



Volume 38, Number 7 Thursday, February 24, 2022

Finding Her Niche

Romance.

Dual time line.

Historical mystery.

Psychic twist.

More than a decade in the making, Sandra "Sandy" Young's love of vintage clothing inspired her debut novel <u>Divine Vintage</u>.

Unveiled to the public Feb. 21, Sandy weaves a captivating tale of the tragic demise of a newly married couple preparing to leave for Paris in 1913, and the two individuals, brought together by an otherworldly connection, trying to solve the mystery of that fateful night long ago.

From the beginning, Sandy's writing quickly draws one into the story. She brings to life a cast of characters to cheer for, fall in love with and dislike. Setting it in Michigan City adds an interesting dimension, with various aspects of the area men-

tioned. The book is a fast, light read, but do not let that deter you. It has depth.

An author blurb by LaPorte's Catherine Lanigan says it best: "...a mystery in 1913 will keep the reader spell bound...well written and woven with enough sexual tension to strum any romantic's heart strings."

More praise comes from other authors:

- Racheal Richey, author of the Nighthawks series: "hooked from the first page and kept me guessing until the last..."
- Elizabeth Hein: "... A distinctive new voice who innately captures the music and wonder of falling in love."

A LaPorte County resident, Sandy has a distinctive persona. Throughout <u>Divine Vintage</u>, her voice emerges. If you know her, there is a familiarity in how she describes something, how a situation is

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Sandy Young considers vintage clothing a creative art form.

Photo by Bob Welliski



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handled, or you actually hear her saying the words in the book. That, in itself, is mind-blowing, yet awesome.

A wordsmith, Sandy's choice of verbiage such as "criminy" is refreshing. She brightens when speaking about her love of words, the enjoyment of playing around with them and using words not frequently chosen. Her style of stringing words together has a rhythm that makes the historical sections lyrical, the mystery part thrilling and the romance slow-burning. In the telling, she leaves room for the reader's imagination, which adds another level to the read.

The way she describes her characters' thoughts, feelings and actions develops an emotional bond with the reader. She gives you a reason to root for some or wonder what others' motives are.

A sample of her writing: "...A male voice sounded behind her right ear. A hand grasped the umbrella... She didn't recognize the voice...an inner sense of safety first drove her to seek the identity of her helper... her intuition again told her he wasn't dangerous."

"They need to know these characters," Sandy says. "They can't be surface. They've got to see their characteristics, and hear their thoughts and be empathetic towards them in some way. Even if it's a character that isn't very likeable or is a villain, there's got to be emotion that's being tugged there"

Sandy strikes a balance between rich, powerful, vivid descriptions. Revealing just enough to keep one turning the pages. Eliciting something deep that pulls one further into the story.

A few examples:

- "As the hours stretched...a shadow of dread pounced if she caught a moment to breathe between tasks."
- "The guilt was far too much to bear...Contrition tore at his heart an unimaginable wrenching agony. He...rummaged for a scrap of paper. His shaking fingers scrabbled for a fountain pen."

Sandy has given her characters flaws, a backstory and their own voices. She touches on homelessness, giving the reader insight on the subject. Her characters begin as buds and fully bloom by the end of the book.

Like most, Sandy has faced adversity.



Entering Sandy Young's writing studio, visitors are greeted by vintage clothing and accessories, including a stunning blue dress displayed on the floor. Photo by Bob Welliski

"I looked at challenges and said, it's really bad now, but I know there's that proverbial light at the end of the tunnel and it will get better," she said. "I need to learn from this, I need to grow from this. So that's how I handled it, and then I relate that to my characters.

"You always want your characters to hit some hard times. You want to build the stakes of the challenges the characters face to drive people through it."

Growing up in the farmlands of central Illinois, Sandy loved to read and write, dabbling in short stories and poetry.

"Reading...took me to all kinds of wonderful places," Sandy said.

Attending Eastern Illinois University, she majored in journalism and communication since the school did not have a huge emphasis on creative

writing. She landed a job as a feature writer for *The Commercial News* in Danville, Ill., a Gannett-owned paper and the parent company of *USA Today*.

Sandy was sent to *USA Today*'s Washington, D.C., bureau on a four-month loan. Gannett staffers, in the 1980s, helped *USA Today* so the fledgling national paper could turn a profit.

"I lived in the D.C. area and worked at the *USA Today* building with 50 others from around the country," Sandy said. "I wrote features, I had a top of the byline *USA Today* story. That was pretty awesome."



Community theater has long been one of Sandy Young's passions. Here, she is pictured with the Footlight Players cast of "To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday."

At this juncture of life, she wanted to meet new people. She found her niche in community theater.

"I was so into theater, it consumed me," Sandy said. "Sometimes, I would do five shows a year. That's a lot of time. So, the (personal) writing actually went to the side."

Through theater, Sandy's love of vintage clothing began. The allure and passion of what she views as a creative art form drew her to start collecting.

"I look at vintage clothing and the designs are unique. They speak of history and an era," Sandy said. "When I wear them, that just evokes this whole persona of a different time and place. There's a beauty in it."

Sandy has a vast collection of dresswear aprons, undergarments, hats, gloves, jewelry and other accessories. Not everything has been purchased.

Her favorite items to collect are dressing gowns as the satiny pieces speak to the bygone eras of glamour and elegance. From her collection, Sandy often costumes herself on stage and wears them to special events.

"I have people who give me things...because they're family heirlooms or pieces they have for some reason and they don't want to just give them away to a thrift shop," Sandy said. "They want it... to go to a home where it will be appreciated...I'm kind of a collector and a protector of vintage clothing at this point."

Continued on Page 4





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http://educateMC.net/kindergarten

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- Proof of residency (a utility bill, property tax bill, lease agreement, public assistance documentation, etc.)
- O A record of your child's immunizations and proof of lead screening. By August 10th, your child must be up to date!

(You'll also be asked for emergency contact info for your child.)

NEED HELP? All MCAS elementary schools will be open Tuesday, March 1 from 12-6pm

for those who need to drop off documents.

Coolspring Elementary – (219) 873-2073 Edgewood Elementary – (219) 873-2079 Joy Elementary – (219) 873-2090 Knapp Elementary – (219) 873-2096 Lake Hills Elementary – (219) 873-2105 Marsh Elementary – (219) 873-2102 Pine Elementary – (219) 873-2114 Springfield Elementary – (219) 873-2117

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Info and applications for Lake Hills (STEM) and Pine (Visual & Performing Arts) now online at http://educateMC.net/magnets



Finding Her Niche Continued from Page 3

The oldest pieces in her collection are an 1880s skirt, an 1890s jacket and blouse. These treasures came from a local theater purging its costumes.

Her most "expensive" piece – a 1920s long, red, silky, chiffon tube dress, with 8 inches of hanging fringe layers and a matching bolero jacket — was found in a pile of unhung clothes at the former Michigan City Salvation Army store. In today's market, the \$50 she paid would be considered a steal, as vintage pieces now sell in the hundreds.

One particular piece she owns has a distinctive, timeless pattern. She saw German supermodel-TV personality Heidi Klum wear a piece with the exact pattern.

"It's just so unique," she said. "That's why I collect. I just find such unique beauty in it."

The years flew by.

At work, she moved into an editor's position, but missed the writing aspect, so she switched careers into nonprofit management.

In 2001, she became the director of Healthy Communities of LaPorte County, bringing her to LaPorte. Eleven years later, she became vice president of Unity Foundation of LaPorte County. She immersed herself in the area's theater community, her church, the trio Blue Sky Music, LaPorte Service League and Arts in the Park, along with giving countless volunteer hours to other organizations.

In 2010, she awakened from a dream with a renewed sense of commitment to writing.

"It was kind of hazy, but it was something that had vintage clothing related and for some reason I sat down at the computer and started to write," she said. "I wrote three linked novellas with vintage clothing themes. It was over several days... but I had so much enjoy-

ment. After work and on the weekends, I was writing because I was loving doing this."

Sandy intermittently wrote for pleasure. She fiddled with the novellas, putting them together, then taking them apart.

Sandy attended a "salon" in Chesterton given by Lanigan. The author had pre-read parts of each novella and suggested she write one into a book.

"I worked on it, flushed it and worked on getting an agent. I had some bites," Sandy said. "In the meantime, I keep doing theater, change jobs, have a lot going on. I never really forgot it." Then one day, the urge to write became a burning desire. She retired in 2016 from the Unity Foundation and, finally, her writing took center stage.

Sandy worked on improving her writing by taking online classes, webinars, seminars and workshops.

"I was adding to the book and changing it...Originally, it wasn't a mystery. I made it a mystery...I added a side plot that's social justice oriented on homelessness... that was one of our (Unity Foundation) key issues. One of my characters is homeless, and it all ties together," Sandy said. "These things all came in years later. It's like the book continued to evolve and really get stronger and better as I learned more."

While continuing to tweak <u>Divine Vintage</u>, Sandy was writing other books.

Then, toward the end of 2019, she entered <u>Divine Vintage</u> into Pitch Wars, an online contest where you pitch the premise of your book to agents or publish-

ers. She immediately received three publisher offers.

Belonging to the International Women's Fiction Writers Association, she turned to fellow members before deciding.

"Some of them were with...Wild Rose Press. I thought, I respect these ladies; I trust them and their work through them," Sandy said. "So, I sent it to them and I ended up landing yet another contract offer. I decided to give this book a home."

In the end she decided to go with The Wild Rose Press, a small traditional company.

In today's landscape of limited resources, self-promoting is a key component. As a debut author, Sandy spends a good portion of her day promoting and branding <u>Divine Vintage</u>. Fortunately, she understands what it takes to build a brand, having spent years doing it for others. Still, the magnitude of work incurred in having her own website, building and maintaining

her presence on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, making personal contacts leaves her little free time these days.

"I had to really grow a social media presence...I know there's going to be some wonderful local support, but to really get a book out there, you have to have a broader audience," Sandy said.

Handling all of her own marketing does have a great perk: the opportunity to seek and join online debut groups for other authors rolling out their first book in 2022. As she sits in her studio in LaPorte County, she is building worldwide connections.



Sandy Young with Ted Taylor as part of Blue Sky Music.

"We've got this bond, we support each other, we commune online and you become friends," Sandy said. "I reached out to a dozen debut authors, we have our own online email chat group...constantly sharing resources with each other and supporting each other.

For authors, the competition is fierce as there are



Surrounded by vintage clothing she's collected, Sandy Young holds a copy of her book, <u>Divine Vintage.</u>

so many new and established releases, along with a variety of avenues giving readers a wide range of choices.

"Your hope is that you'll find your niche," Sandy said. "That there'll be an audience of people that your book appeals to that they read and love it, that it moves them, that they remember it. I think that's all you can hope for as an author is (that) the readers are pleased."

Upcoming Book Signing

A vintage-themed book reading/signing is from 4-6 p.m. Tuesday, April 5, at Sweet P's Fashions (formerly You-nique Bou-tique), 800 Michigan Ave., LaPorte.

RSVP by calling (312) 965-7488. Limited seating is available, with books available for purchase and signing. At 5 p.m., Sandy will give highlights of her publishing journey, then read a few pages from <u>Divine Vintage</u>. Light refreshments will be served. Face masks are recommended. Attendees are encouraged to wear a vintage item from their favorite era.

Additional information is available at:

- Website: sandrayoungauthor.com
- Twitter: @1DivineVintage
- Instagram: @SLYoungauthor





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Polish Heritage Essay Competition

The Polish Heritage Association of Michigan City is accepting applications for its 2022 Essay Competition.

The contest is open to any high school or college student legally residing in Northwest Indiana (Lake Porter, LaPorte, Starke and St. Joseph counties). Applicants are eligible for awards of \$1,000 (first place), \$500 (second place) or \$250 (third place), and not required to be of Polish ancestry.

Students may choose from one of three topics:

Which Polish American has contributed most to

U.S. history and why?

- Which native of Poland has contributed most to science, mathematics or medicine and why?
- What was the First Partition of Poland (1772), and how did it impact Polish history?

Applications and essays are due no later than Aug. 1 to Professor Janusz Duzinkiewicz at jduzinkiewicz@pnw.edu.

Email him for complete essay contest information and an entry form.

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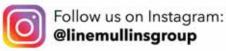


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Rotary Club Alinsky Award

The Rotary Club of Michigan City is accepting nominations for the 2021 Paul J. Alinsky Award.

The award honors the late Alinsky, who was a past Rotary Club president, past Michigan City Chamber of Commerce board chairman and Sentinel Alarm Co. founder. It goes to someone from the community who exhibits dedication to community service, as well as excellence, passion and innovation in their vocation or career.

A nomination form is available at www.mcrotary. org and must be returned to Alinsky Award Committee Chairman Marty Corley at mcorley@emichigancity.com, or sent by mail to Michigan City Police Department, ATTN: Marty Corley, 1201 E. Michigan Blvd., Michigan City, IN 46360.

Past recipients include Les Radke, Bud Ruby, Duane Mertl, Ron Bensz, Jerry Karstens, Emerson Spartz, Glen Lubeznik, James Welborne, Kathleen Lang, Bernie Scott, Jan Radford, Tom Ringo, Jim Dworkin, Dr. Lisa Hendricks, Corley, Don Babcock, Al Whitlow, Dion Campbell, Cyndi Davis, Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins and Rotary Service Volunteers. In 2016, in honor of the club's 100th anniversary, the award recognized every Rotary Club member over the past century. A memorial inscribed with the names of past recipients is on display at City Hall, 100 E. Michigan Blvd.

The nomination deadline is at 4 p.m. Friday, March 11. The selection committee will include Rotarians and community leaders. This year's recipient will be announced March 15 and presented during a Rotary Club meeting at noon Thursday, March 31, at The Salvation Army, 1201 Franklin St.

The recipient receives a replica of the Paul Alinsky memorial. In addition, the club will make a donation to a charity of the recipient's choice. More information is available by visiting www.mcrotary. org or by following the club on Facebook.

Maple Syrup Time Demonstration

The annual Maple Syrup Time Demonstration returns to Friendship Botanic Gardens from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 27.

Visitors can walk through old-growth woodland trails before stopping by the maple sugaring station to learn how early inhabitants of North America produced maple syrup. Longtime garden volunteer Jude Rakowski will demonstrate the processes of harvesting and boiling Red Maple sap, making a foodstuff crucial to the survival of early settlers. Rakowski gathers and chops wood the entire year to fuel fires used to boil the maple sap.

The event is weather dependent, so check social media the day of to confirm it is still planned.

Friendship Botanic Gardens is located at 2055 E. U.S. 12. Email events@friendshipbotanicgardens. org or visit the Facebook page for more details.

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Indiana Dunes National Park

• Winter Fun — Snowshoeing from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 26-27, at Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education.

If there's at least 3 inches of snow, visitors can borrow snowshoes to explore Miller Woods. Guests also can help feed the center's resident turtles and fish, and explore the center's exhibits.

• Snowshoe Hikes in Miller Woods from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 26.

Try snowshoeing on the ranger-led hike through Miller Woods. A limited number of snowshoes are available to borrow, or take a pair. A hike is offered if there isn't enough snow. Call (219) 395-1824 for weather conditions.

Indiana Dunes National Park and Indiana Dunes Tourism have partnered to offer Drop-In Volunteering, a no-hassle option for those looking to help.

Opportunities are available nearly every day and include stewardship, restoration and park cleanup.

From 9 a.m.-noon the third Saturday of each month, meet at the Park Connection Office next to the Bailly/Chellberg parking lot. Projects vary by season, but can include working on invasive species, land and building restoration, or preparing for special events. Visit www.indianadunes.com/volunteer for this month's details.

From 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily, stop by Indiana Dunes Visitor Center or the Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education for the "Trash Trekkers" program. Grab a bag at either center and help keep beaches and trails clean.

No formal commitment is necessary; simply drop in at any location. Dress appropriately for the work: wear comfortable outdoor clothing and depending on the season, take sunscreen, bug spray and water. The national park will provide gear and training to anyone interested. Call the Park Connection office at (219) 221-7098 or visit www.indianadunes.com/volunteer for additional details.

The National Park Service has approved an Indi-



ana Dunes National Park entrance fee that begins March 31.

The new revenue will help fund the Marquette Greenway Bike Trail, visitor services, parking and transportation improvements for a park that has seen attendance increase from 1.7 million visitors to more than 3 million since its 2019 name change.

The fee only affects the national park, not Indiana Dunes State Park. Costs vary depending on the method used to enter:

- The per person/walk-in/bike-in/boat-in rate is \$15 (up to a maximum of \$25 per family).
- Motorcycle pass is \$20.
- One- to Seven-Day Vehicle Pass is \$25.
- Annual Pass is \$45.
- Commercial Fee for a Motor Coach (Bus): up to \$100.

Holders of the following federal land passes will not pay an entrance fee: Annual Pass, Senior Pass, Veterans, Military and Gold Star Family Pass, Fourth Grade Pass, Access Pass (for permanent disability) and Volunteer Pass.

The Entrance Pass (1-7 days) and Annual Pass will be available at: Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, seasonally at West Beach Entrance Station or online at www.recreation.gov. The Annual Pass will be available March 1 and the Entrance Pass on the first day fees are collected: March 31. There are plans to have local vendors such as gas stations, or other retailers near the park sell passes. More information will be available when vendors are confirmed. Call (219) 395-1882 or visit www/nps.gov/indu for more detail.

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.

Indiana Dunes State Park

The following programs will be offered:

- Scatology 101 at 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 26. Meet at the Nature Center where a game offers, according to a press release, "the scoop on poop."
- Snakes Alive at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 26.

 Meet at the Nature Center to see snakes and learn more about them.
- Winter Animal Search Party at 10 a.m. Sunday. Feb. 27.

Meet a naturalist at the nature center for an easy walk searching for animal signs and activity in the forest and marsh. If conditions allow, free snowshoes will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

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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Community Art Exhibits to Celebrate Visual Arts in SW Michigan Schools

The Elementary Art Exhibition and Middle & High School Community Student Art Exhibitions, which celebrate work from Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties, returns to Box Factory for the Arts on March 5-April 24.

The exhibits allow students to display their work in a professional venue and have it viewed by community members and visitors. They are presented by Krasl Art Center in partnership with the Berrien Regional Education Services Agency and the Box Factory. The works also will be featured in the curated online gallery beginning March 5.

The elementary exhibit runs March 5-26, with the virtual award ceremony available March 12. The middle and high school exhibit runs April 9-24, with the virtual award ceremony available April 16. Open

hours are noon-4 p.m. EST Thursday-Sunday.

Virtual ceremonies will be posted on KAC's You-Tube Page at tinyurl.com/2p8usjhj, KAC's Facebook Page and at www.Krasl.org.



The 2021 2-D first place winner: Allison Mroczek's "Walking Into the Light."

The elementary exhibit features awards in the following categories: 2-D and 3-D (first and second place), a collaborative award (a pizza party goes to the winning class) and the Jan Stevens Family Memory Award (\$75 cash award in 2-D, 3-D and Video).

The middle and high school exhibit features awards in first, second and third place in 2-D, 3-D and video. Sponsor awards include the Sarah E. Cayo Award (\$500 cash award), Box Factory for the Arts Emerging Artist Award (\$500 cash award) and Berrien RESA Scholarship Awards (\$50 art scholarships for one student per school). All 2-D award-winning works are professionally framed.

New this year, all participating educators can exhibit work with their students

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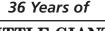
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Michigan City Art League

Michigan City Art League has announced its spring session that runs March 1-May 17.

The league is open to all skill levels, offering two 12-week sessions in the spring and fall. Times are 6:30-8:45 p.m. Some materials can be purchased at class for a small fee. Upcoming classes are:

- March 1 and 8: Dori Huber will present "Acrylic Painting Techniques."
- March 15 and 22: Michele Pytel will demonstrate "The Technique of Acrylic Paint Pouring."
- March 29: Susan Ballew will present "Learn to Paint Beyond the Picture onto the Mat."
- April 5 and 12: Wendy Kerman will present "Create a Painting with Vibrant Color and Texture Using Watercolor, Pastel and Color Pencil."
- April 19 and 26: Ginny Scott will present "3-D Painting Using Shredded Paper and Canvas."
- May 3 and 10: Suzie Rosso will present "A Slide Presentation of Monet's Gardens, and How to Paint Miniatures of Monet."

May 17 is the last class, and students will display their efforts during the past semester.

Yearly dues are \$25, and each 12-week session costs \$35. No previous experience is needed, and the classes are designed to teach art in a relaxed, supportive atmosphere. Programs are held in a lower-level classroom at Queen of All Saints School. It is accessible through Door "F" near the parking lot at Woodland and Barker avenues.

Call Kadie O'Connor at (219) 214-2349, Sam Stroud at (219) 851-4651 or Betty Thomas at (219) 879-0903 or (219) 877-9343 for more information, or email mcartleague1932@gmail.com

Cabin Fever Ham Fest

Cabin Fever Ham Fest, sponsored by LaPorte County Amateur Radio Club, returns from 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 26, at LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St.

General admission is \$7. Talk-In is at 146.610 (131.8). Free parking is available, along with food concessions. Door prizes are planned, while VE testing is at 9 a.m.

Visit http://lpcarc.org/hamfest or call (219) 851-2133 for more details.





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- * Addressing the Climate Crisis
- ★ Safe Drinking Water, Clean Air & Soil
- * Reproductive Rights
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- ★ Ending Gun Violence



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Zoë Kravitz plays a housebound woman convinced she's stumbled upon a murder in "KIMI."

Every now and then, Steven Soderbergh sneaks out of nowhere to crack one out of the ballpark. Take "KIMI," his latest. It arrives with no advance buzz, but it's darn near perfect.

Streaming on HBO Max, the film couldn't be more now. It taps into "Rear Window" and "The Conversation" with a story that feeds off our anxieties about COVID-19 and technology's ability to invade our privacy. The result is an eerie adrenaline rush of storytelling.

The title refers to an electronic device not unlike Amazon Alexa called KIMI. The difference, as its makers like to tout, is that its human staff analyzes all interactions 24/7, resolving any errors or discrepancies.

One such employee is Angela Childs, and she's played by Zoë Kravitz (HBO's "Big Little Lies," next month's "The Batman") in her best performance. Angela, you see, is a mess. We don't know why at first, but she's agoraphobic. Confined to her Seattle loft. COVID-19 hasn't helped, only amplified her compulsions. Her fears.

Kravitz creates a woman trapped by routine. The way she dries her hands after using hand sanitizer is a perfect illustration: waving her hands back and forth with nervous anticipation.

Soderbergh stages Angela's world like a sensory experience. Playing with sound: the muted effect of



Running time: 89 minutes. HBO Max. Rated R for violence, language and brief sexuality/nudity

headphones to drown out peripheral noise. Glancing out her window, much like Jimmy Stewart in Hitchcock's classic, the sight of people wearing face masks is an unforgiving reminder to stay inside.

We see what Angela sees, hear what she hears. So when she analyzes a voice stream from a particular KIMI interaction — shades of "The Conversation" here — she believes she hears a woman's scream. Using all the technology at her fingertips, she filters out excess noise to extract words exchanged between a man and a woman. The conversation all but suggests murder.

The writer of "KIMI" is a guy who knows his way around a Hollywood blockbuster: David Koepp. In addition to four Spielberg pictures — "Jurassic Park," "The Lost World: Jurassic Park," "War of the Worlds" and "Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," he's lent his talents to the first "Mission: Impossible," "Panic Room" and Tobey Maguire's debut as "Spider-Man." What he excels at is repackaging vintage thriller concepts in contemporary settings. What we have in "KIMI" is classically and the sum of the

sic Hitchcock: a housebound woman with knowledge of a crime. Setting the film during COVID-19 is a stroke of genius because it heightens Angela's crippling fears of stepping outside. That she works for a company whose chief product resembles an Amazon Alexa preys on our collective suspicion, and in some cases paranoia, that Big Brother is always watching. Spying on us. Collecting data on our wants and needs. Koepp certainly has done his homework. How the movie conveys the ease and speed with which this information can be obtained looks and feels startlingly authentic.

breakthrough indie hit "Sex,

Lies, & Videotape" (1989), Soderbergh defined himself as someone who likes to experiment, to push boundaries with sound, editing or non-linear storytelling. Even when he goes mainstream, with "Traffic," "Erin Brockovich" or "Ocean's Eleven," his efforts never feel like Hollywood endeavors. They look like someone trying to get outside the box.

When Angela summons the courage to slip out of her apartment, to reach people who can uncover the truth, all of Soderbergh's talents are on display. He creates the sensation of the agoraphobia nearly choking the life out of Angela. Add to the mix everyone wearing masks because of COVID-19, a chilling cameo by Rita Wilson and a foot chase with people hot on Angela's trail...and "KIMI" becomes an exhaustive, feverish race to the finish. I can't recall the last time a thriller has been this relentless, where you're emotionally wiped out. Out of breath.

As much as the story questions the ethics of technology, "KIMI" also praises its benefits during a crowdpleasing finish where the mouse becomes the



From Day 1, with his When Angela summons the courage to leave her apartment, "KIMI" becomes a relentless race to the finish.

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cat. Somehow, Soderbergh and Koepp weave in a #metoo message where violence directed at women is reclaimed and redirected at men.

I can't find fault with "KIMI." I loved it. Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com

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Oscar Watch: "Flee"

by Andrew Tallackson

"Flee" is like no other movie. A documentary told largely through animation because it may be the only way the subject's story can be told.

And on his terms.

That explains why the film, now streaming on Hulu, is up for simultaneous Academy Award nominations as Best International Feature Film, Best Documentary and Best Animated Film.

An Oscar first.

Does it warrant the hype? Yes. This is an immigrant saga, a global history lesson and an LGBT story all wrapped into one genre-bending format.

At the center of "Flee" is Amin Nawabi. On the eve of marrying his husband in Denmark, he opens up to a friend, filmmaker Jonas Poher Rasmussen, about his secret past. All Jonas knows is that Amin, now in his mid-30s, is a refugee from Afghanistan, and that every member of his family is dead.

Not exactly.

When you hear Amin's story, you wonder how he maintains any sense of humor and hope. That the experience of leaving his home country, and the perilous journey that ensued, did not

crush him. Amin, in fact, is not his real name. That he is disguised through animation may be the first time the art form protects a human being from being discovered and, more than likely, captured and put to death.

Amin grew up in Afghanistan with a loving, average-sized family until his father was abducted by the government and never heard from again. Fearing the same, Amin's family flees, leaving behind all their possessions. After the fall of the Soviet Union, they arrive there hoping the next stop will be Sweden to live with Amin's older brother.

At the film's close, we learn Amin's family ended up being scattered across Europe. Worse, he could

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not speak of them, to *anyone*, for fear of being recognized and sent back to Afghanistan...and almost certain death.

Along the way in "Flee," we are invited into Amin's past, specifically an early acceptance that he wasn't like other youth. That being a homosexual in Afghanistan not only wasn't accepted, but in some cases punishable by death.

Had Rasmussen treated his subject like a typical documentary, planting his camera before him and allowing him to speak, the result would have been the cinematic equivalent of a death sentence. Ani-

> mation, indeed, is the only way to afford Amin a comfortable medium to tell his story, to be open and honest after years of living in secret. Rasmussen takes various approaches, from the bright, colorful Japanese anime style to a darker, more brooding use of charcoal sketches. When Rasmussen places Amin's journey in historical context, actual news and archival footage is used.

> The animation carefully, and artfully, conveys month-long peri-

ods where Amin either sat in wait, hoping for the best, or experiencing crushing disappointment. Rasmussen is delicate in coaxing information out of Amin when he clearly does not want to talk. We are moved as well by a family member's gentle acceptance of Amin's sexuality.

As "Flee" arrives at its conclusion, we expect it to consume us. It does not, and I could not figure out why. It may be the format for telling this story is so unusual, we get caught up in the format itself over the actual content. This is a film whose artistic approach is such a conscious choice to safeguard its source, there were times when I found myself lost in the brightness of the colors, the sadness of the charcoal sketches...and not what Amin is saying.

It may take a bold filmmaker like Paul Greengrass ("United 93," "Jason Bourne"), who can make A-list Hollywood pictures feel like documentaries, to tell Amin's story as a companion piece to "Flee." Draw us into his world, staging his journey in bleak lows and triumphant highs so we're emotionally drained by the end. Then, seen together, the two films achieve the wakeup call the world needs.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



"Flee" uses animation to tell a most difficult and emotional story.



Running time: 89 minutes. Hulu. Rated PG-13 for thematic content, disturbing images and strong language

And the Nominees Are...

PICTURE

- ☐ "Belfast"
- □ "CODA"
- ☐ "Don't Look Up"
- ☐ "Drive My Car"
- ☐ "Dune"
- ☐ "King Richard"
- ☐ "Licorice Pizza"
- "Nightmare Alley"
- ╹ □ "The Power of the Dog"
 - ☐ "West Side Story"

DIRECTOR

- □ Paul T. Anderson, "Licorice Pizza"
- ☐ Kenneth Branagh, "Belfast"
- ☐ Jane Campion,
 - "The Power of the Dog"
- ☐ Ryûsuke Hamaguchi, "Drive My Car"
- ☐ Steven Spielberg, "West Side Story"

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ACTRESS

- ☐ Jessica Chastain,
 - "The Eyes of Tammy Faye"
- ☐ Olivia Colman, "The Lost Daughter"
- ☐ Penélope Cruz, "Parallel Mothers"
- ☐ Nicole Kidman, "Being the Ricardos"
- ☐ Kristen Stewart, "Spencer"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

- ☐ Jessie Buckley, "The Lost Daughter"
- ☐ Ariana DeBose, "West Side Story"
- □ Judi Dench, "Belfast"
- ☐ Kirsten Dunst, "The Power of the Dog"
- ☐ Aunjanue Ellis, "King Richard"

ACTOR

- ☐ Javier Bardem, "Being the Ricardos"
- ☐ Benedict Cumberbatch, "The Power of the Dog"
- ☐ Andrew Garfield, "Tick, Tick ... Boom!"
- ☐ Will Smith, "King Richard"
- $\hfill \square$ Denzel Washington,
- "The Tragedy of Macbeth"

SUPPORTING ACTOR

- ☐ Ciarán Hinds, "Belfast"
- ☐ Troy Kotsur, "CODA"
- □ Jesse Plemons,
 - "The Power of the Dog"
- □ J.K. Simmons, "Being the Ricardos"
- ☐ Kodi Smit-McPhee,
- "The Power of the Dog"

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, March 18. Editor Andrew Tallackson's picks will appear in the March 24 edition, before the March 27 telecast. Those who beat his picks will be placed into a drawing. First place receives a \$25 Swingbelly's 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 April 7 edition.

- Name:
- City/Town:
 - Phone Number:

Rom-Com Cheese is Alive and Well in "Marry Me"

by Andrew Tallackson



Pop superstar Kat Valdez (Jennifer Lopez) ropes divorced math teacher Charlie Gilbert (Owen Wilson) into marrying her on stage in "Marry Me."

You can't accuse "Marry Me" of being clichéd when it behaves as if the clichés never existed in the first place.

We haven't seen rom-com cheese like this in some time. The kind where, when others ask about it, you reply with, "Well, the story is lame and predictable, but the leads have good chemistry." That's "Marry Me" in a nutshell. It cobbles together all the generic elements of romantic-comedies from the '80s and '90s and reassembles them into a totally ludicrous package. But it's so earnest, you kinda buy into it, that someone as glamorous as Jennifer Lopez would fall in love with an average Joe like Owen Wilson.

The movie, in theaters and streaming on Peacock, exists in one of those fairy tale worlds where every day arrives with an Indian Summer sheen. Where New York is unusually tidy, not the public toilet that greets visitors. Where rabid product placements and celebrity cameos aren't shameless, but hip. And where a pop star somehow pulls off the most insane stunt that would never fly in the real world.

That would be Kat Valdez (Lopez), veteran of several failed marriages who believes she's found "the one" in fellow Latin pop star Bastian (Maluma). They've recorded a hit song called "Marry Me," and



"Marry Me"

Running time: 112 minutes. In theaters, Peacock. Rated PG-13 for some language and suggestive material.

they intend to perform it live on stage right before they get married on stage, the ceremony streamed for untold millions.

Before that, Kat performs a wacko, head-scratching musical number called "Church" that recalls Madonna in her "Vogue" days, complete with scantily clad backup dancers decked out as nuns and priests. Back in the day, everyone would have been up in arms, denouncing it as wildly sacrilegious. These days, it's so blandly forgettable, the performance is simply pop nonsense.

And when Kat shifts into glittery wedding attire, standing on a platform that will lift her up to Bastian, social media unleashes footage of him making out with Kat's assistant. Stunned, she shambles out to the front of the stage, babbles about life in general, then proposes to divorced math teacher Charlie Gilbert (Wilson). He happens to be in the audience holding a "Marry Me" sign crafted by friend and colleague

Parker Debbs. She's played by bristly comic Sarah Silverman, reduced to one of the most tired rom-com tropes: the gay best friend.

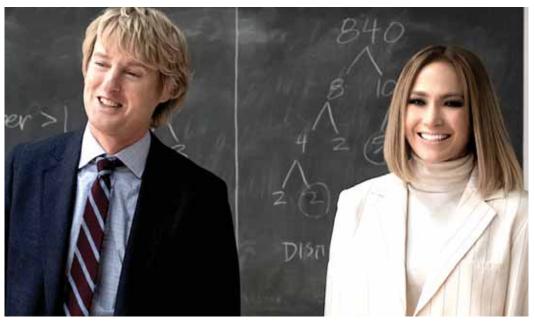
In the real world, Kat's team would launch into damage control, dismissing the proposal as one made under duress. But again, this is a rom-com fairy tale, so Kat's boss, Collin Calloway ("Game of Thrones" veteran John Bradley), decides to go along with it, staging moments of the two together for news shows and social media.

"Marry Me" is based on a graphic novel by Bobby Crosby, apparently requir-

ing three people — John Rogers, Tami Sagher and Harper Dill — to craft a screenplay. During the first 45 minutes, you can feel the wheels grinding away, manufacturing ways to get its two leads together. And John Debney's icky score lays on the syrupy strings each time a "special moment" arrives.

Once it stops trying so hard, once it finally lets its stars elicit star power, "Marry Me" eases into a charming groove. Lopez, apparently continuing her pact with the devil to defy human aging, is bursting with energy and good cheer. Wilson, doing his golly gee, Jimmy Stewart on weed shtick, is low-key enough to ground Lopez's Kat back into a truer version of herself. His world, which comes with an adorable daughter (Chloe Coleman) and equally cute math wizards, is like comfort food for Kat. Lopez and Wilson are good together. We like seeing them together.





Once "Marry Me" relaxes and lets its stars do their thing, it's relatively charming.

You can see the final thorn in their relationship arrive at least 10 minutes before it does, and the big finish is "When Harry Met Sally..." all over again.

Is "Marry Me" worth a look? Well, let's put it this way. A week from now, I won't remember it. But while the wheels are in motion...sure.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



Career Center Students Go Back to Class in New Partnership

A.K. Smith Career Center students enrolled in the Education Professions program are getting back into the classroom, but in a whole new way.

Thanks to a partnership between LaPorte County Career and Technical Education and Michigan City Area Schools, these juniors and seniors are spending several hours each month in an elementary school classroom to get real-world experience.

"Students don't truly know what it's like to be a teacher until they are in the classroom," Education Professions teacher Cathy Lindgren said in a press release. "This gives them a deeper understanding of lesson planning, the method and practice of teaching and classroom management."

Education Professions students will spend one day per month in an elementary classroom. Observation is the primary goal – watching a teacher in action. Throughout the semester, students will become more actively involved in supporting teachers, and conclude their experience by teaching a lesson.

Currently, Knapp and Edgewood elementary schools are partners, but Lindgren said it will expand to include other schools and grade levels.

Delincia Smith, LaPorte County Career and Technical Education director, said the new partnership is a key element of the Education Professions program, which enables high school students to earn dual credit through Ivy Tech.

Knapp Principal Holly Martinez said the first day of the program was a success at her school.

"The A.K. Smith students and staff were flexible, energetic and engaged in what was happening around Knapp," she said. "I know everyone is already looking forward to the next time we're together in March."

More information is available at www.EducateMC.net/CTE.

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Aleigha Kellogg works with students through the new partnership.



Pictured are (from left) Britani Gomez-Ramierez, Brendan Tarter, Automotive Technology Instructor Steve Barnes and Automotive Technology student Ashten Bulger (South Central High School).

In other A.K. Smith news, Britani Gomez-Ramierez (LaPorte High School) and Brendan Tarter (LaCrosse High School), both Automotive Technology students, have placed fifth at the Universal Technical Institute's Top Tech Challenge Event.

The two competed among more than 20 teams in hands-on challenges for electrical systems, brakes systems and onboard diagnostics. They each received a \$1,000 scholarship to Universal Technical Institute. During the visit, students also could tour the facility and participate in other activities, including the High-Performance Lab where they could practice skills with a welding simulator.

Noon Time Talk Series

The Noon Time Talk Series continues at 12:20 p.m. EST Thursday, Feb. 24, at Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St., Elkhart.

Assistant Curator Randy Roberts will discuss 20th century Pop artist Robert Indiana, who adopted Indiana as his last name after moving to New York from Chicago. There, he developed ideas about painting using letter forms and numbers.

Admission is \$5. Members are free. Call (574) 293-6660 for details.

Michigan City Public Library

Michigan City Public Library's circulation/front lobby area is open to the public.

The front doors are open. Public seating is available, and the computer lab is open. Hours are: 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Saturday and closed Sundays.

The following programs are scheduled:

- Needle Arts Club at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. **28.** Membership to the group, formerly known as the Knit Club, is open to anyone interested in needle arts such as crochet, needlepoint, crossstitch, crewel, tatting and other hand stitching. All skill levels and ages are welcome.
- March Madness Book Tournament for Kids & Teens through March 31. Stop by Youth Services to vote for a favorite book.
- Virtual Story Time with Take-Home Craft. A new storytime video is posted at 10 a.m. Wednesdays on the library website and YouTube channel at www.mclib.org/parents/story-time/ Visit Youth Services to get the craft! The program is aimed at children through age 5. Contact the Youth Services department at (219) 873-3045 for more details.

Volunteers are needed for the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program at least one day a week during tax season (February-April). The IRS provides some training, and helpers must pass the VITA test through the intermediate level. Testing and training are online. Call (219) 873-3049 for more details.

Two new services are available:

- · ComicsPlus offers unlimited access to thousands of digital comics, graphic novels and manga. Popular titles include Avatar: The Last Airbender & The Legend of Korra, Big Nate, Bone, Disney Princesses, Geronimo Stilton, Stranger Things, Locke & Key and American Gods. Patrons need a current library card and PIN.
- The app Library NewsStand includes 7,000 titles of digital magazines and newspapers in more than 60 language, including: Newsweek, Fast Company, Forbes, The New Yorker, Reader's Digest, Elle and Esquire. A library card is required.

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

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In Memoriam

Stephen Craig McGue, 74, Sarasota, Fla., and Duneland Beach, passed away Feb. 14, 2022, at Sarasota Memorial Hospital from complications related to bladder and prostate cancer.

Known as "Big Steve" to family and those close to him, his longtime friends simply called him Magoo.



Steve was born in Columbus, Ohio, but spent his formative years in Huntington, Ind., where he attended Huntington High School. He was appointed to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. Upon graduating in 1969 with a degree in engineering, he branched infantry. He was an Army Ranger, and as an officer in the Special Forces served

tours of duty in Germany and Vietnam.

After he left the Army as a major in 1976, Steve attended the University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business. He joined the FMC Corp. in Chicago, then was hired by Hart Schaffner & Marx Corp., where he met the love of his life, Julie Ryan.

Steve rose in the ranks at HMX and became president of Jaymar Ruby Corp. in Michigan City. During this time, Steve developed his two favorite hobbies: golf and flying airplanes. When Steve left Jaymar Ruby to work for Payless Shoes in Topeka,

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• LaPorte County resident for 45 years

Michael V. Riley Harbour Trust Building 1024 N Karwick Michigan City, IN 46360 Kan., he headed up an international division, expatriating his young family to Cuernavaca, Mexico.

After the international stint, Steve moved his

After the international stint, Steve moved his family to Hinsdale, Ill., where they lived for 24 years. There, Steve formed Shamrock Corp. and fulfilled his entrepreneurial dreams by purchasing two KFCs and opening several Brueggers Bagel Bakeries. He grew Shamrock Corp. into a successful multi-unit Taco Bell/KFC franchise.

Besides his fierce commitment to family, Steve had strong ties to the communities in which he lived and worked. He supported many charities financially and with time and talent: the United Way in Michigan City, Pillars, Benet Academy High School, Catholic Charities and Notre Dame and Cornell universities.

Steve was at his happiest when he was flying his Cirrus to golf weekends, over the family farms in Iowa and Indiana, to Army football games and Cornell basketball games, and to the family ski retreat in Big Sky, Montana. His deep smile, wit, intelligence and candor will be sorely missed.

Steve McGue is survived by his wife of 37 years, Julie Ryan McGue, their four children: Colleen McGue (Sean Sellers), Molly McGue (Jonathan Lumley-Sapanski), Daniel (fiancee Phoebe Tzannes), Kassie; four grandsons; his sister, Christie McGue (Bob Calt), and brother, Mike McGue (Corinne), as well as numerous, loving in-laws, nieces, nephews and a host of longtime friends.

A Celebration of Life was held Feb. 19 at Longboat Key Club, Sarasota. Memorial services on March 3 are at St. Francis Xavier Church, 124 N. Spring Ave., La Grange, Ill. Visitation is at 10 a.m. in the church, with a full Mass celebrated at 11 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donating to the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame.



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In Memoriam

Irene Blubaugh, formerly of Long Beach, died Feb. 3, 2022, at her home in Surprise, Ariz.

Irene was born in Dayton, Ohio, on Feb. 19, 1931, to Mary and Walter Seikel. She lived in Dayton until she married John (Jack) Blubaugh on Nov. 26,



1949. The Blubaugh family lived in Long Beach from the late 1960s until 1992, when Irene and Jack retired to Sun City West, Ariz.

Irene was active in summers with the ladies golf leagues at Long Beach Country Club, and bowled in the winters with the same group. During retirement, in addition to

golf and bowling, Irene was active in the Sun City West stained-glass club and traveled with the 10-10 club in its RV. She also volunteered at the Surprise Ballpark and was a 10-gallon blood donor with the American Red Cross.

Irene was proceeded in death by her husband, Jack; her son, Christopher; grandsons Paul Friddle and Jason Walden; and a son-in-law, William Friddle. Surviving are her sister, Pat Merrell, Madison, Ohio; six children: Deborah Friddle, Wilmington, Ill., Jackie Friddle (Bob), Loda Ill., Dara Graham (Gary), Surprise, Ariz., John Blubaugh (Gail), Punta Gorda, Fla., Melissa Wheeler (Michael), Claremore, Okla., and April Alvarez (Richard), Florence, Ariz.; 16 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.

Art Barn School of Art

• Monday, Feb. 28, is the deadline for entries in the 28th annual Juried Art Exhibition.

The event runs April 2-May 19, with a reception from 6-8 p.m. Saturday, April 9 (the awards ceremony is at 7 p.m.).

The exhibit promotes the creation and recognition of original, quality 2-D art and ceramic arts. Entries hail from aspiring and established artists from Northwest Indiana, the Chicago suburbs and Southwest Michigan. The juror is artist James Swanson. Purchase and merit awards total \$4,000. Visit https://tinyurl.com/35huvh7k for details.

• The Opportunity Enterprises exhibit runs through March 25.

Held during National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, the annual exhibit features student work. A reception is from 6-8 p.m. Friday, March 11. All purchases benefit the artists, with a portion of the proceeds benefiting Art Barn and OE programming.

Art Barn School of Art is located at 695 N. County Road 400 East, Valparaiso. Call (219) 462-9009 or visit www.artbarnschool.org for more details.

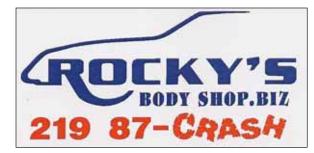
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LCSO in the Spotlight



Elisabeth Waldburger.

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

Elisabeth Waldburger is in her sixth season with LCSO's clarinet section. She started playing clarinet in 2002 and became an avid learner, often participating in musical events while attending South Bend schools, including South Bend Youth Symphony Orchestra and Indiana All-State Honors Band.

She graduated in 2014 from Western Michigan University with a bachelor's degree in clarinet performance, then a master's degree in clarinet performance in 2016.

Waldburger's passion is in educating musicians from young beginners to adult learners. Having created a private studio in 2017, she works with students from multiple school districts around Northwest Indiana, including La Porte Community School Corp.

Along with LCSO, Waldburger is a member of LaPorte City Band, St. Joseph (Mich.) Municipal Band and Elkhart County Symphony. She lives in Granger and enjoys time with family and friends, reading, cooking and finding the odd craft or music project.

LaPorte County Parks



All registrations/questions go through the Red Mill County Park Administrative Office, 0185 S. Holmesville Road, LaPorte. Call (219) 325-8315 or visit www.laportecountyparks.org for more details.

Nature's Tiny Tots

Designed for parents and grandparents, explore nature with toddlers and preschoolers through music, dancing, storytelling and, weather permitting, hiking.

The free program is from 10-11 a.m. at Luhr County Park, 3178 S. County Road 150 West, La-Porte. Dates are Feb. 28, March 14 and 28, and April 11 and 18.

Masks are required for 3 and older. Call (219) 325-8315 at least one week in advance to register.

Joyful Movement Easy Exercises for All Ages

The free, low-impact program is at 8:30 a.m. March 1, 8 and 15 at Luhr Park Nature Center.

Participants can sit or stand for exercises that involve stretching, meditation and balance. Pre-registration is required one week in advance for each date to reserve a seat and avoid cancellation.

Nature Hunt in the Nature Center

The free program is from 1-4 p.m. Tuesday, March 1, at Luhr County Park.

Participants receive a sheet listing objects to find hidden in the nature center. No pre-registration is required. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Parent & Child Discovery Days

The program includes arts and crafts, games and snacks. All activities are related to the topic. Programs are appropriate for children 3 to 8, with an adult required to participate. Times are from 6 to 7:15 p.m. at Luhr County Park. The cost is \$5 per child/per program. Pre-registration and payment are required at least one week in advance or until full, whichever comes first.

The schedule is:

- March 16 Hop, Drop and Roll.
- March 30 Flower Power.

Field Trips

Formal educators, Scout leaders and groups can schedule a free organized program for students or group at any county park. The programs on various topics meet state standards and patch requirements. Visit www.laportecountyparks.org for sample programs.

Email natureniki@csinet.net or call (219) 324-5855 for details.

LaPorte County Public Library

LaPorte County Public Library has updated its curbside pickup service using meeScan.

New users can download the meeScan app through options such as Apple and Google Play. Then, place holds on items using a customer account. Once at the library, check in using the app and clicking Pickup from the bottom of the screen (or calling the library location). An appointment no longer is needed. Add the parking space on the app if picking up from the main location. Enter information in the instructions box if picking up holds placed on more than one account, or if needing additional assistance. A staff member brings held items to the vehicle. Customers using the app receive updates as their requests are processed. Returns can be placed in book drops and be checked in within 24 to 72 hours. At this time, there is no limit to the number of items customers can reserve and pick up during curbside.

- Coolspring Branch: Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Main Library: Tuesday/Thursday (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and Saturday (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.). *The following programs are planned:*
- Intro to the Internet: Adults (19+) from 2-3:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 24, in the Coolspring Branch Meeting Room. Learn the basics of Internet use.
- Stories & More from 10-10:30 a.m. Friday,
 Feb. 25. The socially distanced storytime includes rhymes, music and activities.
- Talk to a Financial Advisor Day: Adults (19+) from noon-6 p.m. Tuesday, March 1, at the main library. An Edward Jones investment advisor provides the free short consultation.

LaPorte County Public Library is located at 904 Indiana Ave. The Coolspring Branch is located at 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Visit www. laportelibrary.org for more details, including programming through the Exchange building.

Cabin Fever Pawction

Bidding for Michiana Humane Society's 2022 Cabin Fever Pawction runs Feb. 27-March 5.

The auction include brunch at Cherry Ridge Farm Indiana, golf outings, art pieces, gift certificates to local restaurants and gifts for pets. Individuals and businesses donated all the items.

Anyone can participate. Funds raised benefit more than 1,000 animals Michiana Humane Society will care for this year.

View auction details at www.tinyurl. com/27reck4d. Contact Development Director Heidi Treacy Tuthill at heidi@michianapets.org or (219) 872-4499, Ext. 103, for more details.

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Horizon Bank will sponsor LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra's 17th Annual Hoosier Star on Saturday, Sept. 17. Horizon Bank has been a Platinum Sponsor every year of the event. Pictured are LCSO Executive Director Tim King (left) and Steve Kring, Northwest Indiana Region of Horizon Bank president.

Krueger Middle School Round-Up

Michigan City area sixth-graders are invited to attend Krueger Middle School's annual "Round-Up" as they prepare to transition into middle school.

The informational session is at 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 1, at the school, 2001 Springland Ave.

Incoming students can learn more details about middle-school life so they will better understand what to expect during the next two school years.

The event is open to families of all current MCAS sixth-graders at Lake Hills, Joy, Springfield and Marsh elementary schools, as well as sixth-graders attending area private or charter schools. Homeschooled students also are welcome.

More information is available by contacting the school office at (219) 873-2061.

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LONG BEACH WOMEN'S BOWLING



Feb. 8, 2022

100.0, 2022		
TEAM STANDING	WON	LOST
1. Pin Ball Wizards	7	1
2. Dolls With Balls	6	2
3. Gutter Busters, Gutter Gals	4	4
Pin Pals, Lady Strikers		
HIGH INDIVIDUAL GAMES	;	SCORE
1. Pat Collado		162
2. Mary Lou McFadden		154
3. Carolyn Wiggins		147
SPLITS		
Susan Kieffer		3-10
Mary Lou McFadden		2-7

Feb. 15, 2022

rep. 15, 2022			
TEAM STANDING	WON	LOST	
1. Pin Ball Wizards	8	4	
1. Lady Strikers	8	4	
2. Pin Pals	7	5	
HIGH INDIVIDUAL GAMES		SCORE	
1. Dottie Brinckman		171	
2. Carolyn Wiggins		165	
3. Kathy Staninger		155	
4. Deb Konicek		149	
SPLITS			
Carolyn Wiggins		2-7	

More bowlers are invited when teams meet at 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays at City Lanes.



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Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

(Never known to fail.)

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

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





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In the Area:

Feb. 26 — Cabin Fever Ham Fest, 7 a.m.-1 p.m., LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St. General admission: \$7. Info: http://lpcarc.org/hamfest, (219) 851-2133.

Feb. 27 — Annual Maple Syrup Time Demonstration, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Friendship Botanic Gardens, 2055 E. U.S. 12. Info: Facebook, events@friendshipbotanicgardens.org

Feb. 28 — Needle Arts Club, 5:30 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

March 1 – Joyful Movement Easy Exercises for All Ages, 8:30 a.m., Luhr Park Nature Center, 3178 S. County Road 150 West, LaPorte. Free. Info: (219) 325-8315, www.laportecountyparks.org

March 1 — Nature Hunt in the Nature Center, 1-4 p.m., Luhr County Park, 3178 S. County Road 150 West, LaPorte. Free. Info: (219) 325-8315, www. laportecountyparks.org

Through March 31 — Local artist Kristy Kutch, The Legacy Center Gallery @ Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Legacy Center hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Mon.-Thur., 6 a.m.-6 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 6 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun.

First/Third Tuesday — Bingo, 5-6 p.m., Long Beach Community Center, Room 13, 2501 Oriole Trail. Free.

Saturdays — Turn Up Dance Fitness with Stacy G., 8:30-9:30 a.m., Long Beach Community Center, 2501 Oriole Trail. Cost: \$5 paid at class.

First and Third Mondays — Singing Sands Toastmasters Club, 6:30-8 p.m., Senior Health/Wellness Center (old hospital ER, Barker/Buffalo).

In the Region

Feb. 24 — Noon Time Talk Series, 12:20 p.m. EST, Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St., Elkhart. Admission: \$5, members/free. Info: (574) 293-6660.

Feb. 26 — Scatology 101, 10 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Feb. 26 — Guided snowshoe hike, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, 100 N. Lake St., Gary's Miller Beach neighborhood. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Feb. 26 — Snakes Alive, 2 p.m., Indiana Dunes

State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Feb. 26 — Real Pretenders, 8 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. General seating: \$30/reserved seating: \$55. Reservations: www.acornlive.org

Feb. 25-March 6 — Ken Ludwig's "The Game's Afoot," Elkhart Civic Theatre @ Bristol (Ind.) Opera House, 210 E. Vistula St. Times (Eastern): Feb. 25&26, March 4&5/7:30 p.m.; Feb. 27 & March 6/3 p.m. Tickets: \$22, seniors (62+), students/\$20. Reservations: www.elkhartcivictheatre.org/tix, (574) 848-4116.

Feb. 26-27 — Winter Fun-Snowshoeing, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Paul H. Douglas Center, 100 N. Lake St., Gary's Miller Beach neighborhood. Info: www.nps. gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Feb. 27 — Winter Animal Search Party, 10 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

March 2 — Jen Chapin Trio Benefit Concert, 7 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: general/\$20, reserved/\$45. Reservations: www.acornlive.org

Through March 25 — "Finding (Me)aning," Red Cup Café, 115 Broadway, Chesterton. Info: programs@chestertonart.org

Thursdays-Fridays in February — Friends of Beverly Shores Bazaar, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., 100 Brown Ave., Suite 1, Chesterton. Info: wagnercasa44@gmail.com, (219) 299-6998.

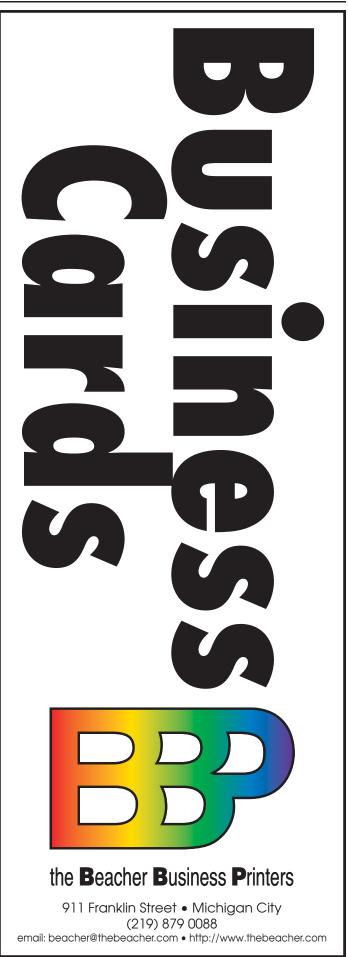
Through March 25 — Opportunity Enterprises exhibit, Art Barn School of Art, 695 N. County Road 400 East, Valparaiso. Reception: 6-8 p.m. March 11. Info: (219) 462-9009, www.artbarnschool.org

Through March 26 — "Shadow, Mooring + Undercurrents," Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. Info: (219) 926-4711, www.chestertonart.org

Through May 28 — "University of Notre Dame: The Fabric of a Global University," The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend. Tickets: \$11/adults, \$9.50/seniors (60+), \$7/youth (6-17), free/members. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat./noon-5 p.m. Sun. Info: (574) 235-9664, www.historymuseumSB.org

The weekly deadline to submit listings for Upcoming Events is noon Thursday





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College Goal Sunday

College Goal Sunday, Indiana's largest Free Application for Federal Student Aid event, is from 2-4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 27, in Technology Building Room 219 at Purdue University Northwest, (1401 S. U.S. 421, Westville.

Students should attend with parent(s) or guardian(s), and parent(s) should take completed

2020 IRS 1040 tax returns, W-2 Forms and other 2020 income and benefits information. Students who worked should take income information. Those 24 or older can attend alone and take completed 2020 IRS 1040 tax return, W-2 Form or other 2020 income and benefits information. Students and parent(s) are encouraged to apply for U.S. Department of Education FSA IDs at www. studentaid.gov beforehand.

Volunteers will walk through the online form line by line and answer questions. All sites offer FAFSA online capa-

bilities, and many have Spanish interpreters.

Students could win one of five \$1,000 scholarships. Those who attend and submit a completed evaluation form automatically are entered in a drawing for a \$1,000 scholarship. Winners will be notified in spring, with scholarships sent directly to the higher education institution selected by the

winning students.

The 21st Century Scholars are income-eligible students who sign a contract in the seventh or eighth grade promising they will graduate from high school, meet grade-point requirements, fulfill a pledge of good citizenship and apply for college financial aid. Upon finishing high school, scholars who have fulfilled the commitment and demonstrate financial need receive state funds to help cover college tuition and fees for up to eight semesters at eligible Indiana public colleges, or an equal dollar amount at eligible Indiana private colleges.

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Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter

The Violin Conspiracy by Brendan Slocumb (hardcover, \$28 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook and an audiobook. 333 pages.)

There's no doubt this book will make my top 10 list for 2022. The scope of the story encompasses so much more than just a boy and a violin. This may be a novel, but there are themes that resonate loud and clear — like jealousy and hate, but also compassion and morality.

The tale starts at the end with the theft of a valuable violin, but it's the story in the past that helps

us understand the real significance of what losing this instrument means to a young man named Ray...

Rayquan (call him Ray) McMillian is a young black man living in Charlotte, N.C. His mother can't wait for him to graduate from high school so he can get a real job to help pay the bills for her and his younger sister. Mom, along with his aunts, uncles and cousins, never understands him wanting to play a violin and all that old white man's music — his mother calls it "screeching."

He has nothing to practice on except a used rental from the school, which he has to return come graduation. His grandmother is his only fan, encouraging him to play for her whenever he

visits. As the years go by, it becomes obvious that Ray has real talent. One Christmas, she gives him his great-great-grandfather's violin that was stuffed away in the attic for years. Grandma tells the story of how the violin came into her grandfather's possession during the 1860s. Ray is ecstatic. Now, he finally has an instrument of his own. It isn't pretty: filthy, in an old green alligator skin case. But now, it is his.

On weekends, Ray plays weddings and parties in a quartet, saving up part of his salary to fix the violin grandma gave him. A second-rate music store overcharges him to fix the broken parts with plastic instead of wood.

Upon graduation, Ray is approached by Dr. Janice Stevens, associate professor of violin at Markham University. She gets him a full scholarship to the school, making Ray realize that maybe now he can become the full-time musician he is meant to be.

Janice takes Ray and grandma's violin to a well-known violinmaker where, after cleaning away so many years of neglect, declares that it is, indeed, an 18th century Stradivarius worth in the neighborhood of \$10 million. Of course, that makes the newspapers.

Suddenly, Ray's family is quite interested in clas-

sical music! By now, grandma had died and true to form, the family says grandma didn't mean to give away the "family's" violin to just Ray.

In the meantime, the Marks family, descendants of the plantation owner where Ray's great-great-grandpa was a slave, contacts him and tells him he needs to give back the violin that belongs to their family. There is simply no way their relative would have given a fancy fiddle to a slave! Now they're talking lawsuit.

Ray does not give in to his family nor the Marks'

threats, taking the violin with him to college.

After graduation from Markham, Ray makes guest appearances with local symphony orchestras, sometimes as a soloist, even judging at musical competitions. Before long, Janice tells him he could be ready for the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, the granddaddy of them all. Winning there would ensure his future.

So, between the Marks family and his family arguing and cajoling him, and practicing night and day for the upcoming trip to Moscow, Ray has his hands full. He goes nowhere without the Strad. So how could it have gotten stolen from the hotel he is staying at in

New York City? And right while he is taking a shower! The empty violin case holds a shoe and a note with a demand for \$5 million.

Police soon call in the FBI and its arts expert to help in the investigation. There are enough suspects to go around, but Ray is more worried he cannot take on the Tchaikovsky competition without his beloved Strad.

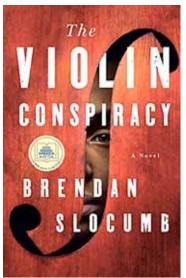
Does the instrument make the musician? Or does the musician make the music? It's a fascinating thought as Ray goes through anxiety and stress, doubting his own ability as the competition looms closer and the race to find his Strad seems to stall.

As a black educator with a degree in music education, Slocumb has more than 20 years as a public and private school music educator, as well as performing with orchestras on the East Coast. He speaks of the underrepresentation of musicians of color in the world of classical music in his Author's Note at the end of the book.

Slocumb is quite eloquent: He emphasizes music being for everyone, and how we must inspire and encourage those around us.

"Alone we are a solitary violin, a lonely flute, a trumpet singing in the dark.

"Together, we are a symphony."
Till next time, happy reading!







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Sandy has been affiliated with (MTM) Long Beach Realty, being licensed in Indiana and Michigan, since 2003. He specializes in beach properties and second homes.

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