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WEST SIDE TIMES

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Cook County Opioid Overdoses for 2021 Set to Surpass 2020 Numbers



The opioid crisis continues to have a devastating impact on the health of several communities across Cook County and across the U.S. More than 100,000 people in the US died of a drug overdose between May 2020 and April 2021, nearly a 29 percent from the 12 months prior, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The prevalence of opioid overdose in Chicago and Cook County has spiked over the last few years. From January 2018 to

December 2020, there were 4,283 opioid-related deaths in Cook County with nearly 82 percent of those deaths from June 6 through December 23, 2020 showing the presence of fentanyl in their systems. The Cook County Medical Examiner's Office recorded a total of 1840 opioid-related deaths in 2020. As of Tuesday, Jan. 25th, 1602 opioid-related deaths have been confirmed for 2021 with 717 cases still pending review. Based on past rates for pending cases, it is estimated that the final

count of opioid-related deaths will surpass 2100 cases in 2021. Recently, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded Cook County Health a five-year \$2.6 million grant to fund opioid use treatment programs. Project REACCH-OUT: Rapid Engagement and Access at Cook County Health for Opioid Use Treatment will provide funding to enhance the treatment and recovery of

individuals diagnosed with opioid use disorder (OUD) and substance use disorder (SUD) by implementing a rapid access, low-barrier and high-capacity

Illinois to Improve Early Childhood Education



As part of a broad, long-term effort to improve the State's early childhood education and care system, Illinois has committed to creating regional councils to promote the growth of high-quality early childhood programs across the State. A series of virtual, regional kick-off events will be held the first week of February to discuss the role of these regional councils, build regional stakeholders' knowledge of early childhood, and introduce data about existing services within each region. In partnership with the state of Illinois,

the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) has launched Birth to Five Illinois with the goal of recruiting family members, providers, advocates, business leaders, and other stakeholders to serve on Birth to Five Action Councils in each of the 39 educational regions established by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) but operating independently. These councils will enable local residents and civic leaders to address early childhood needs within their own communities by gathering input that will inform

local and state policy around early childhood needs and gaps, and leverage resources in their community to increase quality services. The Birth to Five Illinois virtual kick-off events will be held from 6-7pm on February 1, 2, and 3, 2022. There will also be a Spanish session on February 5, 2022, from 10-11am. Registration is organized by county, and all are welcome to attend. For more information on the Birth to Five Action Councils and the upcoming kick-off events, please visit www.birthtofiveil.com.

City of Chicago Announces Winners of Chicago Works Community Challenge



Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot announced more than \$10 million in infrastructure improvements selected through the Chicago Works Community Challenge. The

winning projects, valued up to \$1.5 million each, will improve four Chicago Park District (CPD) facilities, a pair of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) facilities,

and a Chicago Public Library (CPL) branch. The Chicago Works Community Challenge invited neighborhood stakeholders to submit

ideas for improvements to public parks, schools, libraries, and City-owned residential lots. The City received nearly 500 submissions through an online application process last summer. A City of Chicago selection committee evaluated the applications and short-listed 21 projects for consideration. A few of the winning proposals include: **Matthew Gallistel Language Academy, 10347 S. Ewing Ave.**

Far South Submitted by Rogelio Lopez, a school counselor at Gallistel Language

Academy, the project will modernize an antiquated playground with contemporary climbing equipment, landscaping, and areas for active and passive recreation. The work will also include the creation of new spaces for outdoor instruction and community socialization. **Warren Park, 6601 N. Western Ave.**

North Submitted by Pamela Stauffer on behalf of the Warren Park Advisory Council, the project includes site improvements for activities such as cricket, horseshoes, bocce, and

pickleball to foster multi-generational engagement and healthy lifestyles.

Kelvyn Park, 4438 W. Wrightwood Ave.

Northwest Submitted by Casey Guerra on behalf of the Kelvyn Park Advisory Council, the project will repair the roof of the park fieldhouse and auditorium and make long-needed building upgrades, including ADA accessibility.

Project scopes and designs are expected to be finalized and approved by the respective agencies later this year, with work expected to start in late 2022 or early 2023.



Commissioner Aguilar Partners with Cook County Sheriff's Office, City of Berwyn to Provide Free Car Light Repairs

On Thursday, January 20th, The Cook County Sheriff's mechanics facilitated a car lights repair event for Cook County residents for southwest suburban residents. The event went from 9:00am to 12:00pm and was located at the Public Works Building. The volunteer mechanics say the free light repair events provide an opportunity to support our community through this collaboration, now in its fourth year. "Our resident's safety

must be first and foremost in everything we do," said Cook County Commissioner Frank J. Aguilar. "Cost should never be a barrier to safety, and I am proud that residents throughout the 16th District were able to get their vehicles fixed, free of charge. I would like to thank Cook County Sheriff Thomas Dart and Berwyn Mayor Robert Lovero for a great event that will bring immediate help to our residents." The aim of the program is to

help residents avoid tickets, fees and traffic stops while improving road safety, according to the Sheriff's Office. "We hope this partnership will help many people out by saving them time and money. I also want to give thanks to the skilled mechanics from the Cook County Sheriff's Office for offering their valuable services in a quick and cost-free way, especially after the holiday season," stated Mayor Robert J. Lovero.

Greater Chicago Food Depository, Northern Illinois Food Bank Receive Financial Boost for Each Bank of America Employee Who Gets a COVID-19 Booster



The Greater Chicago Food Depository and Northern Illinois Food Bank are the recipients of a unique donation from Bank of America. The bank will make a \$100 donation to fight hunger for every employee in Chicago who receives a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot and notifies the bank before January 31, 2022. "The ongoing pandemic continues to put an increased strain on food security for individuals and families," shared Rita Cook, president of

Bank of America Chicago. "This incentive program is a dual investment in our community and teammates, supporting the overall health and wellness of the region. The Greater Chicago Food Depository and Northern Illinois Food Bank do an incredible job fighting food insecurity throughout Chicagoland, and we're committed to supporting their efforts to get food to those in need." Nationally, Bank of America is committed to donating up to \$10 million to food banks and hunger

relief organizations for employees who get booster shots this month or who have already gotten the shot if they register that information with the bank. Bank of America has encouraged staff to get vaccinated and boosted since summer 2021 and has offered incentives such as paid time-off and \$500 credits towards health benefit premiums. This newest incentive is unique to support the overall health of the community while also making sure local food banks are adequately resourced. "In Chicago and across the nation, the pandemic has contributed to a historic hunger crisis," said Kate Maehr, executive director and CEO of the Greater Chicago Food Depository. "Thanks to the generosity of supporters like Bank of America, we've been able to meet the rising demand for food. We are grateful for this gift and applaud Bank of America for giving their workforce additional incentive to receive vaccine boosters."

Chicago Park District Hosting 'Girls Day of Play'



The Chicago Park District is excited to host "Girls Day of Play," on Friday, January 28, 2022. When school is out, the parks are in! Participants will have access to a variety of sports, recreational games, and

physical and educational activities during the all-day, free series. Girls, ages 6 to 15 years old, are invited to participate. These events are being held at 15+ park locations. The Chicago Park District Girls Play

Initiative works to expand opportunities for girls in sports and ensure that young women have equal access to recreational offerings in their communities. Girls Day of Play activities will range



by location from traditional sports like basketball, volleyball and soccer to more popular activities that include gymnastics, cheerleading, tumbling, yoga, dance and ballet. Advance registration is

required for some locations as space is limited. Drop-in participation may vary by location. For a full list of park locations participating in the Girls Day of Play celebration, or to learn more about

the Chicago Park District Girls P.L.A.Y. (Positivity, Leadership, Ambition, Be You!) initiative, visit www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/girls-play.

Senator Fine Fights for Students in Debt Across Illinois

Student debt is the second leading source of consumer debt in America, just behind mortgage loans. Illinois students across the state would have more options to protect themselves from falling behind on their student debt under a measure championed through the Higher Education Committee by State Senator Laura

Fine (D-Glenview). Under Senator Fine's legislation, universities would be prohibited from withholding transcripts as a means of debt collection. "Currently, students are not able to access their transcripts due to the student owing money to the university," Senator Fine said. "Having access to their transcripts would

allow students to seek the jobs necessary to pay off these loans." Universities would be required to offer debt repayment plan options for any student who has a balance of \$250 or more immediately following the semester. Students who owe less than \$2,500 who are on a repayment plan would also be able to avoid an

academic hold. "Student debt is an enormous burden on students and the economy," Senator Fine said. "This bill gives students a pathway to

economic stability by creating a debt repayment plan that will rein in fees and interest charges. It also prohibits withholding of transcripts that may inhibit

students from seeking employment." SB 3032 passed through the Higher Education Committee and now goes to the full Senate for further consideration.



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National School Choice Week Underway



Programs and policies offering school choice opportunities expanded in 19 states in 2021, and parents are exploring these options, with 52 percent saying they have considered a new or different school in the last year. Millions of teachers, students, and community

leaders across the nation are sharing their hopes and needs for the future of K-12 education as the twelfth annual National School Choice Week (Jan. 23-29) kicks off. Throughout the Week, participants will raise awareness at more than 26,000 events that families do have options

and community help when it comes to navigating K-12 education. Besides in-person events, families and teachers will publish op-eds, post on social media, and attend virtual informational sessions on educational choice. School Choice Week is non-political and non-partisan, and is celebrated by families and educational organizations of every school type: traditional public, public charter, public magnet, private, online, and homeschooling. The Week takes place in January to support parents

as they consider enrollment options for the upcoming school year. More information, visit www.schoolchoiceweek.com/mystate.



Cook County Receives Award from Macarthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge

Last week, Cook County was announced as the recipient of a \$500,000 grant by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to build upon existing efforts to address racial and ethnic inequities in the county’s local justice system. The grant is part of the Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC), a \$300 million national initiative to reduce over-incarceration and address racial and ethnic disparities in local criminal justice systems by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. Cook County has participated in the Safety and Justice Challenge since 2015. Cook County is one of only four jurisdictions nationwide selected for the award and participation in the SJC’s Racial Equity Cohort. Each Equity Cohort member is charged with promoting racial

and ethnic equity in the criminal justice system by authentically engaging community and centering the lived experiences of those most impacted by the justice system. Cook County Government, specifically the Office of the Chief Judge and the Justice Advisory Council, will work alongside Chicago Regional Organizing for Antiracism (Chicago ROAR) to lead this racial

equity work. Funding from the grant will provide training and technical assistance, peer-to-peer support from other cohort members, and qualitative and quantitative data and analytic support. Fellows will be residents from Cook County communities most impacted by violence and crime and disproportionately represented in local courts, jails and prisons



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Cubs Charities Awards Local Organizations Diamond Project Grants



Cubs Charities, a nonprofit that mobilizes the power of sport to champion youth, families and communities, announced that \$920K will be awarded to 13 organizations through the 2021 Diamond Project capital grants. These 13 organizations located throughout Chicago will use the grants for various projects including field upgrades and maintenance, the installation of a new indoor training facility in West Garfield Park and other projects that help grow youth baseball and softball initiatives in their communities. Through

the Diamond Project, Cubs Charities provides funds and equipment to nonprofit, neighborhood-based organizations that support baseball and softball leagues and capital improvement projects that improve the quality, safety and accessibility of local baseball fields or indoor training facilities. A few of the 2021 Diamond Project capital grantees include:

BUILD, Inc.: Located in West Garfield Park, BUILD, Inc. will use the funds to support construction of a new indoor facility.

Little Cubs Field: Located

in Humboldt Park, Little Cubs Field will use the funds to replace the existing turf field.

The Noble Network of Charter Schools: Located in South Chicago, The Noble Network of Charter Schools will use the funds to support field upgrades. Applications for the 2022 Diamond Project grants are now open at Cubs.com/DiamondProject. Program and equipment grant applications are open until Monday, February 28, and capital grant applications are open until Friday, May 13.



Cook County Warming Centers Open During Bitter Cold

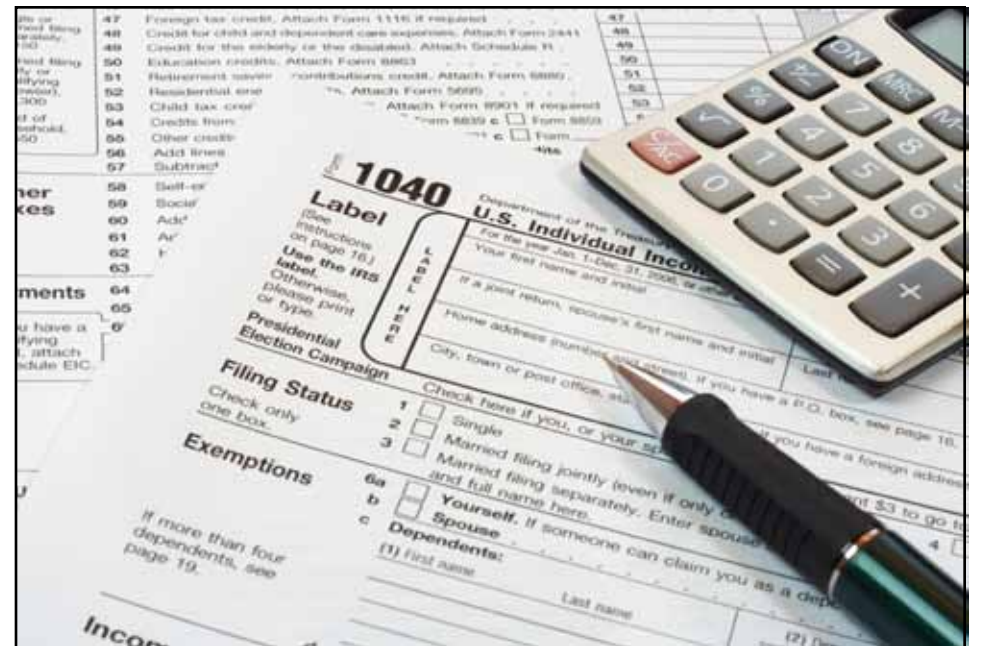
Cook County will experience low temperatures over the next few days. Cook County's Department of Emergency Management and Regional Security (EMRS) reminds residents to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves and their families during extremely cold weather. Municipalities and townships across Cook County operate warming centers for residents.

Residents who do not have adequate heating in their homes are encouraged to visit a warming center to ensure they remain safe. EMRS urges you to keep the following tips in mind through the cold winter months:

- Never use your oven for heat.
- Never bring charcoal or gas grills indoors (they are a carbon monoxide hazard).
- Make sure all portable heaters are unplugged

when not in use.

- Use electric space heaters with extreme caution – avoid placing them near curtains or other flammable materials and turn them off before going to bed.
- Keep heat at adequate levels or leave faucets open with a slight drip to prevent pipes from freezing.
- Keep moving. Your body generates its own heat when you engage in physical activities.



2022 Illinois Tax Filing Season Begins

The Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) will begin accepting 2021 state individual income tax returns this week as well as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). If a taxpayer electronically files an error-free return, they should receive a direct deposit refund in approximately four weeks, if applicable. Last year, IDOR received 5,609,000 electronically filed returns. Eighty-eight percent of returns were filed electronically, while 12 percent were filed using paper returns. The 2022 tax filing deadline is Monday, April 18. Illinois Governor JB Pritzker recently

announced, however, that victims of severe storms, straight-line winds and tornadoes beginning December 10, 2021 have until May 16, 2022, to file various individual and business tax returns and make income tax payments. In addition to free filing of Form IL-1040 through MyTax Illinois, individuals may also utilize the site to make payments, respond to department inquiries, and check the

status of their refunds using the "Where's My Refund?" link. Taxpayers may also look up IL-PINs, amounts of any estimated tax payments made, and (when necessary) amounts reported on Form 1099-G with MyTax Illinois. For the most up-to-date information, forms, schedules, and instructions for the 2022 tax season, please visit IDOR's website at: tax.illinois.gov.



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Chicago Latino Film Festival Unveils 38th Edition Poster



The Chicago Latino Film Festival (CLFF) announced on Wednesday that Polish graphic artist Dominika Czerniak-Chojnacka, winner of the 2017 Chicago Latino Film Festival Poster Contest, is the artist behind the design of the official poster for its 38th edition. The poster will be the face of the Festival, as it will be on the cover of program, digital schedules, invitations, and digital program books, Festival Trailer, Festival’s website and more. “Coming up with an idea for the Chicago Latino Film Festival’s official poster was not an easy task. I was thinking and drawing for many days, and suddenly - as it sometimes happens when it comes to art - I drew the Sun, a very simple object, even obvious. Yet it is a common image

across all Latino cultures. And when its rays turn into celluloid strips it becomes a powerful, radiating symbol of the 38th Chicago Latino Film Festival. Transferring this poster to other media will be easy: even in different formats it will be eye-catching. It’s like the poster is moving and also moves everyone who sees it,” wrote Czerniak-Chojnacka in her artist’s statement. “This year we decided to do something different by asking the winners of the last five poster contests to submit their ideas and concepts for the image that would be the face of this year’s Festival. The choices were difficult; each submission spoke in their own unique way to the multiethnic nature of the pan-Latino diaspora. But we were in the end captivated by Dominika’s

bright, cheerful, and optimistic design” said Pepe Vargas, founder and executive director of the International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago, the organization that produces the Chicago Latino Film Festival. Featuring close to 100 feature length and short films from Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Spain, Portugal and the United States, the 38th Chicago Latino Film Festival, April 21st - May 1st, will be presented in a hybrid format with in-person screenings, several Drive-In presentations at ChiTown Movies Drive-In, 2343 S. Throop St., and online through Eventive’s virtual platform. The full program, as well as additional theaters, will be announced in March.



Dance Your Stress Away

As humans, we all love to dance. Whether it be breakdancing to participate in the Paris Olympic Games in 2024 or the little dance that we do when we see your waiter coming with our food. These random motions that when thrown together in a synchronized fashion, can actually provide some pretty unique health and wellness benefits for us all. Ricardo Souza, New York City based Brazilian professional dancer, highlights unique health benefits that you didn’t know that dancing could offer. “Dancing is one of the most freeing and raw forms of expression that we have, and because of that, is an excellent activity for cultivating well-being. People who dance achieve many benefits to their physical, mental, and emotional well-being which can directly improve physical health.” says Souza.

Benefit #1: Dancing can

help eliminate social anxiety
As humans, we’re social creatures and crave connection to others. Dancing provides numerous opportunities to interact with other people who share the same passion as you. Being a part of a community that stimulates you has been linked to increased happiness, reduced stress, and a stronger immune system.

Benefit #2: Dancing can improve bone density
Growing up, we’re told to drink milk because it will make our bones stronger. While true, it’s only one part of the equation. Load bearing exercises such as dancing cause microscopic damage to the bone itself,

this damage is then repaired by the body while at rest, resulting in stronger, healthier bones. The same happens with our muscles when dancing too, which is why vigorous dancing becomes easier over time.

Benefit #3: Dancing can improve brain health
Have you ever been watching Dancing with the Stars and wondered how on earth they remember so many complicated twists and turns? Part of it is because dancing has been shown to boost memory and help deter dementia later on in life. The mental exercise of dancing encourages neuroplasticity and results in a healthier and happier brain.



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Applications will be accepted until 2/6/22. Written examination will be held on February 19th at 9:00am. Application packet and additional information is available at www.carolstream.org or at the Village of Carol Stream Police Department, 500 N. Gary Ave., Carol Stream. Application and payment of \$15 non-refundable processing fee may be submitted electronically, by mail or in-person. All qualified applicants that submit a completed application packet with fee will be provided the test location & study guide. For more information, please contact Human Resources at **630-871-6240**. Starting Salary \$73,139. EOE

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