kids and to check in with them to see how they are doing with everything going on. I have always tried my best to make sure I do this, but the pandemic forced me to continually check in with each student weekly. This helped build my relationships with them and motivate them to work in class. I love to learn new things and this experience, with all of its challenges, made me a better teacher. I know this experience was tough on the children socially and academically. I am so impressed with how they handled themselves.”



Seventh-graders Cody Benedict, Luna Rogers and Grace Fulford were Barker Red Carpet Winners in a STEM challenge this year.

Edinger said while on Zoom, she strove to make lessons engaging.

“We played games, celebrated birthdays and danced, all while completing our assignments,” she said. “I had to make every day interesting for my kiddos. I had TV, video games and toys to compete with while they were at home.”

Yet, she continued, “I really enjoyed being able to see my students in their home environments. I feel like I got to know them so much more by meeting their pets and their family members, and having our community building activities every Friday afternoon which included show and tell, scavenger hunts and virtual field trips.”

Describing herself as a homebody, Edinger said she never would have imagined being able to teach from the comfort of her own living room. Joining her at home were her husband, Jeff Edinger, who teaches fourth grade at Marsh Elementary School, and their two children, fourth-grader Bailee and kindergartner Brady.

As much as she enjoyed the virtual experience, Edinger said, “The most challenging part for me was not being in person with my students. Last year was very difficult not being able to complete the school year with my students. First-graders show so much growth at the end of each year; it was hard knowing they were missing out on such an important time.”

Parsons admits not seeing students in person, or meeting them in person on the first day, was difficult.

“At the beginning of the year, it was challenging to connect without seeing the students face to face. I had to learn new ways to communicate and create positive relationships. I had to figure out new ways to create engagement in my class because I was unable to walk around the room to check if they were paying attention,” she said. “During virtual learning, I was missing out on facial cues to affirm acknowledgment of understanding.”



Edgewood Elementary School Teacher Sheri Tuesburg helps out third-grader Zoe Neitzel during in-person instruction.

Sheri Tuesburg, a third-grade teacher at Edgewood Elementary School, echoed her colleagues’ sentiments.

“The most challenging thing for me as a teacher during this pandemic was not being with my students in-person,” she said. “I was so disappointed not to finish the school year with students last spring, and it

was so hard to not be with my current students for most of this school year. I am very grateful that the district has taken safety precautions and has also helped prepare us to teach virtually, but I have missed not physically being with my students on a daily basis. I’m so excited to be back in-person!”

Sterling said patience has been a challenge for him this past year.

“We teachers learned along with the students how to navigate school virtually, and for a subject such as band, it has been a unique beast on its own,” he said. “Having the patience of working with students and understanding the new programs we were using have been daunting.”

Some teachers had even more extraordinary circumstances to circumvent.

Edinger found herself diagnosed with COVID-19 the week before Thanksgiving.

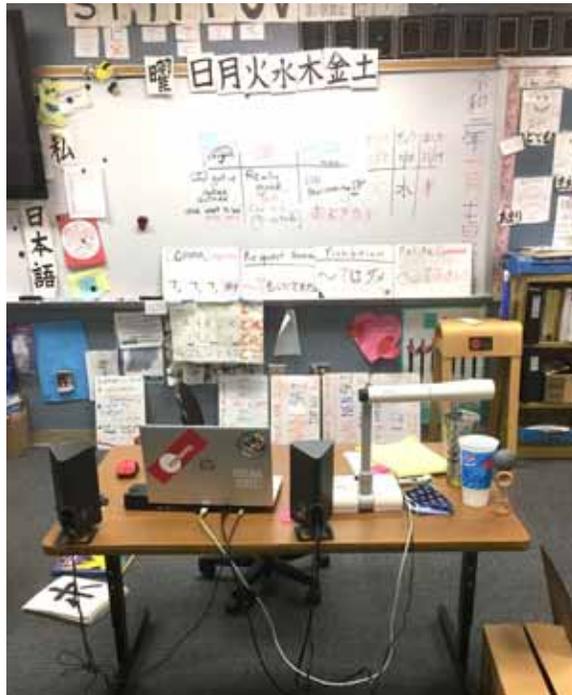
“It was the worst I have ever felt from being sick. I was unable to get out of bed for a week,” she recalled. “I did not want my students to miss out on

their learning, so I would try to make it through the mornings teaching live on Zoom, and they would work independently in the afternoons on assignments. We are given time to take off if we have COVID, but I did not want my students to fall behind.”

When Notre Dame Catholic School closed last spring due to COVID-19, kindergarten teacher Amanda Hartleib’s experience was memorable for another reason.

“I was nine months pregnant at the time, and was able to keep teaching, virtually, throughout the time that I would have normally taken a maternity leave,” she said. “It was some of the toughest work I’ve ever had to do as a teacher and parent, but I was determined to give my students one little piece of normalcy through all the changes they had to endure.”

Michael Tsugawa, Michigan City High School’s



Michael Tsugawa’s Japanese Teaching Studio, once teachers were given the option to teach from school. He reworked a document camera for his webcam, had his flashcards and posters strategically arranged on the floor and added small whiteboards in addition to his large whiteboard. Tsugawa said, “I made a lot of very lonely noise in this room.”

Japanese teacher, described the role of educators as providing reliability.

“We showed up. We tried our best,” he said. “It was a really good opportunity to show our strengths and find new ones. Every teacher I know has worked ridiculously hard this past year.”

Learning to give *and* accept grace was a constant theme among teachers.

“Being virtual sometimes felt like my teaching was put under a microscope,” Parsons said. “I felt a lot of pressure to be perfect, but as I went through I made mistakes when it came to Internet issues, computer glitches or learning about the different programs we were using. The kids would say, ‘It’s OK, Mrs. Parsons, we will wait for you to figure it out.’ Or ‘You are on mute, Mrs. Parsons, you have

to turn on the microphone!’ The students helped me

Continued on Page 6



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A Learning Experience Continued from Page 5

and reminded me that it is OK to make mistakes and be who I am.”

Tsugawa stressed the importance of “giving yourself grace to be vulnerable, to make mistakes. When you screw up – and you will – own it, share it, ask for help. The humble pie is always on the table, and there are slices for everyone.”

Tuesburg agreed.

“I learned that not only is it important that I give my students ‘grace’ during these uncertain times,” she said, “but I need to give myself ‘grace,’ as well, when I’m feeling overwhelmed.”

The experience, too, saw her expand her knowledge in the world of technology.

“I once felt nervous about implementing any new technology programs,” she said, “but now I am eager to learn new technology tools. The district provided us with many opportunities to take technology professional development courses over the summer to help prepare us for the virtual school year. These courses taught us how to enhance our teaching and prepare engaging virtual lessons for our students.”

Tuesburg continued.

“If teachers were not able to attend any of the summer training, videos were made available for teachers to view at their convenience. I was fortunate to work with a wonderful teammate that collaborated and planned with me. We were continuously supported by our principal and instructional coach. Our students have loved using Peardeck to annotate and show their learning on assignments posted on Google Slides. They have also enjoyed recording their own reading fluency on Seesaw. Virtual field trips were fun, too!”

Parsons, too, emerged with a greater repertoire of teaching tools.

“I learned how to use an amazing virtual program called Peardeck. This tool really helped me connect to the students and really see who is engaged by asking them to write and show their work on the screen,” she said. “I could quickly see who was understanding or trying and who was not. The students seemed to enjoy using this program at the beginning of the year to prove their knowledge. I



With students back in-person, Edgewood Elementary School Third-Grade Teacher Sheri Tuesburg works one-on-one with Christian Peterson.

have even started using this program in the classroom as well because I liked it so much.”

Tsugawa is thankful for the new skills he’s acquired, saying, “My toolbox has expanded.”

He mentioned several positives he discovered through eLearning and MCAS Online Learning. For example, he said the option to private chat on a Zoom call is “extremely enlightening” and a plus when “kids participate who normally might not.” He appreciated the opportunity to screen-share and use a Screencastify screen video recorder “to explain in 15 seconds rather than in a 250-word email.”

Students liked the personal aspect of it, he added.

And, Tsugawa liked the speed of it all: “How fast you can get something done – you can find out if they ‘get it’ or not.”

Currently, he teaches 70 students in person and 31 remotely.

“No matter what I do in person,” he said, “I have to do virtually. I need to be efficient and streamlined in what I do. It’s hard work, but it’s fun.”

One of Tsugawa’s favorite remote learning memories is an extra-credit assignment involving a video weather report to be completed over the weekend. One student — one not usually outgoing — dressed up and used props for the recording.



The point of view for Michigan City High School Japanese Teacher Michael Tsugawa’s “quarantine learning command center” created in his family’s kitchen in March 2020. There, his wife, Akiko, taught Japanese for Duneland School Corp. His daughter, Mia, finished fifth grade, and his son, Noa, completed kindergarten. This is what Michael saw for about 10 hours each day of teaching from March 16 to May 13, 2020.

“She dove in feet first and absolutely crushed it,” he said. “She really embraced it. I must have watched it a dozen times.”

Another time, Tsugawa recruited his 5-year-old son, Noa, and 11-year-old daughter, Mia, to create a video about transportation using items such as toy cars and airplanes.

(Tsugawa’s wife, Akiko Tsugawa, also is a Japanese instructor for middle- and high-school students with Duneland School Corp.)

Teaching a foreign language presented its own challenges when it came to remote learning.

“Language is a tool to communicate,” Tsugawa said. “It’s based on interaction. We found ourselves

A Learning Experience Continued from Page 6

separated from each other. Teaching language online sometimes felt like teaching kids to swim without water. A lot of language teachers found that to be true.”

But now, he continued, “Boy, am I glad to be back in the classroom,” he emphasized, with a new appreciation for “eye contact, genuine laughter – or genuine voiced complaints — and body language. We need to be together in real time. It’s not possible to replace real time, face-to-face contact. School is about so much more than what you’re being graded on.”

Sterling echoed Tsugawa’s sentiments.

“It (remote learning) was a wonderful supplement and a necessary step while it was used, but nothing beats in-person learning, especially for a subject such as band,” he said. “We spent some time trying to have lessons with small groups and other times having assignments and instructions given to all. These options helped some, but I have noticed the most progress while in person. This year has been a bit of a setback, but I am very motivated to make up for lost ground going forward.”

Tuesburg admitted that virtual teaching and learning are extremely challenging.

“I really wanted to ensure that I had built strong, positive relationships with my students and their families while we were online,” she said. “I can’t thank our parents enough for all of their support throughout this school year. There were technology issues that occurred that were beyond anyone’s control — loss of Internet, unstable Internet connections, students kicked off of Zoom at times. I was always worried if I was meeting all of my students’ needs when I wasn’t able to be present with them. My comfort zone is definitely being in-person, but I am thankful for the new things I learned from this virtual teaching experience.”

Even though, to date, Notre Dame Catholic School has been in-person this entire school year, Hartleib still has missed some of the usual activities that aren’t possible during a pandemic, “such as making our annual apple pie on Johnny Appleseed Day or enjoying some green eggs and ham on Dr.

Seuss’ birthday. I’m very thankful to be teaching, in person, so I always remind myself to be grateful that at least, we are together.”

Rathbun was thankful classes could be held outside on the Notre Dame campus.

“Both students and teachers loved being able to learn outside,” she remarked.

Looking back over the past year, what will teachers remember most?

“I will always remember how adaptive and resilient children can be,” Hartleib said. “I went into the school year with some anxiety, mostly related to how my students would adjust to all the new rules and procedures. They completely amazed me at how happy they were to simply be at school. Not one student complained about any of the changes that were made. Their joy and smiles are contagious and because of them, I will always look back on this year with a happy heart.”

Tuesburg will remember the challenges, but also how MCAS students and teachers rose to meet them.

“So many students did whatever they could to rise to this challenge,” she said. “It’s the same with teachers, supporting each other with different teaching styles and strategies that worked for them. Also, everyone was so understanding.

Describing the past 12 months as “one heck of a year,” Tsugawa said, “I’ve been incredibly blessed. I definitely appreciate how somebody always has it harder. We definitely became closer as a family. I will never regret having that time with my children. My son learned how to ride a bike in three days. My daughter took up riding a unicycle this past summer. It’s a joy to see a year later that if we have nothing but each other, we are doing pretty well.”

Kim Nowatzke’s article continues on the next page



Since the traditional pumpkin patch field trip wasn’t possible last fall, Coolspring Elementary School first-graders enjoyed the pumpkin patch in their own schoolyard.



Notre Dame Catholic School Teacher Amanda Hartleib’s current class of kindergarten students, taken in February 2021.

Teachers Meet Challenges for Hearing-Impaired Students

by Kim Nowatzke

As the pandemic brought on unprecedented changes for teachers, Susan Baldwin and Lori Jones found themselves especially challenged.

The two are Michigan City Area Schools Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Along with Assistant Kyle McGrew, they take care of the special needs of about 40 hearing-impaired students.

These teachers faced their first hurdle when MCAS implemented eLearning from home on March 16, 2020.

“Listening and understanding speech through a computer can be very challenging for some of our students,” Baldwin said. “We have students in preschool through 12th grade in all buildings throughout the district. All have their own set of communication needs.”

Jones added, “To understand the challenges that COVID-19 presented, you have to understand what the communication needs for these students are in a regular setting. Our students have hearing assistive technology in many forms in a regular classroom setting to be able to access their environment in the best way possible and meet their communication needs, and it all varies per student.

“When our school system was transitioned to an Online Learning Model, everything we knew and used in a regular classroom setting went out the window. It required a great deal of research, consulting with other Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, using our resources, and intensely listening to our students to make it work.”

Headsets, for example, are used so speech on Zoom meetings can be better heard and understood. When Baldwin and Jones received complaints of background noise and teachers’ voices sounding muffled, headsets with microphones were issued to teachers so their voices came across more streamlined and direct.

“Student Support Services and the Michigan City Lions Club helped support and afford all this equipment of headsets to be issued,” Jones said. “We are so grateful.”

Closed Captioning was another hurdle. Although the deaf and hard of hearing students know how to use the tool, relying on it in an Online Learning

Model was another thing.

“It was about more than making sure the CC was turned on for a video a teacher might choose to use with their instruction,” Jones said. “It was about Closed Captioning the entire Zoom session so that it could assist with what our students may be missing. It was training classroom teachers to use the CC on top of everything else they had going on and were adapting themselves to the Online Learning Model. It was explaining that CC is a little delayed, and if you ask one of our students a question, they may not answer you right away because they don’t even realize it’s been asked yet.”

Sign language became more complicated, too.

“When you have little ones thrown into a virtual classroom, filled with many students, trying to locate the communication facilitator amongst the sea of faces was definitely challenging,” Baldwin said. “At the time, we were only able to pin one person, so the student wasn’t always able to have both the teacher and the communication facilitator together on the screen at the same time, especially when the screen was being shared. It was already challenging enough to be a 5- or 6-year-old in a digital classroom, but add hearing loss and communication access to that, and it takes it to a whole new level.”

When MCAS returned to in-person instruction on Oct. 19, 2020, the facemask requirement for all students, staff and teachers increased communication difficulties for adults and children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

“The masks reduced the volume of speech — they made it more difficult for individuals to use facial cues or expressions, and lipreading became impossible,” Baldwin said.

So, Student Support Services provided fashionable and reusable clear masks for all staff with a student with hearing loss in their classroom. Other staff who provided services to that student received disposable clear masks to wear when access to their face was necessary for lipreading and facial expressions. When requested by the student, their peers also received clear masks to aid in communication.

Baldwin said she and Jones came up with the idea



MCAS preschooler Aaliyah Eckwood and Lori Jones, MCAS Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, model special face masks provided to staff and students. Unlike traditional face masks, these make lipreading and interpreting facial expressions easier for hearing impaired students.



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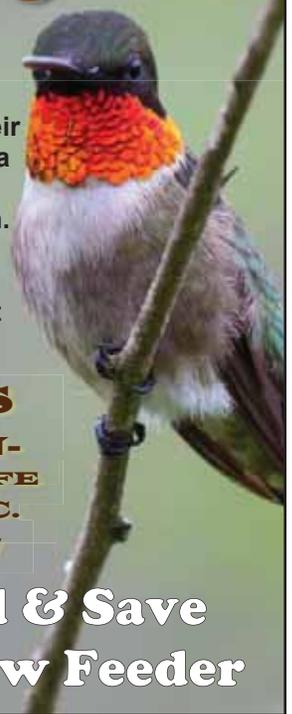
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Teachers of the Deaf... Continued on Page 8

from attending the many professional conferences addressing the needs of their students, in addition to interacting with members from the deaf community.

“We are so fortunate that Student Support Services allows us to attend round tables and conferences held by the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education and Hear Indiana to keep us current as educators with the needs of our students,” Jones said. “Unprecedented times, such as what we were facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to navigate through it successfully for our students is when resources such as these were truly helpful. Beyond that, Student Support Services and our school system listen to the knowledge we gain there on our return, and help us take action to best benefit our students.”

Baldwin added, “We are also so blessed to have deaf mentors and many friends from the deaf community who have been a tremendous support system for us and our students.”

As educators, Baldwin and Jones know the pandemic transformed them into students in ways they never expected.

“...It was prudent to be able to continue educating our students,” Baldwin said. “It was new territory, and any time you are exploring in new territory there are obstacles. The key is remembering the greater the obstacle, the more glory there is in overcoming it. For me, this experience came with pride for being able to achieve all we have, and it definitely was a huge reminder that for everything you think you know, there is always something more to be learned. I was a teacher

by day, but a student again by night.

“To say it was challenging and exhausting is an understatement,” she continued. “But in a crazy way, this experience has made me a better person, teacher and advocate. COVID has put so much in perspective, and I truly have learned not to sweat the small stuff, and to show and give grace. I’m so proud of my students, their families, their teachers, my DHH (Deaf or Hard of Hearing) team, and my school system. We continue to learn and support each other daily.”

Summing up what is most memorable for her this past year, Baldwin continued: “Teamwork! Our school system has been supportive in providing whatever we recommended so that our students with varying hearing levels and diverse communication needs could have the best access to their education. Staff has been amazing to work with and open to trying new things for our students. Our students have become stronger advocates for them-

selves and letting others know what they need. We have all learned so much through this experience, but we did it together, and that is what made it possible, successful and memorable.”

What life lesson did Jones and Baldwin take away from the pandemic teaching experience?

“There’s a part of me that feels like the sum of all my life lessons is what helped prepare me to take on this pandemic,” Jones said, “but

I think the one that was highlighted most for me during this time is that perspective is a beautiful thing.”

And for Baldwin?

“Perseverance,” she said. “To keep things in perspective. To be kind and show myself grace.”



Pine Elementary School kindergartner Sophia Choate and Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Susan Baldwin model some of the special face masks distributed to staff and students to facilitate lipreading and see facial expressions better.



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First, a caveat. Lake Michigan normally goes up and down about a foot every year. The high typically occurs in July, the low in February. So, when you try to calculate what is happening, you must compare the same month for each year.

Last year, February 2020, the measured level was 581.05 feet using IGLD1985 data reference point. That was the highest recorded level for February. This year, it was 580.1. That is about 11 inches difference. Some people have interpreted it to be 10 inches lower. The average for February is 578. So, we are still 3 feet above average.

The USACE projects that as the levels go up through July 2021, the same difference between 2020 and 2021 as February will persist so the lake will have dropped almost a foot from the same month last year compared to this year right through summer.

So, what caused this drop? Less water in and more water out. Direct water into the lake from rain on the lake and all the streams that feed directly into it was down 42% from the average February. The water coming in from Lake Superior was down 45% compared to the average February. The amount of water going out of Lake Michigan was up 24% above the average February.

Also interesting is that there is a YouTube video that shows the lakefront from Stop 39 to Stop 36. You can see the revetment walls that run along almost the entire length of that stretch of beach. Those revetments were installed in 1986 and prior years. Those revetments have stopped erosion the way they were designed to do. Check out the video at <https://youtu.be/u957njH6Wco>.

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This New Cut of “Justice League” is a Marked Improvement

by Andrew Tallackson



Cyborg (Ray Fisher) scores the most significant benefit, in terms of character development, from the four-hour length of “Zack Snyder’s Justice League,” now streaming on HBO Max.

“Zack Snyder’s Justice League” is the most extreme example of a director issuing a new cut of his film that is so radically different, it takes on a life of its own.

Snyder certainly isn’t the first to do so. Many Hollywood greats, hindered by studio interference or box-office demands, purged their lingering regret by re-releasing films as originally intended. Steven Spielberg, for instance, has two alternate versions of “Close Encounters of the Third Kind,” Ridley Scott two as well for “Blade Runner.” James Cameron trims his films for time’s sake, then saves the full vision for home viewing, like with “Aliens” and “The Abyss.”

Not familiar, though, with the cinematic acid reflux involving “Justice League” (2017)? It was supposed to be DC’s answer to “The Avengers,” rounding up Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, The Flash and Cyborg for one massive adventure. But midway through post-production, Snyder stepped down after the death of his daughter. Enter Joss Whedon, who’d courted success for Marvel with “The Avengers” and “Avengers: Age of Ultron.” His contribution to “Justice League”: hacking it to pieces and scheduling reshoots. The result: a reviled box-office dud.

I didn’t catch the film until it arrived on HBO.



“Zack Snyder’s Justice League”

Running time: 242 minutes. HBO Max.

Rated R for violence and some language

The stench of all that bad PR kept me away. First impression: Not quite the pile of excrement it was made out to be. The first half was all jumbled exposition, introducing way too many characters. The second half, not bad. A few killer action sequences. Some spiffy visuals. Ultimately, though, forgettable.

Now, through HBO Max, Snyder has spent \$70 million to create his ultimate vision for the film, complete with re-edits and reshoots. Four hours in length. Count ‘em, *four*. Do we need a four-hour super-hero film? Absolutely not. The extreme length, in fact, only reiterates a nagging flaw of the picture that I’ll get to in a bit. However, this is a massive improvement. It makes more sense. The characters make more sense. Their journey now doesn’t feel so rushed. And, it’s well told. I broke down my viewing into two two-hour chunks, and even that way, I was rarely bored.

Snyder divides the story into seven chapters, also choosing not to film it in widescreen format, but the cropped old-school TV set ratio, which is a little

weird, but OK. The action begins in the immediate wake of Superman's death, events carried out during 2016's "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice." The ripple effect of his passing is hauntingly staged by Snyder during the opening of "Justice League" before Snyder settles in to introducing each character.

Now, here is where Marvel consistently remains one step ahead of DC. Starting in 2008, it gave key characters origin stories. Iron Man. Captain America. Thor. All had their own films, with Black Widow, Loki and Nick Fury weaving throughout them. So, by the time "The Avengers" arrived in 2012, we already knew their histories. No need to rehash them.

That's why "Justice League," in many ways, is misguided in conception. It has to introduce Aquaman (Jason Momoa), Cyborg (Ray Fisher) and The Flash (Ezra Miller) during the same movie in which they have to kick ass in the end. That's too much for one movie. Had DC given these characters their own movies beforehand, a film uniting all of them could have strictly emphasized a sense of adventure.

Maybe, then, that's where streaming works to the benefit of a four-hour cut, as is the case with "Justice League." We can experience it on our own terms. Take a break here or there. This new edit has the breathing room to establish a rhythm, a balance, in telling the story. Every character is fully fleshed out, the most dramatic being Cyborg and his relationship with his scientist father (Joe Morton). Indefensibly sloppy last time, it is meaty and moving here, with Fisher permitted to invest as much humanity as he can into the character.

I'm not going to bother with a scene for scene comparison between what's new and what's the same. Just know that Snyder honors his characters well, and stages one doozy of an action sequence within a smokestack-like structure that has the characters zipping around the sides, along with one of Batman's spiffy contraptions scaling the wall like a spider. That is a *wow*.

Some things about the film, time and money cannot fix. There's still that laughable moment where Superman (Henry Cavill) is reborn not in costume, but shirtless, a move designed more to deliver props to the actor's trainer than for logically fitting into the narrative. And when Snyder piles on the special



Director Zack Snyder (right) works with Ben Affleck (left) and Gal Gadot during reshoots of "Justice League."

effects, the movie, like all of his films, can be overbearing: the bombastic score, the over-reliance on CGI. Worse, a new epilogue, complete with Jared Leto's "Suicide Squad" Joker, borders on annoying. Useless.

But out of the three DC films Snyder has crafted, the first being 2014's "Man of Steel," this version of "Justice League" is the best. Again, the four-hour running time is a lot, but at least this time, we understand what Snyder, as a storyteller, hoped to achieve. And for the most part, he achieves it.



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HBO's "Beartown" Lacks the Soul of Backman's Popular Book

by Andrew Tallackson



Ulf Stenberg stars as Peter Andersson, who returns home to coach the local hockey team.

Like each Fredrik Backman adaptation before it, "Beartown" is good...just not good enough.

The Swedish author — beloved for his grumpy old man debut, "A Man Called Ove" — is an acquired taste. Book after book, he champions life's misfits. To say they march to their own beat isn't accurate. Backman's oddballs don't realize certain beats exist in the first place.

"Beartown" (2017), an unusually dark piece for the light-as-a-feather storyteller, was the Swedish equivalent to "Friday Night Lights." It's set in a small town blanketed by forests, where hockey reigns supreme not just as a sport, but as a way of life. Where the locals turn a blind eye to accusations of rape so their team can win a championship.

Now a five-episode limited HBO series, "Beartown" treads in the footsteps of previous Backman adaptations "A Man Called Ove" and "Britt-Marie Was Here." The stories remain intact, but they're like watching the CliffsNotes versions. The souls are missing. If "Beartown" on the page was tragedy rescued by hope, the TV series, by comparison, is a bleak downer.

The story, as recreated for television, is faithful to the book. Peter Andersson (Ulf Stenberg) returns to his home turf of Beartown after personal tragedy and a failed NHL career. He's been hired to coach the junior hockey team, the star player being Kevin Erdahl (Oliver Dufåker). Kevin is a portrait of tortured youth. Good at the sport, but forced into it by his snarling pit bull of a father (Tobias Zilliacus). The clink of his pucks smashing into the nets as he practices each night is heard throughout town. Everyone knows, it's Kevin.

We meet Peter's family, including his attorney wife, Mira (Aliette Opheim), and vibrant teen daughter, Maya (Miriam Ingrid), as well as the

many townsfolk. Like Benji (Otto Fahlgren), who is secretly gay and plays soccer only to be close to Kevin, his crush. And Amat (Najdat Rustom), the pipsqueak player who happens to be the team's fastest.

What the series gets right, much in the spirit of "Friday Night Lights," is the way sports in small towns are a religion and the players their gods. How parents with failed dreams live through their children, pushing them to extremes. And how these parents swarm coaches with expectations, achieving a suffocating air that borders on claustrophobia.

And one night, after a rare win for the team, Kevin hosts a post-game bash. Maya, attracted to him, joins him in his bedroom. But when she realizes she's not ready for sex, he forces her down and rapes her. A town already divided becomes even more polarized after the incident comes to light.

If you've read the book, then all of this sounds familiar. The adaptation sticks closely to Backman's tale, charting the way Beartown turns on Peter, all leading to a dramatic meeting in which the soccer association tries to oust him from his post.

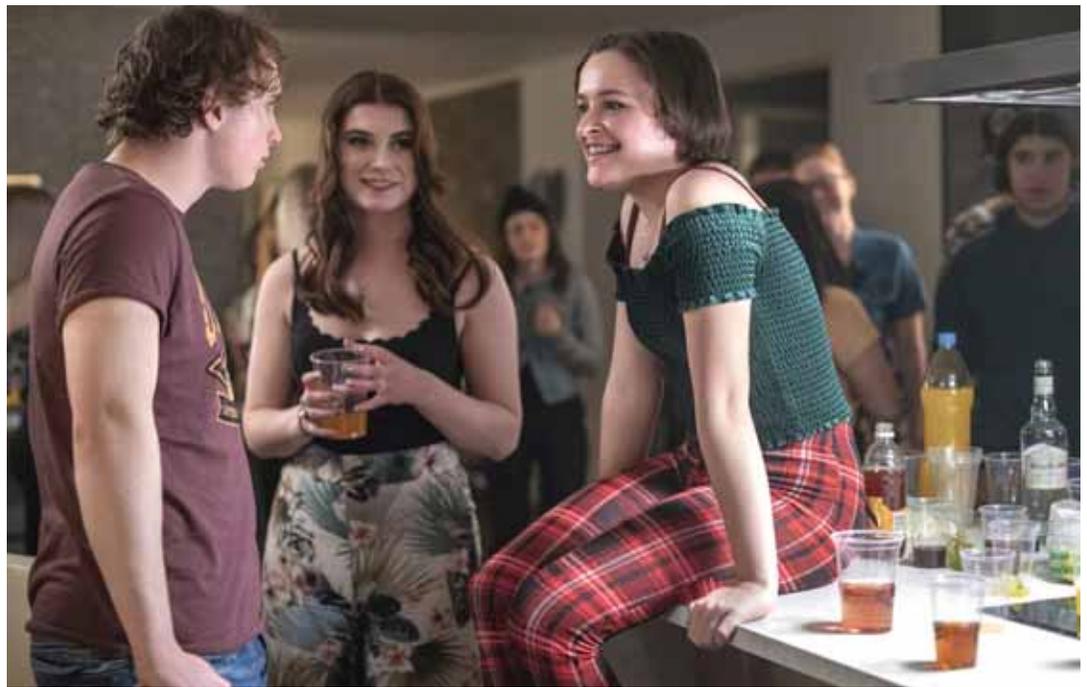
The story is universal, one that could unfold anywhere. That's Backman's gift. He filters his tales through Swedish sensibilities, but we all relate to the foibles of his men and women. But in watching all the particulars of his story unfold on television, I kept wondering why it wasn't affecting me. Everything, and everyone, looks and feels like it should, although the performances seem to plateau at a flat level. Only Opheim as Mira, distraught at how Beartown turns against her daughter, vents the kind of rage that registers. She feels real.

It struck me, gradually, that what's missing in Backman's adaptations is Backman himself. His voice as an author cannot be replicated on film. He exists almost as an omniscient narrator: a wise

sage with comforting wisdom and perspective. Even when his stories go dark, his narration prods us along, suggesting we hang tight, that the payoff is worth it. And he finds beauty in the small moments. Incidents where people summon the courage to take a stand. To be brave. To show compassion.

During the fifth and final episode, I realized, *that* is what is missing. There's some of that present, but not enough of it. Most of the scenes of decency in the book, where Peter and his family realize they're not alone, are absent from the series. These moments in the book were what made the entire tale worth it. What remains in the series, while resolving itself, feels like a major bummer.

Backman wrote a followup, "Us Against You," which I did not care for as it mostly washed away



The turning point in "Beartown" is the moment Kevin Erdahl (Oliver Dufåker, left) and Maya (Miriam Ingrid) meet up at a party.

the satisfying resolution of its predecessor. If the creators of HBO's "Beartown" decide to keep going, then we're in for a lot more doom and gloom.

Too bad.

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“The Last Blockbuster” Offers Bittersweet Look at Bygone Era

by Andrew Tallackson

It must be the movie geek in me. How else, then, to justify choking up at the end of a documentary about a video store?

Well, not just *any* video store. “The Last Blockbuster,” a new Netflix documentary, introduces us to the last Blockbuster Video on the planet. It’s in Bend, Ore. Center of the state. Population about 75,000 or so. The residents aren’t yokels. Just not ready to bid farewell to the once-iconic fixture of the American landscape.

Such bittersweet nostalgia makes “The Last Blockbuster” engaging. It does not tell us anything we don’t already know – Netflix was a key player in the franchise’s demise, duh – but it effectively reminds us of a way of life that no longer exists. Well, *almost* no longer exists.

Director Taylor Morden dishes out the genesis of the video store, and how Blockbuster Video struck revenue deals with Hollywood studios that put mom-and-pop stores out to pasture. Behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealing, and being one-step behind Netflix, saw the franchise collapse...save for the store in Oregon.

We meet Sandi Harding, the store’s general manager, and she’s fascinating. She and virtually every member of her family have kept it going. Every Tuesday, she goes to Target to buy copies of the latest movies. Her family prints out Blockbuster DVD case labels. Their agreement to stay in business, by the way, runs through DISH TV. And what about all that ancient Blockbuster equipment? Well, she takes what she calls the “Frankenstein” approach, piecing together bits from other computers.

Sprinkled between scenes of Sandi and her family are a few familiar faces, like actor Adam Brody (“The O.C.”) and writer-director Kevin Smith, whose micro-budgeted “Clerks” was set in and around a New Jersey strip-mall video store.

Everyone interviewed has a story to tell. About finding a copy of a new release before everyone else. About late fees and not returning copies. But what “The Last Blockbuster” really offers is a snapshot of a way of life that fell to the wayside. The video store, it reminds us, was a social hub. The means for a community to interact with each other. To get out of the house, chat movies with other movie buffs,

recommend films to each other, pick up packets of popcorn and boxes of candy.

Harding is more than just a store manager. More like, a protector of film. The community’s surrogate mother. Watching people grow into adults, raise



Sandi Harding is the manager of the title store in “The Last Blockbuster,” now streaming on Netflix.

★ ★ ★ 1/2

“The Last Blockbuster”

Running time: 86 minutes. Netflix. Not Rated.

children of their own.

The documentary shows how Harding’s Oregon Blockbuster, initially dismissed as an anachronistic joke, has garnered considerable national and international attention. Interviews with *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and CNN. It has become a mecca of sorts for travelers from across the globe who arrive hoping to recapture a fleeting moment from their youth, of walking through the aisles, smelling the smells.

At the close of “The Last Blockbuster,” everyone interviewed receives a replica of a Blockbuster Video VHS movie case. They seem in awe. Taking in the scent of the plastic. Snapping the case open and shut. Commenting on the weight of it. And it was here the movie got to me. For those who “get” it, who appreciate what the documentary wants to achieve, you will be moved, too.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com

And the Nominees Are...

PICTURE

- "The Father"
- "Judas and the Black Messiah"
- "Mank"
- "Minari"
- "Nomadland"
- "Promising Young Woman"
- "Sound of Metal"
- "The Trial of the Chicago 7"

DIRECTOR

- Lee Isaac Chung, "Minari"
- Emerald Fennell, "Promising Young Woman"
- David Fincher, "Mank"
- Chloé Zhao, "Nomadland"
- Thomas Vinterberg, "Another Round"

ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

- "Judas and the Black Messiah"
- "Minari"
- "Promising Young Woman"
- "Sound of Metal"
- "The Trial of the Chicago 7"

ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

- "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm"
- "The Father"
- "Nomadland"
- "One Night in Miami"
- "The White Tiger"

ACTRESS

- Viola Davis, "Ma Rainey"
- Andra Day, "The U.S. vs. Billie Holiday"
- Vanessa Kirby, "Pieces of a Woman"
- Frances McDormand, "Nomadland"
- Carey Mulligan, "Promising Young Woman"

ACTOR

- Riz Ahmed, "Sound of Metal"
- Chadwick Boseman, "Ma Rainey"
- Anthony Hopkins, "The Father"
- Gary Oldman, "Mank"
- Steven Yeun, "Minari"

SUPPORTING ACTOR

- Sacha Baron Cohen, "The Trial of the Chicago 7"
- Daniel Kaluuya, "Judas and the Black Messiah"
- Leslie Odom Jr., "One Night in Miami"

- Paul Raci, "Sound of Metal"
- Lakeith Stanfield, "Judas and..."

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

- Maria Bakalova, "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm"
- Glenn Close, "Hillbilly Elegy"
- Olivia Colman, "The Father"
- Amanda Seyfried, "Mank"
- Yuh-Jung Youn, "Minari"

1st & 2nd Place Prizes

Rules for The Beacher's Beat the Editor Contest:

Check one box in each category. Only one entry per person. Entries from *Beacher* employees will not be accepted. Forms can be dropped off at *The Beacher* or submitted by mail to: The Beacher, Attn: Oscar Contest, 911 Franklin St., Michigan City, IN 46360. Only scanned copies will be allowed by email to drew@thebeacher.com. The deadline is noon Friday, April 16. Editor Andrew Tallackson's picks will appear in the April 22 edition, before the April 25 telecast. Those who beat his picks will be placed into a drawing. First place receives a \$25 Fiddlehead gift certificate and an AMC movie pass. Second place receives an AMC movie pass. If no one beats him, readers with the most correct picks will be placed into the drawing. The winner will be revealed in the May 6 edition.

Name:

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Two Lessons Learned

Friday is our day. I pick up DJ, my 2 1/2-year-old grandson, around 8:30, and our first stop is the drive-thru window at the local coffee shop.

As we wait our turn in the serpentine line of cars, I twist around the Tahoe's bulky headrest and ask DJ, "Would you like milk or apple juice today?"

"Cake pop," he shouts. His chubby legs kick wildly at the passenger seat back.

I stifle a laugh. "OK. Cake pop. Do you want milk, too?"

"Juice, Yu-Yu! Juice!"

DJ is still working on his "L's." My fear is that when I'm a shriveled-up, 97-year-old lady in a nursing home, I'll still be known as "Yu-Yu." And, at that final stage in life, nobody will have a clue as to how my chosen grandma name morphed from "Lulu" to "Yu-Yu."

I inch the car closer to the ordering kiosk. "OK, DJ, your Lulu will get you an apple juice and a cake pop."

I make a mental note. After our usual stops at the car wash and post office, DJ and I better head to the beach or pool so my little guy can run off the potent sugar buzz I'm about to pay handsomely for.

At the gas station, DJ watches me from his car seat as I pump gas. I wave to him through the open car window, and he waves back. After I snag the receipt for the express car wash attached to the service station, I replace the pump handle and open my car door.

"Close the door, Yu-Yu. 'Member?" DJ doesn't mean the driver's side door. He's reminding me to close the little round door into which I pumped the gas. As I close the latch on the fuel injection system, I chuckle at myself and at DJ's perceptiveness.

When I put the car in gear, DJ's voice is louder than it needs to be. "Mask off, Yu-Yu! Mask off."

That Girl, This Life

Julie Ryan McGue

I know what my daughter would want me to say: "DJ, use your inside voice, please. Ask me again in a nice way." But I don't say this. I throw my hot-pink mask on the console and smile knowingly around the headrest at DJ.

My grandson and I have done this fill-the-car-with-gas-and-go-through-the-car wash drill a half-dozen times. I know. There's anxiety building up in him. The machinations of the car wash fascinate and intrigue him. Thrill him. But the combination of the flood of bubbles, which obscures visibility, and the dramatic thud-thud of the rinse cycle challenges him. DJ's insistent tone is less about him being leery of a mask – one that makes his "Yu-Yu" look less like his grandmother – and more about struggling to control the cocktail of fear-joy brimming up inside his little body.

At the entrance to the car wash, I enter the code off the receipt and pull forward. As we wait for the green light go-ahead, DJ's voice shifts to a whisper.

"Hold hand, Yu-Yu. Hold hand!" he says.

The first time we navigated this car wash routine together, I was puzzled by DJ's sudden show of anxiety. Then, I quickly clicked out of my seat belt and threaded an outstretched palm through the seats. As the car lurched into the wash chamber, DJ clutched my long fingers around his small ones and fixed a steely gaze at the windshield. When I returned DJ home at dinnertime, I quizzed his dad.

"Just a little anxiety, but it didn't mean he didn't enjoy it," my son-in-law verified.

Beautiful, I thought. My grandson had the sense to express his need for a soothing touch so he could experience something which he was profoundly interested in.

Whether you are a child, a teenager or an adult, I offer two takeaways from my day with DJ. If you succumb to unhealthy demands, like ordering cake pops and apple juice, make certain you have certain counter-effect measures planned. And, for every experience in life, a joyful moment comes as a result of conquering some amount of fear.

For me, Fridays with my grandson mean enacting a relaxed agenda, regarding the world with a finer focus and appreciating the resulting magic. The time we spend together is not without moments of frustration, a few tears and a test of wills, but there also is laughter and inspiration. The day I spend with my grandson is a marvelous contrast, and a reset to the six other days when I'm forced to experience our crazy world as an adult.

(Julie McGue is a Duneland Beach resident.)

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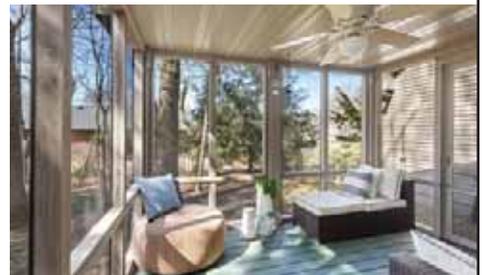
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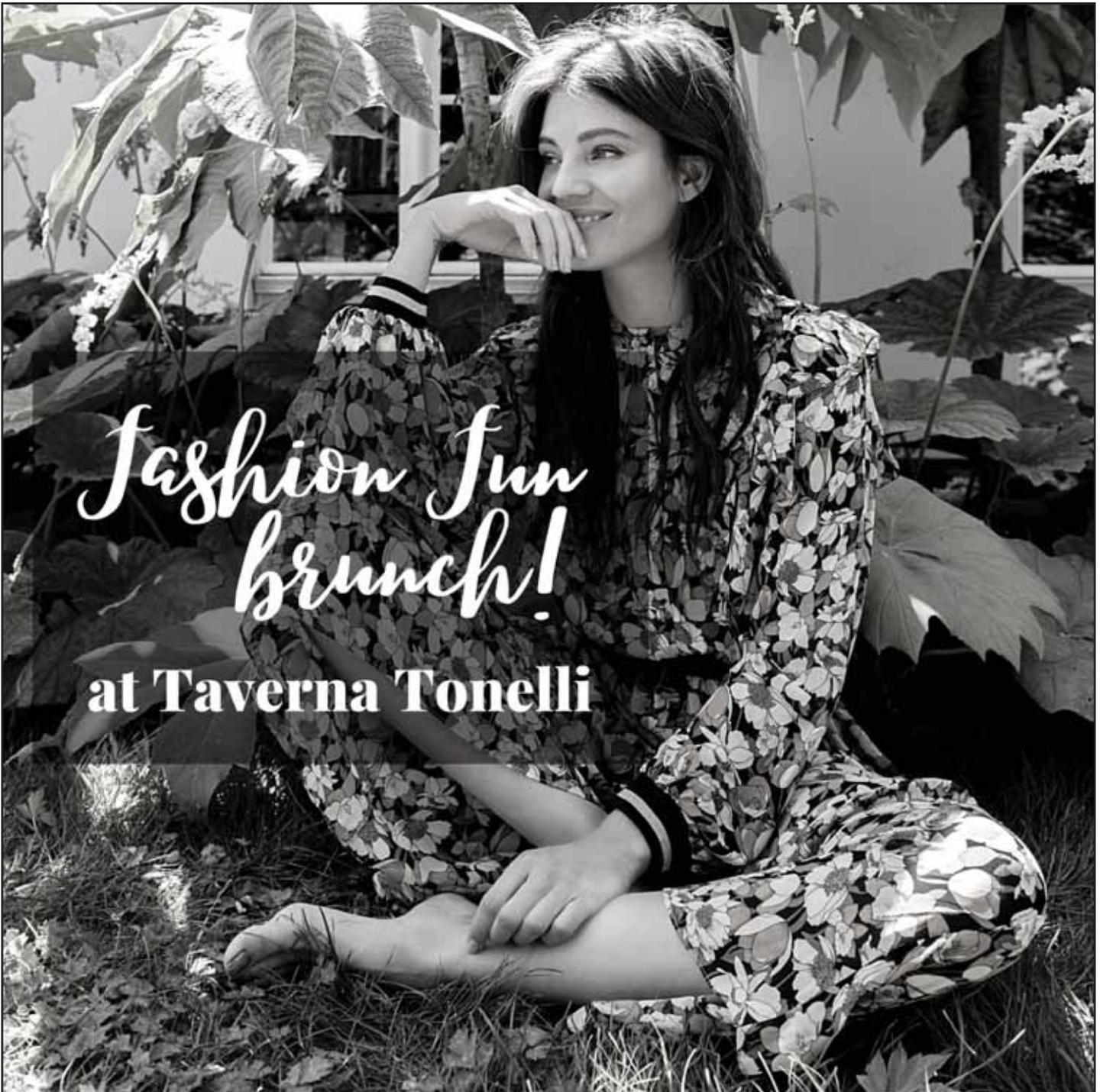
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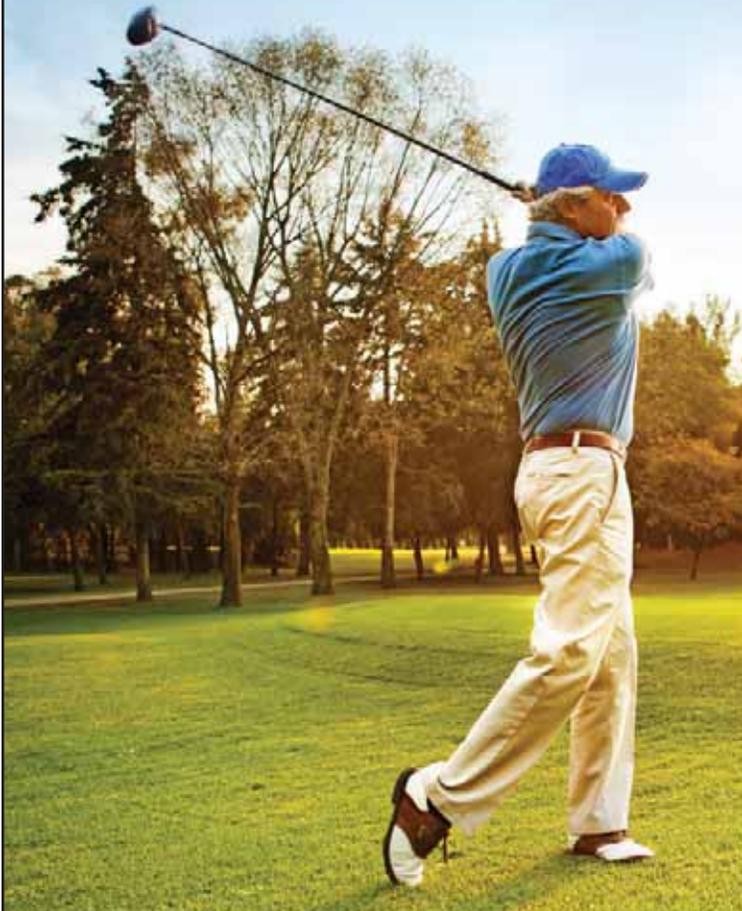
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Dunes Summer Theatre Youth Theatre Classes



Instructors Tito Sanchez-Williams (left) and Amber Zangari are veteran theater performers.

Dunes Summer Theatre will host three Summer Youth Theatre Classes for children ages 5-18 beginning in mid-June.

All classes will be conducted on the Michiana Shores campus, 288 Shady Oak Drive, and according to CDC guidelines. Class sizes are limited to give each student a personalized experience, Dunes Arts Foundation Education Coordinator Amber Zangari said in a press release.

Class instructors Zangari and Tito Sanchez-Williams are veteran theater performers with expertise in teaching youth. Zangari graduated with a focus in theater performance from Huntington Univer-

sity's School of Arts. She has been teaching young artists in person and online for the past five years. Sanchez-Williams, the DAF artistic director, earned a master's degree at the New School for Drama in New York City. He has taught classes for Dunes Summer Theatre children for the past two years.

Sanchez-Williams will introduce students to acting techniques in "Discovering Acting." The class will include script analysis, scene work, voice projection and improvisation. Two sections of the five-week, two-hour class are being offered: one for children 7-12 and another for teens 13-18.

Zangari will lead "Music Theatre Techniques." Students learn proper vocal techniques, character analysis and dance movements. Two sections of the five-week, two-hour class are offered: one for children 7-12 and another for teens 13-18. Zangari also will teach a special four-week class, "Making Magic with Masks," for actors ages 5-8. Children create theatrical characters by making a new mask each week and performing short scenes with their characters.

Visit www.dunesarts.org/youth-theatre-classes for additional information.



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Child Abuse Prevention Month Sheds Light on Pressing Issue

Editor's note — The following article was submitted by staff from Dunebrook

April welcomes daffodils, tulips and soft rains.

It also kicks off Child Abuse Prevention Month. Dunebrook is joining with communities across the nation using a community garden metaphor to reinforce the message that *“Every day, we help positive childhood experience take root.”*

Giving children the chance to grow up safe, healthy and happy is as vital to our well-being as water and oxygen. After all, we harvest what we sow. Children who grow up loved and nurtured are more likely to be loving and nurturing to others.

Sadly, the opposite holds true, too. Dunebrook Executive Director Jeanne Ann Cannon, LCSW, has a long history of working in treatment centers and schools. She witnessed firsthand the connection between addiction or problems at school and dysfunction or stress at home.

“Every time we hear about an act of violence, we have to wonder what was going on in their childhood that led to this,” she said.

Sometimes, violence stems from mental illness or other situations completely unrelated to home life. But, sometimes, there is a deeper family issue.

Child-abuse prevention is somewhat misunderstood. We constantly hear news accounts of child maltreatment: children who have been kept in horrid conditions, denied food or medicine, sexually assaulted, scalded, shaken or hit with blunt force. Naturally, our minds race to thinking, “That’s so sad. Why couldn’t it have been prevented?”

None of us wears a scarlet letter on our chest as a warning label that we’re a potential abuser. The fact is, anyone could be an abuser. Child maltreatment knows no economic, geographic, religious, racial or cultural boundaries.

This may leave you wondering what child-abuse prevention looks like. Actually, everything each of us does to help a child thrive and help him/her feel loved is an act of child-abuse prevention. Reading to a child, having dinner together, going for walks, playing ball, talking and modeling kindness, helpfulness and empathy to others, all strengthen a child’s development, social skills, safety and happiness. These activities foster brain development, unearthing the possibilities and building a foundation for becoming productive members of society and future parents.

No family lives in a perfect world. Raising children is no easy task. Each stage of a child’s development brings new challenges. Sleepless nights, fussy eating, temper tantrums, potty training, homework arguments, sibling rivalry, raging hormones and teenage rebellion take a toll on parents...and children, too. They are a natural, albeit painful progression of children growing up and exerting their independence. Nearly every family goes through

these challenges, and they’re often accompanied with frustration and heartache. Responding without yelling and anger, but rather with boundaries and a chance to solve problems helps grown-ups and children work through challenges together in ways that don’t involve hurtful words or fists that leave emotional or physical scars.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that some problems, particularly those that involve intense emotional exchanges, may be handled best by taking a break from the situation and discussing it later when emotions have subsided, developing alternative ways to handle the situation (removing attention) or, in many cases, avoiding these situations altogether.

The AAP shares these ideas for parents and caregivers to help children learn positive behaviors:

- Providing regular positive attention, sometimes called special time (opportunities to communicate positively are important for children of all ages).
- Listening carefully to children and helping them use words to express their feelings.
- Providing children with opportunities to make choices whenever appropriate options exist, then helping them learn to evaluate the potential consequences of their choice.
- Reinforcing emerging desirable behaviors with frequent praise and ignoring trivial misdeeds.
- Modeling orderly, predictable behavior, respectful communication and collaborative conflict resolution strategies. (*Kohlberg*)

The blue pinwheels displayed at businesses and homes in April remind us of the innocence and playfulness of childhood that every child deserves to experience.

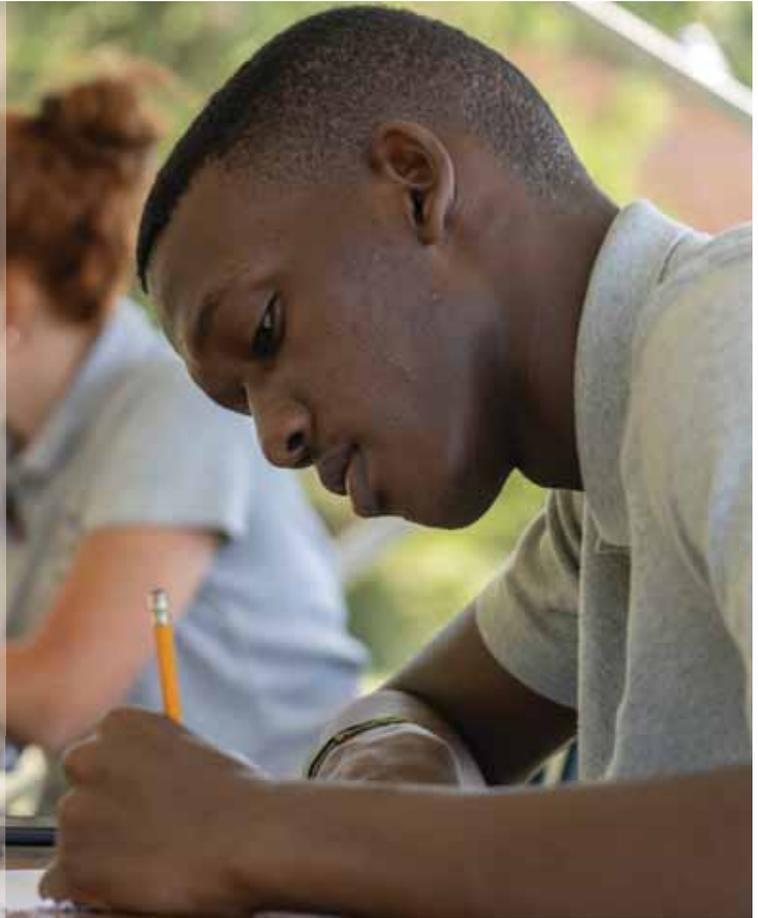
Resolve to help the children you know grow up safe, healthy and happy by lending a hand or being a support for a parent. Offering a parent some free time to take a relaxing bath, sleep uninterrupted or just sit alone listening to music can restore a parent’s energy. The pandemic has isolated families and put unanticipated hardship on many parents who are trying to manage jobs and eLearning, all while trying to put food on their table and keep a roof over their heads. Reach out to parents you know, because it is often difficult for a parent to admit he/she needs help. Volunteer to run errands or ask if you can bring over dinner. What may seem like insignificant gestures are actually quite huge.

If you are worried about a child’s safety, call your local police or the Department of Child Services at (800) 800-5556.

If you would like to sponsor a Pinwheel Garden or learn more about Dunebrook’s programs, visit www.dunebrook.org or contact Cannon at (219) 874-0007, Ext. 318, or jcannon@dunebrook.org

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Easter Bunny Hop

Easter Bunny Hop, a free family event, is from 1 to 3 p.m. Easter Sunday, April 4, at Friendship Botanic Gardens, 2055 E. U.S. 12.

During the safe, socially distanced event, take a spring stroll along the Bunny Hop Trail. Count hidden bunnies for a free bag of candy, and take a picture with the Easter Bunny.

Guests also can explore the ArcelorMittal Children’s Garden, an arena for interactive nature-based play experiences that includes a Garden of Sound, water spout, playset and cabin. Other options include walking the Wilderness Trails and visiting the Heritage Gardens along paved pathways. Dogs are allowed, but must be on a leash at all times. Donations are welcome.

The LaPorte County Health Department has approved the event. Visitors are encouraged to follow safety precautions and maintain social distance. Dress for the weather. Call (219) 878-9885, email info@friendshipgardens.org or visit the Facebook event page for more details.

Uptown Social Events

Local songwriter-vocalist Cheryl Rodey will perform from 6 to 9 p.m. Sunday, April 11, followed by a murder-mystery night from 6 to 10 p.m. Saturday, April 17, at Uptown Social, 907 Franklin St.

Uptown Social will follow all COVID protocols, including temperature and mask checks at entry, sanitizer stations throughout the venue and seating for groups of up to six.

Doors open at 5 p.m. for the April 11 concert. For the murder-mystery, doors open at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the show at 7 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at www.uptownsocialmc.com/the-experience

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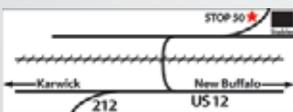
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Indiana Dunes National Park

• Local teaching artists will lead virtual painting classes in partnership with Art Barn School of Art and Friends of Indiana Dunes Inc.

The free Zoom lessons are from 2-4 p.m. Saturday, April 10, June 12 and July 10. No experience is necessary. Register at www.artbarnschool.org

An experienced instructor will guide students through painting a scene inspired by the Indiana Dunes. Each class will feature a different nature-related theme. "The Birds at the Shoreline" class on April 10 will show how to paint shorebirds, sand and a little water to make pictures complete. On June 12, "Waves, Water and Sun" shows how to create a shoreline painting using contrasting colors to achieve depth and motion. On July 10, students create an outdoor floral grassland in the "Butterflies on a Floral Grassland" class.

Registration closes one week before the class or when filled. The limit is 20 participants per session. Programs may be recorded for use by the National Park Service, Art Barn or Friends of Indiana Dunes.

Registered participants can pick up a free supply kit (including a canvas, acrylic paint and brush) at Indiana Dunes Visitor Center before the event. If unable to pick up a kit, call (219) 395-1882 before registering to make alternate arrangements. The kits are provided through support from the Friends of Indiana Dunes

• Four prescribed fires targeting about 976 acres are expected this spring.

In the east half of the park, about 300 acres of prairie and woodland will be burned around Dunes Learning Center and adjacent Mnoke Prairie in Porter. Prescribed fire has been used to restore Mnoke Prairie for the last 20 years.

Three fires are planned in the west end of the

park. A 98-acre area of Black Oak Savannah is the focus in the Miller Woods area, north of the Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education and west of North Lake Street in Gary. Immediately surrounding the center, another 16 acres will be burned to protect it from the threat of wildfire. The 562-acre Tolleston-East prescribed fire area is along the south side of U.S. 12, from the Lake-Porter County Line Road, east towards Ogden Dunes and Stagecoach Road.

An online map of the planned areas is at <http://bit.ly/INDUSpring2021Fires>. More details are available at www.facebook.com/IndianaDunesNPS

Management goals and objectives are established for each burn unit. 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.

The National Park Service has implemented a mask requirement for employees, visitors, partners and contractors.

The move supports President Biden's Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing, aiming to protect those who live, work and visit national parks.

At Indiana Dunes National Park, face masks are required in all park buildings and facilities, including the Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center, Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education and Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk pavilion. Masks also are required on NPS-managed lands when physical distancing cannot be maintained, including on narrow or busy trails, overlooks and in historic homes.

As conditions are subject to change, visitors should check the park's website and social media channels for updates before a visit. Visit tinyurl.com/2r86ch6e for details. Park rangers are on duty to provide information, protect visitors and park resources and uphold the requirement.

The park is offering virtual ranger chats for teachers and students through a variety of media.

The programs can cover a wide range of topics and grade levels. IDNP educators can customize programs to meet teacher preferences. For example, the park can bring Max, the milk snake, into a virtual classroom to teach about animal adaptations.

Visit www.nps.gov/indu or www.facebook.com/IndianaDunesNPS for a list of programs, then call the scheduling office at (219) 395-1885 for details.

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 or visit www.nps.gov/indu for details.





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LCSO in the Spotlight



Brad Oeseburg.

Editor's note — This weekly spotlight, provided by Tim King, LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra executive director, highlights its talented musicians.

Brad Oeseburg is in his second year as a student apprentice with LCSO, having studied cello since he was 6. A senior at Lakeshore High School, Stevensville, Mich., he also plays in the marching band on French horn and mellophone.

Oeseburg has participated in All-State Honors Orchestra and been a member of the Lake Michigan Youth Orchestra since sixth grade. He also participated in the Honors Performance Series Program, which culminated in a performance at Carnegie Hall in 2017. He works part time at Mr. Gyró's in Stevensville, and loves video games and cars. After high school, he is considering a degree in culinary arts.

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Krasl Art Center

Two new exhibits, "Boom Bloom" and "The Undetectable Presence: A Selection of Sculpture," run April 3-June 6 at Krasl Art Center, 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich.

"Boom Bloom," which features Nikki Renee Anderson and Renee Robbins, is in KAC's main gallery. "The Undetectable Presence" features work by Mike Slaski in the artlab. Both are free and open to the public from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. EDT Friday-Monday.

"Boom Bloom" explores themes of growth, standards of beauty, impermanence and notions of femininity. Slaski's works fill the space with structural systems based on geometry and built-in wood.

KAC will offer virtual and in-person programs in conjunction with the exhibits. "Live at Lunchtime Focus Talks" are at noon EDT Thursdays through Facebook Live, offering artist insights about the works on view. Other programs include Coffee with the Curator (April 8), Anderson (April 15), Earth Day Celebration (April 22) and Robbins (April 29). Learn about the artist's inspiration, process and the connections between the "Boom Bloom" creators during a Hybrid Artist Talk at 1 p.m. EDT Saturday, May 8. Guests can register for a discussion with Anderson and Robbins in KAC's galleries, or stream the lecture from home through Zoom.

The community also can register for KAC's Third Thursday virtual series in April and May. Celebrate National Garden Month at 7 p.m. EDT April 15, then at 7 p.m. EDT May 20, KAC Deputy Director-Curator Tami Miller will lead a live Zoom tour from Slaski's studio. Register for either event at krasl.org/art/programregistration.

"Boom Bloom"-themed free virtual Family Days are from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. EDT the second Saturday in April and May. Information is available at krasl.org/education/free-and-fun. The focus April 10 is "Painted Abstract Sculptures," inspired by Anderson, while the May 8 focus is "Water Bears and Watercolors" (Robbins).

Visit www.krasl.org for registration information and more details.

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Lyric Opera Tenor Joins SAM



Tenor Matthew Daniel performs a solo during Handel's "Messiah" in Michigan City.

Matthew Daniel, a veteran tenor with the Lyric Opera of Chicago chorus, has joined the vocal teaching staff at The School of American Music in Three Oaks, Mich.

Daniel also has worked with companies such as Sarasota Opera, Aspen Opera Theater, Tulsa Opera, Harrisburg Opera and Opera Grand Rapids. Highlights range from "Don Giovanni" and "Tales of Hoffmann" to "Rigoletto" and "La Boheme." He has performed countless oratorios, including "Magnificat" by J.S. Bach, "Messiah" by Handel, Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony" and Mozart's "Requiem."

In addition to performing, Daniel has served as a director at South Bend Lyric Opera and an educator at Culver (Ind.) Academies. He has sung in two world premieres: the song-cycle "Moon River Anthology" by Barbara Hamilton and Jon Schwabe's "The Hard Years."

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Robert LeMay, Long Beach Town Council President
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LaLu Senior a National Merit Finalist

La Lumiere senior Trevor Brandt, a boarding student from Manlius, N.Y., has been named a 2021 National Merit Finalist, making him eligible for National Merit scholarships.



Brandt

To make it to this point, an outstanding academic record is essential. In addition, the process requires a detailed scholarship application in which participation in school and community activities, leadership abilities, employment and honors and awards are demonstrated. Lastly, Brandt had to obtain an endorsement and recommendation from a La Lumiere staff member.

“La Lu’s small class sizes, academic organizations and teachers that truly care about their students’ well-being both as a student and a person have benefited me immensely,” Brandt said in a press release. “I honestly do not think that I would be where I am today without the experiences and opportunities it has provided me.”

To be considered for a Merit Scholarship award, students must take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test in their junior year. More than 1.5 million juniors in more than 20,000 high schools participated in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program.

NB Library Community Forum

Classic books gone Hollywood is the topic of the next Friends of New Buffalo Library virtual presentation at 7 p.m. EDT Tuesday, April 6.

Film historian Annette Bochenek will discuss classic films based on books, such as “The Wizard of Oz,” “Gone With the Wind” and “Double Indemnity.” She is an archivist, film historian and scholar of Hollywood’s Golden Age, as well as the president of Windy City Film Fanatics.

The Zoom link is found under Activities/Events either through the library’s Facebook page or its website at newbuffalotownshiplibrary.org.

Upcoming FOL Zoom programs include: April 22 — “Attracting Birds to Your Backyard” by Wendy Jones; and May 18 — “Lifestyles of the Mich(iana) and Famous” by Nick Bogert.

Email new.buffalo.FOL@gmail.com for details.

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Notre Dame Students Awarded

Three Notre Dame Catholic School students are winners in the 2021 Letters About Literatures Competition sponsored by the Indiana Center for the Book.



Egan



Sarver



Hassett

Eighth-grader Jack Egan won the statewide Indiana Author Letter Prize, while sixth-grader Mary Kate Sarver and fifth-grader Aedan Hassett won honorable mentions in Level One: fourth, fifth and sixth grade. All three letters will be published in the 2021 Indiana Letters About Literature Anthology, and all three students will receive cash prizes.

Eight hundred Indiana fourth- through eighth-graders wrote letters to an author — living or deceased — explaining how his/her work affected them, helped them understand themselves better or taught them something about the world.

Egan's letter was to Ernie Pyle: "The Death of Captain Waskow" newspaper column. Sarver wrote to Joan Bauer (Almost Home), and Hassett wrote to J.R.R. Tolkien. Notre Dame students worked on their submissions during their weekly writing class with Nancy Donoghue, as well as with their classroom teachers.

MCAS Unites With DonorsChoose

Michigan City Area Schools has partnered with DonorsChoose so teachers have access to 4.7 million donors to support classroom projects, and align with district strategy and operations.

To date, MCAS teachers have raised \$286,275 and completed more than 657 projects with help from the national nonprofit. The projects vary from books to laptops and other tools.

As one of the 120+ members of the DonorsChoose District Partnership Program, MCAS will be able to fully support teachers in using the platform, ensure safety and security, and align efforts with the district's strategic priorities. The school district will monitor all donated materials. Principals will be notified each time a project is funded and receive early notification when there are new "match" funding opportunities.

Visit www.donorschoose.org/mcas for details.

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JROTC Hosts Drill Meet, Earns Awards

Despite challenges created by COVID-19, Michigan City High School's Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps hosted a military drill competition March 20.

Six schools from Chicago, Zion and Romeoville, Ill., along with Ben Davis (Indianapolis), Portage and MCHS, competed. Cadet Capt. Jessica Wilhelm commanded the Armed, Unarmed and Inspection platoons, earning third place in each category. Cadet 1st Lt. Declan Rice commanded the B Color Guard to another third-place finish.



Cadets direct traffic for the regional basketball tournament.

The Marine Corps League Michigan City chapter sponsored the meet.

Master Sgt. Jeff Benak, the Marine instructor, lauded the cadets for their dedication amid the restrictions.

"Our cadets did not want to take the easy way out," he said in a press release. "They worked hard, and their performance at the meet showed that."

In other JROTC news, cadets continued to support MCHS in March during the sectional and regional Boys Basketball Tournament. They provided color guards for three nights of competition for the sectional tournament, and for the semi-finals and final games of the regional tournament. Additionally, cadets provided support for parking for the regional games. Fans came from Valparaiso, South



Color Guard A executes the competition routine.

Bend, Gary and Elkhart.

The cadets will support numerous spring clean-up activities in the Michigan City area until the end of school, taking all COVID precautions.



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American Red Cross

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

- Northwest Health LaPorte, 1007 W. Lincolnway, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday, April 2.
- Masonic Lodge, 820 Jefferson Ave., LaPorte, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, April 3.
- St. John's United Church of Christ, 101 St. John Road, noon-6 p.m. Tuesday, April 6.
- Sacred Heart Church, 201 Bach St., LaPorte, noon-5 p.m. Wednesday, April 7.

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.

Activities to Explore

In the Area:

April 1 — Giveback Day for Michigan City Lions Club charities, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., South Bend Chocolate Co. @ Lighthouse Place-Premium Outlets.

April 1 — Family Advocate’s Court Youth Advocate Program virtual trivia night, 6-7:30 p.m. Cost: teams of 4-6/\$50. Registration: (219) 324-3385, bstellema@lpfamilyadvocates.com

April 4 — Easter Bunny Hop, 1-3 p.m., Friendship Botanic Gardens, 2055 E. U.S. 12. Free, donations welcome. Info: info@friendshipgardens.org, (219)-878-9885.

Through April 30 — Exhibit, “Inspired/Inspire,” Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St. Info: www.lubeznikcenter.org, (219) 874-4900.

Through June 5 — New exhibits, “Lost and Looking” & “Pipelines and Borderlines: The Art of Survival,” Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St. Info: www.lubeznikcenter.org

Wednesdays — Virtual Story Time, 10 a.m., through Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: www.mclib.org/parents/story-time/

In the Region

April 1 — “Meet the Greats: Fernwood Virtual Lecture Series,” 7-8 p.m. EDT, through Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve, 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Topic: “Spirit of Place: The Making of a New England Garden.” Cost: \$25, \$20/members. Info: www.fernwoodbotanical.org, (269) 695-6491.

April 3-June 6 — New exhibits, “Boom Bloom” & “The Undetectable Presence: A Selection of Sculpture,” Krasl Art Center, 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich. Info: www.krasl.org

April 6 — Friends of New Buffalo Library Zoom presentation, classic books gone Hollywood, 7 p.m. EDT. Zoom link: Activities/Events on Facebook page or www.newbuffalotownshiplibrary.org. Info: new.buffalo.FOL@gmail.com

Through April 11 — Youth Art 2021, Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St., Elkhart. Hours (EDT): 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tue.-Fri./1-4 p.m. Sat.-Sun. Info: www.midwestmuseum.us, (574) 293-6660.

Tuesdays/Fridays — Open Studios for 18 and older, 1-4 p.m., Art Barn School of Art, 695 N. County Road 400 East, Valparaiso. Cost: \$5/day. Registration: tinyurl.com/8hmejvp9

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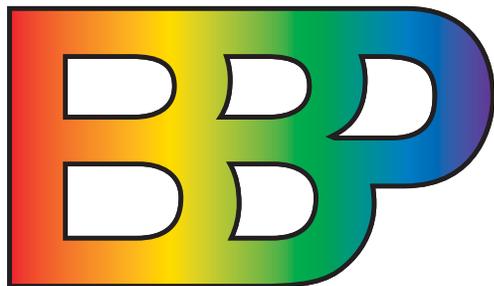
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THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On April 1, 1789, the U.S. House of Representatives held its first full meeting in New York City and elected Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania as the first Speaker of the House.

On April 1, 1853, Cincinnati became the first city in the United States to pay its firefighters a regular salary.

On April 1, 1872, the Chicago Public Library was created.

On April 1, 1924, Frank Capone, brother of mobster Al Capone, was killed by police in Election Day violence in Cicero, Ill.

On April 1, 1963, the daytime soap opera "General Hospital" premiered on ABC-TV.

On April 2, 1792, Congress authorized establishment of the U.S. Mint, and enacted legislation fixing the price of gold at \$19.39 an ounce.

On April 2, 1917, saying, "The world must be made safe for democracy," President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to declare war against Germany.

On April 2, 1956, the long running soap operas "As The World Turns," and "The Edge of Night" premiered on CBS-TV.

On April 2, 1984, Georgetown University's John Thompson became the first black coach to win an NCAA men's basketball championship.

On April 2, 1992, mob boss John Gotti was convicted in New York of murder and racketeering; he died in prison.

On April 3, 1783, Washington Irving, American author, historian and diplomat, was born in New York City. Irving, who created such well-known characters as Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane, was the first American writer to gain fame abroad, as well as at home.

On April 3, 1848, the Chicago Board of Trade held its first official session.

On April 3, 1860, the legendary "Pony Express" began service between St. Joseph, Mo., and Sacramento, Calif., a distance of 1,966 miles. The service would last for only about 18 months, being replaced by the transcontinental telegraph.

On April 3, 1882, American outlaw Jesse James was shot to death in St. Joseph, Mo. He was killed by Robert Ford, a member of James' own gang who was seeking to claim reward money. James was 36.

On April 3, 1979, Democrat Jane Byrne, with 82 percent of the vote, was elected mayor of Chicago,

defeating Republican Wallace Johnson.

On April 4, 1832, Cook County's first financial statement showed taxes on real and personal property totaled \$148.29.

On April 4, 1841, one month after taking the oath of office, President William Henry Harrison died of pneumonia, achieving the dubious distinction of becoming the first chief executive to die while in office.

On April 4, 1864, Abraham Lincoln said, "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."

On April 4, 1887, Susanna Medora Salter was elected mayor of Argonia, Kan., the first woman chosen to head a U.S. town.

On April 4, 1969, CBS canceled "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour" because of its political humor.

On April 5, 1614, Pocahontas, daughter of Indian Chief Powhatan, was married in Virginia to English colonist John Rolfe.

On April 5, 1792, President George Washington used his veto power for the first time, refusing to sign a bill affecting state representation.

On April 5, 1955, Winston Churchill submitted his resignation as British Prime Minister.

On April 5, 1980, the world's most precious stamp, an 1856 British Guiana 1-cent magenta, was auctioned for \$850,000.

On April 5, 1987, Fox Broadcasting Co. made its prime-time TV debut.

On April 6, 1896, the first modern Olympic Games formally opened in Athens.

On April 6, 1906, a copyright was granted for the first animated cartoon. The film, by James Blackton, consisted of drawings of a man rolling his eyes.

On April 6, 1909, Robert Peary, accompanied by Matthew Henson, became the first people known to have reached the North Pole.

On April 6, 1965, the United States launched the "Early Bird" communications satellite.

On April 7, 1775, Samuel Johnson made this famous observation: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

On April 7, 1927, the first successful long-distance television program was broadcast. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, in Washington, was heard and seen clearly by viewers in New York.

On April 7, 1947, a nationwide telephone strike that was to last for 23 days began in the United States.

On April 7, 1948, the World Health Organization was founded.

On April 7, 1949, "South Pacific," a musical by Rodgers and Hammerstein, opened on Broadway.

On April 7, 1987, Harold Washington easily won a second term as mayor of Chicago.

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 Available through May. Call Barry Tharp at (312) 593-1861.

 **REAL ESTATE FOR SALE** 

Greenwood Cemetery plots for sale. Northwest corner, Section C,
 block 15, plots 1-6. Upon entrance to cemetery, turn left at circle, first left,
 plots are in the section on the right. \$1,500 per plot.
 If interested, call (708) 269-9717.

10-Digit Dialing Starts Now

All telephone users in the 219 and 574 area codes
 are encouraged to start using 10-digit dialing in-
 stead of seven digit to make local phone calls.

NITCO customers can start using 10-digit dial-
 ing immediately; all other carriers are ready this
 month. The full transition is mandatory by Oct. 24.

The Federal Communications Commission is re-
 quiring the change to accommodate the national
 "988" National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which
 will be fully applied by July 16, 2022.

Residential and business customers in the 219
 and 574 area codes should be aware that:

- Your telephone number/area code will not change.
- In these area codes, you will need to dial the area code and telephone number (a total of 10 digits).
- All long-distance calls will still require dialing 1 + the area code + the telephone number (a total of 11 digits).

Ten-digit dialing will not change the price of a lo-
 cal call, coverage area or other rates and services.
 You can still dial three digits to reach 911 (emer-
 gency services), 211 (social services), 411 (directory
 assistance), 711 (telecommunications relay service)
 or 811 (call to request utility locate before a dig).



Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter

The Nature of Fragile Things by Susan Meissner (hardcover, \$26 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook. 364 pages.)

“Every step toward the ramp to the pier is taking me farther away from who I am and closer to who I am going to be.”

That is the voice and narrator of this story, Sophie Whalen, recent immigré from Ireland. It’s 1905, and she is arriving in San Francisco to meet the man she will marry. Meet him is the operative word here. Sophie only knows what he looks like from a photo he sent along with tickets to California. Yes, Sophie is going to be one of those mail-order brides.

Then why does the story start out with Sophie under interrogation by a U.S. marshal one year later? At this point, it becomes a possibility that Sophie may have made the biggest mistake of her life...

She is living in New York City in a crowded tenement building when she sees Martin Hocking’s advertisement in the newspaper. She came over from Ireland to be with her brother, but he soon married, told her they were moving to Canada, but didn’t offer to take her along.

Hocking says he is a widower with a 5-year-old daughter. That suits Sophie well. He tells her his job is assessing risk for an insurance company, and that he travels a lot and will be gone for days at a time. Also not a problem.

Hocking meets her, and they immediately head to the city clerk’s office and get married. Katherine (Kat), his daughter, is not with him. Sophie is disappointed. Afterward, they pick her up, and Hocking takes them to a nice house close to Russian Hill, a swanky part of the city, shows Sophie her bedroom and retires to his bedroom. Alone.

Sophie spends her days organizing the house, buying supplies and food and painting Kat’s room — obviously recently occupied by a little boy.

Kat. Now that’s another story. The girl doesn’t speak. It’s not that she can’t, she just chooses not to. She is a sad little girl, and Sophie does her best to win her over.

The days go by, Hocking comes and goes and Sophie thinks maybe she made a good decision by marrying him. He takes them out occasionally when he’s in town, but spends most of his time at home in his office — there is no emotional attachment from him toward Sophie or even Kat.

They do share a bed from time to time, but Sophie can’t help but notice there is no kissing, no endearing whispered words between them. Translated —

no love.

Months go by, and now it’s April 1906. A knock at the door — who could possibly be calling? — reveals a very pregnant woman who wants to know if Martin Hocking lives there.

She says her husband, James Bigelow, is doing a favor for Hocking and hasn’t come home yet. Her name is Belinda, she’s worried and near her due date. Sophie takes her in the parlor for tea, and Belinda spots the Hocking wedding day photo...

“That’s James...That’s my husband.” Wow. Sophie is speechless. But not so speechless that she doesn’t realize the first order of business is who married him first?

Second order of business — what do we do now? After all, maybe she really doesn’t want to know. After all, she left a rat-infested tenement to live this nice, normal life that has been working out well, and now she might have to give it all up.

Third order of business — break open that locked desk of Hocking/Bigelow and find out what he’s hiding there. There is something going on here, but what? It can’t be just bigamy. It turns out to be a veritable treasure trove of all his dirty little secrets! The women pack up Sophie and

Kat and decide to take the papers to the police in the morning.

April 18, 1906. As the women are preparing to leave — the front door opens and in steps the man himself. Words are exchanged, he reaches for one of the women on the stairs and — everything begins to shake. Plaster is falling, furniture is overturned, dishes come crashing to the floor...yes, this is the beginning of the great San Francisco earthquake that leveled a city and killed thousands.

From Page 1, I sensed something building in Sophie’s story. The earthquake is like a giant tsunami carrying Sophie and Belinda on a path of no return.

Part of the wonder of this beautifully written story is Meissner’s authentic description of the great earthquake: A city in utter chaos, water mains breaking, gas lines erupting in flames, explosion after explosion that engulf the city for several days. Sophie, Kat and Belinda racing along the broken streets, dust and ash falling on their heads, people screaming — it’s all brilliantly laid out before you.

And you haven’t heard the end of Sophie’s story by any means. There’s more to come in a cleverly written plot that will reveal more about Hocking, as well as one or more things about Sophie — after all, at this point, we’re only halfway through the book.

Combining the earthquake with Sophie’s life is genius— it simply left me breathless.

Till next time, happy reading!



celebrate with your peeps.

HAPPY EASTER



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From our homes to yours...

Happy Easter



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