



Volume 40, Number 4 Thursday, February 1, 2024

Limitless Potential

by Kim Nowatzke



Two Pine Club members enjoy spending time together after school.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of La Porte County is building great futures in more ways than one.

With a significant increase in the numbers served, plans for new construction, additional programming and the need for more staff, the nonprofit youth-development organization views 2024 as filled with new opportunities.

“2023 was a truly memorable and impactful year for our organization,” BGCLPC Chief Executive Of-

ficer Michelle Shirk said. “Thanks to our amazing club members, team members, families and supporters, we are now halfway to our long-term goal of serving 1,500 LaPorte County children annually.”

BGCLPC offers free after-school and summer programs for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. It is a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, a nationwide affiliation of more than 5,000 autonomous organizations.

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Limitless Potential

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As 2022 drew to a close, five BGCLPC locations existed: Kingsford Heights Elementary School, Westville Elementary/Middle School, Pine Elementary School, Springfield Elementary School and Charles R. Westcott Club in Michigan City.

In early 2023, three more clubs joined the lineup: Lincoln Elementary School, Brighton Street Green Space and the Kesling Intermediate Campus in LaPorte. This Phase 2 expansion garnered support from Health Foundation of LaPorte. A new site, approved by LaPorte Community School Corp., is planned at Hailmann Elementary School, which will replace the Brighton Street location.

What sets BGCLPC apart from other organizations?

“At the Boys & Girls Club, we are highly focused on just one thing – providing fun and safe places for kids to go when school isn’t in session,” Shirk said. “We are helping them learn new skills and make new friends, and providing high quality programming that encourages engagement. The children we serve today become tomorrow’s teens, and then eventually our community’s adults. That means the work we do helps everybody.”



A club member makes pumpkins out of strings and a balloon at the Charles R. Westcott Club.



Children at the Lincoln Club in LaPorte use common household items to create structures during STEM enrichment time.

BGCLPC programs, she continued, have been free since fall 2000.

“We are freeing up time and financial resources for families,” she explained. “Otherwise, it would be a line item for families for after-school care and summer camp. We are supporting the whole community.”

Shirk began with BGCLPC on March 2, 2020, right as the COVID-19 pandemic began, facing subsequent challenges early in the position.

“We were safe and extremely useful,” she said, “but there weren’t a lot of traditional experiences.”

However, she described 2023 as a wonderful year.

“We got back to our core programming that supports ‘Academic Success, Character & Citizenship and Health Lifestyles,’” she said, “and were able to build on, enhance



Chief Executive Officer Michelle Shirk joined Boys & Girls Clubs of La Porte County in March 2020.

and expand it.”

A recent milestone is the reintroduction of regular family-engagement events. The goal is two events per month October-December, then closer to the end of the school year.

For example, at the Westcott Club, Site Leader C.C. Carnes held a talent show for club members showcasing kids’ individual strengths and talents. Not only did members perform in traditional ways, such as singing, but also through unusual talents, like solving a Rubik’s Cube in less than a minute. Families and other club members provided plenty of support in the audience.

At the Lincoln club, Site Leader Sosha Alva, who also is the school’s manager of food services, created a fall event centered around making apple nachos. Shirk said a large percentage of the BGCLPC’s staff also are employees at partner schools, which enhances these unique connections.

In addition, the Kesling Club, with Site Leader Reba Cochran, held a family art show that displayed items such as sculpture and string art. Since it involved middle-school children who often are busy with after-school commitments, several art projects spanned different days to best accommodate their schedules.

The return of such events, Shirk said, meant people were “really ready to engage with us in fun activities.”

Continued on Page 4

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With last year's dramatic growth, BGCLPC provides free after-school and summer programs to 763 children in LaPorte County: a 94.6 percent increase from 2022.

"Seeing that measurable impact was really rewarding to me," Shirk said.

These numbers were due to the added locations, as well as more space available at the Westville Elementary/Middle School site. In addition, transportation from other schools brought youth to the Charles R. Westcott location.

Phase 3 expansion includes construction of a stand-alone location, adding other sites and increasing capacity at existing areas.

Having purchased a 12-acre parcel behind the former YMCA on Coolspring Avenue, BGCLPC plans to begin site work later this year. The approximately 35,000 square-foot building will include several amenities: a gymnasium, cafeteria, teen center, STEM room and outdoor study patio.

"A full-court gymnasium will allow us to offer enhanced physical activity programming and give our members an opportunity to try out a wide variety of sports in a fun, low-pressure environment," Shirk said. "Families will feel more connected with the club after attending their children's games and performances in this space."

The cafeteria means the club can continue to offer breakfast, lunch and an after-school snack in the summer, and relaunch the dinner service during the school year. And with more space, members can be fed in just two shifts. The spacious teaching kitchen opens up possibilities for cooking classes,

nutrition programming and workforce-development opportunities.

As for the new teen center, Shirk said. "On any given day, you might find teen club members learning from a guest speaker, interviewing for their first jobs or just relaxing or playing video games with their friends."

Area designated as a STEM Room is another planned amenity.

"Science, Technology, Engineering and Math enrichment is a critical part of our 'Academic Success' programming," Shirk said. "Our STEM Room will allow kids opportunities to develop hypotheses, experiment, collaborate and make messes! High tech equipment like 3-D printers, drones and LEGO robotics will find a home here. In the long term, we hope to partner with local businesses to offer programming that will help spark our club members' interests in STEM careers and fields."

An outdoor study area, adjacent to the academic wing, means club members will connect with nature while completing individual and group work.

"Kids love being outside," Shirk said. "We will now have the perfect space to erupt volcanos, graph the leaves we find during a fall scavenger hunt or simply read books on a nice day."

Besides the return of regular family engagement, BGCLPC also launched the new science, engineering and math curriculum "Stepped-Up STEM" in partnership with Howmet Aerospace Foundation.

"STEM programs represent a lot of what we're about," Shirk said. "We've found that what kids want when it comes to STEM is to get hands-on and to make messes."

So, BGCLPC now has scheduled art monthly at each of its sites. Past programs include making

Continued on Page 6



Some of the 21 Boys & Girls Clubs of La Porte County board of directors with Michelle Shirk at the annual Blue Bash fundraiser last November.



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pumpkin geysers in October and a “Fun With Fossils” activity, where children excavated homemade geodes that contained plastic dinosaurs. “Slime Science and Animal Dioramas” is this semester.

With the increase in site size, the number of sites and how many kids reached, the need for more staff has spiked as well. The number of employees rose from 38 in January 2023 to 47 as of now.

“We recently restructured our administrative leadership team and roles to better serve our rapidly growing organization,” Shirk said. “Our chief operations officer provides on-the-ground support and manages overall daily operations at all eight clubs. Our director of membership and impact works behind the scenes to ensure accuracy in our membership and outcome tracking systems. Our curriculum director complements their efforts by designing and implementing specialized programs that support ‘Academic Success, Character & Citizenship and Healthy Lifestyles.’



A monthly recognition program highlights strengths and contributions to a positive club environment.

“In 2024,” she continued, “we will add a director of administrative services to manage our overall administrative and office operations.”

Also at BGCLPC, activity specialists, who float between locations implementing specialized programming, support the site-specific teams, allowing



At the Lincoln Club, two members have fun excavating salt-dough geodes through the “Fun With Fossils” unit.

them to concentrate on their responsibilities.

“The activity specialists that visit sites have allowed us to feel more like one organization, even though we’re split at eight different sites,” Shirk said.

Besides staff members, 21 members serve on the BGCLPC board of directors. The nonprofit kicks off its 2024 annual campaign, a fundraising drive, on Feb. 1, followed later in the year by the annual Blue Bash fundraiser on Friday, Oct. 10, at LaPorte Civic Auditorium.

“We are where we are today — both in terms of our organization’s growth and ability to offer our services free of charge — because of the support of our community,” Shirk stressed. “I am grateful every day for the many team members, board members, partners and supporters who believe in our cause and the limitless potential of LaPorte County kids!”

(Visit www.bgclpc.org or “Boys & Girls Clubs of La Porte County” on Facebook for more information, or contact Shirk at mshirk@bgclubmc.org)

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Mindful Movement for Seniors Workshops

Dance instructor Melli Hoppe will offer the seven-week "Mindful Movement for Seniors" from 10-11 a.m. March 11-April 22 at Long Beach Community Center, 2501 Oriole Trail.

No previous dance experience is required. The workshops are open to all seniors, with all degrees of mobility. Participants learn how elements of dance (body, space, action, time and energy) can be used as a tool for self-expression while improving focus, memory and balance. Individuals work with partners, small and large groups to learn dance-improvisation skills.

Hoppe is a nationally credentialed teaching artist with Young Audiences Arts for Learning. She has a Bachelor of Arts in dance from Columbia College Chicago and a Master of Fine Arts in interdisciplinary arts from Goddard College, Vermont. She received a Teaching Artist Certificate from Teachers College at Columbia University.

She was the artistic director of Susurrus, an Indi-

anapolis-based non-profit performance group, from 1993-2013. She also taught site-specific theater and stage movement at Butler University, and dance at Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis, Butler University, Broad Ripple High School and Shortridge Middle School in Indianapolis.

She is one of 35 members of the Lifelong Arts 2023 Training Cohort that received fellowship funding to support arts-learning experiences for older adults. Lifelong Arts Indiana is a partnership between Indiana Family and Social Services Administration Division of Aging and the Indiana Arts Commission.

There is no fee, but participants must register in advance by emailing mellihoppe16@gmail.com

The workshops are supported by the Indiana Arts Commission and a grant through the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies in partnership with E.A. Michelson Philanthropy.



Melli Hoppe



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The Ballet Lady



Judith Joseph kicked off her 37th season as "The Ballet Lady" on Jan. 29 in Michigan City and LaPorte Head Start classrooms. Continuing through February, the dance- and music-based program encourages creative empowerment in children. Silk, chairs and "Fred's" are props for dances that, with ballet exercises, are set to music. Doug Moon of Metamorphosis Traveling Theatre provides assistance. Call (219) 872-4813 for more information.

Annual Valentine Tea

The women of First United Methodist Church, 121 E. Seventh St., will host the annual Valentine Tea at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 10.

The free event is open to all women in the community. A short devotional is followed by light entertainment, tea and sweets.

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The Salvation Army Exceeds Christmas Goal

As the annual Christmas Campaign comes to an end, The Salvation Army of Michigan City reported it has exceeded its \$230,000 goal.

Community support helped The Salvation Army raise 107 percent of the 2023 campaign goal.

“We set a lofty goal this year, and we are so thankful to all of those who helped us not only meet this goal, but exceed it,” said Maj. Becky Simmons, who oversees The Salvation Army with her husband, Maj. Dale Simmons, in a press release.

The Salvation Army attributes this higher campaign goal to an increase in requests for assistance. Over the past year, the non-profit reported 20 percent more grocery orders filled through the food pantry compared to the previous year. Becky Simmons said this increase is due to the post-pandemic economy and inflation, as more Michigan City residents are struggling to make ends meet.

Christmas campaign funds, raised through red kettles and other donations, account for approximately 1/3 of the annual budget. In 2023, these funds



Maj. Marc Johnson (left), divisional commander of The Salvation Army Indiana Division, stands with Linda and Gene Simmons, chairs of the 2023 Christmas Campaign for The Salvation Army of Michigan City, at the Red Kettle Kick Off in November.

helped provide holiday assistance to nearly 600 local families, including 1,369 children who received food and toys for Christmas. Other supported programs include a food pantry, diaper bank, summer camp, utility assistance, free clothing room, weekend backpack feeding program and Pathway of Hope case management.

“All of the money raised through our Christmas campaign stays right here in Michigan City to meet the needs of people who

are struggling with basic needs,” Becky Simmons said.

Sponsors of the 2023 Christmas Campaign include B&E Marine, Wilson Industrial, GAF, Harbour Trust & Investment Management Co., NIPSCO, General Insurance, Centier Bank, Members Advantage Credit Union, Horizon Bank, Woodruff & Sons, Michiana Insurance, Haas & Associates, Restore Dental Arts, *The Herald-Dispatch*, *The Beacher*, WIMS and WEFM.

Gene and Linda Simmons were the Christmas campaign chairs.

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To repeat myself: Your loan is bought from your lender by Fannie or Freddie, which then sell securities (a kind of stock) to investors. You pay your mortgage. The buyer of the MBA secured by your loan gets paid. You fail to pay. The investor does not get paid. You pay your loan off, the investor is paid off for your part of the MBS.

While it is not correct to say that the return on investment is set by any standard, the fact is that most of the MB-Ses are sold for about 2.5% above the 10-year treasury note being offered on the same day. This morning, the 10-year rate was just about 4%. The mortgage rate should be 6.5%

Sometimes, when the 10-year treasury is very low, the "markup" can be as low as 1.25% (as during COVID shutdown times). At other times, when the 10-year treasury rate is high and likely to come down (as in 2023), the "markup" is as high as 3% because the investors believe the MBSes will be paid off soon, so the investors want more money for the shorter-term returns.

So have some fun. Check out the 10-year treasury every morning, then figure the mortgage rate will be 2.5% higher — unless something is messing with the marketplace. Then ask, what is causing the deviation?

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- **"What are Vernal Pools? Why Should We Care About Them?"** The program is at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 6.
- **"The Giving Tree."** The library is accepting donations to Michiana Humane Society.
- **Winter Readings.** The program runs through Feb. 29.

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The Best Films of 2023

by Andrew Tallackson

You could say 2023 was a so-so year for movies, and it'd be a fair statement. An insane amount of films released, many instantly forgettable.

Rubbing salt on the wound, all bets were off. Tom Cruise was the box-office champ one minute (2022's "Top Gun: Maverick"), a head-scratching misfire the next (2023's "Mission: Impossible Dead Reckoning Part One"). Disney gambled the whole candy store in 2023, only to emerge as box-office poison ("Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania," "Elemental," "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," "The Haunted Mansion," "The Marvels," "Wish"). And, much to the delight of their disparagers, comic-book movies saw their golden perch hobbled by the marketing phenomenon known as "Barbenheimer."

So, no safe bets.

You could also say that in 2023, certain movies aimed higher, embracing challenging material. If there is a connective tissue among the films listed here, it is that they are about people. Characters whose journeys affect you. In fact, some of the films here are among the best I've seen in a while...so what does that say about 2023?

As always, my list is incomplete. Hopefully, nominations for the Holocaust drama "The Zone of Interest" will warrant a wider release. Nonetheless, I stand by this list.

My selections for the best films of 2023 are:

1. Origin

Sometimes, a movie hits you. Hits you *hard*. Maybe it struck a nerve. Or, it's just well made, period. Ava DuVernay's "Origin" achieved both for me. Lifted from Isabel Wilkerson's 2020 Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents, the movie is not content to simply argue we live in a racist society. It attacks the engine keeping it in perpetual motion. That, in and of itself, would be enough for one movie. But DuVernay charts the heartbreaking journey of Wilkerson (Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor, in the performance of her career) as she experiences one devastating loss after another. Witnessing Wilkerson, through Ellis-Taylor's powerhouse work, understand her world better, and embrace beauty and hope through pain, spoke to me in ways no other film of 2023 did.

2. Past Lives

Celine Song's "Past Lives" introduces two Korean children, a boy and girl, who by all means appear destined to be together. Then, she moves with her



"Origin"

family to America. The two reconnect as adults, first online, then in person. The woman (Greta Lee of Apple TV+'s "The Morning Show") now is married, but still feels a connection with her old friend (Teo Yoo). What should she do? Reignite the relationship, or embrace the fact that her "past life" is long gone? Song allows Lee and Yoo, and John Magro as Lee's husband, to carefully explore this dilemma. When Song arrives at the final scene, she makes your heart ache. It is a finale you won't soon forget.

3. The Holdovers

A simple premise transformed into a love letter to 1970s cinema. A prep school professor (Paul Giamatti, wonderful) is forced to babysit pupils stuck there during winter break. Eventually, it's just him, the school cook (Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Oscar-

bound) and a student (newcomer Dominic Sessa) craving a father figure. These wounded souls find companionship in each other...and a little more clarity about themselves. In a perfect world, Giamatti, Randolph and Sessa would take home Oscars. Director Alexander Payne ("Election," "Sideways") keeps the characters at the forefront for a dramedy that is honest, hilarious and moving.

4. American Fiction

The perfect satire for our times, gleefully skewering the publishing industry. Jeffrey Wright stars as a black writer whose books, he's told, aren't "black" enough, so in a flippant middle finger to the industry, he cranks out a book that's one big racial stereotype...and it becomes a raging success. Wright is perfect, blending frustrated resentment with per-



"The Holdovers"



"Barbie"

sonal heartache amid his dysfunctional family. The movie, a dynamite debut by writer-director Cord Jefferson, argues mainstream America is more comfortable with tired tropes about blacks because it maintains a racial divide. In the process, the film delivers acidic truths, and laughs, along with a spot-on portrait of an American family in crisis.

5. "Barbenheimer"

Two movies that couldn't be more different — Greta Gerwig's groovy feminist satire "Barbie," Christopher Nolan's epic "Oppenheimer" — and released the same day. Audiences craving a reason to head back to theaters devised their own support system, rebranding the two as "Barbenheimer." The result: an ingenious scheme that saved Hollywood. "Barbie" was a feminist rallying cry, with some of the year's best performances. "Oppenheimer" is proof the true test of an epic is not how long it is, but how long it *feels*. Once it revs up, Nolan's thoughtful exploration of *the* key turning point in the 20th century is a three hour film that feels like two. Chal

Continued on Page 18

Continued From Page 17

lenging on all fronts, with powerhouse turns by Cillian Murphy and Robert Downey Jr.

6. The Creator

Why did audiences give this science-fiction masterpiece the cold shoulder? Because it lacked bankable stars? Whatever the reason, Gareth Edwards, whose “Rogue One” was the best “Star Wars” film since the 2015 franchise reboot, delivered his finest film to date. Artificial intelligence is blamed for a nuclear bomb detonated in Los Angeles. Years later, an Army sergeant (John David Washington) hunts down the creator of A.I. to prevent more catastrophes. In the process, he discovers the humanity not only in A.I., but also in himself. Dazzling, thrilling and emotional, the last act is operatic in payoff. The movie is streaming now. By all means, see it.

7. Flora and Son

John Carney (“Once,” “Sing Street”) is one of film’s last musical poets. A storyteller with hope for misfits, and a belief in the healing power of rock ‘n’ roll. Eve Hewson, daughter of rock god Bono from U2, stars as a rowdy single mother, disconnected from her teen son (newcomer Orén Kinlan), who takes online music lessons with a washed-up musician (Joseph Gordon-Levitt). In the process, she forges a new bond with her son. Filled with great music, co-written by Carney, “Flora and Son” is comfort food with bite. The songs contain the same edge as Hewson’s iffy mother. But by the end, when the family comes together to perform at a local pub,

Carney sends you out on high. The movie streams exclusively on Apple TV+.

8. The Burial

There is great pleasure in watching star power in top form. Jamie Foxx, doing his best work since the Oscar-winning “Ray,” plays real-life attorney Willie Gary, who takes on a David-Goliath case involving a funeral home owner (Tommy Lee Jones) scammed by corporate sleaze. Foxx is a human tsunami, consuming everything, and everyone, in his path. His energy level is unreal, while Jones finds nuance in otherwise grumpy old man shtick. In the process, the movie explores issues of greed and race in a way that is deeply affecting. Why Foxx’s performance did not enter the awards circuit is baffling. The is a reminder of why he became a star. The movie streams exclusively on Prime.

9. A Million Miles Away

In some respects, “A Million Miles Away” is standard underdog fare. The true story of José M. Hernández — the first migrant worker to become a NASA astronaut — hits all the requisite feel-good elements. But Michael Peña, as Jose, is a tribute to persistence amid constant rejection. The casual, and not so casual, racism Jose experiences is deftly conveyed, but as Jose knocks down one barrier after another, the payoff is worth the wait. The movie is a tribute to family, and that one special teacher who made all the difference. By the time Jose prepares to blast off into space, you’re wiping away tears of joy. The movie streams exclusively on Prime.



“The Creator”

10. Anatomy of a Fall

A rarity: a legal drama that does not have all the answers, nor does it resolve itself with a neat, tidy bow. The stellar Sandra Hüller (currently seen in “The Zone of Interest”) plays a writer whose husband falls to his death from the third floor of their chalet. She’s accused of the crime, yet writer-director Justine Triet muddies the waters. For the longest time, we aren’t sure what to believe, thanks to Hüller’s exceedingly complex performance. Triet’s film explores the kinks, and moral gray areas, of marriage, leading to a finale that does not indicate if Hüller’s character is guilty or innocent. But if you’ve paid close attention, you have your suspicions.

Honorable Mentions

- “Air” — An inspiring, often hilarious look at Nike’s feverish attempt to court Michael Jordan for its new shoe line.
- “Are You There God, It’s Me Margaret?” — A warm, lovingly acted adaptation of Judy Blume’s Young Adult classic.
- “The Boston Strangler” — A refreshingly feminist take on the journalists responsible for covering the notorious serial killer.
- “Creed III” — If this is it for the franchise reboot, then it’s a most satisfying one, with Michael B. Jordan doing double duty as star and director.
- “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3” — James Gunn bids farewell to the franchise on a high, especially as a metaphor for animal rights.
- “Nyad” — Oscar bait, but the best kind. A sports biopic with Annette Bening and Jodie Foster achieving one formidable team.
- “Pain Hustlers” — A bracing, emotional look at scams within the pharmaceutical industry.
- “Polite Society” — A rip-roaring good time that pokes fun at the uptight culture of life in the United Kingdom.
- “Society of the Snow” — The definitive look at the 1972 Andes plane crash.
- “Spider-Man: Across the Spidaverse” — The boldest, bravest Marvel film in recent years, bolting through animation styles while telling a compelling story.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at atallackson@gmail.com

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Three Gripes, and Some Praise, for This Year's Oscar Nominations

by Andrew Tallackson

Terribly disappointed...and for three reasons. Nominations for the 96th Academy Awards were announced Jan. 23, and the requisite heavy hitters were duly noted:

- Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer," leading the charge with 13 nominations.
 - The warped fantasy "Poor Things" up next with 11, followed by Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" with 10.
 - The year's biggest hit, "Barbie," close behind with eight.
- So where are:
- Ava DuVernay's "Origins"?
 - The director and stars of "Past Lives"?
 - The director and star of "Barbie"?

You hate to cry race and sexism, particularly when "American Fiction" is well-represented, and Lily Gladstone makes history as the first indigenous Best Actress nominee.

But something's off.

"Origin" was the year's most powerful film. My theory for its absence here is that, like Spike Lee, DuVernay ("Selma," Netflix's "When They See Us") makes Academy voters nervous. She wants to make people uncomfortable when it comes to race, to re-examine their own beliefs.

Did Academy voters, upon learning the difficult subject of "Origin," not bother seeing it? If so, that is a shame. The movie, I believe, will stand on its own. Over time, it should, and will, find an audience, especially once it starts streaming.

Kudos to voters for nominating "Past Lives" for Best Picture and Original Screenplay...but the same

thing happened to last year's "Women Talking." Nominated in the same categories, but no nods for the cast or director. Was "Past Lives" too subtle, too quiet, for voters? The movie's heartbreaking finish would not have worked if director Celine Song and her cast didn't make us feel for these people. That kind of work deserves recognition.

I haven't seen "Poor Things," and that is by choice. Its director, Yorgos Lanthimos, well, his last two pictures — "The Favourite" and "The Lobster" — were irritatingly pretentious and weird. The older I get, the more precious my time becomes. Certain directors — Lanthimos and especially Wes Anderson — are instant red flags to tread carefully.

Kudos to voters for giving Jeffrey Wright and Sterling K. Brown their due for "American Fiction." Ditto Ryan Gosling and America Ferrera in rare nods for comedic turns in "Barbie." Apparently, though, "Barbie" directed itself, with Greta Gerwig shut out of the category, as was her star, Margot Robbie.

OK, enough of grumpy gus talk.

Despite my Oscar quibbles, this is my favorite time of year because of our annual "Beat the Editor" Oscar contest. It's a chance for me to interact with you, the reader. I'm not going to spell out all the contest details. That's why we have the ballot. A big thanks to Swingbelly's as our contest sponsor. We couldn't do this without you!

So, let's have fun with this. Let the guessing game begin...

Contact Andrew Tallackson at atallackson@gmail.com



Lily Gladstone makes history as the first indigenous Best Actress nominee.

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And the Nominees Are...

PICTURE

- "American Fiction"
- "Anatomy of a Fall"
- "Barbie"
- "The Holdovers"
- "Killers of the Flower Moon"
- "Maestro"
- "Oppenheimer"
- "Past Lives"
- "Poor Things"
- "The Zone of Interest"

ACTRESS

- Annette Bening, "Nyad"
- Lily Gladstone,
"Killers of the Flower Moon"
- Sandra Hüller,
"Anatomy of a Fall"
- Carey Mulligan, "Maestro"
- Emma Stone, "Poor Things"

SUPPORTING ACTRESS

- Emily Blunt, "Oppenheimer"
- Danielle Brooks,
"The Color Purple"
- America Ferrera, "Barbie"
- Jodie Foster, "Nyad"
- Da'Vine Joy Randolph,
"The Holdovers"

DIRECTOR

- Jonathan Glazer,
"The Zone of Interest"
- Yorgos Lanthimos,
"Poor Things"
- Christopher Nolan,
"Oppenheimer"
- Martin Scorsese,
"Killers of the Flower Moon"
- Justine Triet, "Anatomy of a Fall"

ACTOR

- Bradley Cooper, "Maestro"
- Colman Domingo, "Rustin"
- Paul Giamatti, "The Holdovers"
- Cillian Murphy,
"Oppenheimer"
- Jeffrey Wright,
"American Fiction"

SUPPORTING ACTOR

- Sterling K. Brown,
"American Fiction"
- Robert De Niro,
"Killers of the Flower Moon"
- Robert Downey Jr.,
"Oppenheimer"
- Ryan Gosling, "Barbie"
- Mark Ruffalo, "Poor Things"

Contest sponsor: **Swingbellys!**

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 atallackson@gmail.com. The deadline is noon Friday, March 1. Editor Andrew Tallackson's picks will appear in the March 7 edition, before the March 10 telecast. Those who beat his picks will be placed into a drawing. First place receives a \$30 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 March 21 edition.

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Michigan City Public Library

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

- **Tinkercad 3-D Modeling from 4-5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 1, in the Makerspace.** Registration is required for the program that involves Tinkercad, a free online collection of software tools. This session, for children 9-17, serves as an introduction to 3-D design, art and printing. No experience is necessary. All registered participants receive a 3-D print of his/her creations. Register at the Youth Services desk or call (219) 873-3045 for more info. Space is limited. MCPL 3-D printing rules apply, and the printing fee is waived for this program.
- **Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night from 5:30-7 p.m. Thursdays, Feb. 1 and 8.** Membership is open to anyone interested in needle arts such as crochet, needlepoint, cross-stitch, crewel, tatting and other hand stitching. All skill levels and ages are welcome. Also, the group has organized a local chapter of the Warm Up America Foundation. Volunteers are knitting and crocheting handmade squares (7x9 inch) that will be joined together to make full-size afghans
- **Diamond Painting from 4-5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 5.** Youth ages 10-17 can learn how to diamond paint. Registration through the website is required due to limited supplies.
- **Dungeons & Dragons (ages 13-17) from 4-6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7.** Supplies and characters are provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Email Miss Dana at dwolf@mclib.org for details.
- **Winter Reading Bingo for Adults through Feb. 29.** Stop by the reference desk to pick up a Winter Reading Bingo sheet. Complete five reading-related activities in a row, then turn in the sheet to the reference desk to receive a sticker and free entry into a drawing for a \$25 Amazon gift card. The winner will be notified March 1.
- **Creative Tech Activities (ages 6-17) from 3:30-5 p.m. Tuesdays, Feb. 6 and 13.** Create with LEGO WeDo, Micro:bits, paper circuits, Ozobots and 3-D pens. Children 12 and younger must have a parent or guardian attend with them.
- **Story Time at 10 a.m. Wednesdays.** Children birth to age 5 and adults will enjoy stories, songs and crafts. Check out previous story time videos through the library's YouTube channel, Facebook page and website.
- **Weekly Crafts for Kids & Teens.** Each week offers a different project. Take-home craft kits are available, or create some in the Makerspace.
- **Wild Pokemon Scavenger Hunt in February.** Visit Youth Services, find all the characters and win a prize.
- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance aid needed.** Volunteers help at least one day a week during tax season (February-April). The IRS provides some training, and passing the VITA test through the intermediate level is required. Testing and training are online. Call (219) 873-3049 for more details.
- **Learning Center volunteers needed for children and adults.** Areas include reading, math, high school equivalency and English as a Second Language. All supplies and training are provided. Volunteers are needed two hours a week. Contact Jessica Hoffmaster at (219) 873-3043 or stop by the Learning Center for more details.
- **The 2024 Genealogy Bus Trip to Allen County is Wednesday, April 17.** The trip is sponsored by the library and LaPorte County Genealogical Society. The center has an extensive collection of North American genealogy resources. More details will be available in March.



Michigan City Public Library is located at 100 E. Fourth St. Visit www.mclib.org or call (219) 873-3049 for more details.



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Savage Girl by Jean Zimmerman (hardcover \$27.95 or paperback \$17 retail; also available as an eBook or an audiobook. 416 pages)

Nature vs. nurture. Can a child brought up in the wilds by, say, Native Americans, return to civilization and be a member of “proper society”? The debate, argued some hundred years ago, goes on and on. Nowhere is it handled better than in this week’s recommendation first published in 2014.

I call this a historical novel, mystery and psychological drama. It contains all those elements, as well as love, hate and revenge; elements that make the world go round...civilized or not.

Here are the facts of this captivating story:

It is 1875, and the immensely rich Delegate family of New York City is on its private railroad cars headed for a tour of the American West and, in particular, the Nevada silver mine it owns. The family consists of the parents, Friedrich-August and Anna Maria, and sons Hugo and his younger brother, Nicky. They are accompanied by Tu-Li, a Chinese woman and companion to Anna Maria, and Tahk-too, a Zuni man-woman. (“*Anatomically male, garmented as a female, an indigene from the deserts of the Arizona Territory.*”)

They find the town called Virginia City, Nev., as rough and tumble as the stories sent back east by dime novelists. In fact, while dining at the only respectable hotel in town, they witness a shooting right in the restaurant. Their only reprieve from a stray bullet is that they are sitting in the balcony instead of the main floor.

A walk down a side street puts them in front of a large barn with a hand-painted sign — Savage Girl. Appropriately amused, the group goes in for the 5 o’clock “show.” The girl they see is wild, disheveled and apparently mute. She puts on a pair of claw hands, each one fitted with three blades, razor sharp, made of honed steel and, obviously, made to scare and excite the audience.

Friedrich-August, a rich man with a lot of time on his hands, takes the girl back to “civilization” to see if nurturing can indeed overcome nature...it could prove to be interesting, yes? Imagine the looks on friends’ faces when they see the transformation from savage to society girl at her coming-out ball. No, this has nothing to do with a humanitarian effort to save a young woman, only a chance to amuse the family. Compare them to Henry Higgins and how cute he thought he was with his “experiment” with Eliza Doolittle.

Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter



The New York City the family returns to with Savage Girl in tow (her name is Bronwyn) is Manhattan, a town of the very rich, like the Delegates, and the rest of the population, which doesn’t matter to them. Have you read Edith Wharton? Like her, Zimmerman brings to vivid life the strict structure and mores of Manhattan society.

For a while, it seems to work. Bronwyn says a few words, then picks up on writing and reading. Anna Maria and Tu-Li dress her properly, even pass her off to the rest of New York society as a distant relative about to have her “coming out” ball.

This story is told by Hugo to his lawyers while in jail for murder... a murder he says is not his fault.

Yes, murder. It seems since this whole “Savage Girl” thing started, vicious murders have been happening wherever the Delegates, and Bronwyn, go. Hugo, who has spent time in a sanatorium (“...down with a woeful bout of disturbed thoughts, restlessness and depression of spirits”), cannot bring himself to believe Bronwyn is responsible for these vicious murders, so he begins to think he is responsible somehow. Plus, he discovers Bronwyn has

been sneaking out of the house late at night. Where could she be going?

It’s an interesting cast of characters: Friedrich-August with his scientific curiosity, Anna Maria looking to replace the daughter she lost, Nicky the teen who follows Bronwyn around like a lost puppy, and Hugo, who vacillates between a decent human being and a simpering wimp who prefers anatomy lessons to society...until Bronwyn comes into his life.

It’s a “My Fair Lady” transformation with more than a few twists. But before you start singing “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face,” take note of the dead bodies piling up of men attracted to her. That begs the question, will all this civilizing turn Bronwyn into a lady or a lunatic?

Every twist and turn of this well-written story only serves to engage you more and more. You won’t be satisfied until all questions have been answered, and Zimmerman keeps the final reveal until the very end — an ending I really didn’t see coming.

Till next time, happy reading!



Chesterton Art Center



Children and adults create together during Family Art Day.

The next free Family Art Day is from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 3.

With guidance from the CAC team, families will explore the solo exhibit “Changes” by Chicago-based artist Bryana Bibbs. On view are 79 weavings from her 2020 “Journal” series that uses a mix of materials, including wool, dried paint, flax, recycled sari silk, degummed silk cocoons, and handmade fibers and yarns.

Visitors then move into the classroom to create projects inspired by Bibbs’ work. That includes cardboard loom and paper weaving, mixed-media collage and a coloring corner. All supplies are provided, and dress to get messy.

Register at tinyurl.com/5n82979a or call (219) 926-4711.



Chesterton Art Center is located at 115 S. Fourth St. Hours are 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday. Call the center at (219) 926-4711 or visit www.chestertonart.org for more details.

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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.



In the Area

Feb. 1 — Tinkercad 3-D Modeling, 4-5 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3045.

Feb. 1, 8 — Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night, 5:30-7 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Feb. 3 — LaPorte Community Concert Association, magician Chris Funk, 2 p.m., LaPorte High School's Performing Arts Center, 602 F St. Tickets at door: \$20/adults, \$5/students through high school. Info: (219) 362-5292.

Feb. 3 — Chicago Historical Architecture, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Coolspring Library, 6925 W. County Road 400 North. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Feb. 5 — Diamond Painting, 4-5 p.m., Michigan

City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Feb. 6, 13 — Creative Tech Activities, 3:30-5 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Feb. 7 — Dungeons & Dragons (ages 13-17), 4-6 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3045.

Feb. 7 — Creative Kids: Valentine's Day, 4-5 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Through March 31 — Work by Cheryl Kaper, The Legacy Center Gallery at Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. "Meet the Artist" reception: after 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass on Feb. 4. 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. Info: lucia@gas.org

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

Mondays in Michigan City — Bingo, Moose Family Lodge 980, 2107 Welnetz Road. Doors open/8:30 a.m., early birds/9:30 a.m., regular Bingo/10 a.m.

Mondays in LaPorte — Weekly line dance lessons, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1130, 181 W. McClung Road. Cost: \$5. Beginner lessons, 2-3 p.m. Improver lessons, 3-4 p.m. Info: (219) 363-8301.

Tuesdays — Bingo, St. Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Church, 109 Ann St. Doors open: 3:30 p.m. Bingo: 6 p.m. \$45 entrance fee (includes all cards). Info: (219) 336-3099.

In the Region

Feb. 2 — Art at The Acorn (artist reception for Chris Brown, "Awakening"), 7 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Info: www.acornlive.org

Feb. 3 — Birding with the Indiana Audubon Society, 8:30-10:30 a.m., Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk Pavilion, 1000 Riverwalk Drive. Info: (219) 395-1882, www.nps.gov/ind

Feb. 3 — May Erlewine, 8 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$25 + \$4.50 convenience fee, \$50 + \$4.50 convenience fee (reserved). Info: www.acornlive.org

Feb. 4 — The Acorn's Dance Showcase featuring Fusion Center for Dance, 3 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$10 + \$3 convenience fee, children/free, \$25-35 (reserved) + \$3 convenience fee for \$35 seats. Info: www.acornlive.org

Feb. 6 — "What are Vernal Pools? Why Should We Care About Them?," 6 p.m. EST, New Buffalo Township Library, 33 N. Thompson St. Info: (269) 469-2933.

Through Feb. 13 — Newly acquired paintings from Philipp Brockington estate, Porter County Museum (PoCo Muse), 20 Indiana Ave., Valparaiso. Free admission. Hours: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Sun. Info: www.pocomuse.org



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Through Feb. 25 — Series 1 Exhibit, Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, Mich. Info: www.boxfactoryforthearts.org, facebook.com/boxfactoryarts

Through Feb. 29 — “Changes” (solo exhibit by Bryana Bibbs), Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. *Gallery tour/talk with Bibbs: 1-2 p.m. Feb. 10. Public weaving workshop: 10 a.m.-noon Feb. 10.* Info/registration: www.chestertonart.org

Through March 3 — “Abstract Topographies: One if by Land, The Paintings of Richard Keen,” “Intimate Worlds: The Collage Works of Bonnie Rock,” Elkhart’s Midwest Museum of American Art, 429 S. Main St. Admission: \$10/adults, \$6/8-12, \$8/ages 13-18 & college students with ID. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues.-Fri., 1-4 p.m. Sat.-Sun. Info: (574) 293-6660.

Through March 14 — Chesterton-based plein air oil artist Christine Newton, The Village Gallery at Pines Village Retirement Communities, 3303 Pines Village Circle, Valparaiso.

Through May 12 — “Indiana Lore,” South Bend’s The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun. Admission: \$11/adults, \$9.50/seniors, \$7/youth 6-17, free/members. Info: www.historymuseumSB.org, (574) 235-9664.

Saturday-Sunday in February — Warm Up to Winter, 1-3 p.m., Chellberg Farm, Mineral Springs Road between U.S. 12/20, Porter. Snow conditions: (219) 395-1882.

Saturdays-Sundays in February — National Park Themed Movie, 2-3:30 p.m., Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. Info: www.nps.gov/indu, (219) 395-1882.

Mondays — Pickleball, 5:30 p.m. EST, New Troy (Mich.) Community Center, 13372 California Road. Free, donations welcome. Info: (269) 426-3909, friendsofnewtroy@yahoo.com

Vickers Theatre — *Now Showing:* “Freud’s Last Session.” Rated PG-13. Times: 2 & 5 p.m. Feb. 3, 1 & 4 p.m. Feb. 4. All times Eastern. Theater address: 6 N. Elm St., Three Oaks, Mich. Info: www.vickers-theatre.com, (269) 756-3522.

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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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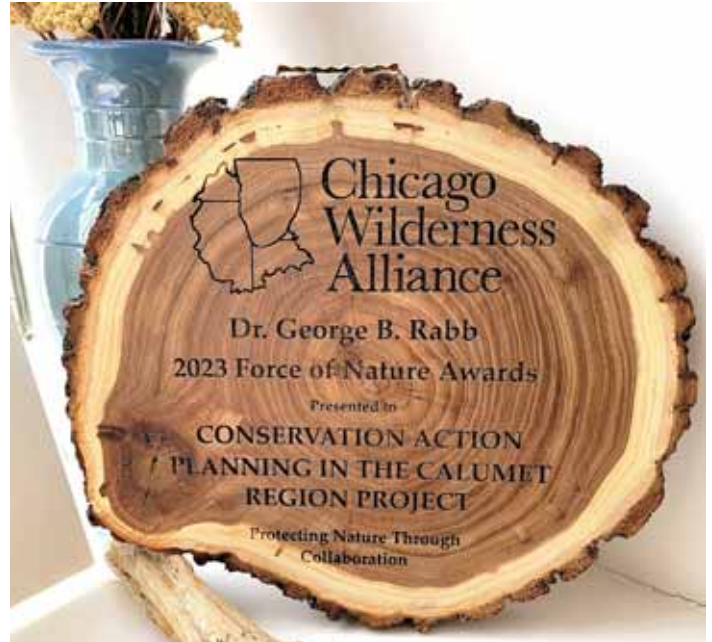
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Force of Nature Award



The Chicago Wilderness Alliance on Jan. 17 honored Save the Dunes and 10 partner organizations, together called Calumet Land Conservation Partnership, with its Force of Nature Award.

Recipients, according to a press release, bring “novel approaches, big ideas, extraordinary collaborations and bold leadership to their cause” in improving the environment.

CLCP partners include Save the Dunes, Shirley Heinze Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, National Parks Conservation Association, Audubon Great Lakes, Openlands, Metropolitan Planning Council, The Wetlands Initiative, The Field Museum and the Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Federal Partnership.

Save the Dunes and the CLCP group were nominated for their Conservation Action Planning in the Calumet Region project, a collaborative approach to protect nature in the bi-state region. CLCP partners produced coordinated Conservation Action Plans to identify targets, threats and strategies.

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