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WEST SIDE TIMES

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ESTABLISHED 1940

Greater Chicago Food Depository, Young Invincibles Champion Illinois Bill to Address Growing Crisis of Student Hunger



The Greater Chicago Food Depository announced that it has joined forces with the national young adult advocacy network, Young Invincibles, to champion a state-level bill in Illinois aimed at alleviating college student hunger.

The bill expands and streamlines eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in Illinois, ensuring that more students at public colleges and universities have access to the nutrition they need to thrive. Sponsored by

State Senator Graciela Guzmán (20th District) and State Representative Barbara Hernandez (50th District), SB1298 and HB2750 aim to increase SNAP participation among college students, particularly those at community colleges,

parenting students and students of color disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Nearly two thirds (67 percent) of students in the U.S. who are eligible for SNAP are not receiving benefits, according to the U.S. Government

Accountability Office. The bill will streamline and expand eligibility for SNAP benefits, allowing all students at public colleges and universities in Illinois to benefit from the program provided they meet income and other eligibility requirements.

Increasing SNAP participation would bring an estimated \$150 million in additional federal benefit dollars to Illinois residents, generating an additional \$225 million in economic activity in the State of Illinois.



Court Orders Landlord to Pay \$80,000 for Threatening to Call ICE on Tenant

An Illinois circuit court judge awarded more than \$80,000 in a case brought by a Chicago couple who sued their landlords under the state's Immigrant Tenant Protection Act (ITPA). The case, filed by MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund) is the first to reach a judgment under the 2019 law, attorneys said. MALDEF filed the suit in 2022 on behalf of a tenant family whose landlord threatened to call U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) during a rent dispute, solely based

on the parents' perceived immigration status. The suit was the second brought by MALDEF under ITPA, which bans landlords from discriminating against or harassing a tenant based on the tenant's actual or perceived immigration status. On February 19, 2025, Circuit Court Judge Catherine A. Schneider ordered landlord Marco Antonio Contreras to pay more than \$80,000 in damages as well as attorneys' fees and costs for violating the ITPA. The judge also awarded a smaller sum in compensation for denying

the tenants access to their belongings. According to the lawsuit, the tenant family rented a basement apartment from Marco Antonio Contreras and his wife beginning in 2017. On June 30, 2020, the landlords went to the family's apartment and demanded payment of the July rent. During the discussion, Contreras threatened to report the couple to federal immigration officials, in violation of the law. Illinois was the second state in the U.S. to enact legislation protecting immigrant tenants' rights.

CICERO POLICE

PRESS RELEASE

CICERO RESIDENT IDENTIFIED AS PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSE EXPLOSION

CHANG, S. - The Cicero Police Department, in collaboration with the Cook County Medical Examiner's (ME) Office, has identified the remains found in the house explosion as 31-year-old Cicero resident Anthony Avila-Puebla.

On February 15, 2025, at approximately 4:52pm, officers responded to a house explosion at 2214 South Central Avenue, Cicero, Illinois. Once the fire was extinguished, the remains of Avila-Puebla were discovered in the debris.

During the investigation, Detectives determined that Avila-Puebla had a relationship with a family member living at the residence where the explosion occurred. While the family member attended a wedding, Avila-Puebla was seen on video parking his vehicle a half a block from the house, removing a 5-gallon jug, and entering the building. He was then seen exiting with the same jug empty, returning to his vehicle. He was observed on two additional occasions removing multiple jugs from his vehicle and entering the building. Shortly after, an explosion occurred, and Avila-Puebla was not seen exiting. A thorough investigation revealed that the jug contained a flammable liquid, and Avila-Puebla was determined to be responsible for the explosion. The motive for the explosion remains unknown at this time, and the investigation is still ongoing.

Superintendent Thomas P. Boyle expressed his gratitude to the Detectives for their dedication in determining the cause of the explosion, as well as to the Cicero Fire Department, neighboring Fire Departments, and the ME's Office for their assistance.

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Photo Credit: Town of Cicero

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Town of Cicero

Meaningful Ways to Celebrate Women's History Month



By: Ashmar Mandou

Women's History Month is a time to recognize and celebrate the countless contributions women have made throughout history. This is a wonderful opportunity to intentionally commemorate this month by reflecting, volunteering, and supporting women-related stories, businesses, and organizations. This month we will highlight the contributions of local women from all walks of life making a difference in their community. To kick-start Women's History Month, here are a few meaningful ways to celebrate.

Donate funds

Consider donating to organizations that support the empowerment of women and girls, such as those that focus on women's education, health, legal rights and economic opportunities. Look for local charities and community organizations where your donation may

go a long way in helping empower marginalized communities.

Host a Book Club

Host an in-person or virtual book club featuring works written by women or about women's experiences. Choose a book that can expand your understanding of how women have contributed to our shared culture and society and inspire you to take action. Make sure to select books written by diverse female authors to get a full range of perspectives and discussions. Invite friends who also share your interest in exploring women's history and open up conversations about the issues faced and successes celebrated by female figures throughout the ages.

Volunteer your time

From helping out at local shelters or community centers for disadvantaged women, donating supplies to historic sites related to the women's rights movement, tutoring low-income female

students or participating in online events focused on celebrating women's achievements, there are many ways you can contribute meaningfully and make a difference.

Support women-owned businesses

Shopping small helps support local economies and small business owners while also helping to spread awareness about the importance of celebrating Women's History Month. Make this a more meaningful month by following influencers or bloggers who review products from female-owned companies, shopping at small businesses owned by female entrepreneurs online or in person, using social media platforms to spread awareness about buying from women-owned businesses, and making a point to leave reviews for products or services purchased from female-owned companies.



Triton College Launches PEPA Academy

Triton College is thrilled to announce its free Pre-Employment, Pre-Apprenticeship (PEPA) Academy Program, designed for students interested in the manufacturing and healthcare fields. This program aims to enhance students' marketability and equip them with valuable skills before entering the workforce. The PEPA Academy can be a steppingstone for students considering a credit program or noncredit certificate program or pursuing a future associate or bachelor's degree. The 60-hour PEPA Academy is divided into two tracks: manufacturing and healthcare. There will be two student cohorts per track, according to Triton College. Students in the healthcare track earn certifications in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), First



Aid and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA 10), enforced by the Department of Labor. Students in the manufacturing track complete OSHA 10 training and gain hands-on experience in forklift operations. Students will have the opportunity to

earn the Forklift Operator Certification, a new and unique offering at Triton. If you would like to learn more or to apply, visit www.triton.edu. For more information, contact Laura Fisher at laurafisher@triton.edu or (708) 456-0300, Ext. 3768.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

Spring Returns to the Parks!

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Sinai Urban Health Institute Celebrates 25 Years of Advancing Health Equity

Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI), a leader in public health research, training, and community-driven solutions, proudly celebrates its 25th anniversary of addressing health inequities and driving positive change in communities across Chicago and the United States. Since its founding in 2000, SUHI has consistently advanced its mission of ensuring that all individuals have the opportunity to thrive in health. Recognized as one of the nation's top non-academic health equity research centers, SUHI is dedicated to eliminating barriers that disproportionately impact communities of color. "Over the past 25 years, SUHI has been steadfast in its commitment to advancing health equity,



in partnership with the communities most affected by health disparities," said Dr. Ngozi Ezike, President & CEO of Sinai Chicago. Among one of their community-driven solutions is SUHI's Community Health Worker (CHW) model, which has led to substantive health improvements in multiple areas. For example, SUHI's CHW-led interventions for asthma led to 70%-80% reductions in asthma-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations; diabetes

interventions have led to an increase in the percentage of participants with controlled diabetes and significant decreases in hemoglobin A1C levels among participants. In addition, SUHI CHWs have served over 13,000 patients in the hospital and post-discharge, identifying needs in over 5,000 individuals to address housing, food and financial security, transportation, etc., and connecting people with important resources to meet those identified needs. To learn more about SUHI, visit www.suhichicago.org

El Instituto de Salud Urbana Sinai Celebra 25 años Impulsando la Equidad en Salud

El Instituto de Salud Urbana Sinai (SUHI), líder en investigación, capacitación y soluciones comunitarias en salud pública, celebra con orgullo su 25.º aniversario abordando las desigualdades en salud e impulsando cambios positivos en las comunidades de Chicago y Estados Unidos. Desde su fundación en el año 2000, SUHI ha impulsado constantemente su misión de garantizar que todas las personas tengan la oportunidad de prosperar en salud. Reconocido como uno de los principales centros de investigación no académica sobre equidad en salud del país, SUHI se dedica a eliminar las barreras que afectan de forma desproporcionada a las comunidades de color. "Durante los últimos 25 años, SUHI ha mantenido un firme compromiso con el avance de la equidad



en salud, en colaboración con las comunidades más afectadas por las disparidades en salud", afirmó la Dra. Ngozi Ezike, presidenta y directora ejecutiva de Sinai Chicago. Una de sus soluciones comunitarias es el modelo de Trabajadores de Salud Comunitarios (TSC) de SUHI, que ha logrado mejoras sustanciales en la salud en diversas áreas. Por ejemplo, las intervenciones de SUHI dirigidas por los TSC para el asma lograron reducciones del 70 % al 80 % en las visitas a urgencias y hospitalizaciones relacionadas con el asma; las intervenciones para la diabetes han

generado un aumento en el porcentaje de participantes con diabetes controlada y una disminución significativa de los niveles de hemoglobina A1C. Además, los TSC de SUHI han atendido a más de 13 000 pacientes en el hospital y después del alta, identificando las necesidades de más de 5000 personas en materia de vivienda, seguridad alimentaria y financiera, transporte, etc., y conectando a las personas con recursos importantes para satisfacer dichas necesidades. Para obtener más información sobre SUHI, visite www.suhichicago.org

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Equal Hope Holds Successful 3rd Annual “Teal Talk” Health & Resource Fair



Chicagoans attended Equal Hope's 3rd Annual "Teal Talk" Health & Resource Fair recently at the Humboldt Park Field House, held in honor

of National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month in January. Teal is the color representing cervical cancer. Chicago Alderperson Jessie Fuentes (26th Ward) attended and delivered remarks. She thanked Dr. Lee for all that she and the university does in cervical cancer detection and treatment and praised Equal Hope for its grassroots efforts to educate and provide assistance to women in marginalized communities. The Health & Resource Fair also included 25 vendors who offered a variety of information on

healthcare services, job opportunities, recidivism, and housing. All of these impact a cervical cancer patient and their family members. For more

information about cervical cancer (and breast cancer), available resources and clinic referrals, visit www.EqualHope.org. **Photo Credit: Equal Hope**



Tips to Help you Spring Forward

While your phone may automatically update for daylight saving time, our bodies aren't always as quick to adapt. Here are a few tips to help you spring forward into daylight saving time on Sunday, March 9th.

Update your clocks in advance

While most smartphones and computers update the time automatically, there are a number of clocks that you'll need to change manually. Consider updating the clocks around your home, including those on your microwave, oven and car, before you go to bed on Saturday. In the morning, you'll be relieved to know all of your clocks have the correct time.

Refresh your nighttime routine

As the semester gets busier, our sleep can suffer and the time change can bring additional sleep challenges. This is a great time to re-assess your sleep needs and habits and practice a little extra self-care around your sleep. Try to incorporate relaxing activities into a nightly routine that you can enjoy every night before bed. This can help signal to your brain that it's time to start winding down for the day. For instance, you can take a shower or bath, sip on a cup of non-caffeinated tea, read a book (not on a screen) or listen to a meditation. These types of activities will help your mind and body settle down for a good night's sleep.

Stick to a consistent sleep schedule

It can be tempting to stay up

late or change your routine now that you have one less hour in the day. However, disruptions to sleep can affect our mood, energy levels, concentration and overall health. The closer you stick to your normal routine of getting between seven and nine hours of sleep each night, the faster your body will adjust to the time change.

Avoid the snooze button

Did you know that hitting the snooze button in the mornings can actually hinder your ability to wake up? Try to break the habit by setting an alarm that's 10 minutes later than you normally would and place your phone or alarm clock out of reach. This will force you to get out of bed, which can help you jumpstart your day.

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Butcher and The Burger Opens in O'Hare International Airport's Terminal 5



The Chicago Department of Aviation (CDA) held a ribbon-cutting to celebrate the opening of Butcher & the Burger in O'Hare International Airport's Terminal 5. "I'm proud to welcome another Chicago institution to our

world-class concessions program in O'Hare's modernized Terminal 5," CDA Commissioner Jamie L. Rhee said. "By bringing in diverse local businesses to the airports, we are investing in Chicago's communities while offering

travelers from all over the world a taste of what our city has to offer." Butcher & the Burger's original Lincoln Park location – part old-fashioned butcher shop and part fast-casual burger joint – has been a Chicago favorite since

2011. "For more than a decade, our BYO burger spot at Armitage and Kenmore has been a go-to for Chicagoans craving comfort food staples," said Joseph Arnold, managing partner of Butcher & The Burger. "Now, we're thrilled to bring our signature flavors to one of the world's busiest airports, offering travelers a true taste of the Windy City." Butcher & the Burger's airport location has some of its most popular items for breakfast, lunch and dinner on the menu in the newly-expanded Terminal 5. Diners can customize their prime beef, turkey

or vegan lentil burgers with a wide array of fresh toppings, or enjoy grilled chicken sandwiches, salads and more. The restaurant also offers a selection of hand-crafted cocktails,

spirits, wine and beer. Open daily from 5:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Butcher & the Burger is located near Gate M26 in Terminal 5.

Photo Credit: Chicago Department of Aviation



Illinois DCFS to Provide Free Webinar about the DCFS Hiring Process



Job recruiters from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (Illinois DCFS) are hosting a free webinar designed to guide job seekers through the DCFS application process. Attendees will learn about available positions at Illinois DCFS, including opportunities for bilingual (English and

Spanish) professionals. Although most roles require a bachelor's or master's degree, entry-level positions exist for those with a high school diploma. Illinois DCFS offers mission-driven career opportunities and is recruiting child protection specialists, child welfare specialists and day care licensing representatives.

Other in-demand positions include office associates, regional and senior counsel, public service administrators, child development aides and social service aides. The webinar will take place on March 6th, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. You can sign up by visiting www.dcf.illinois.gov.

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