

INDEPENDENCE PARK COMMUNITY

VOICE



WINTER WONDERLAND

Winter Walking

Patti Kimbel

Unless you readily embrace hibernating in winter or what the Danish refer to as *hygge*, this season may be especially difficult through the enduring pandemic. Let me first point out the many health benefits of walking outside in the winter. You will likely burn more calories than you do in any other season and the fat-burning effect is longer. Thus, you can be guilt free when you enjoy that hot chocolate or cookie afterwards. Walking as a form of exercise can also reduce stress. Exercise reduces the body's stress hormones while increasing the feel-good endorphins. Walking outside even for just 15 minutes during the daytime can provide enough of a dose of vitamin D to ward off depression. Of course, it can bring additional mental health benefits especially if you might just be in need of a little family or spousal distance. We must all agree this COVID thing is tough!

Psychologists also recommend Awe Walks, especially during the pandemic. You intentionally shift your attention outward instead of



inward. It is recommended that you take nice deep breaths and focus your awareness of what is around you as you walk. This can be very beneficial to relieve any worries, anxieties or frustrations. This is akin to Mindful Walking in which you focus on the scenery around you and take time to engage all of your senses in what you see, hear, feel, taste, and smell.

Now hopefully you are convinced of the many mental and physical health benefits of walking. There are some wonderful walks to take to appreciate our area's homes. West Walker, just north of Irving Park Road, is very similar to Independence Park in that it provides a tranquil change of scenery. Homes include single family homes in late Victorian, Foursquare and Revival styles. Turning to the west is Old Irving

Park and The Villa District. In Old Irving you will find many architecturally significant homes designed by architects influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright. The Villa, which was originally developed as The Villa addition to Irving Park, has many Craftsman and Prairie-style homes. The St. Wenceslas church, south of the Villa, is a historic Romanesque Revival-Art Deco structure worthy of a view and appreciation.

Perhaps you'd rather connect with nature and practice an Awe Walk. To enjoy a more picturesque walk in nature, you do not have to travel too far either. Nearest to our north is the LaBagh Woods nature preserve at Foster and Cicero with many hiking and walking trail options and is known for being a birding hotspot. Horner Park, to our east at 2741 W. Montrose, boasts close to 60 acres of park space. While there are many athletic fields, it also has a dog park and a nature area. Further north is the West Ridge Natural Area, 5801 N. Western Avenue. This park includes 20+ acres of lagoons with easy walking trails (mulched and paved), lots of aquatic and aerial birds, and natural plantings. A little further trek is the North Park Village Nature Center at 5801

N. Pulaski Rd. You have to drive a ways into the complex to get to the nature center building and trails that feature woodlands, wetlands, a prairie and a savanna.

Requiring a drive but less than an hour from Independence Park is the Chicago Botanic Garden to the north and Morton Arboretum to the west. Both remain open year round and during the pandemic and provide winter programming with timed entry to the facilities. At Morton Arboretum, you can rent cross-country skis or snowshoes for a twist to your winter walking excursions and to experience the scenic terrain.

While the winters can be harsh and cold, Chicago does excel at providing four distinct seasons to enjoy. One thing I have always loved about the summers is the energy in the city. Chicagoans fully embrace the summer months as we know that time in the sun is precious. Without winter we likely would not appreciate the summer as much as we do. A refrain that can also be helpful to remember is if you don't like the weather in Chicago, just wait. So as we wait until the season changes as it will, please be inspired to enjoy winter walking.

The regular GIPNA will be on Tues., March 2, 7 p.m.

Join us online via Zoom. Meeting I.D.: 819 2958 6855, Password: GIPNA.

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Due to the on-going coronavirus pandemic, some future events are cancelled for the foreseeable future. Please contact GIPNA (info@gipna.org) , IPAC (ipac.chicago@gmail.com), AFAC (athleticfieldpark.com), Friends of Murphy (friendsofmurphy.org), and CAPS (CAPS.017District@chicagopolice.org) for updated event information.

MARCH

TUES., MAR. 2—GIPNA Board Meeting, 7 p.m., online Zoom Meeting ID: 819 2958 6855, Password: GIPNA.

TUES., MAR. 9—FOM Meeting, 7 p.m. Go to friendsofmurphy.org for the link.

THURS., MAR. 18—John B. Murphy Elementary School LSC Meeting, 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Check www.murphy.cps.edu the week before the meeting for Zoom info.

FRI., MAR. 19—Carlson's Virtual Trivia Night, 7 p.m. Register at www.carlsoncommunityservices.org. See story on this page.

APRIL

TUES., APRIL 6—GIPNA Board Meeting, 7 p.m., online Zoom Meeting ID: 819 2958 6855, Password: GIPNA.

TUES., APRIL 13—FOM Meeting, 7 p.m. Go to friendsofmurphy.org for the link.

WED., APRIL 14—CAPS Beat 1732 Meeting, 7 p.m. via Zoom. Contact CAPS.017district@chicagopolice.org to make reservation.

THURS., APRIL 22—John B. Murphy Elementary School LSC Meeting, 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Check www.murphy.cps.edu the week before the meeting for Zoom info.

FUNDRAISING

Good Deeds Forwarded

Thank you to all the neighbors and sponsors who participated in the Virtual Beer and Barbeque Tasting Fundraiser in December. Your generosity allowed GIPNA to donate \$5000 to the John B. Murphy Elementary School to help support their music programs. We were also able to aid other local service organizations, such as the Carlson Community Services, the Irving Park Food Pantry, Lydia Home, Openlands, and donate holiday gift cards to Murphy and to Disney II Schools.

A special shout-out to board member Sharon Sears, whose company Solomon Cordwell Buenz donated \$1300 to the Irving Park Food Pantry. Employees made brief presentations to nominate non-profit organizations. In the end, the company gave to over 40 different non-profits that support the mind, body and soul. Thank you so much!



COMMUNITY

Thank You, GIPNA!

Liz Mills

The Carlson Community Services board of directors wishes to thank the Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association for its \$300 donation. At this unprecedented time, the generosity of our neighbors is greatly appreciated! The donation will be used to support Carlson's after-school program, community garden and free concert series.

Register for the March 19 Carlson Virtual Trivia night.

Back by popular demand, it's Carlson's Virtual Trivia Night – Part 2! Though we hoped our first Virtual Trivia Night would be our last, we had so much fun the first go around, we've decided to do it

again!

Virtual Trivia Night takes place Friday, March 19, at 7:00 p.m. Whether you and your teammates are hunkered down in Chicago or scattered across the globe, you can play together through the magic of Zoom breakout rooms! Virtual tables are \$200 each and can accommodate up to 8 players. \$200 cash prize! Check Carlson's website for registration details at www.carlsoncommunityservices.org. All proceeds benefit Carlson's neighborhood programs.

Carlson Community Services connects the Irving Park community with programs that enrich lives through education, culture and service. For more information, visit carlsoncommunityservices.org or contact Liz Mills at 773.398.6766 or lizmills@carlsoncommunityservices.org.

INDEPENDENCE PARK COMMUNITY

VOICE

The Independence Park Community Voice is published by the Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association (GIPNA), a 501(C)3 corporation.

This newsletter is for the Independence Park community. Please consider renewing your membership or joining GIPNA now. We need your support. Thank you.

Editorial: Sue Ryan
Photography: Robin Hochstatter and Cindy Schuch
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The editorial board reserves the right to edit all submissions. Errors in advertisements are the sole responsibility of the advertiser.

E-MAIL: INFO@GIPNA.ORG

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The Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association (GIPNA) is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in the Independence Park community by involving, informing, and encouraging people to participate in matters relating to the community, and by protecting the historical, social, cultural, and architectural character of the neighborhood.

This all-volunteer publication is made possible by the creative voices of our community and the generous support of area advertisers.

Join GIPNA on Facebook

Check out the GIPNA Facebook page for news, alerts, and conversation with your neighbors. Post your own comments to get the word out on your activities and announcements. To find the page and like it, search for GIPNA: Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association.

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COMMUNICATION

E-Blasts to GIPNA Members

All GIPNA members who have access to email should be receiving e-blasts twice a month. The emails are compiled by GIPNA and feature such news as announcements of events in the community, crime reports, and notices of meetings.

If you're a member in good standing and are not receiving the blasts, send an email to us at info@gipna.org. We'll sign you up so that you don't miss any more neighborhood announcements.

ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Thank You to the Men in Blue... and Black Winter Jackets

Sue Ryan

They came to serve and protect the neighborhood. These men knowing the risks and potential dangers to themselves, nonetheless, cast their own safety aside for the sake of their neighbors.

They came without warning to free us from our homes. They prevented countless injuries and bodily harm. We owe a debt of gratitude to these men in blue and sometimes black jackets who fought the perils of nature's fury lashing the city with several consecutive snow storms. These brave men powered up their snow blowers and valiantly cleared the sidewalks of heavy, deep snow not once, not twice, but at least three times. They could have stopped where their property ended, but no, they bravely fought on trudging down the block, blowing piles of snow on ever escalating snow banks. Kudos to Dean Allison, Bob Brown, Todd Kibbey, the 3800 block of Ridgeway Snowblower Brigade and many others in the neighborhood. Your selfless actions allowed us to wander outside and



enjoy the beauty of freshly fallen snow -- as long as we didn't have a car to dig out. For your heroic efforts, the GIPNA community thanks you

We back the blowers!

COMMUNITY

Have an Idea for the Newsletter?

If you want to see something in the neighborhood highlighted or just want to provide feedback, reach out to us at newsletter@gipna.org.

My Creative Journey Continues

Robin Hochstatter

I was really good at math. My brain processed things very much in black or white. That didn't leave much room for the grey parts of life. Which as I discovered, is most of life.

However, I had an epiphany in high school when our English teacher asked us to write an essay about the bicentennial (1976) for a local contest. I struggled for a few days trying to come up with an idea. Finally, I came up with one. How about from the perspective of a reporter taking in the festivities of a celebration? Well that angle won me the first prize in the contest. Not a very big deal, but it opened up my creative side.

I decided that I really liked to write and went on to major in creative communications at Loyola. It became apparent to me that I loved the television side because it allowed me to tell stories with words, visuals and sound.

Upon graduation in 1982, I landed a job in Creative Services at Kraft Foods where they were just starting to use video. I was the first female in a department of twenty men. I was soon travelling around the country producing video stories on how Kraft products were made (yes, including Mac & Cheese) and many, many other topics and areas of the company. I always said that I had the best job in the company because I traveled all over the country, met amazing people and learned how so many things worked in the company.

I became the leader of the department just a few years later. This meant I broadened my



creative skills to include large meeting production. I was making decisions about staging, graphics, photography, video, talent and the creative theme of the events. It was essentially, corporate theatre and so rewarding creatively. I also got to hire a lot of outside creatives to fill in the gaps of a shrinking department.

During this time, I had to manage a lot of people and their creative work...but, I was no longer producing any of it myself. When Kraft split into two companies in 2012, a lot changed. I stayed with the new Kraft, which was a much smaller company than before. We were expected to produce all our own creative and with little money. It was intimidating, but the greatest gift. I was having fun again doing the creative work myself. Then, Kraft was bought out by Heinz in 2015 and it all came to an end after 33 years.

I was technically retired from the company and thought I'd go back to school to learn professional photography. I had always been an amateur photographer, but never used it at Kraft. I loved combining my new skills with those I had developed over the years to reinvent myself.

After finishing school, I became

a freelancer for Kraft for a few years. I photographed over 500 headshots of employees and captured various corporate events for my new client. This led to work with other clients.

I also started to donate my photo services to various non-profits so that I could continue to hone my new art form and give back at the same time. It was amazing to

work for so many groups of people doing great things for others.

I also started to shoot for GIPNA when I joined the Board of Directors a few years ago. Because of all of the events we put on each year, there were so many wonderful opportunities to contribute images to the newsletter. While I've lived in the area since 1998, it's amazing how many neighbors I've met since joining the board.

Some of these folks have even hired me to photograph their family shots for holiday cards. It's been great fun to see how much the children change each year. Thanks, neighbors, for trusting me enough to capture your family history. I look forward to seeing everyone through my lens when we can all gather safely again.

If you're interested in seeing some of my photo work and maybe some of your neighbors, go to www.browndogpix.com

COURTESY OF AN OPENLANDS
TREEPLANTERS GRANT AND GIPNA

FREE NATIVE PARKWAY TREES

Up to 40 Independence Park residents will receive a free tree
(est. value \$200)

TREE RECIPIENTS AGREE TO:
VOLUNTEER AT TREE PLANTING
WATER THEIR TREE WEEKLY
PROVIDE YEAR-ROUND MULCH

Interested? Questions?
Send your name, street
address and phone number to:
GIPNAtrees@gmail.com



Let's Talk About Race, Part 2

Rebecca Otalvora

Excluding people of color from the most basic aspects of society has been rampant in our country since its inception. During colonial times, denying Native Americans the right to land which they had occupied for tens of thousands of years was crucial in staking European claim on territory that did not belong to them, paving the way to naturalized violence towards people of color. Slavery and the genocide of Native American peoples are two of the most shameful times in our country's history.

The negative impact on Black Americans is undeniable. We cannot have a serious discussion on the topic of race and racism and the role that it plays in our everyday lives, without acknowledging the Jim Crow-era laws and mass

incarceration. As a woman of color, I know this to be true on a personal level. This type of exclusion isn't new. In fact, our country has relied on these discriminatory practices as a way of elevating social and economic prosperity for white Americans in part by oppression of their Black and brown counterparts. This is an undeniable part of our history. What is it about our society that makes it so difficult to approach and discuss with empathy and compassion?

First, the shameful nature of past discrimination makes a full accounting difficult. It is easier for those whom it has not impacted negatively to minimize or willfully ignore the issue. Just as humans will suppress painful or traumatic memories as a way of self-preservation, a large part of our society has attempted to do the same. People of color do not have this luxury when it is those very events and policies that set into motion our current system. As a result, this coping mechanism has proven to

be a failure. The mounting racial tensions and growing disparity in home ownership and wealth accumulation between white and Black Americans highlights this point.

Another, and likely more nuanced part of the answer, is because those who benefit from the current structure don't want to admit that their complacency is the reason people are still fighting this century-long fight. If you aren't actively pursuing ways to combat these inequalities, then you are, in fact, contributing to maintaining the status quo.

Finally, when one group of people benefit at the expense of another, there are few incentives for the more privileged group to intervene on behalf of the marginalized group. One of the most effective ways to ignore the effects of genocide, slavery, segregation, and mass incarceration is to pretend that discrepancies in privilege and opportunity do not exist or to simply downplay

the obvious systematic inequities which affect people of color their entire lives. Just because there aren't any shackled slaves alive today, that does not mean that the impact on future generations disappears. Just because the U.S. isn't actively committing genocide on Native Americans, does not mean that the trauma and loss of land and identity doesn't directly factor into the challenges those communities face. The same is true for segregation and mass incarceration.

Fortunately, smartphones and social media have made this ignorance difficult to maintain. In the next edition of *The Voice*, I will be exploring how smartphones and social media have exposed existing and continuing racism and discrimination. We will explore how we can use these tools, and others, to approach our history in an accepting and healing manner that benefits everyone in our community.

Are you a GIPNA member? Join today!

Pay at www.gipna.org or mail in the form below with a check. For information, send an e-mail to: membership@gipna.org



MEMBERSHIP FORM

(Must be 18 yrs old) Fill in this form, and send with check, payable to GIPNA, to: **GIPNA**
P. O. Box 18184 Chicago, IL 60618

Check amount enclosed:

- Single** \$10 **Family** \$20
 Business \$15
 Lifetime \$100 per person

Check here if a new member

Annual Dues enclosed: \$

Tax Deductible Donation for GIPNA: \$

Total of enclosed check: \$

Check if you would like to volunteer for events.
(GIPNA is an all-volunteer association.)

PLEASE PRINT: DATE

NAME #1

NAME #2

ADDRESS

Check here if new member, new to the neighborhood.

PHONE #1

PHONE #2

E-MAIL #1

E-MAIL #2

The History of the Independence Park Neighborhood

Reprinted from the GIPNA website.

The beginning of the Independence Park neighborhood starts with the cutting of a deal between the railroads and some land developers in 1869. Several New York investors moved to Chicago and bought up land around what is now Irving Park Road and the Kennedy Expressway. At that time, as now, transportation was critical to the value of a community, so the developers made an agreement with the Chicago and North-western Railroad to build a train station if the trains would stop. The deal was made and the first settlers who developed the land built new homes along with the train station to establish the new city of Irving Park.

The area in 1869 was primarily truck farms. The roads were either dirt or plank, but were adequate for delivering produce to the then faraway city of Chicago. However, with the new railroad station, the community became an upscale suburb where businessmen working in Chicago could escape from the city to the quiet surroundings of a rural setting. The railroad made transportation easy from the train station to the city, but commuters still had to wear hip boots to the train station, which were left until their return in the evening for the muddy walk home.

This vital link to the Chicago business district attracted more residents to the area. After the Chicago fire in 1871, a mini building boom brought new residents drawn to the community by the

train station, a good drainage system, and an artesian well that supplied plenty of water. By 1875 there were sixty homes in the area.

In 1889 Chicago annexed the Irving Park community, along with all of Jefferson Township. This brought another advance in transportation, as new electric trolleys were added along Irving Park Road to the east and new rail cars along Milwaukee Avenue to the south.

Drawn by good transportation, the population in the area grew rapidly. Germans, Swedes, and Norwegians made up the initial wave in the 1890s. As different immigrants settled the central urban areas, more established groups moved further out to areas like Irving Park. By 1930 the population was made up of mainly Germans, Scandinavians, Poles, and Russians; by 1960 the major nationalities were Germans, Poles, and Italians; and in 1980 German, Irish, and Polish families predominated.

The next significant improvement in transportation arrived in 1960, when the Kennedy Expressway was built. Though homes were lost as it sliced through the community, the Irving Park area gained quick access to what is still the best expressway in Chicago. In addition, a new CTA subway line was constructed from the Loop to Jefferson Park in 1970 and extended to O'Hare International Airport in 1984. With ready access to an expressway, the newest subway, and several railroad train stations, the community now enjoys quick access to both the Loop and to O'Hare airport, making it once again an attractive location for commuters, especially cross-commuters and business fliers.



NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

Every House Tells a Story. What's Yours?

Sue Ryan

The companion piece on the history of Independence Park tells the story of how our neighborhood came to be. This made me wonder about the history of homes within the GIPNA boundaries. Given that many homes are over 100-years-old, a vast collective history lies within their walls.

My knowledge of our house is limited and mostly hearsay, but isn't all oral history that? It was built in 1907 and we bought it in 1997 from a couple

who had lived in it for 20 years. Although they had blueprints for major renovations, the actual updates included new windows in the primary bedroom and a kitchen expanded by knocking out a wall of a first floor bedroom as evidenced by our kitchen's mismatched flooring – half maple and half oak.

One day several years ago, a woman knocked on our door and said her family lived there when she was a teenager in the 70s. I gave her a tour and she regaled us with stories, many of them centered around trying not to get busted for smoking in the bedroom or sneaking out at night. When I asked her about the history of the house, she didn't have many details, but thought the original occupants owned

Appleton Electric. I did a quick search on the company, which is now defunct, but it had been a prosperous company founded in 1903. Given that Albert Appleton also invested in Thoroughbred horses, I decided that perhaps it was a manager or factory worker who lived in our house, not the CEO of the company.

Another way to learn about a house is through rehabbing, but there is a twinge of sadness with each renovation as if we are erasing bits of history. Our first project when we moved in was the stairway and the surrounding walls covered with brown burlap over gold metallic wallpaper. The stairs themselves were covered in dark gold shag popular in the 70s and had white spindles. Under the carpet were black stairs with white risers. The paint was stripped and stained to what we thought the original woodwork might have looked like, but really it is just a guess. What isn't a guess are the numbers of layers of wallpaper underneath the top layer of paint that I call house-showing white which was used throughout when we purchased our home. The upstairs drywall was more like medium weight cardboard and the

outer layer of wallpaper depicted scenes from ante-bellum plantation life – a curious choice.

The known history of our house is sparse. No secrets were revealed when the kitchen and most of the second floor were gutted to the studs. The inner walls did not reveal a long forgotten stash of cash or letters from a bygone era. No treasures were hidden within the frame of a Murphy bed. Yet within this old house, I can envision the once gas-lit lighting from the original fixtures that still grace our dining room. I imagine the conversations, the birthday and holiday celebrations and other milestones that mark the passage of time. Our house is starting to show its age. Like a lined-worn face that comes with the passing years, the stucco exterior has a few vertical crack lines. Yet our house has good bones and surely will outlast us. Future owners are likely to commence on yet another rehab and perhaps even repaper bedroom walls, just not with ante-bellum scenes.

We'd like to hear your home's history. Even if you have just a nugget, please share it at info@gipna.org.



spot at the Independence Branch library specifically because of the library. "It was a big draw for me," Ryan said. "I've always been a reader and have attended a wide variety of Chicago Public Library programs around town."

The pandemic has put a slight damper on the fun of living above a library, but she is undaunted. "Though everything is scaled down now, I use their WiFi and download lots of eBooks. And it's easy to request books and movies to be transferred to the Independence Branch. It's wonderful."

One thing that has definitely not been realized during the pandemic is residents getting together much to participate in book clubs or other events, something that was envisioned as a side benefit of the partnership of the library and CHA. "I have wonderful neighbors in the building," Ryan said. "With COVID, they can't organize

activities but several of us chat, text and call to keep updated on building and neighborhood news. And we watch for each other's package deliveries in the lobby."

The library has big plans for activities in the next year as COVID restrictions potentially ease. But for Ryan, she'll be happy with something as simple as a book club. "I've been a participant in two book clubs at the Mayfair branch for a few years now," Ryan said. "But I can't wait until we have one here soon."

Ryan did have one complaint about living above the Independence library, the AM radio signal. "The only bad thing about living here is terrible AM radio reception," Ryan said. "That's my only access to Cubs games, except for watching ESPN on my phone." So, bad radio reception makes it hard to listen to Cubs games? One might argue that this is not necessarily a bad thing this year.

COMMUNITY

Library Living at the Independence Branch

Greg Shea

The Independence Branch library was always a unique concept. Part library, but with housing above. Even the housing was innovative from a partnership between the Chicago Housing Authority and

the Chicago Public Library for housing to benefit seniors from a variety of backgrounds.

After a year of the pandemic, we asked one resident a simple question: How is it going? It turns out, not so bad. Sure, a lot has been put on hold due to the pandemic and special programs in the library are waiting to take off. But is it a great place to live? "Definitely yes," says Terry Ryan, a resident of Irving Park and Portage Park since 2007. She applied for a housing



A Few Helpful Tips to Keep Kids of All Ages Occupied When Your Stuck at Home

Olivia Martinez

This article is for all the people out there who are spending a lot of time with kids who are stuck at home. I know from personal experience of being an 8th grader stuck at home that it can get really boring if you don't have something interesting to do. This is especially true for people like my six-year-old nephew. He is always full of energy and has the need to move around. So here are some ways to keep kids of all ages occupied, and it might even help you too.

Considering the fact that our world is going through a pandemic and we are in the middle of winter, it can be especially difficult to keep your kids active and occupied. One suggestion I have for solving that issue is to go on walks whenever you can. They



don't have to be long, you can just go around the block. But it's really important to get that fresh air and exercise. So grab your winter clothes, bundle up and try to go on a walk at least twice a week.

A fun way to make your walks a little bit more interesting is to try to find something on your walk that starts with every letter of the alphabet. It's kind of like a neighborhood scavenger hunt. You could find street names, types of birds or trees, whatever it is you see when you're out there. You might find multiple things for some letters or you might struggle with some. Try to increase the amount of things you find every time and be aware of your surroundings.

If you have a kid who's like me

and enjoys crafts and making things, here are some great ways to keep them from getting bored. One thing that I personally love is painting, it's a great way to express your creativity and just have fun. If you have a messy or young child, I suggest washable paint so if it gets on your couch or other surfaces it won't get stained if things get out of hand. Also if your kid tends to write on your walls, try getting a big roll of craft paper. Tape your paper to a blank spot on the wall or put it on an open space on the floor so they have plenty of space to draw, color, paint, or whatever it is that you have for them. I suggest using painter's tape so that you won't damage your surfaces.

Also paper airplanes are a great way to keep your kids entertained. It can keep someone occupied for a while. It helps get their imagination going. They can use colored paper, stickers, markers, crayons, or whatever it is you have to decorate it and make it completely their own. Just find some paper for them and find a place where they can fly it and they'll have plenty of fun.

There are also some interesting and educational things to do with the help of the internet. One of

my personal favorite things to do (when we aren't stuck at home) is going to the aquarium as the underwater life just fascinates me. Lucky for us there are tons of live feeds from aquariums and other places too, such as zoos, nature preserves, there's even one from outer space! There are so many interesting things in nature that you can watch and enjoy right from the comforts of home. Sometimes I also go on virtual field trips. There are a lot of video tours of things like Jelly Belly and Hershey factories. There are also videos that show you how lots of things like bubble gum, mirrors, and basketballs are made. I think your child would be quite interested in how some things are made because they probably don't know how, for example, their favorite candy is made. These videos are educational and fun to watch.

There are plenty of other ways to keep your kids occupied too. To find more ideas check out Chicago Parent Magazine at www.chicagoparent.com. You can also look at www.timeout.com for lists of things to do here in Chicago every week. I hope this article was helpful to you and that you enjoyed reading it.

HISTORY

17th District CAPS Prevent a Burglary Before it Happens

Police Officers are on a continuous lookout for crimes and suspicious activity that may occur in your area. The problem of Burglary is a growing concern in the 17th District and we need YOUR HELP in combating this crime of opportunity. Basic security precautions can significantly reduce your residence or business from being burglarized. By being security conscious and using simple steps to secure your property, the number of burglaries can be reduced.

The 17th District Tactical Officers will be conducting Burglary Assessments to identify areas on your property where you may be vulnerable to a burglary. This is an exterior physical assessment and Officers will not enter the residence or business. By neighbors and police assessing weak and strong points on your property, it will create a much greater sense of security, prevention and awareness.

Please contact the 17th District CAPS Office at 312-742-4588 or caps.017district@chicagopolice.org or call the 17th District Tact Office 312-742-4822 if you are interested in having your property assessed.



Spotlight on Independence Branch Library

Liz Drew

I remember moving into this neighborhood in 2017 and following with great anticipation the opening of the new Independence Branch Library. A years-long campaign by passionate community advocates and supportive elected officials culminated in the 2019 launch of a stunning new facility that attracted nationwide attention. The library has since won awards and acclaim from far and wide for its beautiful and unique design, an innovative partnership between the Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Housing Authority that co-locates affordable housing for seniors with the library.

The library's history dates back to 1901 when the Irving Park Woman's Club literary society asked its members to donate a book or magazine to create a circulating library. After a century of moving from one storefront location to another, a 2015 fire at the 3548 W. Irving Park Road location marked a turning point in the campaign to create a permanent location that would better serve

the community. Roberta Bole, who leads the Friends of Independence Library group, told me that she remained passionate throughout the lengthy campaign to create the new branch. She is as motivated as ever to ensure the community rallies around the library and its programs as we emerge from the pandemic. Roberta shared that as a child the Logan Square Library was an invaluable resource to her and her family. As an educator now, Roberta is fully aware of how critical libraries are to not only children and families, but students and learners of all ages. Everyone should be able to access a library, she told me, no matter where you are from, what languages you speak, or what special needs you may have.

With the pandemic now stretching on for a year, I wanted to see how our library has been adapting and what the future holds. Rory Brown, the Independence Branch Manager, shared that he and his team have been focused on safely keeping the library and its resources open and accessible. In fact, library staff have braved the pandemic from the beginning to keep serving our community. Libraries across the city only closed for a short period last spring, opening back up even before the stay-at-home order was lifted. (Although they are essential workers, library staff are unfortunately



not currently in the first wave of 1b vaccine eligible frontline workers.)

Patrons are still able to come in and browse, use the computers, or pick up materials they've placed on hold, with requirements for masks and social distancing. Of course, the pandemic put a halt to in-person group programming which had been particularly popular with children and families. Overall library usage has gone down by about half during the pandemic. The pandemic also forced the library to close the meeting rooms that had been open to the community free of charge. The Independence Branch, like other Chicago Public Library (CPL) locations, is offering online programs including virtual story hours and the virtual Teacher in the Library resource, but the team is very eager to return to more robust programming in person as soon as it is safe to do so.

Rory noted that currently, a small number of the residents of the senior housing use the library on a near-daily basis. Ideally, they would have dedicated programming to take full advantage of the unique CHA/CPL partnership. Intergenerational programming is one exciting goal. For now, Rory and his team are focused on being good neighbors, including helping eligible residents navigate COVID vaccine access. New programs that

fully realize the potential of such an innovative facility located in a diverse and dynamic community will require new resources, which means that the Friends of the Library group is gearing up again to launch new fundraising and partnership campaigns.

Spring is a time for renewal. While we do our part to keep ourselves and our community safe and healthy over the next several months, we can also get to work investing in the future we want to build and imagining new ways of connecting, learning and growing as a community. As the snow starts to melt, let's think about what programs we would like to see in the future, and how we can support the library's mission. To learn more about the Friends of Independence Library's work and how you can join, visit their Facebook page, or pick up a membership form at the library. And the next time you pay a visit to the Independence Branch library, remember to give a big (socially distant, masked) thank you to the staff for providing essential services during this incredibly difficult year. Or to share your appreciation virtually, send the team an e-mail: independence@chipublib.org.

Our library needs champions, and our community needs our library, now more than ever.





REDUCE, RECYCLE, REUSE

Green Tidbits

Pat Clark

The absolute best source for finding out what is recyclable is recyclebycity.com/Chicago. The site also shows several clever ideas on reusing non-recyclable things, such as how to make storage baskets out of corrugated plastic election lawn signs. It's very well written, actually entertaining,

and chock full of info. The site even lists where you can get free mulch.

Who knew? Well, there's a place not that far from our neighborhood where you can recycle Styrofoam. It's a ward yard at 6441 N. Ravenswood Ave. that's open 7 days a week during daylight hours. Just inside the gate is a big green dumpster for the Styrofoam and recycling it is a much better solution than dumping it in the landfill where it will last forever.

I'm a big fan of waxed food wraps. I got a package of various sized wraps at the 2019 Fine Craft Fair and have used them daily since then. The cloth is impregnated with beeswax and other waxes and so much better than using plastic wrap for refrigerated

leftovers. Simply wrap the bowl or dish with the waxed wrap, tuck and stick the edges together and put it in the fridge. After use, simply wash the wrap with soapy water, rinse thoroughly and let dry. I roll mine up and store them in a kitchen drawer. Amazingly, the wraps keep fruits and vegetables very fresh. For example, a sliced apple doesn't turn dark and a cut lemon stays fresh much longer. I Googled waxed food wraps and there's plenty of places to buy them and guides on how to make your own.

Do you have something too big for the regular garbage pickup? Call 3-1-1 and ask for a Bulk Item Pickup.

Did you know that there's Off Peak, Peak and Super Peak ComEd hours? For now, Off Peak, the

lowest rate, is 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.; Peak is 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Super Peak is 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. I've been trying to run my dishwasher after 10 p.m. and using the washing machine in off peak hours and I've seen about a 10% reduction in my electric usage. Summer rates and times are different so check the ComEd website.

Rats. Just sends shivers through you, doesn't it? One of the biggest problems is damaged black trash carts. Rats and squirrels have easy access when there's a hole or ill-fitting lid. If you need a replacement, call 3-1-1, or go online at cityofchicago.org, or email ward45@cityofchicago.org. And, of course, keep the lids firmly closed.



AVOID BEING A CARJACKING VICTIM!

Carjacking has increased over 300% over the last year and women are more likely to be a victim than men. Carjacking takes place within 15-20 seconds making it important to be proactive and prepared.

HOTSPOTS:

- Residential driveways – getting in and out of the vehicle
- Parking lots and garages
- Gas stations
- ATMs
- Highway entry and exit ramps
- Intersections with stop lights

SCENARIOS:

- **Bump & Run** – Criminal rear-ends or bumps you giving them an opportunity to steal your vehicle when you get out to exchange information.
- **OR**
- **Flashing Lights** by vehicle behind you to signal a maintenance problem
 - **DO NOT GET OUT! DO NOT PULL OVER!** Stay inside the vehicle, close windows and lock doors.
 - If you feel a threat, turn on your flashers and signal the other driver to follow you and drive to the nearest police station.
- **Stranded Motorist**
 - **DO NOT STOP!** Note their location and call 911

SAFETY TIPS:

- **BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS:**
 - Avoid reading your cell phone while waiting in traffic or a stoplight
 - Make it a habit to start your car and drive away immediately. Get your children in the habit of getting in and out of the car quickly.
 - Look around for persons sitting in vehicles or loitering in the area before entering/exiting your vehicle
- **PARK IN WELL-LIT AREAS THAT ARE VISIBLE TO THE PUBLIC**
- **KEEP WINDOWS ROLLED UP AND DOORS LOCKED NO MATTER HOW SHORT YOUR TRIP OR HOW "SAFE" THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND WHEN PARKED**
- **LEAVE SPACE BETWEEN YOUR CAR AND THE CAR AHEAD OF YOU WHEN STOPPED IN TRAFFIC OR TRAFFIC SIGNAL:**
 - This will allow you space to maneuver and escape if necessary
- **KEEP YOUR CELL PHONE, WALLET AND HOUSE KEY IN YOUR POCKET OR A SMALL CROSS BODY BAG:**
 - **DO NOT KEEP YOUR PURSE IN THE PASSENGER SEAT, FLOOR OR SEAT BEHIND YOU** where it can be grabbed or left behind if the car is carjacked.
 - If the criminal gets your bag and/or cell phone, they will know your address and you won't be able to call 911
- **IF YOU ARE IN A CAR ACCIDENT, DO NOT GET OUT OF YOUR CAR:**
 - If your car is driveable, go to a well-lit busy area and call 911
 - If possible, drive to the nearest police station
- **CREATE A SMART911 PROFILE** and include your vehicle information.
 - Go to smart911.com
- **IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM OR A CARJACKING:**
 - **DON'T FIGHT BACK:** Give up your car and leave the scene. Your vehicle can be replaced. It is not worth getting hurt or losing your life.
 - **IF YOU HAVE A CHILD IN YOUR CAR, LET THE CARJACKER KNOW:** They don't want to be responsible for a child.
 - **MAKE A MENTAL NOTE OF THE SUSPECT(S)' DESCRIPTION AND THEIR VEHICLE'S DESCRIPTION IF THEY HAVE ONE**
 - **CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY**

John Van Essen: Growing Up in Nigeria

Ellen Ryan

Growing up in suburban Milwaukee, this author's idea of diversity was the non-Catholic family living right across the street. John Van Essen's experience was a bit different.

John's dad was the eighth of eleven siblings in a farming family from Leota, Minnesota. A farming accident rendered his leg pretty much useless. Since he couldn't be of much use on the farm, he was sent to college. Full of gratitude for this opportunity, John's dad felt the need to give back and decided to join the ministry. He and his wife went to Nigeria where, along with spreading the word of Jesus, dug wells, and planted trees, they raised their four boys and one girl.

John is the third of five children. His two older siblings were born in Africa. John was born in Oak Lawn, IL, while his parents were back stateside for a six month progress report to the sponsoring churches on how they were doing in Nigeria. The family returned to Nigeria when John was about three months old.

John lived in Africa from basically birth to age 14. His family was first posted in Lupwe on the coast near Cameroon. John enjoyed the freedom of a carefree existence in Africa - leaving home in the morning with his friends and not returning until dinner - a luxury that kids here in Chicago don't have and haven't had for a

while.

Not everything was idyllic. The school which John attended was not in his village, so he and his siblings stayed in dormitories, away from their parents. John wasn't crazy about being far from home. It was not uncommon to either be crying in his bunk bed at night or hearing other kids doing the same. House mothers can't take the place of parents.

John's family eventually moved to Jos, the city where the school was located, so he and his siblings could then live at home. His family certainly did not have the amenities we take for granted in the states. No air conditioning in wickedly hot weather. Part of their time in Nigeria, they had no running water - just a well and cistern where boiling water was necessary for cooking, cleaning and bathing. They had electricity from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. TV choices were a bit of Sesame Street in the day and one episode of Hawaii Five-0 at night. John's family was fortunate enough to have a washing machine whereas most of the families washed their clothes in the river.

He and his African playmates spent hours together outside riding bikes, playing soccer and doing all the things young boys do. He went to school with other ministry kids from all over the world - England, South Asia, Australia to name a few - as well as Muslim kids from his village whose parents sent them to the academically superior school. Maybe one's food was different, a custom or two curious, but his takeaway from exposure to

so many different cultures was that, regardless of skin color or religion, people from all walks of life are just the same. As a kid, John never really saw racial differences and found those issues here in the U.S. difficult to comprehend upon his return.

When John's family returned to the states, they lived in Burbank, IL. After high school, John attended Calvin College where he met the love of his life, Holly. After graduating with a business degree, he decided he wanted to train to be a pilot. This decision was surely informed by the pleasure he took flying back and forth to and from the states every three years and his trips from Lupwe to boarding school. As nothing is stable in the airline business, John knew he

would have to move around a fair amount, with different employers in different cities. Alas, he broke up with Holly. Nonetheless, he wanted to know if they could still be friends. Holly interjected that he only wanted to remain friends with her so they could continue to play racquetball. Holly said no thanks. After two years when things settled down, John called Holly and asked if they could see one another. She said yes and they got married six months later. They have two kids, Emma and Josh, and John was hired by his current employer, United Airlines, in 2000. Looking back on his years in Africa - in essence his childhood - John eloquently summed up his fortunate experience. "To be fair, if you have loving parents and siblings, the rest is just fluff." Well said John.



Independence Parka

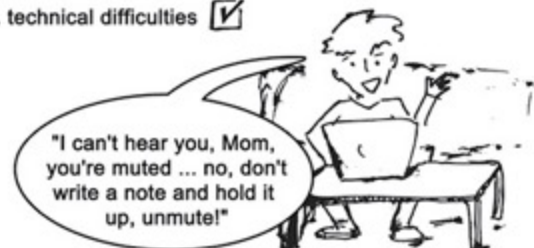
by erica dreisbach

PANDEMIC CHECKLIST

1. questionable home haircut



2. technical difficulties



3. read the news (self-harm)



4. hope for a brighter new year



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