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Mystery Solved

by Edmund Lawler



Chuck Sittig (from left), Nick Bogert and Kim Weber stand beneath the portrait of E.K. Warren in the front room of the historic building. Photo Edmund Lawler

The mysterious, nearly century-old Art Deco building that has stood watch over the vibrant main street in Three Oaks, Mich., is about to be demystified.

If all goes well with an estimated \$75,000 restoration, visitors finally will be able to step inside the so-called “Mystery Building” by May 2027, according to Nick Bogert, The Region of Three Oaks Museum (TROTOM) board vice president.

Unoccupied since 1981, the single-story brick-and-concrete building at 7 S. Elm St. has long intrigued residents and visitors. Could it be a safe house? A secret laboratory? A bank? It does have a safe with thick, reinforced steel walls to withstand fire and burglars, and it has a walk-in vault in the basement. But, it was never a bank.

Visitors will learn about the story of E.K. Warren (1847-1919), founder of The Warren Featherbone Co., and his descendants who played a central role in developing Three Oaks. The building will become sort of a TROTOM satellite campus dedicated to the memory of Josephine Warren Hoffman, E.K. Warren’s granddaughter who died in 1983.

Last summer, James Barkhurst, current Warren Oil & Gas Co. president, donated the building to TROTOM. The company essentially vacated the building in 1981 after the death of longtime secretary-treasurer William Kramer. He was its only member who worked regularly in the building. A caretaker maintained it over the years.

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Mystery Solved

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The Warrens, of course, are best known, for The Warren Featherbone Co.

that made featherbones, derived from turkey quills. They were primarily used as stay material for women’s corsets. Founded in 1883, the company ran its factories in Three Oaks until 1956, when it relocated to Gainesville, Fla. By then, it was making children’s clothing. The company closed in 2005.

The Warrens were less well-known for their ownership of vast ranch and farm lands in the southwestern United States and in Mexico. Known as E.K. Warren & Son, the organization in the early 20th century began buying land. It also bought land and raised cattle in Southwest Michigan.

E.K. Warren & Son was a prosperous operation. Bogert says it is believed the Warrens were the fifth-largest owners of land in the United States, with more than one million acres in their portfolio.

Charles, E.K.’s son and corporate successor, wasn’t necessarily eager to fill his father’s shoes as the head of Featherbone.

“Charles didn’t care for the corporate life,” says Bogert, a local historian and former TV journalist in Miami and Chicago. “What he really wanted to do was to be a cowboy out west. He actually ditched his role at Featherbone for a while and went to work on a ranch in Texas.”

But Charles returned and took the reins of the company after his father’s death.

“The Warrens later sold off the ranch and farmlands, but they retained the mineral rights to the land,” Bogert says. “E.K. Warren & Son, which was



A bust of E.K. Warren stands just north of the site. Photo by Edmund Lawler.

basically managing farmland and ranches, morphed into the Warren Oil and Gas Co. in the mid-1950s.”

Its operation continues to this day.

After his father’s death in 1932, Charles Warren Jr. became president of the oil and gas company that received royalty checks from energy companies drilling on the lands. Kramer remained with the reorganized and newly named company.

“This place was built like a brick outhouse because of the amount of cash that was kept inside,” says Kim Weber, a TROTOM board member serving on a task force to oversee the restoration proj-



Another artifact is a stock certificate for the Warren Oil and Gas Company. Photo Edmund Lawler

ect. "They had an alarm system and bars on the windows. The back door was made of steel, a quarter-inch thick."

Charles Warren Sr. did not live to see the completion of the building at 7 S. Elm St. It was finished in 1933, a year after Charles Sr.'s death. It was designed by Stanley Fairclough, a Chicago architect who designed several Tudor-style homes and businesses in Berrien County. The building was erected only to house E.K. Warren & Son. The Featherbone Co. maintained a separate headquarters farther north on Elm Street.

One of the best things about the newly acquired building is its location, says Chuck Sittig, TROTOM board member and former Three Oaks Township supervisor.

"We are right on the so-called Main Street now," he said. "It will help give the main museum much higher visibility."

TROTOM is a couple of blocks west of Elm Street.

"Our museum is kind of off the beaten path" he added, "but here, we can hook people and bring them in."

Weber says the newly acquired building also can be a possible staging area for historic walking tours of Three Oaks, which attracts tourists

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The "Mystery Building" in Three Oaks is scheduled to open to the public in May 2027. Museum board members Nick Bogert (from left), Kim Weber and Chuck Sittig are leading the restoration of the historic site at 7 S. Elm St. Photo Edmund Lawler.

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Mystery Solved

Continued from Page 3

year round. The board is still discussing exterior signage and its wording for the new building, Bogert says.

There is much to be done in the next 16 months, Bogert says. He was reassured about the project after the Three Oaks building inspector recently looked it over, declaring it has “good bones.”

“We are about to take everything off the walls and remove all the artifacts,” Bogert says.

In the main room of the historic building, he pointed to the framed photos of Warren family members and some of their properties.

“This was hanging here when we took possession,” he said. “But we don’t want it here when they are doing construction.”

Photos and other artifacts will move to TROTOM for storage during construction. Antique furniture, including Kramer’s rolltop desk, also will be stored during construction.

Slated for permanent removal is the faded, 1970s-era, wall-to-wall carpeting, as well as a bank of fluorescent lights that don’t fit the Art Deco motif. Bogert says the museum plans to prowl architectural salvage yards and tap other resources to find lighting appropriate for a building completed in 1933.

The restoration to-do list includes:

- Painting interior walls.
- Taking down an old maple tree that threatens to fall on the building.
- Planting new trees on the property.
- Removing faded draperies.
- Restoring hardwood floors.
- Purchasing cabinets and shelving for display of artifacts.
- Tuckpointing deteriorated bricks.

Two of the most expensive projects are making the building accessible to guests with disabilities and replacing the outdated electrical box and cloth-covered wiring.



The rolltop desk of E.K. Warren & Son executive William Kramer is among the artifacts in the building. Photo Edmund Lawler.



A safe that once guarded assets of E.K. Warren & Son. The bags of cash are only make-believe. Photo Edmund Lawler.

Fortunately, major grants will defray the cost of those big-ticket items. Berrien Community Foundation recently provided an \$11,000 grant to offset the cost of installing a lift for guests with disabilities, one compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Pokagon Fund pledged \$10,000 to upgrade the electrical infrastructure, which includes replacing the electrical panel and cloth-covered wiring, as well as grounding all electrical outlets.

Supplementing the major grants is TROTOM’s ongoing capital campaign, which so far has raised \$11,400 from its members. Additional donations, including a sizable pledge from an anonymous contributor, and possibly drawing on some of TROTOM’s reserves are expected to drive the campaign toward its \$75,000 goal.

TROTOM is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Donations are tax-deductible. Prospective donors are encouraged to visit TROTOM’s website, www.RegionofThreeOaksMuseum.com, for more details.

In the meantime, TROTOM is gearing up for the restoration project. And it’s developing plans to staff the “Mystery Building” thanks to some of the museum’s 55 volunteers.

He anticipates the historic building will have a parallel schedule with the main Three Oaks museum at 5 Featherbone Ave. Hours are noon-5 p.m. EST Friday-Sunday starting the last weekend in May through the last weekend in October.

If all goes according to plan, the building will open its long-sealed doors to the public on the last weekend in May 2027.

Mystery solved.



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“Wait Until Dark” Next Production at Footlight Theatre

Local actor Tom Olson makes his directorial debut with the thriller “Wait Until Dark,” which runs Feb. 5-8 and 12-15 at Footlight Theatre, 1705 Franklin St.

In the play, a sinister con man and two ex-convicts trace a mysterious doll to the apartment of Sam Hendrix and his blind wife, Susy. A strange woman persuaded Sam to transport the doll across the Canadian border, not knowing several grams of heroin are inside. When the woman is murdered, the three crooks persuade Susy to believe police have implicated Sam in the murder, and the doll is evidence.

The cast features Mahaffa Thompson as Susy, Anabel Artis as Gloria, Josh Thompson as Sam, Larry Piotrowski as Roat, Rick Henderson as Mike, Ian Horn as Carlino, Lisa von Werder as Lisa and Police Officer 2, and T.J. Aubuchon as Drug Dealer and “Police Officer 1.” The crew includes assistant direc-

Auditions

Auditions for “The Legend of Georgia McBride,” directed by Bobbi Ann Lauritsen, are at 6 p.m. Sunday-Monday, Feb. 8-9, at Footlight Theatre, 1705 Franklin St. Call (219) 874-4035 or visit www.footlightplayers.org for details.



Mahaffa Thompson and Larry Piotrowski star in “Wait Until Dark.”

tor Cindy Reyes and producer Bobbi Ann Lauritsen. Tickets are \$17 for adults or \$12 for children 12 and younger Friday-Sunday, and \$12 on Thursdays. Thursday and Friday shows are at 7 p.m., with Saturday-Sunday shows at 2 p.m. Reservations are available at www.footlightplayers.org



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A (Red!) Devil of a Gift

by Betsy Kohn



One thing the Graduates of Isaac C. Elston High School Education Support Fund has supported is the Michigan City High School robotics team.

When Jim Kniola attended his 50th class reunion in 2018, he was struck by how truly special the Elston High School Class of 1968 was. After all these years, his former classmates were still filled with school spirit and a desire to give back to the community.

Following the reunion, Kniola toyed with the idea of working with class members to establish a scholarship. But when he contacted Unity Foundation of LaPorte County about the possibility, they encouraged him to think more broadly.

Why not create an education support fund for Michigan City Area Schools that could have a more far-reaching impact? Donations could benefit a variety of projects by providing materials, funding special programs and supporting student needs for things outside of the school's budget.

Kniola immediately reached out to fellow Class of '68 graduates Tom Cipares and Denise Libke. A past president of General Insurance Services (now Highstreet Insurance & Financial Services), Cipares had extensive contacts across the city, while Libke over

the decades had organized all of the class reunions.

"They loved the idea," Kniola says. "We knew this could be a wonderful opportunity for our class to give back."

The trio started by approaching a small group of 1968 alums, hoping to persuade them to sign on as founding donors. The initial effort raised \$5,425, and the Graduates of Isaac C. Elston High School Education Support Fund was born in October 2018.

"We are so grateful to those founders," Kniola says. "Without them, the fund would have never taken flight. And now, we ask all Elston reunion organizers to include our fund in their planning."

The Elston Class of 1969 was the next to come through, presenting a "big check" in the amount of \$1,969 after its 50th celebration.

Fundraising stalled during the pandemic years. When the dust settled, more donations from individuals and classes poured in, including a \$4,000 check from the Class of 1974 to mark its 50th.

(Thanks to a matching challenge opportunity



through Unity, that gift was doubled.)

To date, the fund has granted close to \$30,000 for programs, materials, equipment and supplies not included in the schools' annual budget. It has pitched in to assist the high school's robotics team with expenses related to its award-winning EV Go Kart. It has supported teachers attending a summer technology conference, an elementary school's parent-involvement club for dads, a summer STEAM camp, an arts-education residency, leadership training for sixth-graders and an elementary sports program. It's even provided personal hygiene items to stock a "care closet" organized by the Open Door Adolescent Health Center for students in need.

"We are so pleased that our little fund has been able to do so much good in only seven years since its founding," Kniola says. "Now, we are looking for ways to expand our donor base."

Kniola emphasizes that the Elston Fund is not solely for former classes celebrating reunions. Any groups or individuals are welcome to contribute, at any amount.

(Visit <https://shorturl.at/THlkL> to donate.)

"I'm hoping that someday in the future when all of us are gone," Kniola says, "a Michigan City teacher and class will receive funding for a worthwhile educational program and remember the enthusiastic generosity of Michigan City Elston High School graduates."

Now that's a legacy!



Pictured are (from left) Jim Kniola, Denise Libke and Tom Cipares.

Other Schools Give Back

Rogers High School graduates also have made large donations to support Michigan City High School.

In 2024, the Rogers Class of 1974 donated \$5,000 directly to the high school to support students with special needs and a teacher supply fund. Following their post-pandemic multi-class reunion, the classes of 1973-1977 also made a donation of \$5,122 to support MCHS.

And in addition to the Elston Fund, Unity Foundation of LaPorte County manages a number of funds that support grants for Michigan City Area Schools, LaPorte High School, Marquette High School, La Lumiere School and many others. Visit <http://ufc.net/funds> for more details.

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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:

- **Adult Crafting — Handcraft and Create from 5:30-7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29.** Make a micro-wavable heating pad, simmer pot and paper flowers. Participants may create all three crafts. All supplies are provided.
- **Needle Arts Club from 5:30-7 p.m. Thursdays.** Join fellow artists to stitch needle art. A variety of crafts are included. All skill levels and ages are welcome, as is the sharing of skills.
- **Great Decisions, "The Third Nuclear Age," from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 30.** The foreign-policy discussion program continues. Participants read the "Great Decisions Briefing Book," watch the videos at the library, then discuss with community members. Call (219) 873-3049 to register or for more details.
- **Genealogy Help with Pat Harris from 1-4 p.m. Tuesdays.** Harris can offer tips and advice on how to research a family tree or find genealogical records.
- **Creative Tech Activities (ages 6-17) from 3:30-5 p.m. Tuesdays.** 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.
- **Jigsaw Puzzle Swap at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 3.** Take gently-used puzzles to swap for new ones. Puzzles must be in good condition, in the original boxes/containers and with all the pieces. A limited number of free puzzles will be available after 6 p.m. to take home without exchanging.
- **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 (ages 13-17) from 4-6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4.** Supplies and characters are provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Email Miss Dana at dwolf@mclib.org for details.
- **January scavenger hunt.** Find all the hidden Sesame Street characters and win a prize.
- **Winter Reading Challenge for Adults through Feb. 28.** Pick up a Winter Reading bookmark at the reference desk. Fill in a circle for every 20 minutes of reading or listening to a book. Once filling all the circles, return the bookmark to the reference desk to pick a prize and receive an entry in a drawing. One reader may receive a \$50 Barnes & Noble gift card. The limit is five entries per person. The last day to enter is Saturday, Feb. 28.
- **Art Exhibition Wall.** Tim Lace's solo exhibit runs through March 6. Lace ventured to New Orleans, capturing men and women who bead the suits in which they parade twice each year: Mardi Gras Day and Super Sunday. The brightly colored suits of beads and feathers celebrate the connections between African and Native American tradition.
- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) helpers needed.** The requested amount of time is one day a week during tax season (February-April). The IRS provides some training, and volunteers must pass the VITA test through the intermediate level. 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.
- **Used Christmas card collection.** Youth Services will accept used holiday or Christmas cards for future projects.

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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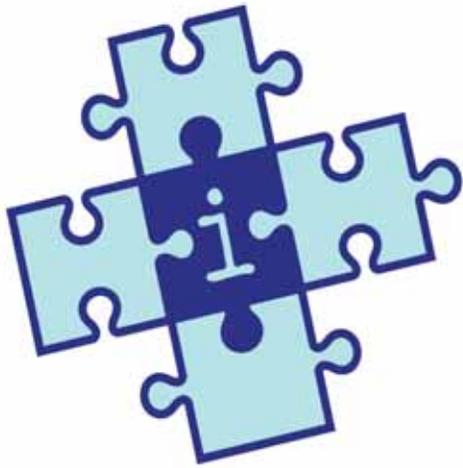
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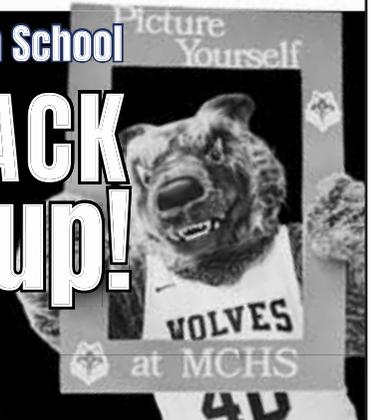
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LaPorte County Public Library

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:

- **Sourdough Starter from Scratch from 5-6 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29, at the main library Meeting Room B.** Explore the process of making the starter and share tips for nurturing it over time. Take a jar with a lid.
- **Stories & More from 10-10:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 30, at the main library.** The storytime includes rhymes, music and activities.
- **Choose Your Own Storytime from 4-4:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 2, at the main library Multipurpose Room.** Structured around the Every Child Ready to Read curriculum, children help choose the books read during the program.
- **Tween Book Club (ages 10-13) from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 3, in the main library Multipurpose Room.** The focus is Stuart Gibbs' [Spy School Goes North](#). Copies are available at the youth desk.
- **Creative Kids — Lunar New Year from 4-5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4, at the main library Multipurpose Room.** Make a paper-chain dragon, learn about the Chinese zodiac and its cultural significance, and explore how the holiday is celebrated around the world.
- **All Things True Crime Book Club from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4, at the main library Meeting Room A.** The focus is Áine Cain and Kevin Greenlee's [Shadow of the Bridge: The Delphi Murders and the Dark Side of the American Heartland](#).

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.

Dunes Summer Theatre Auditions

Dunes Summer Theatre will hold auditions in Michigan City and Chicago for its 75th anniversary season.

The in-person auditions are open to non-equity actors of all ethnic backgrounds, gender identifications and body types. Walk-ins are accepted, but not guaranteed

The Chicago auditions are from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 7-8, at City Lit Theatre Co., 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago.

The Michigan City audition is from noon-5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Feb. 14-15, at The Holdcraft Performing Arts Center, 1200 Spring St.

Fill out the audition form at <https://shorturl.at/zB74J>, including if doing a virtual audition.

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New Buffalo Township Library

- **Campus for Creative Aging: Memory Café.** The program is from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 3.
- **Adult Literacy Class.** The program is from 5:30-6:45 p.m. Thursdays in February.

Weekly programs

- Story Time at 10 a.m. Mondays and 4 p.m. Thursdays.
- Read to a Dog Sessions for all ages from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Tuesday and 4-4:45 p.m. Wednesday.
- Pajama Story Time at 6 p.m. Tuesdays.
- Craft Time from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Wednesdays while supplies last.
- Teen Maker Space from 4-6 p.m. Thursdays.
- Chess Club from 4-6 p.m. Thursdays.
- Spanish Story Time at 10 a.m. Fridays.
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- Lego Club from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Fridays and 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Saturdays.

All times are Eastern. New Buffalo Township Library is located at 33 N. Thompson St. Visit www.newbuffalotownshiplibrary.org or call (269) 469-2933 for more details.

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Franciscan Health is offering the free six-week Produce Prescription Program, aimed at chronic disease management, from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Tuesdays at the Franciscan Health Michigan City Legacy Campus, 301 W. Homer St.

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All registrations/questions go through the Red Mill County Park Administrative Office, 0185 S. Holmesville Road, LaPorte. Call (219) 325-8315 or visit www.laportecountyparks.org for more details.

Nature's Tiny Tots

Designed for parents and grandparents, explore nature with toddlers and preschoolers. Enjoy music, dancing, storytelling and, weather permitting, hiking.

The free program is from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Feb. 3 and 24, at Luhr County Park, 3178 S. County Road 150 West, LaPorte.

Valentine's Glow-in-the-Dark Night Hike

The family program is from 5-7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 6, at Red Mill County Park.

Find glowing hearts and valentines on the trails using the park's black lights, then head inside to play games, dance to music and sample hot cocoa and cookies.

Wandering Watercolors

The free program is from 10 a.m.-noon Tuesday, Feb. 17, at Luhr County Park.

Take a short walk around the park, then paint a nature journal-style watercolor art. All supplies are provided. Call (219) 325-8315 to register.

A Brush with Madness

The all-ages program is from 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18, at Luhr County Park.

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“The Rip” Toys With You Twist by Twist

by Andrew Tallackson



Matt Damon (left) and Ben Affleck star as police officers investigating a dangerous tip in “The Rip.”

Joe Carnahan makes “guy movies.” Cops, crooks, fists — that’s his first love. Plots born out of the B-movie wasteland, but with A-list actors. Efforts like “Narc,” “Smokin’ Aces,” “The A Team,” “The Grey” and my favorite, 2021’s “Boss Level,” a bonkers time-loop gem in which Frank Grillo repeatedly tries to save his wife and son.

“The Rip,” which just debuted on Netflix, is a fun guy movie. The story dips into a long-dry well of crime plots, but it’s briskly told and acted by pros, the twists piling up one after the other.

The title is police slang for officers who take large amounts of illegal items for their own reward, usually drugs or cash.

Carnahan introduces a Miami police unit under investigation for possibly killing its own captain, an act we witness in the opening scene, the killers disguised in black. Matt Damon and Ben Affleck play the crew’s senior members, Dane Dumars and J.D. Byrne, respectively. They are joined by “Walking Dead” alum Steve Yeun, freshly minted Golden Globe winner Teyana Taylor (“One Battle After Another”) and Catalina Sandino Moreno (“Maria Full of Grace”) as detectives.

After receiving an apparent Crime Stoppers tip, the group heads out to a home in Hialeah, where they encounter a young woman (Sasha Callie, “The Flash”) who says her deceased grandmother owned the house. She fails to mention, at first, that there’s

★ ★ ★^{1/2}

“The Rip”

Running time: 112 minutes. Netflix. Rated R for violence and pervasive language.

more than \$20 million stashed in the attic walls.

Is it cartel money? Was the Crime Stoppers tip entrapment by an unknown enemy? That is the puzzle. Carnahan is not exactly rewriting the cop genre playbook here, but he effectively amps up the suspicion, hurling us in so many directions that by the film’s midpoint, we don’t know what to believe. Our loyalties shift practically every five minutes, and the effect is dizzying. It gets your pulse racing, more so as we realize the quiet cul-de-sac where all this plays out may not be that quiet. Watchful eyes are everywhere.

“The Rip” becomes less about the money and more about adults under fire from increasing paranoia, all while wrestling with staying true to their ideals as the law.

Do the twists pay off? Are they based in a logic where it all makes sense by the end? I’d have to see “The Rip” again for that verdict, but as a breathless, skittish roller-coaster ride, it is quite satisfying how it all plays out. I wish the look of the film wasn’t so murky, though. Cinematographer Juan Miguel Azpiroz gives the Hialeah cul-de-sac a dark, muddy



Teyana Taylor (right) and Catalina Sandino Moreno are equally compelling as fellow police officers.

look where, at times, it's tough to make out what is happening.

But Damon and Affleck, back together after 2023's unjustly overlooked Air Jordan dramedy "Air," breathe life into the chaos. As actors, these two sometimes force their performances (Damon in "Oppenheimer," Affleck in "Daredevil"), but here, they flirt with corruption so effectively, we never quite guess if they've sold their souls or have something else up their sleeves. The level of moral uncertainty is the adrenaline rush at the heart of this mystery.

If "The Rip" feels stale as first, by the end, it's sent us on a wild race through one long night. It is one of Carnahan's best, his reign as "guy movie" champ fully intact.

Contact me at atallackson@gmail.com

Knights of Columbus Ball

Knights of Columbus Council 14366 will host its first "A Winter Knight's Ball" from 6-11 p.m. EST Saturday, Feb. 7, at New Buffalo Yacht Club, 500 W. Water St.

The black-tie optional event includes dinner, a wine tasting, live music and a live auction. It is limited to the first 90 people at \$100 per person.

Register and pay by credit card at <https://tinyurl.com/mupb95dp>, or send a check to KofC Council 14366, P.O. Box 293, New Buffalo, MI 49117. Put "Winter Ball" in the memo line.

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A Look Back: My Favorite Films of 2025

by Andrew Tallackson

Slim pickings last year.

Good movies, yes. That “Hamnet” ending: *wow*, I cried hard, but before then...a snail’s pace. And I may as well come clean over a few errors in judgment. Like “Avatar: Fire and Ash,” which is not a 3 ½ star movie, but more 3 because of that lazy, redundant ending. “One Battle After Another,” on the other hand, should have earned 3 ½ stars, not 3, because it says a lot about today’s political and social unrest. Chalk those goofs up to writing reviews too soon after leaving the theater. Not enough time for the films to live rent-free in my brain for an hour or so afterward.

A truly great film, though, is easy to spot. Midway through, you have a sense of experiencing greatness. Something people will still discuss years from now.

Readers may find this list questionable. Many entries are of the love-‘em-or-hate-‘em variety. But hey, art is subjective, right? What touches a nerve in one person may repel another.

So, with no shame or reluctance, here are my picks for my favorite films of 2025

1. “Sinners”

At about the one-hour mark of “Sinners,” writer-director Ryan Coogler takes us somewhere unexpected. The setting is a 1932 Mississippi juke joint. In one sweeping take, time becomes fluid. Past, present and future are bridged by music, blues in particular. That’s when I knew. This was bold. Remarkable. Marketed as a “vampire” movie, “Sinners” is more than that. It celebrates blues as an expression of self. It also offers a stinging attack on how America treats people of color. Coogler spins his tale with the best money can buy: the cast, costumes, music, production design — all of it. The result is a joyous, painful, illuminating experience that will stand the test of time.

2. “Sentimental Value”

Norway’s Joachim Trier has been at it for years, but it’s only been the past five that I discovered him, first with 2021’s “The Worst Person in the World” and now “Sentimental Value,” which just won Stellan Skarsgård a well-deserved Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actor. In tracing a father’s rocky reconnect with his daughters, Trier explores how families bury years of hurt, only to discover they can run from the past no longer. Renate Reinsve and Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas play the daughters, and they create something rare: two women we believe



“Sinners” tops my list for my favorite film of 2025.

are sisters because of the unspoken connection between them. They are each other’s rock, and by the end, we are moved by the way forgiveness begins not with huge leaps, but baby steps. We see that between father and daughter, who say nothing, but their looks, their body language, suggest and openness to healing.

3. “Train Dreams”

I get it, why audiences felt they’d witnessed a whole lot of nothing. Director Clint Bentley designed his film not as a movie to watch, but feel. He introduces a logger (Joel Edgerton) in the early 20th century: nothing extraordinary about him. But that’s the point. So many lives in this world, each experiencing joy and heartache. Here, that journey is framed in the context of the modern world’s inevitable approach. There are moments when you’re almost afraid to breathe for fear of interrupting the fragile beauty; others, your heart sags heavy amid agonizing loss. Bentley establishes himself as a talent to watch.

4. “A House of Dynamite”

Boy, did people hate the ending of Kathryn Bigelow’s ticking-clock doomsday thriller...and I mean *hated it*. Bigelow, the Oscar-winner for 2009’s “The Hurt Locker,” introduces a world where the U.S. has 16 minutes to stop nukes headed directly to Chicago. We get three different perspectives before the same outcome, told by individuals feverishly struggling to save humanity. Viewers who prefer succinct endings were infuriated by the ambiguous close. That was the point, though. When the unthinkable becomes inevitable, the who and why become irrelevant. Preserving the human race becomes the endgame. Bigelow’s tale is so expertly crafted, you watch it with your stomach tied in knots, desperate to be free of its grip...as it should be.

5. “The Lost Bus”

A real-life disaster tale told with stark realism and terrifying visual effects. Paul Greengrass (“United 93”), master of the unflinching docudrama,

Next Week

Look for the official ballot in this year’s “Beat the Editor” Oscar contest.

follows a school bus driver (Matthew McConaughey) and teacher (America Ferrera) who attempt to usher 22 students to safety during the 2018 California wildfires. Greengrass stages the journey — complete with actual people who were there at the time — like a nightmare from which you cannot awake. With every exit blocked by traffic and debris, “The Lost Bus” becomes a feverish race toward survival. The result is an anxious, squeamish ride that celebrates bravery amid the impossible.

6. “Black Bag”

Never underestimate Steven Soderbergh (“Erin Brockovich,” “Traffic”). He can come out of nowhere with a modest work that puts studio efforts to shame. Here, working with an insanely tight script by David Koepp (“Jurassic Park”), he created the year’s smartest thriller no one saw. Why? That’s a mystery. Cate Blanchett and Michael Fassbender are spouses and spies who may or may not be traitors. Can husband and wife trust each other? The movie throws out every curveball under the sun, all leading to the year’s most satisfying payoff. Sharp, witty and suspenseful, “Black Bag” deserves a healthy afterlife through streaming.

7. “The Life of Chuck”/ “The Long Walk”

A lot of Stephen King in 2025 (“The Monkey,” “The Running Man,” MGM+’s “The Institute” were the other entries), but only “The Life of Chuck” and “The Long Walk” emerged with brilliance. “The Life of Chuck” warrants a second viewing to appreciate all the Easter eggs that reveal what’s really happening. Beautiful, profound and exceptionally moving, it is an ode to celebrating life even if knowing the outcome beforehand. Thought unfilmable, “The Long Walk” took 45 years to bring to the screen, but director Francis Lawrence (“I Am Legend”) created the year’s most brutal and emotional experience. Teens in a dystopian 1970s must walk hundreds of miles without faltering or be shot and killed. Some of the year’s best performances are contained here.

8. “Last Breath”

What happened to this one? The tense, superbly

Continued on Page 20

Continued From Page 19

acted docudrama got dumped in theaters in February with zero fanfare and disappeared before streaming saved it. It follows the 2012 near-disaster where three gas-line divers near Scotland saw one member of their crew stranded below the surface. Like “Apollo 13,” the movie is a tribute to feral ingenuity amid potential tragedy. How everyone pulls off the rescue makes for one moving, exhilarating experience. Woody Harrelson does more celebratory work no one got to see. As the crew’s senior diver, he creates a man where “giving up” is not part of his vocabulary.

9. “The Penguin Lessons”

The kind of experience that sneaks up on you. It feels like one movie, then emerges as one far more significant. In a performance of beautifully controlled snark, Steve Coogan stars in the movie inspired by fact about a boys prep-school teacher in 1970s Argentina who adopts a penguin trapped in an oil spill. You brace for Disney slapstick; instead, the scenario offers unexpected insight into a time of deep social and political unrest. Try not to cry during the final scene. I dare you.

10. “Weapons”

The year’s twistiest surprise...and with a fry-your-nerves climax. Seventeen third-graders flee



“The Penguin Lessons.”

their homes late one night, not to be found, their teacher the suspect one month later. We experience this scenario from different angles — Josh Brolin again delivers the goods as an outraged father — but it is Amy Madigan who walks off with the entire picture. She doesn’t show up until the end, but she scares the crap out of you the first time you see her. What’s her story? That is the payoff to a most unusual horror film that requires patience, but it all comes together with frightening skill.

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Winslet Proves Herself Behind the Camera With Affecting “Goodbye June”

by Andrew Tallackson



One mess of a family on its way to visit a dying loved one in “Goodbye June.”

Movies based around someone slowly dying make me itch. Unless illuminating something deeper, like, say, “Terms of Endearment,” they exist solely to wring every tear imaginable out of a painful subject. It is manipulation at its most shameless.

“Goodbye June,” a family affair for Oscar-winner Kate Winslet — her son, Joe Anders, wrote it, she not only stars, but makes her directorial debut — has the bone structure of a Christmas weepy, but it ends up being cathartic, really, finding the right mix of laughs and tears.

It speaks to Winslet’s clout, too, that she attracted some of Britain’s best. The cast’s greatest achievement, guided by Anders’ wise script, is that they create characters I suspect many people will recognize in themselves.

The new Netflix film opens with the kind of dreaded phone call no one wants: the title matriarch, June (Oscar-winner Helen Mirren), is back in the hospital, the cancer to where any hopeful treatment is off the books. The priority is making her comfortable until the inevitable, and in this case, she prefers the safety of her hospital room...not home.

Once her family arrives at the hospital, you can see why. Classic dysfunction. The oldest daughter, Helen, is a New Age hippie played by Oscar-nomi-

★ ★ ★^{1/2}

“Goodbye June”

Running time: 114 minutes. Netflix.

Rated R for language.

nee Toni Collette...as only she can play it. Youngest son Connor (Johnny Flynn) still lives at home, lost for what to do next with his life. Daughter Molly (“To Leslie” Oscar-nominee Andrea Riseborough) is exhausted by her own kids and husband. She also harbors resentment toward her older sister Julia (Winslet), the most successful of the lot, but with a husband whose job sees him rarely at home.

Mirren’s absolutely wonderful performance finds humor in the way June has a front-row seat to her own family drama. And it is here that “Goodbye June” is most insightful in terms of how family members choose to cope. They retreat into their own miseries. The dad (Timothy Spall) behaves as if he’s still at home, tuning everyone out by watching sports on TV. Molly intentionally schedules family visits so she and Julia are not present at the same time. Connor mourns in his own way.

Anders’ screenplay carefully charts how pending loss ultimately saves this family. What prevents



Helen Mirren grounds the film in humor and heartache.

scenes from becoming maudlin is Mirren. She doesn't treat June as a martyr. And Winslet, as director, doesn't hold back on cancer's cruel hold over June. There are scenes where June lies awake at night, her eyes red with tears. But there are other scenes when June simply wants peace in her family, and the moment when she realizes reconciliation is in the air, well, the look of contented joy on Mirren's face is incredibly moving.

The surprise in "Goodbye June" is the relatively unknown Fisayo Akinade as Nurse Angeli in a performance of enormous compassion and insight. He's experienced his own private loss, so his goal is to be the calm amid the brewing storm. Angeli, in a way, becomes an extended family member: the balance between emotion and strength.

Winslet, as director, could have pushed certain scenes, milked them for all their worth, but she restrains herself. There are quiet conversations, moments of truth between family members, where the exchanges, alone, are enough to touch us.

And we are touched by the end. The look of recognition on Winslet's face, in particular, will stay with me for some time. Ultimately, her film isn't about death, but about family and its ability to rise to the occasion when death presents itself.

I loved this movie.

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African American Legacy Award

March 15 is the deadline to submit nominations for The History Museum’s 2026 African American Legacy Award.

An individual or organization may nominate an individual by completing an application at www.historymuseumSB.org or by downloading the application and mailing it to: African American Legacy Award Committee, The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend, IN 46601. The award presentation is in June at The History Museum’s annual Juneteenth event.

The award recognizes individuals who have been instrumental in collecting, preserving and disseminating black history in the St. Joseph River Valley, either working directly with the museum or within the black community.

To be eligible, an individual must:

- Be, or have been, a resident for at least 10 years of the St. Joseph River Valley, which includes in Indiana the counties of LaPorte, St. Joseph, Elkhart, LaGrange, Stark, Marshall, Kosciusko, Pulaski and Fulton, and the counties of Berrien, Cass and St. Joseph in Michigan.
- Not be a previous recipient.
- Have demonstrated leadership and creativity in promoting black history.
- Have increased public understanding of and appreciation for black heritage.
- Have had significant impact on the local community promoting black history.
- Have recognized efforts that are exceptional or gone above and beyond their job.

Visit historymuseumSB.org or call (574) 235-9664, Ext. 6256, for more details.

Master Gardener Grants

Individuals or groups needing materials for gardening/horticultural volunteer projects that benefit LaPorte County can apply for a 2026 LaPorte County Master Gardener Association Community Grant.

March 2 is the deadline to apply for grants that do not exceed \$500. Individuals or groups within LaPorte County are eligible. The number of grants is at LPCMGA’s discretion and based on available money.

All requests must be made in writing using the 2026 application available on the LPCMGA website or at the Purdue Extension LaPorte County Office, 2857 W. Indiana 2, Suite A, LaPorte. Only one application may be submitted per project. Two projects per organization may be submitted and postmarked no later than March 2.

Visit <https://lpmastergardener.org/grants-scholarships/> for more details.

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Indiana Dunes National Park

- **Chellberg Farm Open House from 1-3 p.m. Saturday-Sunday through March 28.** Rangers and volunteers will share the area's history as visitors tour the farmhouse and garden and visit the animals. Passes are required. The parking lot is off Mineral Springs Road between U.S. 12 and 20 in Porter.
- **Critter Time from 1:30-2:30 p.m. Sundays through March 29 at The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education.** Learn what the park's ambassador animals eat, where they live and how park staff care for them.
- **Snowshoeing in Miller Woods from 1-3 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday at The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education.** Friends of Indiana Dunes sponsors the program. Snowshoeing needs at least a 6-inch snowpack for safety. A limited number of snowshoes are available for loan, or take your own. Inquire at the front desk or call (219) 395-1824 to check for appropriate conditions.
- **Artist-in-Residence Art Display at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday-Sunday at The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education.** View 21 pieces, all inspired by the Indiana Dunes.
- **Drop-In Volunteer Program (Trash Trekkers) from 9:30 a.m.-3 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:

- **Snow Days at 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 31.** Meet at the Nature Center to learn facts about snow. Experiments and activities are planned.
- **Winter Alive at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 1.** In the Nature Center auditorium, learn how dune animals adapt to winter.
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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Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

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Oh, most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh, Star of the 'Sea, help me and show me, herein you are my mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth! I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor me in

this necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. Oh, show me herein you are my mother. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (3x). Holy Mother, I place this cause in your hands (3x). Holy Spirit, you who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can attain my goal. You who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances in my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things as you confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you in Eternal Glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. The person must say this prayer 3 consecutive days. After 3 days, the request will be granted. This prayer must be published after the favor is granted.



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LCA Registration Under Way

Registration is under way for spring classes and workshops for children, teens and adults at Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St.

The schedule includes:

- Abstract Painting I & II.
- Coffee and Creativity.
- Contemporary Art: Art as Social Conscience.
- Digital Illustration.
- Figure Drawing.
- Mini Masterpieces: Art History for Tots.
- Mixed Media for Young Artists.
- Sandcastle Writers.
- Three Styles of Acrylic Painting.

New workshops include:

- A 3-D Model of Color: The Ott Cuboctahedron Color Theory – March 14.
- Abstract Landscapes in Gouache – March 21-22.
- Bless the Mic Poetry and Performance – April 11.
- Experiments in Printmaking – April 18.
- Pose & Proportion: Live Figure Drawing – April 25.

LCA's free Teen Arts Council continues to meet during the spring. Connecting teens ages 13-18, it meets from 4:30-6 p.m. Feb. 26, March 26 and April 23. Register by emailing Nelsy Marcano at nmarcano@lubeznikcenter.org.

Scholarships for children and adults are available thanks to support from LCA's Dolly Fund. Sign up at www.LubeznikCenter.org/Scholarships. Visit www.LubeznikCenter.org/Learning or call (219) 874-4900 for more details.

Insights in History

Amanda Miller Kelley, PBS Michiana WNIT president-general manager, will present "57 Years of Sunny Days: How PBS and 'Sesame Street' Changed the World" at 1:30 p.m. EST Wednesday, Feb. 4.

The "Insights in History" program is at The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend.

Kelley also will chronicle the history of WNIT, the community's public broadcasting station. A tour of the Muppet Car at The Studebaker National Museum is planned.

Admission is \$3, or \$1 for members. Reservations are required by Feb. 2 at www.historymuseumSB.org. Call The History Museum at (574) 235-9664, Ext. 6256, for more details.

Japanese Watercolors Show

Japanese watercolors by self-taught artist Erika Spafford of Holland, Mich., are on display through Feb. 9 at Episcopal Church of the Mediator, 14280 Red Arrow Highway, Harbert, Mich.

An artist reception is at 3 p.m. EST Saturday, Jan. 31. Show hours are (all times Eastern) 9 a.m.-noon Mondays-Thursdays and 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday.

Contact the church office at (269) 469-1441 or at office@mediatorharbert.com for more details.



American Red Cross

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

- St. John's United Church of Christ, 101 St. John Road, noon-6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 3.
- Holy Family Parish, 201 Bach St., LaPorte, noon-5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4.

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.

MCHS Heritage Night

Michigan City High School, 8466 Pahs Road, will host its annual Heritage Night on Saturday, Jan. 31, during the boys basketball matchup against Marion High School.

The JV game tips off at 5 p.m., followed by the varsity game at about 6:30 p.m.

Heritage Night celebrates Michigan City basketball, as well as the legacy of Elston, Rogers and Michigan City high schools. The matchup also revives a historic rivalry, as Marion was a consecutive IHSAA Boys Basketball Semi-State opponent from 1984-1987.

Alumni, students, families, staff and community members are encouraged to wear their respective school colors.

Visit www.GoMCWolves.com, and follow Michigan City Wolves Athletics on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter (X) @MichCityWolves for more details.

Westchester Public Library

Westchester Public Library has curbside pickup at its Thomas and Hageman branches.

Use a library card or go online to place holds on up to 10 items, including DVDs and CDs. Once notified the items are available, park in specially-numbered spaces at each branch during pickup hours. While parked, call the library phone number posted on the numbered space sign.

Hageman Library (219-926-9080) is located at 100 Francis St., Porter. Thomas Library (219-926-7696) is located at 200 W. Indiana Ave., Chesterton. Westchester Township History Museum (219-983-9715) is located at 700 W. Porter Ave., Chesterton. The Baugher Center is located at 100 W. Indiana Ave., Chesterton.

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In the Area

Jan. 29 — Sourdough Starter from Scratch, 5-6 p.m., LaPorte County Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Jan. 29 — Adult Crafting — Handcraft and Create!, 5:30-7 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Jan. 30 — Great Decisions, “The Third Nuclear Age,” 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Jan. 30-Feb. 1 — The Holdcraft Players, David Mamet’s “Faustus,” The Holdcraft Performing Arts Center, 1200 Spring St. Times: 7 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun. Tickets: \$15/adults, \$10/students. Reservations: www.yptcinc.com/tickets

Jan. 31 — Annual Heritage Night, Michigan City High School, 8466 Pahs Road. JV game/5 p.m., varsity game/6:30 p.m. Info: www.GoMCWolves.com

Feb. 2 — Choose Your Own Storytime, 4-4:30 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Feb. 3 — Jigsaw Puzzle Swap, 4 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Feb. 3 — Tween Book Club (ages 10-13), 4:30-5:30 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Feb. 4 — Creative Kids — Lunar New Year, 4-5 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Feb. 4 — Dungeons & Dragons (ages 13-17), 4-6 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: dwolf@mclib.org

Feb. 4 — All Things True Crime Book Club, 5:30-6:30 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: www.laportelibrary.org

Feb. 5-8, 12-15 — Footlight Players, “Wait Until Dark,” Footlight Theater, 1705 Franklin St. Times: Thur.-Fri. shows, 7 p.m./Sat.-Sun shows, 2 p.m. Tickets: \$17/adults, \$12/children 12 & younger Fri.-Sun., \$12/Thursdays. Reservations: www.footlightplayers.org

Through Feb. 15 — “LIT! Site-Specific Installations by Maria Burundarena and Luftwerk,” Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St. Info: (219) 874-4900, jsexton@LubeznikCenter.org

Through March 6 — Tim Lacey solo exhibit, Art

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

Through March 31 — Watercolor/colored-pencil drawings by local artist Kristy Kutch, Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Mon.-Thur., 6 a.m.-6 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 6 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun. Info: kd3627@hotmail.com

Through Dec. 31 — “America A-Z” exhibit, LaPorte County Historical Society Museum, 2405 Indiana Ave. Info: (219) 324-6767.

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

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

Mondays in Michigan City — Adult Children of Alcoholic and Family Dysfunction (ACA), 6 p.m., Trinity Episcopal Church, 600 Franklin St. Info: (219) 801-1296.

First Monday of the Month (February, April, June, August, October, December) — Cancer Support Group, 5-6 p.m., Franciscan Health Woodland Cancer Center Community Room, 8955 W. County Road 400 North, Michigan City. Info/registration: (219) 861-5820.

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

Tuesdays — Genealogy Help with Pat Harris, 1-4 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Tuesdays — Creative Tech Activities (ages 6-17), 3:30-5 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Tuesdays — Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS), 4:30 p.m., Simeon Square, 1207 S. Woodland Ave. Info: marsha2529@comcast.net

Tuesdays — Bingo, St. Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Church, 1506 Washington St. Doors open: 4 p.m. Bingo: 6 p.m. \$40 entrance fee (includes specials except Winner Takes All & Jackpot). Jackpot consolation \$300 guaranteed. Info: (219) 336-3099.

Second Tuesday of the Month — Stroke Support Group for Survivors and Caregivers, 2 p.m., Mother Maria Theresia Room, Franciscan Health Michigan City, 3500 Franciscan Way. Info: Kelly Wise at kelly.wise@franciscanalliance.org

Wednesdays — Al-Anon meeting for Friends/Family of Alcoholics, 6 p.m., Trinity Episcopal Church, 600 Franklin Square. Enter at Sixth Street Barker Hall side. Info: Candy at (708) 927-5287.

Thursdays — Needle Arts Club, 5:30-7 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

Fridays — Overeaters Anonymous, 9:30 a.m.

Info: Jan at (219) 241-8757, Paula at (219) 588-3127, www.oa.org

In the Region

Jan. 30-31 — Anti-Variety Show (featuring Marquette-sibling band Massasauga), 5-11:30 p.m. Jan. 30, 1-11:30 p.m. Jan. 31, The Hobart Art Theatre, 230 Main St. Advance single-day admission/\$15, advance two-day admission/\$30. Day of admission/\$20 per day. Tickets: www.Brickartline.com

Jan. 31 — Snow Days, 10 a.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Feb. 1 — Winter Alive, 2 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

Feb. 3 — Campus for Creative Aging: Memory Café, 9:30-11:30 a.m. EDT, New Buffalo Township Library, 33 N. Thompson St. Info: (269) 469-2933, www.newbuffalotownshiplibrary.org.

Feb. 4 — “57 Years of Sunny Days: How PBS and ‘Sesame Street’ Changed the World,” 1:30 p.m. EST, The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend. Admission: \$3, \$1/members. Reservations: www.historymuseumSB.org

Through Feb. 9 — Japanese watercolors by Erika Spafford (Holland, Mich.), Episcopal Church of the Mediator, 14280 Red Arrow Highway, Harbert, Mich. Reception: 3 p.m. EST Jan. 31. Info: (269) 469-1441, office@mediatorharbert.com

Through Feb. 9 — “A Bear’s Natural Habitat: The Return of Fozzie’s Studebaker,” The Studebaker National Museum, 201 Chapin St., South Bend. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun. Admission: \$11/adults, \$9.50/seniors 60 & older, \$7/youth ages 6-18. Info: (888) 391-5600, www.studebakermuseum.org

Feb. 14, 28 — Duneland Chamber of Commerce Indoor European Market, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter.

Through April 26 — “From a Bailly Point of View,” Porter County Museum (PoCo Muse), 20 Indiana Ave., Valparaiso. Museum hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tue.-Sun. Free admission. Info: www.pocomuse.org, @pocomuse on social media.

Through May 25 — “Reel Rides: Cars of TV & Film,” Studebaker National Museum, 201 Chapin St., South Bend. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun. Admission: \$11/adults, \$9.50/seniors 60 & older, \$7/youth ages 6-18. Info: (888) 391-5600, www.studebakermuseum.org

Through May 31 — “Rockne: Life & Legacy,” South Bend’s The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St. Info: www.historymuseumSB.org, (574) 235-9664.

Saturday-Sunday through March 28 — Chellberg Farm Open House, 1-3 p.m., Mineral Springs Road between U.S. 12/20, Porter. Info: (219) 395-1882, www.nps.gov/indu

Sundays through March 29 — Critter Time,

1:30-2:30 p.m., The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, 100 N. Lake St., Gary’s Miller Beach neighborhood. Info: (219) 395-1882, www.nps.gov/indu

Wednesday-Sunday — Snowshoeing in Miller Woods, 1-3 p.m., The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, 100 N. Lake St., Gary’s Miller Beach neighborhood. Info: (219) 395-1882, www.nps.gov/indu

Wednesday-Sunday — Artist-in-Residence Art Display, 9:30 a.m., The Paul H. Douglas Center for Environmental Education, 100 N. Lake St., Gary’s Miller Beach neighborhood. Info: (219) 395-1882, www.nps.gov/indu

Sundays — Free sewing classes, 5-7 p.m. EDT, Friends of New Troy (Mich.) Community Center, 13372 California Road.

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

Vickers Theatre — *Now Showing*: “Sabrina.” Rated PG. Time: 6 p.m. Jan. 29. *Also*: “Father Mother Sister Brother.” Rated R. Times: 3 & 6 p.m. Jan. 30, 1 & 4 p.m. Feb. 1, 6 p.m. Feb. 3. *Also*: Acorn Anywhere: A Winter Series (Songwriters-in-the-Round), 8 p.m. Jan. 31. All times Eastern. The theater is located at 6 N. Elm St., Three Oaks, Mich. Info: www.vickerstheatre.com, (269) 756-3522.

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NEWSLETTERS



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On January 29, 1845, *The New York Evening News* first published The Raven, Edgar Allen Poe's most famous poem.

On January 29, 1894, Detroit's C.B. King received a patent for a pneumatic hammer.

On January 29, 1900, baseball's American League was organized. It consisted of teams from Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

On January 29, 1936, Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner, Christy Mathewson and Walter Johnson were elected as the first members of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

On January 29, 1963, the first members of the Football Hall of Fame were announced in Canton, Ohio. They consisted of: Sammy Baugh, Bert Bell, Joe Carr, Dutch Clark, George Halas, Mel Hein, Pete Henry, Cal Hubbard, Don Hutson, Curly Lambeau, Tim Mara, George Marshall, John Blood McNally, Bronko Nagurski, Ernie Neavers and Jim Thorpe.

On January 30, 1798, a brawl broke out in the House of Representatives, meeting in Philadelphia, after Matthew Lyon of Vermont spat in the face of Roger Griswold of Connecticut.

On January 30, 1815, Congress authorized purchase of Thomas Jefferson's library, making it the nucleus of the Library of Congress.

On January 30, 1933, the first episode of "The Lone Ranger" was broadcast on Detroit's radio station WXYZ.

On January 30, 1948, Mohandas K. Gandhi, spiritual and political leader of India, was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic while on his way to attend a prayer meeting in New Delhi.

On January 30, 1964, the U.S. launched Ranger 6, an unmanned spacecraft carrying television cameras. As planned, it crash-landed on the moon.

On January 31, 1865, the House passed a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery.

On January 31, 1931, Ernie "Mr. Cub" Banks, the Hall of Fame infielder and power hitter for the Chicago Cubs, was born in Dallas.

On January 31, 1949, television's first daytime soap opera, "These Are My Children," was broadcast from Chicago's NBC studios.

On January 31, 1958, the United States entered the Space Age with the launching of Explorer 1, its first successful launching of a satellite into orbit.

On February 1, 1790, the U.S. Supreme Court met in New York's Royal Exchange Building for its

first official session.

On February 1, 1862, Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic" was first published in *Atlantic Monthly*.

On February 1, 1865, the signing of the 13th Amendment to the American Constitution marked the end of slavery in the United States.

On February 1, 1893, in Orange, N.J., Thomas Edison completed work on the world's first motion picture studio. The cost was less than \$650.

On February 2, 1675, the first recorded observance of Groundhog Day took place in Germany. In the United States, the official observance takes place in Punxsutawney, Pa. (At least that's what they say in Punxsutawney). There, crowds gather to wait for a groundhog to emerge from his burrow. If he sees his shadow, there will be six weeks more of winter. No shadow: Spring has definitely arrived.

On February 2, 1876, the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs formed at an owners meeting in New York. The new league consisted of teams from Chicago, Boston, Cincinnati, Louisville, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis and Hartford.

On February 2, 1895, George Halas, National Football League co-founder, was born in Chicago.

On February 2, 1983, Pope John Paul II elevated 18 bishops, including Chicago's Archbishop Joseph Bernardin, to the rank of cardinal.

On February 3, 1690, Massachusetts issued America's first paper money, using it to pay soldiers fighting a war against French Quebec.

On February 3, 1809, Congress approved an act creating the "Illinois Territory." Prior to this date, the present state of Illinois was included in the vast area known as the Northwest Territory.

On February 3, 1836, the Whig Party held its first state convention in Albany, N.Y., nominating William Henry Harrison for president.

On February 3, 1894, the first steel sailing ship, the *Dirigo*, launched at Maine's Bath Shipyard.

On February 3, 1959, rock 'n roll star Buddy Holly was killed in a plane crash near Clear Lake, Iowa. This date is referred to as the day the music died. Killed with Holly were Ritchie Valens, J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson and pilot Roger Peterson.

On February 4, 1789, the Electoral College selected George Washington as the first U.S. president.

On February 4, 1895, a rolling lift bridge over the Chicago River at Van Buren Street opened to traffic.

On February 4, 1913, civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks was born in Tuskegee, Ala.

On February 4, 1938, the Thornton Wilder play "Our Town" opened on Broadway.

On February 4, 1957, the first portable electric typewriter, a 19-pound Smith-Corona, went on sale in Syracuse, N.Y.

On February 4, 1977, 11 people were killed when two cars of a Chicago Transit Authority train fell off the tracks.

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Mona's Eyes by Thomas Schlessler, translated by Hildegarde Serle (hardcover \$30 retail; also available as an eBook, large-print paperback and audiobook. 446 pages)

"Mommy, it's gone all black!"

Ten-year-old Mona loses her sight one day. Just 63 minutes later, as she and her parents approach the hospital, her sight comes back.

What happened?

Dr. Van Erst is stymied. He doesn't know either. Further tests in the coming days show Mona has a condition for which there is no cure. Within one year, she probably could go completely blind. No machine, no injections, no surgery. Van Erst's suggestion is to visit a therapist once a week to prepare for what is to come — the total loss of her eyesight. How do you explain that to a 10-year-old girl?

Mona lives in Paris with her parents, Paul and Camille Vuillemin, and grandfather Henry (Dadé) Vuillemin. Paul owns a shop of old toys and collectables — mostly 1950s Americana — that he loves dearly, but business hasn't been good the past year. Now, with Mona's weakening eyes, he turns more and more to alcohol.

Henry, however, decides to be proactive and take Mona under his wing, make her final days of sight so she remembers the beauty around her, especially within great works of art. The goal is each of Paris' three famous museums — The Louvre, The Musée d'Orsay and Beaubourg — and study one painting each week. It is to be a secret between them; instead of going to therapist meetings, Henry decides visiting an art museum is more helpful.

Each chapter features a work of art, starting with a visual exploration of it: eyes wide open, studying every detail, then discussing what the artist is saying. We actually are disconnected from what's in front of our eyes unless we take time to consider the possibilities — is the artist trying to tell us something? Of course. Even the Mona Lisa. Is she just the portrait of a woman? What about that enigmatic smile — what is she thinking or trying to tell us? How much are we missing by not really looking while we're looking?

Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter



Then, there is the day Mona is so taken by a painting, she can't help but want to touch it...that's when she finds out the Louvre has a very capable alarm system!

Never have I looked at a work of art with the contemplation the author provides here. To have a

painting explained, to know the history and inspiration behind it, is simply amazing.

The man talks, the girl listens, and soon the girl is talking and the man is impressed at how quickly his granddaughter understands the real meaning of art to the individual, as well as the world. And Henry wants to fill Mona's mind's eye with beauty she will never forget, sustaining her the rest of her life. All the things Henry teaches her, he hopes she can carry to her dark world.

Is the story sentimental? Yes. Educational? Absolutely, and in a way that makes you begin to understand how important art is to civilization. It also shows us the special bond between a man and his grand-

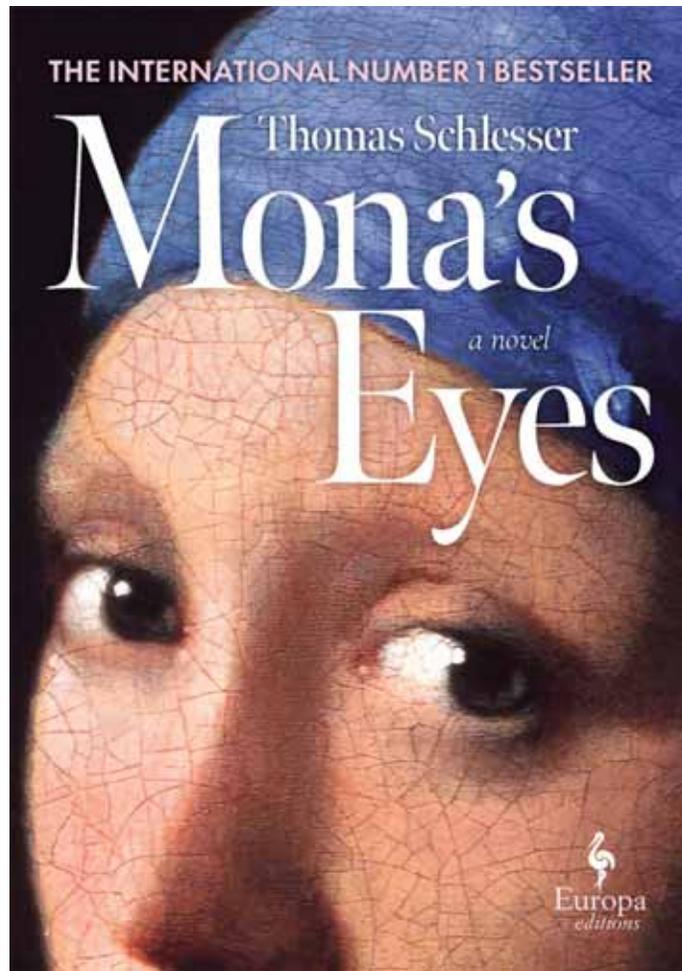
daughter, and the lessons to be learned from the stroke of a brush. This is a book to read slowly and thoughtfully. Give yourself time to savor every page.

To add to your pleasure, the paper cover opens up to twice its size to show you small, but colorful images of each piece of art Henry introduces to Mona. The frosting on the cake!

The final word: "To paint was, first and foremost, to love." Truer words were never spoken. Mona's Eyes is: Barnes & Noble 2025 Book of the Year, Boston Globe Best Book of the Year, National Indie Bestseller and Top Ten Indie Next Pick

Schlessler is an art historian and director of the Hartung-Bergman Foundation in Antibes, France.

Till next time, happy reading!





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