



Volume 40, Number 7 Thursday, February 22, 2024

Moments of Grace

by Edmund Lawler



David Feikes (right), professor of mathematical education at Purdue University Northwest, has Sharing Meadows residents stand on graphing plot points on the floor. Photo by Andrew Tallackson.

Everyday moments of grace are too many to count at Sharing Meadows – a residential community of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Rolling Prairie.

Here's just one of those moments: David Feikes, a professor of mathematical education at Purdue University Northwest, who volunteers by teaching classes at Sharing Meadows every other Wednesday. He patiently, gently and with great cheer guides a class of 15 residents through a math exercise.

A small team of his volunteer assistants circu-

lates the makeshift classroom on Sharing Meadows' 200-acre campus, assisting residents struggling to come up with the right answer.

Feikes is road-testing a new math game he calls "The Squeeze" that he's devised especially for the residents. One resident shares a number between 1 and 100 with Feikes while the other residents – or villagers as they're known – must squeeze the range of possibilities until one of them arrives at the correct number.

Continued on Page 2

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Moments of Grace

Continued from Page 1

A villager ventures a guess, which Feikes dismisses as too high and records it on a whiteboard. He paces the floor like a bubbly game-show host rather than an authoritarian professor planted behind a lectern. Another villager weighs in with a number that's close, but it's too low, Feikes says as he scratches the latest number on the whiteboard.

After several more increasingly calculated guesses, a resident nailed the number and is warmly congratulated by fellow villagers and Feikes, who has always been struck by the kindness and support they show for each other.

A LaPorte native-resident and PNW math-education professor for 31 years, Feikes has established a sweet rapport with the villagers since becoming a volunteer instructor at Sharing Meadows nearly two years ago.

"I tease them occasionally," Feikes says playfully. "Hey Colin. Do I cheat at math?"

"Yes, professor, you do sometimes," the villager replied without a moment's hesitation.

Feikes says building a bond of trust with students is the secret sauce to teaching.

"Regardless if it's elementary, middle school or high school students, it's about building relationships," he said. "They have to know you care about them. And once they know you care, they will do anything."

When faced with a math exercise they find overly challenging, the villagers will often push back, he says. "I can't do it. I can't do it." But they will eventually try," he says, "because they trust me."

Feikes is one of about 300 people who volunteer at Sharing Meadows. Bill Harmon, executive director of the residential community, says each volunteer contributes moments of grace in countless different ways that are as meaningful to them as they are to the villagers.

Some volunteers teach, some as-

sist the teachers, some help with the summer and weekend camps and some help raise money for the nonprofit organization. Still others cut the grass and trim the trees on the sprawling campus, or help repair mechanical equipment when it breaks.

Many, many volunteers help staff the annual Leprechaun Hunt: the family fun day of food, games and Irish music every August. And some volunteers simply spend time with a villager.

The volunteers hail primarily from Northwest Indiana, while others come from Southwest Michigan, even the Chicago area.

Passionate about Sharing Meadows' mission, the 30-year-old Harmon has led the organization and its staff of 28 employees since 2018. Raised in Bristol, Ind., he planned to become a Catholic priest and enrolled in Pontifical College Josephinum, a Roman Catholic seminary in Columbus, Ohio. Established in 1888, the seminary later was declared a pontifical college by Pope Leo XIII, making it North America's only seminary to hold that distinction.

Harmon earned a degree in philosophy from the seminary, but decided the priesthood would not be for him. He wasn't sure what he wanted to do. That



Steve works on math problems as David Feikes talks to other students in the class.
Photo by Andrew Tallackson

was until he saw an ad in 2016 for a camp coordinator at Sharing Meadows.

Working for an organization that cared for people with disabilities was especially appealing to Harmon.

“I told myself, that is something I can do because I have been working with people as a volunteer with intellectual disabilities since I was about 4,” he said.

When he was a young child, his father, a successful businessman, lost his eyesight. His father was able to continue to do work from home, but was no longer able to drive a car. However, he wanted his children to help those less fortunate in their community.



Elizabeth works with Unifix linking cubes as part of the math exercise. Photo by Andrew Tallackson

“My dad called the local therapeutic horse ranch for children with disabilities and asked if people from the ranch could come and pick us up so we could volunteer there,” Harmon says. “So from a very young age, I discovered that our friends with intellectual disabilities are just that – friends.”

As he did when he found a community of friends at the therapeutic horse ranch as a child, he felt he discovered a home at Sharing Meadows.

“One of the greatest things about working here,” he said, “is that I have been able to find my sense of belonging at Sharing Meadows, where truly everyone belongs.”

Two years after he was hired to lead Sharing Meadows’ summer camps, he was named executive director at age 24. His staff, the board of directors and the army of volunteers carry on the work of Father Dennis Blaney, a former parish priest in Michigan City who founded Sharing Meadows.

Land was acquired in Rolling Prairie, and the 185-acre site debuted in 1994 under the umbrella of the SHARE Foundation for the Handicapped. Fifteen more acres were added in 2023.

Continued on Page 4

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Continued from Page 3

Although founded in 1982 by a Catholic priest, Sharing Meadows is a non-denominational Christian nonprofit.

“Father Blaney made it very clear that he wants to accept people of all different faiths and backgrounds,” Harmon says. “You don’t even need to be Christian. But we do live by Christian principles.”

Sharing Meadows, which receives no government funding, relies on private donations and fundraising events like the Leprechaun Hunt that annually draws thousands to its picturesque campus of winding roads, lakes and wooded trails. It has five villages, each consisting of three homes occupied by two adults and one full-time steward.



Bill Harmon (left), executive director of the residential community, is photographed with Bobby, a Sharing Meadows resident.
Photo by Andrew Tallackson.

The waiting list for placement at Sharing Meadows, unfortunately, is long. But plans for more villages to better accommodate some of the community’s gray-ing population are in the offing, according to Harmon.

Now 91, Father Blaney lived in a home on the campus. Requiring more care, he now resides in a senior living center. Harmon’s office is in the basement of

the priest’s former home.

Not long after Harmon was named executive director, Sharing Meadows began an education program for villagers. A particular concern was the high percentage of villagers diagnosed with Down syndrome.

“We know that with Down syndrome, almost 99% of them will develop dementia by about age 50,” he says. “If we continue their education by getting back to the basics with reading, writing and mathematics, that will help delay a diagnosis of dementia for those with Down syndrome.”

Villagers range in age from 30 to 69.

Harmon says other organizations with similar missions to Sharing Meadows focus on job skills when their residents become adults.

“We do that kind of job training here, too, but we want to take it to the next level with our education program that invests in the villagers’ right to an education,” he said.



Kevin Noland (right), seen here in this photo taken by Edmund Lawler at an earlier class, is a regular volunteer at Sharing Meadows.

Sharing Meadows put the word out about plans for its education program in its monthly newsletter, *Good News*. One volunteer read the article and alerted Feikes, her colleague at PNW, that the organization could use a volunteer with his type of talents.

“Dave called me, and we met for coffee to discuss the education program,” Harmon says. “And he has been hooked ever since. He has come out every other week for close to two years. And thanks to his classes, there is growth among the villagers. It’s exactly what we were hoping to see.”

Feikes also joined the SHARE Foundation’s 21-member board of directors, reinforcing the organization’s commitment to the villagers’ education.

The organization also hired Nichole Blake, a licensed teacher, to oversee the development of its educational initiatives in addition to coordinating fundraising events. She noted that in addition to math and literacy classes, Sharing Meadows enriches the villagers’ lives with a science club, drama club, cooking classes and participation in Special Olympics.

As Feikes walked the villagers through another lively and engaging math activity, Kevin Noland, a retired attorney from Louisville, Ky., and longtime volunteer, leaned in to help villagers plot points on a graph.

Noland, who lives nearby, regularly assists with the math class. He was first introduced to Sharing Meadows 11 years ago when he volunteered to help villagers tend their outdoor garden. He’s also accompanied residents to concerts by LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra.

“I love each of the villagers,” Noland says. “They each have their own special abilities.”

The benefit of time spent with villagers at Sharing Meadows is quite tangible for Noland.

“If I can make a villager’s day better and put a smile on their face,” he said, “I feel very rewarded by that.”

Moments of grace.



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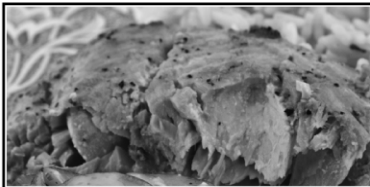
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Michigan City Public Library

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:

- **Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night from 5:30-7 p.m. Thursdays in February.** 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.
- **Film Showing: "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 3" at 2 p.m. Friday, Feb. 23.** The movie is Rated PG-13.
- **Great Decisions at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 26.** The foreign-policy discussion program continues its 26th season. The focus is "Climate Technology & Competition." Reading material is available at the circulation desk. Call 873-3049 for details.
- **Creative Tech Activities (ages 6-17) from 3:30-5 p.m. Tuesdays in February.** 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.
- **Dream Big & Engineer On! from 3:30-5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 27.** The free hands-on program is open to children ages 2-8 and accompanied by an adult. All materials are provided.
- **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.

- **Dungeons & Dragons for Adults from 5-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 28.** Supplies and characters are provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Email mguncheon@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.
- **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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MCHS Students to Present “Tech Support Saturday”

Michigan City High School’s “Alpha-Bytes” Computer Science Honor Society will host “Tech Support Saturday” from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, at the high school, 8466 W. Paks Road.

The event kicks off with a cyber safety presentation from 10-10:30 a.m., followed by open hours for training and device repair. The public can take desktop computers, laptops, tablets, phones and other devices in need of repair. Students will diagnose problems and provide basic fixes. Devices in need of more extensive repairs will be diagnosed at the event and returned at a later date.

As possible, parts needed for repairs will be offered at no cost because of a Computer Science Teachers Association grant. Those who plan to attend should complete a work order in advance at <http://educateMC.net/alphabytes>



Trevor Ackerman works on a laptop.

Students also will accept donations of devices, which they will refurbish and provide to local families in need through a partnership with The Salvation Army of Michigan City.

MCHS Computer Science Teacher Carlos Melendez, who is the Computer Science Honor Society advisor, said service is a key component of the newly established honor society chapter, which inducted its first

members in September. In November, several students, who are also members of the MCHS Esports team, raised \$730 for the Children’s Miracle Networks through a 12-hour live gaming marathon on Twitch.

Melendez says the Alpha-Bytes are seeking additional opportunities for community service and outreach. Contact Melendez at cmelendez01@educatemc.net or call (219) 873-2044, Ext 4580, for more details.

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Michigan City

Harbor Country Film Group



Viola Davis and Denzel Washington star in "Fences."

Harbor Country Film Group begins its 2024 meetings with "Fences," in celebration of Black History Month, at 1 p.m. EST Saturday, Feb. 24, at New Buffalo Township Library, 33 N. Thompson St.

The 2016 film is based on August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play about Troy Maxson, a proud garbage collector in 1950s Pittsburgh, once a promising baseball player who was unable to advance because of the color barrier. Tensions emerge when, among other things, Maxson's bitterness thwarts his young son's opportunity for a college football scholarship.

The film stars Denzel Washington and Viola Davis, who won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar. Group leader Eve Moran will introduce the film and discuss it afterwards.

Meetings are free, with free popcorn served.

Michigan City Art League

Michigan City Art League has unveiled its spring slate of classes.

All skill levels are welcome. Required materials will be listed and emailed beforehand. Some supplies are available, with some sold for a small fee.

The schedule is:

- March 7 — Gail Woolever, "Ukrainian Egg Painting."
- March 14 and 21 — Kristy Kutch, "Dip Into Watercolor Pencil."
- March 28 — No classes, Holy Thursday service.
- April 4 and 11 — Bunny Dimke, "Intro to Oils" (all supplies included).
- April 18 — Holly Beadles, "Neurographic Art." Watercolor paper, fine tip Sharpie and watercolor paint are needed for class.
- April 25 — Matthew Kubik, presentation to be announced.
- May 2 — Laura Krentz, "Mixed Media for Spring Flowers."
- May 9 and 16 — Julie Kasniunas, "Gelli Plate Printing."
- May 23 — Jane Cowley, oil painting techniques
- May 30 — Last class, "Auction, Critique and Fun!"

Annual membership dues are \$25, and each semester class fee (12 weeks of classes) costs \$35. Classes are from 6-9 p.m. Thursdays in the Queen of All Saints Catholic School cafeteria, which can be accessed through the parking lot behind the school, 1715 E. Barker Ave.

Membership and class fees may be paid to the Art League, P.O. Box 9720, Michigan City, IN, 46360, or on the first day of class. Arrive by 6:15 p.m. because spots fill fast. Contact Kadie O'Connor at (219) 214-2349 or Betty Thomas at (219) 877-5343 for more details.

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Linney, Parker Make Hospice Dramedy “Suncoast” Quietly Affecting

by Andrew Tallackson



Laura Linney (front) and Nico Parker play a mother and daughter struggling through the hospice experience in “Suncoast.”

“Suncoast” debuted not even a month ago at Sundance Film Festival, and in some respects, it’s the generic template for indies that thrive there. It clicks all the essential ingredients:

- Feature-film directorial debut? Check.
- Semi-autobiographical? Check.
- Coming-of-age dramedy? Check.

And while the film, which just debuted on Hulu, does not transcend its familiar premise, it has two things going for it: Laura Linney and Nico Parker. These actresses achieve something special.

The movie hails from writer-director Laura Chinn, a veteran TV writer, and when you read up on her, you can see how “Suncoast” is personal for her. So much of her own life is incorporated here.

Parker (the daughter of “Westworld” actress Thandiwe Newton), who made a brief, if memorable impression in HBO’s “The Last of Us,” stars as 17-year-old Doris, and if the name feels too old for a teen, it is fitting. She’s an old soul forced to grow up fast because of her family. Living in Clearwater, Fla., her brother is in the last days of brain cancer. Uncommunicative, immobile. She’s been his primary caretaker because their mother, Kristine (Laura Linney), slaves away at odd jobs.

Linney has made a career out of playing emotional steamrollers, (“Primal Fear,” “You Can Count On Me,” “The Savages,” “The Nanny Diaries”), and Hollywood often takes her for granted. That it’s expected she will do strong work. But here, she infuses



“Suncoast”

Running time: 109 minutes. Hulu. Rated R for teen drug and alcohol use, language and some sexual references.

Kristine with enough empathy so we get her. She’s focused so much of her energy on her dying son, she forgot how to be a mother to Doris. She has a scene where she pleads with security at her son’s hospice facility to allow her inside, and the maternal desperation is so powerful, in a perfect world, the performance would kickstart next year’s Oscar race.

Why, by the way, does a hospice facility require security? Turns out, this is the mid-2000s, and the facility’s famous resident is none other than Terri Schiavo. Remember her? The Florida woman in an irreversible vegetative state at the center of a right-to-die controversy. The swarm of news media and protesters from both sides of the equation mirrors the chaos within Doris’ family. Where, in some ways, death to Doris is a distraction from living.

As a teen, Doris is desperate for normalcy. So, she latches on to a group of vapid teen girls solely for companionship. The girls take advantage of her, using her vacant home for parties since Kristine is camped out at hospice. And it is in these scenes that Parker shows tremendous range. Her posture in the presence of these teen harpies ranges from stiff and brittle, fearing rejection, then confidently doling out

advice that proves why she's better than these other girls. The yearning for acceptance, the anger and resentment toward her mother — every emotion from Parker — is real and honest.

There is a third party here. Woody Harrelson's Paul, an aging activist seen among the throngs of protestors. Harrelson can enliven *anything*, especially in "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing Missouri" and "The Edge of Seventeen." His presence here is designed as the one stable adult in Doris' life. But the role is underwritten. Not as sharp as Harrelson, as a scene-stealer, can be. You expect more, and you don't quite get it.

I am a sucker, though, for character studies where everything isn't hunky-dory by the end...but it *will* be. The seeds of renewal are planted. That is what we get here. Mother and daughter, arriving at an understanding, with Linney and Parker achieving a quiet grace. Even Keyla Monterroso Mejia (Nurse Mia), who with lively turns in "Abbott Elementary"



Woody Harrelson appears as an aging activist camped out at the hospice facility.

and "Curb Your Enthusiasm" has become one of my favorite comic actresses, dials it down to achieve one of the movie's most affecting exchanges.

Linney and Parker sold the movie for me. Didn't matter that their journey contains few surprises. They made me care. I was moved.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at atallackson@gmail.com

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College Goal Sunday

Financial-aid professionals will help college-bound students and their families with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25, at Purdue University Northwest, Technology Building, Room 219, 1401 S. U.S. 421, Westville.

The form is required to be considered for federal and state grants, scholarships and Federal student



loans at most colleges, universities and vocational/technical schools.

It must be filed by the April 15 state priority deadline to guarantee state aid.

Students are asked to attend with parent(s) or guardian(s), who should take completed 2022 IRS 1040 tax returns, W-2 Forms and other 2022 income and benefits information. Students who worked should take income information.

Students 24 or older may attend alone and take a completed 2022 IRS 1040 tax return, W-2 Form or other 2022 income and benefits in-

formation. Students and parent(s) are encouraged to apply for U.S. Department of Education FSA IDs at www.studentaid.gov before logging in to the event.

Volunteers will walk through the online form line by line and answer individual questions. All sites offer FAFSA online capabilities, and many have Spanish interpreters.

Students also may win one of five \$1,000 scholarships by submitting a completed evaluation automatically entered in a drawing. The winners will be notified in the spring and scholarships sent directly to the higher education institution selected by the winning students.

Harbor Country Hikers

Harbor Country Hikers will visit a rare, acidic, sandy flatwoods during its frozen winter period at 1 p.m. EST Saturday, Feb. 24, at the New Buffalo Area Schools' Nature Study Trails.

"These forests can be underwater or bone dry, it just depends on when you visit them," HCH President-hike leader Pat Fisher said in a press release. "Unfortunately, they are endangered because they often fall outside the protection of Michigan's wetland laws."

Those who attend should dress in layers, wear a warm cap and sturdy shoes or boots, and take water. Depending on the weather, there may be muddy or icy areas.

Visit www.harborcountryhikers.com or Harbor Country Hikers on Facebook for more details.

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LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra presented its latest concert, "Side by Side with a Twist: A Celebration of Music Education," on Feb. 10 at The Holdcraft Performing Arts Center, 1200 Spring St.

Music Director-Conductor Dr. Carolyn Watson invited local music educators and enthusiasts to join the orchestra. Students were encouraged to attend and see their music teacher or private-lesson instructor on stage.

All photos by Bob Wellinski



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 \$50 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.

Name:

City/Town:

Phone Number:



JROTC Makes Presentations to Middle Schools

Michigan City High School’s Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps held presentations for eighth-graders at Barker and Krueger middle schools on Feb. 7 to boost enrollment for the next school year.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, JROTC is struggling nationwide to maintain the minimum enrollment requirements of 100 students.

The senior Marine instructor, Maj. Tom McGrath, made the introduction. Cadets then demonstrated military regulation and exhibition drill before transitioning to different physical-fitness events. The two highest ranking cadets, Capt. Marcus Mantel and 2nd Lt. Alexandra Reed, reflected on being in the program for three years. Students could ask questions and speak to cadets.

McGrath emphasized that JROTC is a leadership program, not a preparation for the military. It will help a student who decides to enter the military, but it is not designed as a recruiting tool. Many cadets, he continued, fill leadership roles in other school extracurriculars, such as athletics, band and technology clubs. The JROTC has many extracurricular teams, including Military Drill, Raider, CyberPatriot. None are required.

Master Sgt. Jeff Benak, the Marine instructor, was impressed with the attentiveness and enthusiasm from eighth-graders.



Speed and equilibrium are tested during the “Dizzy Izzy” exercise.

“They were really into what our cadets were doing,” he said in a press release. “We just hope that it translates into an increase in our enrollment.”


The Military Drill team competes in its final meet of the year March 2 at Fort Wayne Concordia High School. Cadets will support a number of Michigan City Area School events.



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Two Oscar-Nominated Shorts Definitely Worth Your Time

by Andrew Tallackson



"The After" opens with a shocking act of violence, the sole survivor paralyzed with grief in the weeks and months after.

A feature-length film would ground itself here, in unthinkable anguish. But within an intensely focused 18 minutes, director and co-writer Misan Harriman has plenty to say, saying it with unflinching directness. The effect is an 18-minute sucker punch to the gut.

Harris' short film is a leading Oscar contender for Best Short Film (Live Action). Used to be, this category, and Best Documentary Short (the other movie featured here), were cinematic black holes no one could locate, but thanks to streaming, the inaccessible is more accessible than ever.

"The After" is lean, efficient storytelling whose greater meaning hails from its star, David Oyelowo. What a year this guy had! In addition to this 2023 short film, he scored a well-deserved Golden Globe nod for the revisionist western "Lawman: Bass Reeves" on Paramount+.

In "The After," he plays Dayo, a loving father and husband out for an afternoon in the city with his daughter before her dance recital. His wife meets up with them, thrilled he can attend the program.

★ ★ ★^{1/2}

"The After"

Running time: 18 minutes. Netflix. Also showing at Vickers Theatre. Rated TV-MA for brief violence.

Then, tragedy.

A lone assailant arrives out of nowhere, targeting everyone in his path. Dayo's daughter is one of the casualties, his wife shocked into committing suicide.

How do you pick up the pieces from there? Life from there, in "the after," it's unthinkable. And we find ourselves with Dayo some time after the tragedy. He's now a rideshare driver, his grief like a jacket worn without fail.

Harriman, who wrote the script with John Julius Schwabach, does something interesting. Through rapidly edited vignettes, we meet the many passengers in Dayo's vehicle. They all represent society's preoccupation with the trivial. Their worries, their fixations, means nothing compared to the empty void Dayo faces daily.

Then, a bickering couple and their daughter cram into Dayo's vehicle. The husband and wife pick at every scab imaginable. Their daughter is an eerie

doppelgänger for Dayo's deceased daughter.

That experience leads to a gesture from the girl that is a cry for help *and* an act of solidarity between weary souls. What follows is the greatest piece of acting Oyelowo has achieved. A complete, utter collapse. A soul ravaged by grief.

This might sound too painful, but the beauty of "The After" is what happens next. The message of the film isn't that life is cruel, but that amid pain, having the courage to pull it together and keep going is a triumphant act of resilience.

□

Yi Yan Fuei and Zhang Li Hua likely have enough stories within them to fuel 10 movies, but in the 17-minute "Nai Nai & Wai Pó," they offer plenty of joy and heartache.

The film, an Oscar nominee for Best Documentary Short Film, is a love letter to these women by their grandson, Sean Wang. It just debuted on Disney+ and Hulu, and Wang couldn't have picked two more fascinating people as his subjects. They are his maternal and paternal grandmothers. Obviously not related by blood, but they became instant friends and maintained the friendship over the years. When their husbands died, they moved in together and now exist almost like sisters.

Wang follows their daily routines, and we get two women who live life to the fullest. Staying active is essential, too, including moments where they dance together.

Even in 17 minutes, "Nai Nai & Wai Pó" feels like it has no pull. Then, these two women open up about being in the last chapter of their lives. Their

★ ★ ★ 1/2

"Nai Nai & Wai Pó"

Running time: 17 minutes. Hulu, Disney+.

Also showing at Vickers Theatre. Not Rated.

"These two women open up about being in the last chapter of their lives. Their insights into life, into acknowledging the beauty and sadness of death, is profoundly moving."

insights into life, into acknowledging the beauty and sadness of death, is profoundly moving.

Thing is, Wang doesn't treat his grandmothers as geriatric martyrs. As his visit with them comes to a close, a lump firmly lodged in your throat, one of the grandmothers tosses off a quip about her grandson that makes you laugh so loudly, it's obvious, these women have no plans of giving up on life.

"Nai Nai & Wai Pó" would seem like an Oscar shoe-in...but it's up against "The Last Repair Shop," one of the truly great films of last year. "Nai Nai & Wai Pó," by comparison, feels a tad slight, while "The Last Repair Shop" has more meat on its bones.

Still, tough not to admire these women. They're something else.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at atallackson@gmail.com

The two remarkable women at the center of Sean Wang's moving film.



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Indiana Dunes National Park

- **Warm Up to Winter from 1-3 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays in February at Chellberg Farm.** Try snowshoeing and wander through Chellberg Farm. Then, stop by the farmhouse to learn about the area’s history. A limited number of snowshoes can be checked out at the Eastern National Bookstore located off the main parking lot. Snowshoeing is dependent on the amount of snow on the ground, with a minimum of 3 inches of snow required. Regardless of snow, the farmhouse will be open for hikers. The parking lot is on Mineral Springs Road between U.S. 12 and 20 in Porter Call (219) 395-1882 for snow conditions
- **National Park Themed Movie from 2-3:30 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays through February at Indiana Dunes Visitor Center.** Movies will change each weekend and last between an hour to 90 minutes. The schedule is: Feb. 24-25, “San Juan National Historic Site.”
- **Drop-In Volunteer Program (Trash Trekkers) from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily at Indiana Dunes Visitor Center.** Trash Trekkers is a no-hassle volunteer option that helps keep trails and beaches clean. Temporary passes are available. Visit tinyurl.com/2p83798v for more details.
The Visitor Center is at 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. The Paul H. Douglas Center is at 100 N. Lake St. in Gary’s Miller Beach neighborhood. Call (219) 395-1882 or visit www.nps.gov/indu for details.

Indiana Dunes State Park

The following programs will be offered:

- **The J.D. Marshall Shipwreck Today & Long Ago at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24.** Meet at the Nature Center to learn about the shipwreck.
- **Full Moon Hike at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24.** Meet at the Nature Center for a short presentation about the moon, with treats provided.
- **Winter Bird Wander at 10 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 25.** Meet at the Nature Center for an easy stroll with the naturalist seeking different bird species and other wildlife. Take binoculars or borrow a pair. If snow conditions allow, free snowshoes will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis.
- **Reptile Rendezvous at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25.** Meet a naturalist at the Nature Center to see live turtles and snakes, the emphasis being how they survive the cold winter months.

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.



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1. Nancy Kubath			171
2. Ann Bogart			167
3. Tammy Vouri			157
4. Lisa Albers			151
SPLITS			
Tammy Vouri		3-10, 5-6	

Dunes Announcement Party

Dunes Summer Theatre will host its 2024 Season Announcement Party from 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 29, at Vita Del Lago, 521 Franklin St.

Artistic Director Steve Scott and the Dunes Arts Foundation board of director will highlight the 73rd season. A cash bar and appetizers are planned.

Email contact@dunesarts.org or call (219) 879-7509 to RSVP. Visit www.dunesarts.org for more details.

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American Red Cross

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

- Frank and Edward Skwiat American Legion Post 451, 121 Skwiat Legion Ave., 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24.
- Northwest Health Heart and Vascular Building, 901 Lincolnway, LaPorte, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24.
- Marquette Catholic High School, 306 W. 10th St., 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 29.

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

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Barker Seasonal Forum

Save the Dunes will host the third installment of its free Barker Seasonal Forum, “Winter Stroll & Seminar,” at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 28, at Barker House, 444 Barker Road.

Em Racine, Save the Dunes community engagement coordinator, will lead a winter stroll in Barker Woods (managed by Shirley Heinze Land Trust). The short, flat walk (0.78 miles) will include the history of Barker House, and how it became the Save the Dunes headquarters.

Guests then head back inside at 5:15 p.m. for a Facebook Live program by Serena Ard, Westchester Township History Museum curator, who will discuss Save the Dunes’ early history. The last half of her presentation will cover aspects of women’s history, showing how women in early conservation played huge roles in creating the state and national parks and Save the Dunes.

Monday Musicale

Monday Musicale will highlight Italian music at 7 p.m. Monday, Feb. 26, at First United Methodist Church, 121 E. Seventh St.

Program Chair Michelle Alexander will perform selections for keyboard and voice. Appointments are vocalists Ange Benz, Frank Casorio, Steven Mast and guest performers Iyanna Estes, Annabelle Kilbourne and Natt Kilbourne.

The program will include a piano piece written by J.S. Bach in the Italian style, classical Italian arias and familiar love songs sung in Italian.

The hosting committee, led by Felicia Thomas, will serve light refreshments after the program, which is free. Donations to the club’s scholarship fund are welcome. Contact Sue Cassler at (219) 362-1421 for more details.

Historic Building Program

A program that focuses on tax incentives and grant programs for historic property owners is from 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, Feb. 24, at Healthcare Foundation, 140 E. Shore Parkway, LaPorte.

Sponsored by Preserve Historic LaPorte, the speakers are preservation consultant Kurt West Garner and Todd Zeiger, Indiana Landmarks Northern Regional Office director. They will provide an in-depth explanation of financial-incentive programs available to homeowners and commercial property owners for restoring their buildings, followed by a Q&A session.

Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$10 for Indiana Landmarks members and free for Preserve Historic LaPorte member. Visit tinyurl.com/446r722d for reservations, or pay by mail to Preserve Historic LaPorte, P.O. Box 853, LaPorte, IN 46352-0853. Advance tickets will be held at Healthcare Foundation the day of the event. Contact Claudia at (219) 575-8425 for more details.

LaPorte County Public Library

Patrons are no longer charged daily overdue fines. Customers only will be charged for items they damage, lose or never return.

The following programs are planned:

- **Stories & More from 10-10:30 a.m. Friday, Feb. 23, at the main library.** Children ages 3-5 with their caregivers experience stories, songs, crafts and activities.
- **Mush! with Noggin, the Sled Dog (and her human, Karen Land) from 5-6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, at the main library.** Land is a writer, public speaker and three-time participant in the 1,000-mile Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, as well as other sprint and endurance races in Alaska, Canada, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Maine. Since 2000, she has traveled to nearly every state with her Iditarod dog sled, mushing gear, Arctic clothing and dogs, giving more than a thousand school and public library presentations.
- **Readers Corner-Book Club from 6-7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 27, at the Coolspring Branch Meeting Room.** The focus is Jodi Picoult's Wish You Were Here.
- **Virtual Author Talk with Kim Scott from 1-2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 28.** The *New York Times* bestselling author will discuss her recent book, Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity. Register through the website.

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.

New Buffalo Township Library

- **Harbor Country Film Group with Eve Moran at 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24.** The focus is the Oscar-winning "Fences" (2016).
- **"Where the Fairy Shrimp Live."** The program is at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 26.
- **NBTL Book Club.** The program is at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 27.
- **"The Giving Tree."** The library is accepting donations to Michiana Humane Society.
- **Winter Readings.** The program runs through Feb. 29.

Weekly programs:

- Story Time at 10 a.m. Mondays.
- Read to a Dog Sessions for all ages from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Tuesday and 4-4:45 p.m. Wednesday.
- Craft Time on Wednesdays while supplies last.
- Lego Club on Fridays-Saturdays.
- Yoga from 9-10 a.m. Saturdays.

All times are Eastern. New Buffalo Township Library is located at 33 N. Thompson St. Call (269) 469-2933 for more details.

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Location: 4000 Cherokee Drive, Michiana, MI, 49117

Under guidance of the camp director, the counselor oversees an assigned group of campers. Responsible for knowledge of the whereabouts of all assigned campers, ensuring safety standards, instructing campers of camp rules and regulations, maintaining discipline and guiding campers throughout all daily activities. Must be energetic, creative, positive and have the ability to work well with staff and campers alike. Reports to the camp director and/or art director or assistant camp director. Be available to work June 14, 2024–Aug. 9, 2024. Counselors work days, Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. CST. Occasional nights 7-9 p.m.

Duties Responsibilities & Qualifications

Must be 16 years of age

Must have USA ID

Will get Michigan child care fingerprint/background check. Must have current Ability to lead and oversee an assigned group of campers.

Ability to work with children of all ages, understand their interests, and apply that to how you relate to each camper

Maintains camp discipline. Refers incidents of misbehavior, as necessary, to the camp director.

Assists with camp activities and events as assigned by the On-Site Program Director.

Promotes high camper morale.

Ensures camper safety

Compassion, good judgment, sense of responsibility, patience, fairness, humor, charisma, spontaneity and a positive outlook. Will supervise Counselors-in-Training assigned to the same group.

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or email anneblasko@gmail.com for application link

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The Girlfriend Sale presents a "Winter Warm Up Sale" Saturday, March 2, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., and Sunday, March 3, noon-4 p.m. Long Beach Community Center, 2501 Oriole Trail

One room, two days, three ways to save big on new 2024 boutique merchandise, red-hot orange-dot markdowns and a curated collection of consignment items. Check out our Facebook page "the girlfriend sale" for sale updates and sneak peeks the week of the sale. Bonus: We have our Spring Girlfriend Sale dates set and will be scheduling early participation appointments at this sale!

WANT TO BUY

WANTED: I buy all types of antiques and collectibles, including toys, advertising, military items and more. **Call Matt at (219) 794-6500.**

Want to buy baseball cards and possibly baseball memorabilia depending on items. Also looking for Michigan City Elston Red Devils basketball team buttons. **Call Gene at (219) 879-9453**

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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.

The Little Liar by Mitch Albom (hardcover \$26.99 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook and an audiobook. 328 pages.)

“...a lie told once is easy to expose, but a lie told a thousand times can look like the truth. And destroy the world.”

You may be greatly surprised to learn the narrator of this story is the Angel of Truth. But, really, if you want to know if a story is the real deal, then you need truth explaining it all; after all, truth can't lie — but we humans do a lot of that. And why?

We say we will tell the truth, the sad truth, the undisputed truth, the truth of the matter, and always truthfully, of course. It's the human way of saying you can trust what I have said because nothing is stronger than the truth. Right? Except that we are not perfect, and we lie about the truth all the time. Therefore, in this story, we have Truth to believe all that is to follow.

Singer-songwriter Lucinda Williams said, “*Everything's gonna change, everything but the truth.*” That's the crux of this story, in the form of a little boy who spreads a little lie someone persuaded him is the truth — a lie that changes the face of his world forever and haunts him the rest of his life.

His name is Nico Krispis, a Jewish boy who lives with his family in Salonika, Greece. He is beloved by his family for a number of reasons, but mainly because he always tells the truth...always. The boy is simply incapable of lying, and that makes him the pride of his family, but also the envy of his older brother.

Truth tells this story through the eyes of four people: Nico Krispis, his older brother, Sebastian, the Nazi Udo Graf and Fannie, a neighbor girl beloved both Nico and Sebastian. Their stories take them on separate journeys over many years from childhood to late middle age, from Greece to Europe, to America.

Nico doesn't look Jewish because of his wavy blond hair, lovely blue eyes and bright white teeth. And that's what will save him from being herded onto the trains headed for one of the death camps in Poland. Graf, the Nazi in charge of cleansing Salonika of the Jewish population, sees the boy for what he is — the perfect actor to make his job a whole lot easier. Nazis were very subtle. They knew that if someone the Jews trusted told them the trains would take them to new homes and new jobs in Poland, they would go along meekly, even happily.

Graf tells Nico he is telling him the truth about Poland, so the boy believes him. And it works. Nico

Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter



walks around the train station telling everyone the big lie...and they believe him because he is the boy who always tells the truth.

So begins the mass movement of all Jews from the Grecian city. **Fact:** Albom researches that “*Salonika (also called Thessaloniki) had the highest percentage of Jewish population of all the cities that the Nazis invaded.*”

Graf also tells him he will not make his family move if they don't want to — as long as he does what Graf tells him to do. But when the last train to Poland is ready to leave, Nico sees his family being herded into one of the cattle cars, realizing that Graf lied. He is so broken by this final betrayal, and unable to face what he had done to the Salonika Jews, and worse, to his own family, his life becomes a world of lies.

Here's where the story breaks off into four different directions. Nico is forced to stay with Graf (until he escapes), his family is sent to Auschwitz and Fannie jumps off the train, running like the wind toward Hungary...

and the unknown.

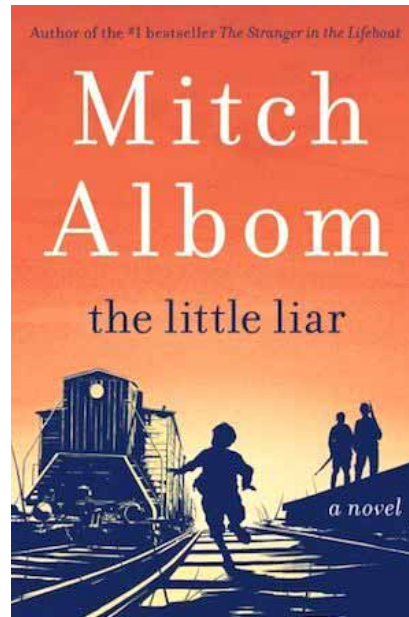
As for Nico, he never tells the truth again. He simply can't. His life is broken, he retreats into a world of lies, unable to process how he can ever receive redemption for the horrors his lying has caused.

We see how the Nazis changed people, even ones who are good neighbors and friends. Like exposing your neighbor to the Nazis that they are hiding Jews might get you some reward. Nico turns out to be a resourceful teenager as he makes his way through Europe, always changing his persona to get further away from Greece. Always seeking a way to get to his family and somehow save them — a childish dream perhaps, but one he clings to always. But it's lies, not the truth, that sustain the four of them for decades, and, not surprisingly, give no satisfaction or lasting peace.

For many years Sebastian wants nothing more than to see his brother punished for his deeds in Salonika; Fannie doesn't know where she is going and Nico's family pays the price in Auschwitz. Will they all find each other one day? Will the passing years lead to redemption or destruction?

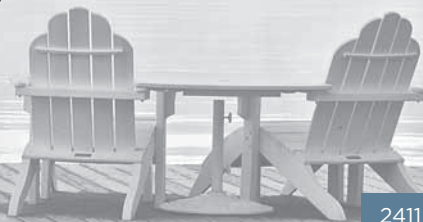
This is a story told only as Albom can, with humanity...and Truth.

Till next time, happy reading!





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Listed by: Zach Baker

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