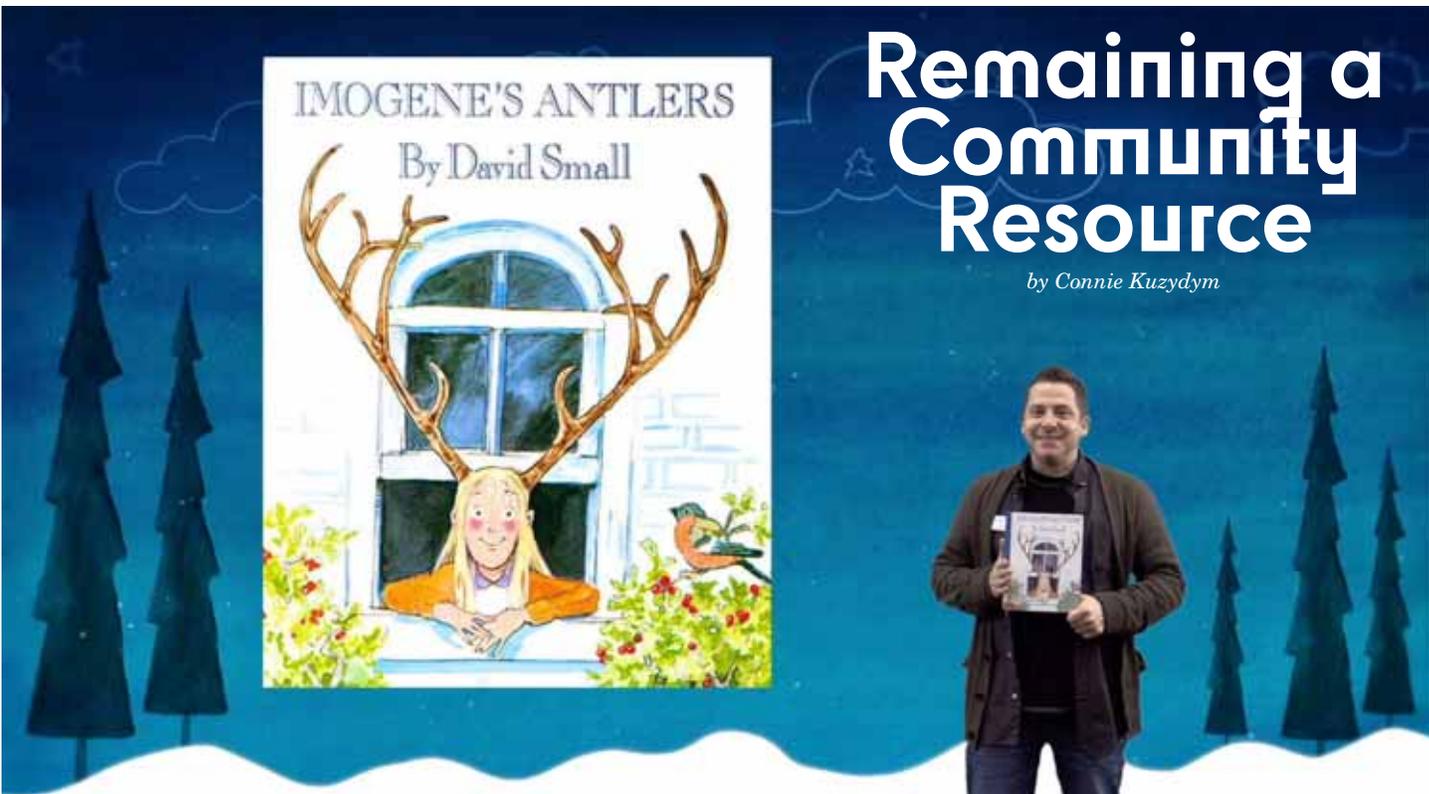




Volume 37, Number 8 Thursday, March 4, 2021



# Remaining a Community Resource

by Connie Kuzydym

This screenshot shows Dave Fink, Michigan City Public Library assistant department head of Youth Services, during virtual story time.

*Editor's note — This is the next in a series of articles over the next few months exploring life in LaPorte County since the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Libraries, these brick-and-mortar public institutions, inspire wonder, imagination, knowledge, learning and so much more.

But when the COVID-19 pandemic hit last year, mandates closed Michigan City Public Library and LaPorte County Public Library from March 18 to June 1. Libraries these days, however, play a greater role than merely checking out books and other materials. Libraries, in fact, provide a variety of programs and a host of other services. Funded either in whole or in part by public funds, they are set up to serve their community.

That's according to Robin Kohn, MCPL public-relations director, and Jennifer Bissonnette, LPCPL communications manager.

"We think of ourselves as a cultural center," Kohn said, "a community center for the whole community." Bissonnette agrees.

"Libraries are a resource for the community," she says. "Whether someone is looking for information, Internet access or entertainment, we can help."

Michigan City Public Library is located at 100 E. Fourth St. LaPorte County Public Library, whose main location is at 904 Indiana Ave. in LaPorte, has branches throughout the county, the closest to Michigan City being the Coolspring branch at Johnson Road and County Road 400 North.

Amid the COVID shutdown, the staff at both libraries worked remotely. An immediate concern was the impact the mandated closure would have on the more vulnerable population.

"We hated being closed. We've always prided ourselves to offering services," Kohn said. "When we closed, it was heartbreaking, but we understood why

Continued on Page 2

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**Delivery****Remaining a Resource** Continued from Page 1

Robin Kohn, Michigan City Public Library's public relations director. Beacher file photo by Paul Kemiell

we had to. It was the fact that people didn't have access to computer use. To some people, that's a very important aspect of how they get their unemployment and other services that you have to sign up with. You can't apply for a job without a computer... There was nothing open where you could go to and get those services. It was heartbreaking for our staff to see that, and to not be able to offer that for those weeks."

With Bissonnette joining the LPCPL staff in September, Director Fonda Owens offered additional insight about the past year.

"We have done training, and we stay in touch with our local community resource providers," she said. "When we are aware of a need, we put people in direct contact with agencies who can help them."

Understanding the challenges each community faced, both entities made Wi-Fi accessible in their parking lots. LPCPL also offers hotspots that patrons can check out. A hotspot is a way to access the Internet, typically with Wi-Fi.

While working remotely, staff made sure to still offer assistance to the community.

"While physical facilities were closed, we were still able to offer digital resources and limited other services," Bissonnette said. "Staff were available to



Jennifer Bissonnette.

answer phone calls and online inquiries."

Digital materials patrons can access through LPCPL include e-books, e-audio, magazines, movie streaming, databases and a wide variety of resource information. The list is similar at MCPL.

Library staff also had to prepare for the day their buildings would reopen to the public. MCPL removed its soft seating, such as plush chairs scattered through the library, while the LPCPL rearranged or removed furniture to ensure social distancing. Meanwhile, Personal Protection Equipment was secured for staff and patrons, and safety measures, such as Plexiglass barriers, put in place.

In the process of implementing these procedures, libraries now faced a bigger challenge: turning in-person programs into online events. Kohn and Bissonnette agree, the staff at both libraries eagerly took on that challenge: a wonderful option for the many families and individuals who rely on these programs as a source of entertainment.



This screenshot reveals how library staff digitally placed animals throughout the library for young viewers to see.

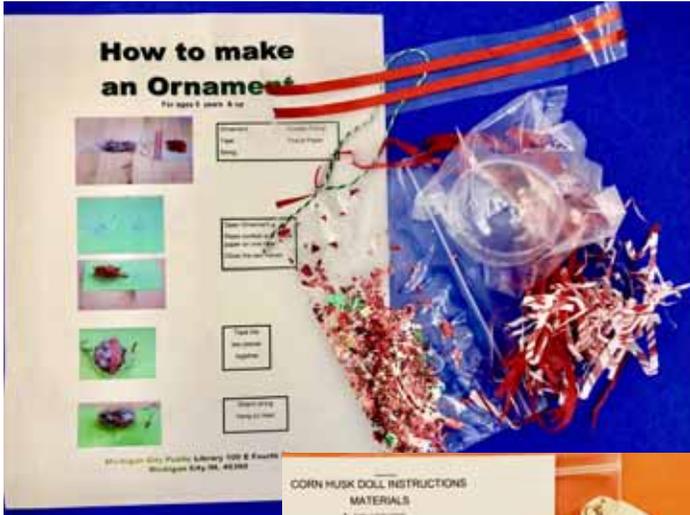
MCPL Youth Services shifted the majority of its programs online. A new Children's Story Time is streamed every Wednesday. Graphic Novel Club/Podcast for teens and Dungeon and Dragons monthly one-shot campaigns are hosted on Zoom. Tinkercad, an online workshop, allows youth to design 3-D creations the library will print for no charge.

Adult programming is all on Zoom, according to Kohn, who has done book reviews and held a book club discussion. She's also leading the online version of the Great Decisions-Foreign Policy discussion group twice a month.

“It was a little bit tricky at first,” Kohn said. “We didn’t know what kind of participation we’d get... People were at home, were they even going to be engaged?”

During the holiday season, they got their answer.

“Normally, we would have Santa visit, and all kinds of fun things going on,” Kohn said. “We offered a free take home craft...Within a few hours, we had over 100 of them. They were completely gone...we ordered more and gave all those away, too.



Library displays that reveal how families can make crafts at home.

“It was pretty amazing,” she continued. “We realized with that particular thing that people were looking for things to do with their kids.”

LPCPL also went virtual with many of its events and programming.

“That was a bit of a challenge at first, but our community engagement librarians enjoyed creating some of these, and the challenge of moving them (online),” Bissonnette said. “We have virtual book clubs, weekly virtual story time. We will have an upcoming gardening series with JoEllen Meyers Sharp, and we’ve also had a book club Battle Royale at the end of February, amongst some other things.”

The challenge for both libraries, then, was ensuring their engagement with patrons, and that the quality of programming stayed the same.

“I think we’ve done a very good job of doing that,” Bissonnette said. “We’ve had great success in using Zoom. We’ve been able to invite authors in to speak on Zoom. We can take questions and other things that way. We got very creative with some of our problem solving, and I think it’s worked very well.”

Continued on Page 4

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## Remaining a Resource Continued from Page 3

Will the streaming component remain at both libraries?

“It will depend on the event, but I do think we will keep virtual components in the future because some events have seen a larger amount of people participating,” Owens said. “Virtual allows us to have different panelists and presenters that we otherwise may not have access to.”

Another uptick is, streaming allows patrons to watch at their leisure. Zoom typically requires the patron to be online for an event at a specific day and time, providing the socialization aspect.



Signs at LaPorte County Public Library stress the importance of social distancing.

When mandates requiring that libraries close were lifted as of June 1, the cleaning procedures began. The approach varied between the two institutions, but rest assured, there is continuous cleaning of surfaces that are touched. Every item returned is quarantined for at least 24 hours before being made available again to the public. MCPL's quarantine on returned items is 72 hours. There are items at both libraries in which disinfectants are used prior to the next patron's usage. LPCPL has reopened its meeting rooms, but at a lower capacity. Both require masks. Neither facility has experienced having too many individuals in the library so that social distancing cannot be maintained.

Today, the majority of services the libraries offer, such as notary, genealogical research assistance, computer/Internet access, are back up and running, but in limited capacities.

A convenient feature — curbside pickup — was implemented at LPCPL just prior to the pandemic. Patrons place materials on hold, then make a reservation for pickup on a designated date and time. Upon arriving at the library, a staff member delivers the materials to his/her car.

Since the restrictions have been lifted, the LPCPL Mobile library is traveling again, providing patrons living in more remote areas the opportunity to



An example of curbside pickup through LaPorte County Public Library.

check out materials. Masks must be worn to enter, and social distancing is maintained.

One of MCPL's largest programs since 1997 is to offer tax assistance to low-income and elderly individuals. When the library closed last year, it was amid tax preparation. Fortunately, the due date was changed to July 15. When the library reopened, it was ready to offer its services within a week.

“Most of my volunteers were willing to come back,” Kohn said. “Instead of an in-person service, we now do a drop-off service...We had to adjust it, and it turned out great.”

The library helped prepare 258 2019 taxes and is gearing up for tax season this year.

What the staff at these libraries learned is, you can adapt to whatever is thrown your way. Facing these challenges, and rising to them, also speaks highly of the teamwork between staff and boards. By working together, understanding the magnitude of the challenges and being resilient, they made the necessary changes to remain a vital part of the communities they serve.

“During COVID, my process, and I think the process of many of the staff and our Board of Trustees, has been to figure out how to serve our community,” Owens said. “What that looks like is determined by conditions, but it's our job to figure out how to do that safely and to the best of our ability.”

Kohn said, “We took a bad situation, one we never had to deal with before in all of our whole professional lives, and we were able to figure out a way to make sure services and people were safe in our environment.”

### For More Information

**Michigan City Public Library**

[www.mclib.org](http://www.mclib.org)

**LaPorte County Public Library**

[www.laportelibrary.org](http://www.laportelibrary.org)

# MCPL Amid Final Phase of Remodeling Project

by William Halliar



This rendering depicts how the exterior of the library will look.

Michigan City Public Library is amid the third and final stage of its remodeling project that will bring up to 21st century standards Helmut Jahn's unique architectural contribution to our area.

Preliminary drawings of a sweeping new en-

trance canopy slated for the front of the building, 101 W. Second St., reveal the project designers are sensitive to keeping their improvements in line with Jahn's original vision of shapes, space and light.

Continued on Page 6



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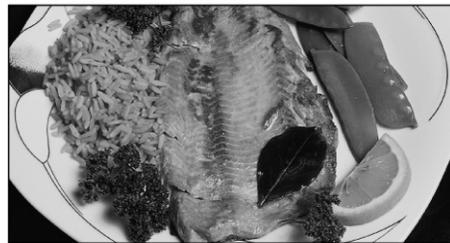
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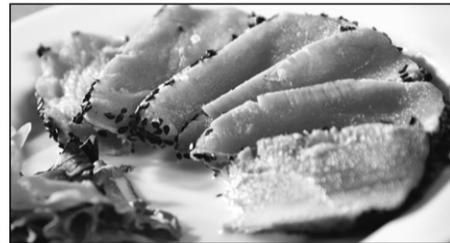
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## MCPL Remodeling Continued from Page 5

Project designers Tiffany Nash and Dan Pohrte, founding partners of the Chicago-based firm Product Architecture+Design, studied Jahn's designs and worked diligently to bring the 44-year-old building back to its original splendor.

"It was a challenge to be respectful of the original design," Nash told *The Beacher*. She also believes "this particular piece of architecture is truly a work of art."

Over the years, during cycles of regular maintenance, some of Jahn's original intent for the building's interior was lost to the styles and popular colors of the times. Nash and Pohrte, ever mindful of Jahn's open-concept design, removed much of the solid wood treatments, replacing them with clear and colored panels.

In a brilliant attempt to "bring back the original aesthetics," as Nash puts it, colorful carpeting was chosen throughout the building and translucent, pastel-colored end caps installed on book shelves. A new circulation desk will be decorated with multi-colored, perforated metal.

Pohrte points out that the building, although built on a rectangular lot, is not at all built as a squared-off rectangle. Rather, the interior structure is built at angles to the rectangular lot on which it sits. This can be seen in particular from above in the roof structure. The overall visual effect is of waves crashing at an angle against the lakeshore. The new canopy over the front entrance will lead the viewer's eye to this unique feature.

Pohrte speaks of the openness of the building,



This design conveys plans for the circulation desk.



This image reveals how the vestibule will look once completed.

and how he and Nash strove to enhance the "long open vistas" Jahn created in his brilliant design by using glass and bright, translucent colors. Pohrte considers it a "great honor" to be part of the library's restoration.

According to Robin Kohn, the library's public-relations director, the current restoration will include;

- A new front entrance and vestibule, both with new lighting.
- A new canopy, with lighting, over the front entrance.
- A new circulation desk and circulation staff offices.
- New shelving and seating for the front lobby.
- Carpeting, electrical and security updates.

This final construction phase is expected to be completed by mid-June. During this time, the front plaza, main entrance and inside lobby will be closed. Library patrons can enter the library through the east doors near the drive-up book drop. Public bathrooms will remain open, a temporary circulation desk will be set up and as many regular services as possible will remain available.

Kohn says the library will make every effort to remain open to the public; however, some closings may be necessary for public safety. The library will post updated information on Facebook and the website ([www.mclib.org](http://www.mclib.org)). Local radio stations will be notified of any closings.

Kohn and the library staff look forward to sharing the newly remodeled space with the people of Michigan City.

"I am sure that it is going to be amazing," Kohn said.



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**UNDER CONTRACT**



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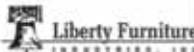
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Financial-aid professionals from across Indiana will volunteer to help college-bound students and their families with financial aid during a virtual edition of College Goal Sunday at 2 p.m. EDT Sunday, March 7.

The free program assists Indiana students in filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The form is required for students to be considered for federal and state grants, scholarships and Federal student loans at most colleges, universities and vocational/technical schools nationwide. The FAFSA must be filed by April 15.

Volunteers will answer families' questions as needed. Visit [www.CollegeGoalSunday.org](http://www.CollegeGoalSunday.org) and click the link displayed on the page to enter the virtual event. For the best filing experience, working from a computer/laptop is highly recommended.

Students should be joined by parent(s) or guardian(s), and parents should have a completed 2019 IRS 1040 tax returns, W-2 forms and other



2019 income and benefits information. Students who worked should provide income information. Students 24 or older can participate alone and present 2019 IRS 1040 tax return, W-2 form or other 2019 income and benefits information. Students and parents are encouraged to apply for their U.S. Department of Education FSA IDs at [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov) before logging in to the event.

Students also may be eligible for one of five \$1,000 scholarships. Those who attend College Goal Sunday and submit a completed evaluation form automatically will be entered in a drawing for a \$1,000 scholarship. The winners will be notified in April, and prizes will be sent directly to the higher education institution selected by those students.

Now in its 32nd year, College Goal Sunday has helped more than 94,000 Indiana students and families complete the FAFSA properly and on time. It is a charitable program through the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association. Visit [www.CollegeGoalSunday.org](http://www.CollegeGoalSunday.org) for details.

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Robert LeMay, Long Beach Town Council President  
 Mark Swistek, Long Beach Police Chief

**INDIANA AND LOCAL  
 REAL ESTATE STILL  
 VERY STRONG**

Just got the Indiana stats for January 2020 compared to January 2021. Here is the summary for the state as a whole.

Total closed sales were up 9.9%. Median Price was up 15%. Average was up 14%. New listings were down 11.8%. A great time to sell across the state, but a harder time to find what you want.

Next, look at January through Feb. 24, 2020, compared to 2021 in "Indiana Lakefront," which is the area northwest of U.S. 12 from Burns Harbor to the Michigan line. The numbers for residential and land sales are in more detail. We only have closed data for 2020.

Year/typ	Units	Med Price	Total \$Vol	DOM
2020/res	11	\$400k	\$4.6 M	100
2020/lnd	2	\$95k	\$198 k	101

Year/typ Status	Units	Med Price	Total \$Vol	DO M
2021/res For sale	14	\$999k	\$14.4M	111
2021/res Sold/pen	11	\$450k	\$5.5 M	66
2021/res Closed	14	\$473.k	\$7.6 M	68
2021/lnd Active	21	\$150k	\$6.1 M	292
2021/lnd Pend	4	\$110k	\$449k	21
2021/lnd Closed	8	\$88k	\$862k	90

**lnd means Land. Res means residential unit. Pen means under contract, but not closed yet.**

The total \$Volume numbers jump off the page for me. Residential (2020, \$4.6 million; 2021 \$7.6 million). That is a 165% increase. Land 2020, \$198k; 2021, \$862k. That's a 435% increase. Median prices of both residences and land were up. Days on market for residential and land were both down.

People are definitely buying real estate, paying more for both residential and land, and beginning to buy a lot more land.

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## “I Care a Lot” is a Twisted Delight

by Andrew Tallackson



Marla Grayson (Rosamund Pike) stands before a wall with pictures of all her “clients” in “I Care a Lot,” now streaming on Netflix.

Movies rarely surprise us. It’s not that we are jaded or cynical, more that filmmakers lack the *cojones* to catch us off guard. They’ve become shackled to a squeamish society. Fearful of offending.

Writer-director J. Blakeson, apparently, didn’t get that memo. Midway through “I Care a Lot,” I found myself laughing out of twisted delight. His movie is so delicious, so warped by design, the effect is like an adrenaline rush. The story — the darkest of dark comedies — shifts so many gears, we’re never quite sure where it is headed. What the outcome might be. And that, dear reader, is part of the fun.

The movie, which just debuted on Netflix, introduces us to Marla Grayson, played by Rosamund Pike (“Gone Girl”) as if modeled after tigers that eat their young. Her sole intention is being rich. And her scheme? Con a judge into appointing her the legal guardian of wealthy seniors, plunk said seniors into nursing homes, cut them off from the outside world, then drain them of their assets. Nursing homes, medical professionals, they’re all in cahoots with her, steering likely targets her way.

The latest is what Marla calls a “cherry”: an older woman with no family, no ties to anyone else, and sitting on a gold mine. That would be Jennifer Peterson (two-time Oscar-winner Dianne Wiest), who



### “I Care a Lot”

Running time: 118 minutes. Netflix. Rated R  
for language throughout and some violence

early in the film is literally dragged from her idyllic existence and dumped into an assisted living facility after Marla becomes her legal guardian.

Not knowing anything about the film, I feared that “I Care a Lot” was about to become a message movie: a commentary on greed, exploitation and the plight of our seniors. It is not. That, my friends, is why we have boring LIFETIME channel movies. Instead, Blakeson, who helmed a solid adaptation of Rick Yancey’s Young Adult novel “The 5th Wave” (2016), delivers one wicked sucker punch after another.

Turns out, Marla messed with the wrong woman. I wouldn’t dare dream of spoiling the reasons why, but know that Jennifer has a son (a hilarious Peter Dinklage, intimidating as hell) who has no qualms of doing whatever it takes to free his mother. Even if that means gunfire in a nursing home. And when Wiest, as Jennifer, sedated at Marla’s request, allows a devilish smile to creep across her face, calling Marla the one word you don’t call a woman, well...

the game is on.

Wiest is the only actress who could play Jennifer like this, without any trace of sentiment. That would be a snooze. Instead, Wiest plays her as fearless, thrilled by the world of hurt her son will unleash against Marla.

As for Pike, I thought her Oscar-nominated turn in "Gone Girl" was chilling... but after what she achieves here, that was child's play. That character was a scorned wife out for revenge, her husband's brain motivated by his male reproductive organ. Marla, by comparison, has zero scruples. Blakeson, as the writer and director, does not try to analyze her too intently — Marla hurls a few verbal daggers that suggest botched feminism. Instead, she is greed at its most primal, and it is like watching a train wreck. We are captivated by her even as we are repulsed by her. Pike's face rarely cracks. Emotion, for her, is a sign of weakness. Each new challenge to her control simply redirects her energy. And that persistence apparently affords her nine lives, particularly during a breathless sequence in which she's drugged and her vehicle plunged into a river.

That is what you appreciate about "I Care A Lot." Nothing about it is predictable. Even the climax. As the dust settles, it appears Blakeson has unleashed his final twist...and it would have been enough. We are satisfied. But nope, he has one more surprise up his sleeve, and it's a doozy. You don't see it coming.



Marla Grayson (Rosamund Pike, right) and her assistant, Fran (Eiza González), escort Jennifer Peterson (Dianne Wiest) against her will into a nursing facility.

I may have to give "I Care a Lot" another viewing. It is just so darn juicy.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at [drew@thebeacher.com](mailto:drew@thebeacher.com)

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# “Minari” Takes a Unique View of the American Dream

by Andrew Tallackson



Steven Yeun and Han Ye-ri star in “Minari,” now available through View on Demand.

“Minari” may be the first immigrant saga that shows the American dream nearly disintegrating not because of our own cruelty, but because its family is not on the same page. Craving the spoils of can-do Americanism isn’t at issue, but a husband, wife, children and grandparent who all want different things.

That makes for one unique moviegoing experience. Stories of immigrants arriving in America typically come bathed in violence (“The Godfather,” Al Pacino’s “Scarface”), fanciful memories (“Avalon”) or family turmoil (“The Namesake”). “Minari,” available through View on Demand, falls into none of these categories. It introduces a Korean family settling in Arkansas pushed to the brink of collapse. Because of that, it teeters close to being a downer... until the beautiful ending leaves you full of hope.

Drawing from his own childhood experiences, writer-director Lee Isaac Chung introduces the Yi family in the early 1980s that arrives in Arkansas from California, the intentions of the father, Jacob, being to flourish as a farmer. He’s played by “Walking Dead” alumnus Steven Yeun in a difficult performance that eschews all the warm fuzzies associated with movie immigrant fathers. He’s a bit selfish, refusing to accept any opposing perspectives. He just

★ ★ ★<sup>1/2</sup>

## “Minari”

Running time: 115 minutes. View on Demand.

Rated PG-13 for some thematic elements and a rude gesture

assumes everyone will bend to his will.

His wife, Monica (Han Ye-ri), is *not* one of them. Content with their life in California, she sees their latest move as one giant step backward. Living in the middle of nowhere, in a trailer, no less, and scraping by sexing chickens at a local hatchery.

Their two children, older sister Anne (Noel Kate Cho) and younger brother David (Alan Kim), have begun Americanizing themselves, much more so than their parent. They speak more English, reverting to Korean only if their parents demand it. And when their grandmother, Soon-ja (Youn Yuh-jung, who is one live wire), arrives to stay with them, the two wonder why she doesn’t embrace a more American notion of grandmothers, like baking cookies. Instead, she takes them for walks on their property, eventually showing them how to plant minari seeds along the creek. Minari seeds, she tells them, are useful and resilient, growing wherever they are planted.

Symbolism 101.

Thing is, Chung, as writer and director, takes a largely unsentimental approach to the family. Yes, *Soon-ja* provides moments of high comedy, especially when a disgruntled David brings her a rather unsavory warm drink. We brace for racism from the locals, but what's surprising is how members of the local church, including an inquisitive young boy, reach out to the family, offering help and support. Less genuine, and depicted as more of a ridiculous caricature, is veteran character actor Will Patton. He appears as Paul, who helps out with the family farm, all while behaving like a boiler-plate religious fanatic, one who speaks in tongues and on Sundays carries a large wooden cross across dusty backroads.

The central turmoil in "Minari," though, revolves around Jacob and Monica. Through them, we see two different pursuits of the American dream. He craves a more rural existence, she a more urban one surrounded by people with similar interests and backgrounds. That disconnect results in heated fights between the two, the marriage crumbling as the months drag on, with Paul's farm failing to yield the crops he once promised. The film's second half, in fact, often is painful. What we are witnessing is a family in crisis, and we question whether we admire Jacob at all, if he's lost sight of what matters most.

The big finish of "Minari," though, is its saving grace. No, everything isn't resolved with a neat, tiny bow. Instead, it reminds us of an invaluable lesson. Happiness within a family — it's often about compromise. A willingness to listen, not just to each



Alan Kim, as David, proves to be the scene-stealer of "Minari," particularly during an unexpected confrontation with his grandmother.

other, but also to the wisdom of others.

Then, and only then, are our dreams possible.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at [drew@thebeacher.com](mailto:drew@thebeacher.com)



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# My Favorite Films, and a Few Honorable Mentions, from 2020

Last year will go down as the point in my life when I dove headfirst into “the stream.”

Oh sure, beforehand, a “Stranger Things” here, a “Marvelous Mrs. Maisel” there, but never the full-throttle embrace of 2020. Then again, amid a global pandemic, did we have a choice?

Make no mistakes, I’m old school. Reviewing films by streaming felt like cheating. A new movie is cause for celebration. A trip to the local theater and all the requisite rituals, like scouting out the right seats for optimum viewing, devouring a regimen of snacks or, if at Vickers Theatre, the best movie popcorn anywhere.

And, nothing can top the collective experience, the feeling of being part of a movie community, when a packed house goes berserk with delight amid the big finish of “Avengers: Endgame,” or gasps when the killer is nabbed at the close of “Knives Out.”

But back in March, as we all hunkered down into self-isolation, and local events were canceled left and right, it became abundantly clear to me that, if we were all glued to our TV sets amid COVID, then it was best to roll with the punches. Adapt. Embrace “the stream.” Guide *Beacher* readers toward the best available options.

Because Hollywood studios pushed back the release dates of their costliest pictures, desperate to escape COVID’s clutches, a colleague suggested that 2020 was a weak year for movies. True, popcorn movies we eagerly anticipated — “Black Widow,” “No Time to Die,” “West Side Story” — saw expected COVID delays. But I would argue by clearing out the slate of hefty studio releases, smaller independent fare got to shine. Better yet, through streaming, they were more accessible, attracting a far greater audience.

Typically, the list of my favorite films of the past year appears in our first edition of the new year. But Oscar officials, in granting directors extra time to complete their films amid COVID shutdowns, extended the release requirements into 2021. With the Oscar nominations to be announced March 15, I held out as long as possible. Look for our annual “Beat the Editor” Oscar contest to appear soon after the nominees are revealed, complete with prizes for first and second place.

So, without further ado, my favorite films of 2020 are:

## 1. “The Father” & “Supernova”

A tie, yes.

Movies affect us on emotional and visceral levels. Something about them speaks to us, touches a nerve, finds a common thread. Maybe my choice of



these two films has to do with the fact that I’m now in my 50s. Or that a close relative is fighting, and losing, his battle with dementia. These two films explore the shattering effects of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia on intimate, deeply personal levels... and through actors working at the top of their game. “The Father,” structured like a baffling jigsaw puzzle, achieves a rarity, placing you inside the mind of someone with Alzheimer’s disease. “Supernova” charts the journey of two men, long in love, one of them standing at the abyss of his own mortality. Both explore individuals struggling to retain any shred of humanity left within them. Anthony Hopkins and Olivia Colman in “The Father,” and Colin Firth and Stanley Tucci in “Supernova,” reach down deep to offer raw, compassionate performances.



## 2. “Sound of Metal”

Like “The Father,” this is the equivalent of sensory viewing, possibly the first movie to successfully reproduce what it is like for people who are deaf or suffering from hearing loss. Riz Ahmed, in a performance sure to score a Best Actor nod, stars as the

by Andrew Tallackson

drummer for a metal band who, after years with the group, quickly loses most of his hearing. He lands in a rural community for former drug users now battling hearing loss, his dreams and values rattled to the core. Ultimately, “Sound of Metal” is about embracing the hand life deals you. That message is fulfilled in a carefully calibrated experience with a most powerful conclusion.

## 3. “Nomadland”

Chloé Zhao’s lovely, haunting “Nomadland” explores one woman’s solitude amid the great American landscape, but it places her journey within the context of people not tied down to the land. Frances McDormand, in a performance of considerable restraint, stars as a widow who roams the country finding work wherever it becomes available. In the process, she meets fellow “nomads,” many played by real people who lay bare their hearts and souls on film. The whole experience feels genuine. Real. Enlightening.



## 4. “One Night in Miami”

Oscar-winner Regina King (“If Beale Street Could Talk”), in her directorial debut, shows extraordinary confidence behind the camera. Her film, based on Kemp Powers’ 2013 one-act play, envisions a fictional encounter between Malcolm X, Cassius Clay, Sam Cooke and Jim Brown. The story draws sad, painful parallels to the events of today, allowing the unfortunate truths these men reveal to emerge from her dynamite young actors. The film, like the men it introduces, holds no punches. It says what

needs to be said.



## 5. “The Trial of the Chicago 7”

“The Trial of the Chicago 7” reveals Aaron Sorokin, as writer and director, at the top of his game. When was the last time a two-hour drama zipped by this quickly? His film introduces the group charged with conspiracy and crossing state lines to incite riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. In doing so, the crackling dialogue and killer cast propel the drama forward like a bullet fired from a gun. There is an urgency, a relevancy to today’s fractured political climate sorely lacking in most films. I slighted the film upon its release with a 3 1/2 star rating. It deserves 4 stars. Sacha Baron Cohen likely will score his first Oscar acting nod by playing Abbie Hoffman as the trial’s hippie court jester.



## 6. “Judas and the Black Messiah”

Shaka King’s film, about an FBI informant’s betrayal of Illinois Black Panther Chairman Fred

Continued from Page 17

Hampton, is exceedingly intelligent and involving, placing its characters in thoughtful context and brilliantly evoking a specific time and place. Better yet? A performance for the ages by Daniel Kaluuya. He is electrifying as Hampton, holding everyone in his grip with powerfully seductive skill. Credit Lakeith Stanfield, as informant Bill O'Neal, with delivering a career high, especially Bill's final scene with Fred: trembling, barely composing himself.



## 7. "The Life Ahead"

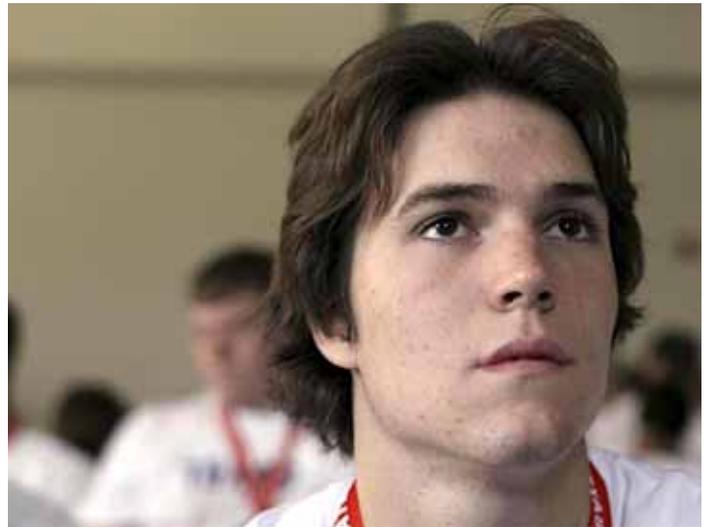
What this film achieves is a deeply moving friendship that defies all convention, with Italian filmmaker Edoardo Ponti at the helm of a story in which his mother, the great Sophia Loren, proves age is just a number. At 86, her star wattage shines brighter than ever. She plays a prisoner at Auschwitz and former Paris call girl who in her final years cares for the children of local prostitutes. The latest charge is 10-year-old Momo, played by Ibrahima Gueye in a startling performance of raw intensity.

## 8. "Herself"

A familiar story — abused wife flees spouse, starts anew — reinvented as a quiet character study. It is one that builds to scenes of tremendous power as it has the courage to see its housewife discover her own self-worth. Clare Dunne, the Dublin-born writer and star, sends all the characters on journeys that suggest some of the best projects in life benefit others, not the individual self.

## 9. "Boys State"

The year's most engrossing, perceptive and revealing documentary. Filmed in Texas in 2018, it



introduces teen boys randomly organized into two political groups who subsequently stage mock elections. What the film does is reveal American politics in a fishbowl, arguing political divisiveness starts early, absorbed by youth in their formative years so when young adulthood arrives, they exist not collectively, as one voice, but as starkly opposite camps. A



challenging experience on every level.

## 10. "The Outpost"

This fact-based drama begins like a B-movie western, and with all the clichés present. Then the climactic ambush arrives, a harrowing 45-minute assault on the senses, and the film emerges as a stirring tribute to American bravery amid impossible odds. The movie details all the key players who survived, and perished, during the 2009 Battle of Kamdesh in eastern Afghanistan, when 300-400 Taliban descended on American Combat Outpost Keating. Director Rod Lurie, a former movie critic-turned director ("The Contender," "The Last Castle"), is unflinching in his portrait of courage under constant fire.

### Honorable Mentions

- "Da 5 Bloods" — Spike Lee's compelling spin

on “The Treasure of Sierra Madre,” but in the context of black veterans who return to Vietnam searching for gold. Brilliantly told, with a shell-shocked performance by Delroy Lindo that warrants a Best Actor nomination.

- **“Enola Holmes”** — Pure moviemaking enchantment, with “Stranger Things” star Millie Bobby Brown a delight in this feminist twist on the Sherlock Holmes legacy.
- **“I Care A Lot”** — A scathing black comedy in which a con artist (Rosamund Pike, phenomenal) picks the wrong senior citizen to scam, played with vicious glee by Dianne Wiest. A rare film that keeps you guessing until the very end.
- **“The Invisible Man”** — A slick, smart horror film for the #metoo era, with Elisabeth Moss positively ferocious as a woman who fights back against the man who terrorizes her.
- **“Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom”** — A superb adaptation of August Wilson’s stage play, with Viola Davis in fine form and the late Chadwick Boseman, in his final performance, operating at Oscar-worthy levels.
- **“The One & Only Ivan”** — The year’s best family film, one I had the pleasure of seeing twice. A gentle fable, told with humor and heart. The last 10 minutes will reduce anyone who sees it to a lump-in-the-throat mess.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at [drew@thebeacher.com](mailto:drew@thebeacher.com)



The late Chadwick Boseman (left), in his final performance, delivered the crown jewel of a career cut short by cancer.

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## Indiana Dunes National Park

The National Park Service is partnering with Leon's Triathlon and Team Rubicon Disaster Response to present the inaugural "America's Race" on Sept. 11 at West Beach.

The event is part of national recognition amid the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, honoring military veterans and First Responders.

The 5K and 10K championship features obstacles representing numerous American conflicts. Race participants will fight their way through the forests of the Revolutionary and Civil wars, or crawl through the trenches of World War I. Other challenges include: negotiating the obstacles at Normandy Beach; patrolling Vietnam; and running up sand dunes in the Middle East.

Military veterans and First Responders have the first chance to sign up. Registration then opens to the general public and is capped at 250 contestants. The race will have staggered start times so the course will never get too crowded. Participants should be prepared to low crawl, bear crawl, carry sandbags, drag dummies and negotiate numerous obstacles spread throughout the course. A water point will be stationed at about the halfway point, and snacks and refreshments will be provided close to the finish line. Opportunities for spectators will be shared later when the information is available.

The race is part of the Indiana Dunes Outdoor Adventure Festival that includes more than 70 events in one weekend. It also showcases the region's outdoor activities, such as hiking, paddling, biking, geo-caching, photography, birding and yoga.

Visit <https://leonstriathlon.com>, call (219) 395-1882 or visit [www.nps.gov/indu](http://www.nps.gov/indu) for more details.

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](http://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.

No Maple Sugar tours at Chellberg Farm are planned, but a virtual presentation about maple sugaring, complete with activities and connections to the area's history, is offered.

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

Snowshoes are available for free checkout from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily, with at least a 2-inch snow base required, at The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education.

Snowshoe sizes are available for kids and adults. They can be used to explore the three-mile-long Miller Woods trail system that leads visitors on an easy to moderate hike through oak savanna and dune habitats. Inside the Douglas Center are exhibits, a live animal display and "Nature Backpacks" stocked with supplies and nature guides. Wear a face covering when inside the center and maintain social distancing on the trails.

*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](http://www.nps.gov/indu) for details.*

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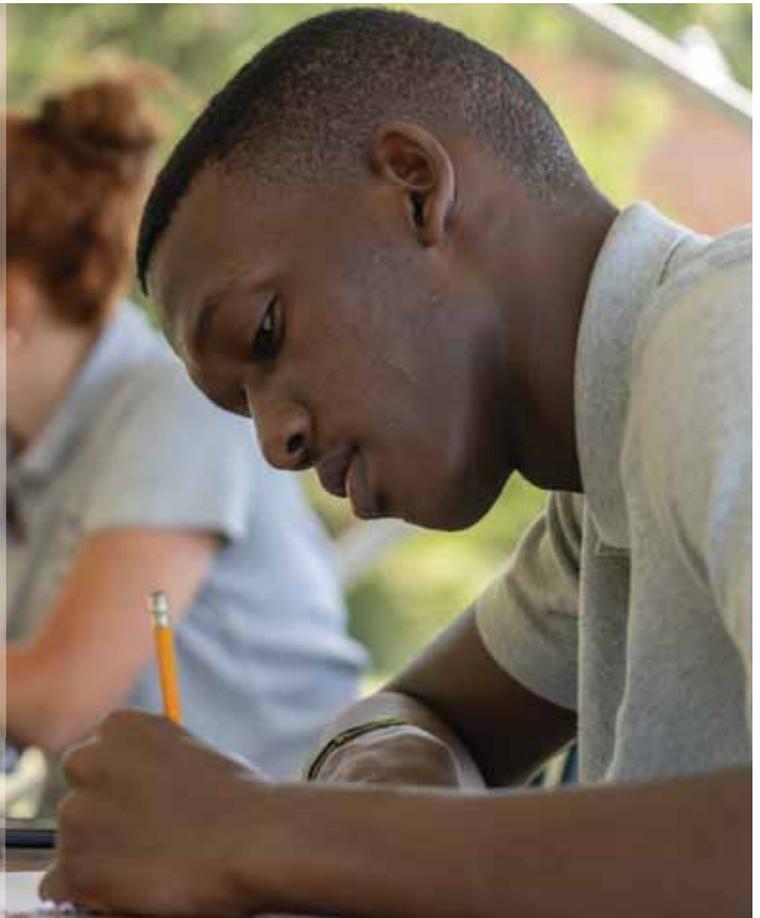
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**Art Barn School of Art**

Valparaiso’s Art Barn School of Art is offering a new workshop and Creativity Lab.

The virtual workshop, “Abstracting Nature II: Let’s Get Starting Finishing with Pat Dews,” is from 1 to 4 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, March 25-27.

The cost is \$250 per person. A followup to a previous workshop with Dews, students focus on finishing paintings and design. In a demonstration, Dews will change a painting using acrylic paints, adding more inks or watercolors to a start or cropping.

The Creativity Lab with instructor Alice Dickey is from 10 a.m. to noon Saturdays, March 6-20. The cost is \$55 for three weeks or \$20 for a drop-in. Children ages 5-9 learn basic skills using a variety of media. Each class will explore a different theme. Session One themes are “Unicorns & Dragons,” “Clovers & Charms” and “Grumpy Cats & Glitter.” Techniques include drawing, painting and mixed-media collage. All supplies are included.

The Art Barn is located at 695 N. County Road 400 East, Valparaiso. Visit [www.artbarnschool.org](http://www.artbarnschool.org) to register or for more information. Call (219) 462-9009 for additional details.

**Indiana Dunes State Park**

*The following programs will be offered:*

- **COVID-19 program safety precautions.**

Pre-registration is required for all programs to properly meet gathering guidance restrictions. Social distancing must be practiced by staying at least 6 feet away from others. Masks or other face coverings of the nose and mouth are required.

- **Snowshoe Rentals are available at the Nature Center.**

Snowshoeing is offered as long as 6 inches of snow is on the ground. A driver’s license is needed, and the cost is \$5 for the day. (10 a.m.-4 p.m.) Call the Nature Center to ask about snow conditions.

*Indiana Dunes State Park is at 1600 N. County Road 25 East (the north end of Indiana 49), Chesterton. Call (219) 926-1390 to register for programs or for more information.*



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### PNW to Host Basketball Tournament

Purdue University Northwest will host the 2021 Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Men's and Women's Basketball Tournaments.

The men's championship will be played at the Hammond campus, inside the Fitness & Recreation Center, and the women's championship at the Westville campus, at the James B. Dworkin Student Services and Activities Complex. Both sites will host four quarterfinal games Thursday, March 4, two semifinal games Friday, March 5, and the finals on Sunday, March 7.

A new format will allow all 12 GLIAC institutions for the Men's and Women's Tournament to participate. The opening round is at campus sites, with the advancing teams traveling to PNW for the remainder of the tournaments. PNW will lend its staff to assist the conference with tournament operations.

With COVID-related safety at the forefront, attendance is limited to essential staff and no fans. The tournaments will follow the GLIAC Safety Requirements for Competition, which call for testing of student-athletes, masking and sanitization of venues before and after competition.

All games can be viewed live on pay-per-view streaming, and be available on-demand, through PNW's partnership with JED TV.

Visit [www.PNWathletics.com](http://www.PNWathletics.com) fore details.

### Kids Night Out

LaPorte County Family YMCA, 901 Michigan Ave., will host a free Kids Night Out — Glow Party from 6 to 9 p.m. Saturday, March 6.

The event includes dancing, face paint and crafts. Pre-packaged snacks and drinks will be provided. Wear tie-dye, white clothes or neon colors.

The cost is \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members. Visit [tinyurl.com/y8w9jjbx](http://tinyurl.com/y8w9jjbx) for details.



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## Hoosier Star Auditions

LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra will hold auditions for the 16th Annual Hoosier Star competition on Saturday and Sunday, March 20-21, at Bethany Lutheran Church, 102 G St., LaPorte.

Sponsored by Horizon Bank, NIPSCO, Northwest Health and Duneland Media, the competition is open to amateur singers — individually or as duets — throughout Indiana and Berrien County, Mich.

Times are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. Contestants are divided into two age groups: Youth Division (17 and younger) and Adult Division (18 and older at the time of auditions). Ten finalists — five from each age group — advance to the final event for a chance to win monetary prizes and the title of “2021 Hoosier Star Winner.”

The 10 Hoosier Star finalists perform with LCSO members Saturday, Sept. 11, at LaPorte Civic Auditorium. The audience and a judges panel choose each age division’s winners. First- and second-place winners receive \$1,000 and \$500, respectively.

Audition forms are available at <https://lcsso.net/events/hoosier-star/>. The registration fee is \$20 per person or per duet and requires separate registrations. Contestants should preregister for a guaranteed time slot. Applications must be received by March 15 to be eligible and receive a time slot. Walk-in auditions will be available at the end of each day.

Hoosier Star is open to amateur soloists and duets only. No group performances may enter, and both competitors in a duet must be from the same age division. For auditions, applicants may provide their own accompanist, use a CD with no lead vocals, supply a digital MP3-capable device or sing a capella. Email [hoosierstar2018@gmail.com](mailto:hoosierstar2018@gmail.com) or call (219) 362-9020 for more details. Applicants will be notified of their assigned audition date and time within a week prior to auditions.

## LCSO in the Spotlight



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

Meg Rodgers began playing the harp at 14 after taking several years of piano and flute lessons, studying all three in college.

She has been an LCSO member since 2000, and serves as a musician liaison to the LCSO board. She is a graduate of DePauw University with a bachelor’s degree in harp performance, and a Master of Music Performance from Northwestern University.

In addition to LCSO, she is the principal harp for the South Shore Orchestra and assistant principal with the Rockford (Ill.) Orchestra. She also has performed with the Northwest Indiana, Southwest Michigan and South Bend orchestras, as well as the Holland and Kalamazoo (Mich.) orchestras.

She is active as a freelance harpist, playing about 50 weddings a year, as well as other events. She is the adjunct harp instructor at Lake Michigan College and Andrews University, and the artist in residence at St. Joseph Public Schools in Michigan.



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## LCA Art Classes, Summer Camps

Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St., has unveiled its spring schedule of art classes and youth summer camps.

The session, which includes online and in-person classes for all ages, begins Monday, March 22.

“We continue to abide by strict safety measures for our returning students as we enter the spring months,” LCA Education Director Hannah Ham-



mond-Hagman said in a press release. “We will continue to limit in-person class size to allow for social distancing, and masks are required for all students, instructors and visitors while in the building.”

Adult offerings include in-person instruction in “Abstract Painting” and “Mixed Media Exploration” with instructors Jay

Zerbe and Michelle Wiser. Students will explore techniques and skill-building exercises. Young artists can explore online classes, including “The Art of Comic Book Storytelling” and “Art Journaling,” as well as in-person painting and drawing classes.

Whether online or in person, tuition for youth classes includes all materials, and families who register for online classes will need to pick up a supply kit from LCA prior to the start of the session.

Registration is open for LCA’s Youth Summer Camps for children ages 8-13. Themes for in-person camps are “Things that Fly,” “Ocean Deep” and “Myths, Tales and Lore.” Beginning mid-July, each camp meets from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for five days, with youth using all kinds of materials and techniques related to each week’s theme. Each week ends with a family celebration to showcase the works created.

Scholarships are available for students of all ages to attend a class or camp thanks to The Dolly Fund and Unity Foundation of LaPorte County. Email [hhammond@lubeznikcenter.org](mailto:hhammond@lubeznikcenter.org) or call (219) 874-4900 for more details. Visit [www.lubeznikcenter.org/learning](http://www.lubeznikcenter.org/learning) for additional information.

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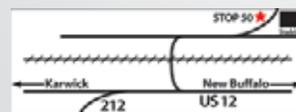
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## Activities to Explore

### In the Area:

**March 4** — "Intro & First Exercises Drawing Class," 2-4 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library Coolspring Branch, 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Registration: [tinyurl.com/jdgpobst](http://tinyurl.com/jdgpobst)

**March 6** — Kids Night Out — Glow Party, 6-9 p.m., LaPorte County Family YMCA, 901 Michigan Ave. Cost: \$15/members, \$20/non-members. Info: [tinyurl.com/y8w9jjbx](http://tinyurl.com/y8w9jjbx)

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

**Through March 31** — Dale Cooper installation (3-D paper flowers), The Legacy Center Gallery @ Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Gallery hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Info: [jessicar@gas.org](mailto:jessicar@gas.org)

**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](http://www.lubeznikcenter.org)

### In the Region

**March 4** — "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. Cost \$25, \$20/members. Info: [www.fernwoodbotanical.org](http://www.fernwoodbotanical.org), (269) 695-6491.

**March 5-7** — Jerry Mayer's "2 Across," Elkhart Civic Theatre @ Bristol (Ind.) Opera House, 210 E. Vistula St. (Indiana 120). Times (Eastern): March 5-6/7:30 p.m., March 7/3 p.m. Tickets: live performances — students/\$16, adults/\$22, seniors 62+/\$20; streaming — \$19. Reservations: [www.elkhartcivictheatre.org/tix](http://www.elkhartcivictheatre.org/tix), (574) 848-4116.

**Through March 7** — Exhibits, Elkhart's Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St. Exhibits: "The Blue Ribbon Collection: The Amish Acres Arts & Crafts Festival"; "Adam Grant: A Holocaust Remembrance"; "Gabor Peterdi: The Early Works." Info: [www.midwestmuseum.us](http://www.midwestmuseum.us), (574) 293-6660.

**Through March 12** — Student exhibit, Art Barn School of Art, 695 N. County Road 400 East, Valparaiso. Gallery hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tue., Thur., Fri./10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. Info: (219) 462-9009, [www.artbarnschool.org](http://www.artbarnschool.org)

**Through March 28** — New exhibits, KAC Members' Show & local ceramist Jennifer Zona, Krasl Art Center, 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich. Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. EDT Fri.-Mon. Info: [www.krasl.org](http://www.krasl.org), (269) 983-0271.

Want your event listed in Activities?

The weekly deadline is noon Thursday  
(219) 879-0088 • [drew@thebeacher.com](mailto:drew@thebeacher.com)

## Unity Releases Annual Report

Working with area homeless shelters and kicking off the Vibrant Communities of LaPorte County process are among the accomplishments Unity Foundation of LaPorte County listed in its 2019-2020 Report to the Community.

The full report and Unity's newsletter are available by visiting [www.uflc.net](http://www.uflc.net).

In 2020, Unity quickly pivoted to remote working, virtual meetings and office visits because of COVID-19. In the process, it:



- Completed the Vibrant Communities community engagement process, but COVID stalled it when it was time to unveil the Action Agenda. Still, Unity began implementing the more urgent items, such as a virtual tool to support entrepreneurs: [www.NWIBI-Zhub.com](http://www.NWIBI-Zhub.com). The foundation worked with its partners to take first

steps toward a countywide housing study and action agenda. Further implementation continues this year. Visit [vibrantLPCounty.com](http://vibrantLPCounty.com) for details.

- Activated the LaPorte County Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund, making grants to frontline organizations as “early” money for food and supplies. Non-profits received expedited annual fund payments, and 2019 grant recipients given flexibility to divert unused grant funds to crisis response.
- Weekly convened the county's three homeless shelters and many support organizations working to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among the homeless. Unity also convened local funders weekly to avoid duplication and coordinate grant-making and solutions.
- Convened bi-weekly meetings with key groups to try to prevent mass homelessness of people facing the “eviction cliff.” A pilot program with township trustees is seeing results.
- Granted more than \$1.44 million and distributed \$280,000 in scholarships to benefit local residents and non-profits.

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- American Legion, 107 N. Flynn Road, Westville, noon-5 p.m. Friday, March 5.
- First Church of God, 2020 E. Lincolnway, La-Porte, noon-6 p.m. Monday, March 8.

*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](http://red-crossblood.org) for more details. Visit [rcblood.org/](http://rcblood.org/) together for more details.*

**Museum Focus of Zoom Presentation**

An update on New Buffalo Railroad Museum, and the kickoff of an oral history program, are on tap for the next Friends of New Buffalo Library presentation at 7 p.m. EDT Tuesday, March 9.

Museum administrator/co-founder Katha Kissman will preview the season opening and its newly refurbished C&O caboose. The Zoom link is under Activities/Events on either the library's Facebook page or website ([www.newbuffalotownshiplibrary.org](http://www.newbuffalotownshiplibrary.org)). Email [new.buffalo.FOL@gmail.com](mailto:new.buffalo.FOL@gmail.com) for details.

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## Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter

**The Unwilling** by John Hart (hardcover, \$27.99 retail in bookstores and online, also available as an eBook. 370 pages.)

We're off to Charlotte, N.C., this week. It's 1972 and the Vietnam War has changed the French family, and not in a good way. This story is so raw, I expected the pages to spit out gravel.

William French is a homicide detective and wife Gabrielle a homemaker. They have three sons: twins Jason and Robert, and high school senior Gibson (Gibby). The twins went to Vietnam — Robert came back in a body bag. Jason came back a Marine with a dishonorable discharge and... changed.

PTSD? Or something else? He doesn't talk much when he comes back, but his actions speak volumes. He refuses to talk about Vietnam, starts drinking heavily, gets into drugs and ends up spending almost three years in Lanesworth Prison. He's out now, but his father has all but written him off. His mother, well, she refuses to see him and, frankly, is suffering from her own form of PTSD. She acts as though Jason doesn't exist anymore and is overprotective of Gibby, driving him into his own shell while keeping him from anything that might be harmful — like football. Yes, Gabrielle has retreated into a place even her husband can't reach.

Half the story is told in third person, and the other half in Gibby's voice:

*"I thought how strange it was to be born with two brothers, yet be so ignorant of both."*

OK, so far, this story may sound like a real downer, but stick with me here, as family dynamics and the underlying love that never goes away, no matter what, offer a story with much to consider.

Jason is back in town now, but seeks out Gibby, not his parents. Gibby wants badly to learn more about this secretive brother. Jason, wanting to reconnect with his little brother, now 18, who isn't so little any more, takes him for a ride and picks up two young women, Tyra and Sara, both in their 20s. Gibby is taken with Sara, but can't offer up more to her than a modest kiss.

Tyra, on the other hand, is bad luck: She can be an angel or the devil's own spawn. Passing a bus from the Lanesworth Prison, she flashes the men inside. Tyra's antics start a fight in the bus; she thinks it's the funniest thing she has ever seen.

Unfortunately, one of the inmates recognizes Jason and reports to prisoner X, short for Axel. He's a super rich man (he killed his family to get control of

their money) who runs the prison by intimidation (he has proven he can get things done outside the prison walls). X decides the girl should be punished, and by association, Jason...well, it might be interesting to have him back in prison again.

Tyra's body is found a few days later, horribly tortured before her death. Jason was the last to see her when they had a very public break-up fight. Evidence of her murder — planted, of course — was found in his apartment. Looks like he's on his way back to Lanesworth Prison.

Gibby knows his brother is innocent, even though

his father, as a cop, finds it hard to ignore the evidence. How to keep his snooping from his father may be harder than he thought. While his father tries hard to believe Jason is innocent, the police take him off the case. Now, he must find other means to look into his son's life since leaving prison. *"Murder cases swept up innocent people all the time. He'd seen it before...Suspicion alone could tip the world on its side."*

Gibby, however, pulls out all the stops, putting himself in harm's way, not knowing about the mysterious X and his hold over Jason. Or that he and Sara are on X's radar, about to be captured and held as leverage over Jason.

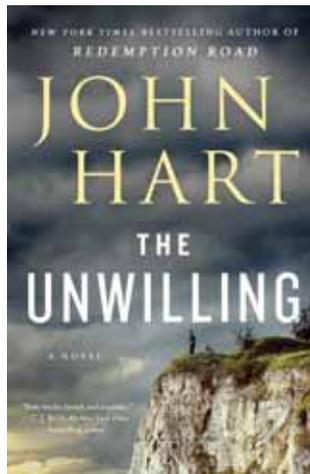
Now, the action picks up, and we see that sometimes, events and people just tumble one after the other, like an avalanche that can't be stopped until the damage is done.

Ken Burklow, Bill French's long-standing partner, provides a good look at what real friendship entails, and how far that person will go to protect and help his friend. No questions asked, Burklow is always there for the French family.

Gabrielle French, however, is a problem. Of all the characters, she is never completely fleshed out. Her anguish at losing a son to war and another to something more insidious could have been pursued more than it was. Had she become an alcoholic, or perhaps slightly insane? We all have our breaking points. Having said that, it could be argued Gibby is the most important person in this story. His struggle between being a good son and wanting to pursue a relationship with a brother he never really knew comes across loud and clear.

To tell more of the story would be taking away your option of reading one of the most emotionally charged stories of the year. This story is raw and cuts to the bone, compelling you to keep reading — there must be a way for this to end happily-ever-after...but that would be a fairy tale, wouldn't it?

Till next time, happy reading!



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