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THE NORTH LAWNDALE COMMUNITY NEWS

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Serving North Lawndale, East & West Garfield, Austin, Pilsen, Humboldt Park, Near Westside & South Lawndale

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PROVIDING INFORMATION ON RESOURCES AND EVENTS THAT IMPROVE THE LIFESTYLE OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITY

You Better Ask Somebody

Calvin C. Crayton

I was allowed the opportunity to walk through North Lawndale with Francis Pratt of Lawndale Christian Development Corporation and Art DelAngel Metropolitan Tenants Organization as they approached tenants whose landlords were in foreclosure. We asked the tenants if they were aware that their residences were in foreclosure. I listened as resident Marzell Shorter told us he was unaware that the building where he rented his apartment was in foreclosure explained how nice the landlord is.



Art DelAngel, Marzell Shorter and Francis Pratt

There was actually one building that was in foreclosure with an apartment for rent sign in the window. According to Ms. Pratt and Mr. DelAngel this kind of situation happens too often. Statistics from the Metropolitan Tenants Organization show that 40% of all Chicago foreclosures happen in twelve neighborhoods. The neighborhoods include Englewood, Auburn-Gresham, South Chicago, East Garfield, Humboldt, Logan Square, North

Lawndale, West Englewood, West Pullman, Roseland, and Austin. 72% of all foreclosures in North Lawndale were multi-unit properties or rental properties in which the landlords did not live in the building or in the neighborhood.

Tenants have many rights and there are multiple programs to assist them. If you are having landlord problems you can call MTO's hotline 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. You may also contact Ms. Francis Pratt of LCDC at 773-762-8889 ext. 20. Remember, before it's too late, you better ask somebody.

CHICAGO WEST SIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL EXCITED TO "EMBRACE THE FUTURE"

Travles R. Lane

The world is a classroom at Chicago West Side Christian School and the sky is the limit of its efforts to excite its students, staff and supporters about learning, leading and meeting high expectations.

Established by the Christian Reform Church in 1969, the school remains near the Roosevelt Road/Pulaski Road intersection at 1240 S. Pulaski Road after moving into a new building across the street from its original location in 2004. The building also hosts the Lawndale Christian Reform Church congregation's sanctuary, retaining a concrete connection to its mission to "partner with parents to engage children in dynamic Christian education that nurtures and challenges youth to develop intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, creatively and socially so they are equipped to lead and serve as Christians in society."

The successful attainment of its mission begins with the family-like atmosphere that is palpable throughout the school's immaculate hallways which lead to neat, lively classrooms adorned with computers and other state-of-the-art

academic accoutrements.

"The relationships among our staff and with the kids, their parents and our supporters are very much valued at Chicago West Side Christian," co-administrator Jeralyn Harris said during a recent interview. "We work hard to nurture those relationships"

A highly motivated staff of eleven full-time teachers presides over instruction to an equally motivated student body of 160 pupils in grades K-8th who are primarily from the North Lawndale community. Controlled excitement permeates the building as students and teachers prepare for the conclusion of the 2008-09 school year. They all eagerly anticipate the soon-to-follow six-weeks summer program at Chicago West Side Christian. Striving toward its motto of "Embracing the Future," the school is accepting enrollment applications throughout the summer.

"We want our students to leave here with academic skills, but also want them to be very well-balanced holistically and able to be productive citizens," said Ms. Harris, a former Massachusetts Public Schools



teacher before assuming her current post at Chicago West Side Christian twelve years ago. "We seek to foster a strong sense of community here, where everybody knows everybody and support each other."

Equipped with a Bachelor's in English and Secondary Education and a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction, Harris, who exudes the enthusiasm and the excitement that are hallmarks of the school's method of

instruction, is well complemented by the calm, quiet approach of Ms. Mary Post, who has served as co-administrator for eleven of her twenty-three year career with the school.

Post, who has earned a Bachelor's in English and a Master's in Library Science as well as a fellowship in Executive Christian School Management, said the goal is to "equip students to lead and serve

academically, spiritually and socially."

"We also try to foster a passion in them to contribute to the community."

Parents are also encouraged to contribute through the activities of a Parent Club that meets monthly, plans and assists in fundraising, promotes the school's advantages of smaller class sizes, and emphasizes the character education that are staples of this Christian foundation.

Students also get in on the teaching efforts as they work with each other among the different grade levels, giving the older kids leadership opportunities and responsibilities in mentoring to younger pupils. The school's "Dare to Be King" and "Girl Talk" programs and much of its teaching are modeled on the Search Institute's 40 Development Assets approach to education that is used around the country and in five Canadian provinces. Spanish classes for K-8th graders, daily physical education and boys and girls basketball and soccer programs are also available and supported by excellent gym facilities.

See CWCS page 7

CSC SOWS ECONOMIC STIMULUS FROM GROUND LEVEL

Travles R. Lane



Kelly Veal, Assistant Branch Manager at the Community Savings Center

Pioneering a symbiotic financial market development model that may someday become a standard in the banking and social services industries, a small, nondescript business on the West Side is blazing trails as it strives to stimulate economic growth by nurturing financial literacy in the heart of one Chicago's most distressed communities.

The Community Savings Center (CSC) at 310 N. Pulaski Road opened as the brainchild of a synergetic collaboration among a trio of diverse organizations in 2006 with a mission to introduce—and in many cases, reintroduce—a vastly underserved and uniformed market to the financial mainstream, sowing the seeds for economic development and empowerment.

Serving a community still struggling to overcome decades of economic distress,

the small branch bank just north of the Green Line's El tracks provides the range of traditional financial products and services. Customers can cash checks, open checking and savings accounts and get loans there.

They can also become students of finance and entrepreneurship in a partnership designed to nurture the bank's customer base and stimulate community economic development from the ground up. "We are striving to bring financial literacy to our customers," Branch Manager Alfred Burns said of the eight staff specialists who facilitate the center's operations. "We are here to offer them an alternative to the higher fees they pay at the currency exchanges while also creating an association with our bank that may eventually make them depositors."

"We see a lot of clients who have stopped dealing with banks because of previous problems. We try to get them back into the mainstream."

The "synergy" that planted the idea of the Community Savings Center began with a concept proposed by Bethel New Life, a church-based, nonprofit community services organization that has pursued a mission to renew prosperity on the West Side for more than 30 years. Nationally recognized for its efforts, which were spawned in the aftermath of the riots of the 60s and 70s that devastated the West Garfield Park neighborhoods, Bethel New Life pitched the CSC concept in 2004 to Park National Bank, a network of community banks throughout Chicago operating under the aegis of the First Bank of Oak Park.

The addition of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, a faith-based Fortune 500 membership insurance, investment and financial services organization, created the third rail of the organizational infrastructure that energized the opening of the center in January of 2006 and began an economic stimulus experiment well before the current

recession necessitated a nationwide government-led program.

"Bethel created the motivation [for the CSC]," said Elias Mitropoulos, a Park National vice president and regional manager, "and [the bank] saw an opportunity to get into a market that was underserved and offered us an opportunity to gain new customers."

"We could offer them the same services as the currency exchanges with lower fees and the added assurances of doing business with a stable, regulated financial services firm," Mitropoulos added.

The center targets clients whose credit or banking history hampers their ability to open accounts and otherwise do business with banks as well as provides financial counseling services and classes about basic personal and business finance. Homeowner training and entrepreneurial training and assistance are also provided. The purpose is to establish the educational roots for

See CSC page 4

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# NLCN

## 2009 FOCUS

### HEALTH & THE ECONOMY

One of the major issues of the recent presidential campaign was health care. Health care costs have become an escalating burden for employers and consumers alike. Research has shown that total health spending is reduced when consumers bear more responsibility for their health and the expenses related to it. One of the best ways to increase life expectancy while reducing disability is to encourage a culture of self-care practices.

Self care is personal health maintenance. It is the care taken by individuals towards their own health and well being. Self care includes the actions individuals take in their role as care givers for their children, their families, and others to stay fit and to maintain good physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Extreme self care means making choices and decisions that honor our soul in everyday living. It means feeding ourselves whole foods, moving our bodies every day, balancing silence with activity, and surrounding ourselves with supportive, like-minded people who are committed to improving or restoring health and uplifting the quality of their lives as well.

More than 75% of people surveyed in the United Kingdom said if they had guidance or support from a professional or peer they would feel far more confident about taking care of their own health. Research shows that supporting self care can improve health outcomes and increase patient satisfaction. Our intention is to support individuals, families, institutions, and communities in their efforts to practice extreme self care. During 2009, the North Lawndale Community News focuses on cost-effective ways you can improve your health by practicing self care.

The Economy has made itself the number one issue with gas prices reaching almost \$5.00 per gallon and having a domino effect on everything else sold, except housing stock which experienced a terrible decline with the high rate of foreclosures. The Chicago metropolitan area reported 5,821 new foreclosure filings in December, a foreclosure rate of one new foreclosure filing for every 499 households — more than twice the national average. That brought the area's fourth quarter foreclosure total to 16,949 and its 2006 foreclosure total to 57,706, according to Realty Trac.

Even transportation on the CTA went on the rise with one day passes increasing by seventy-five cents and monthly passes increased by \$10.00 from \$75.00 to \$85.00. Those are just a few of the increases.

The North Lawndale Community News this year is expanding on last years financial focus to give attention to its broader parent the economy. Saving and making smarter shopping decisions will help stop us losing through wasteful choices. Finding new ways to increase our income is a necessity for many in an area where gentrification is not going to stop.

One of the hardest things to change is behavior. Modifying behavior seems to be easy when it comes to pain. Social pain lack of money has to be extreme for many to change. 2009 should be different for many and of course many will continue toward economic mistakes and financial ruin.

But in today's information society there is no excuse for not making smart choices. Financial literacy alone is not enough. Look what happened to Lehman Brothers and what's happening to many other financial institutions let alone individuals, families, and small businesses.

Solutions come to the internet, books, economic experts, financial counselors and experts, the media and your economical neighbors.

The North Lawndale Community News will tap into resources and share them with you, our reader. So to help you improve your health and your economy keep reading The North Lawndale News. We say yours because some may not modify their behavior, except when the pain comes and still some won't change.. Your input is also welcome If you have some information that is beneficial please submit it. Let's make smarter health and economic moves for life in 2009.

## THE NORTH LAWDALE COMMUNITY NEWS

The North Lawndale Community News is now published weekly by Strategic Human Services. Our purpose is to help inform our community on resources, events, and issues relevant to them and our neighboring communities. Our community includes those who live, work, worship in, and/or care about North Lawndale. Our focus is on positive, productive solutions, that will improve the lifestyle of our community members.

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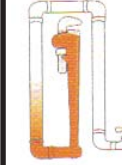
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**ASTE OF NORTH LAWDALE**

## CSC from front page

financial development with the aim of facilitating economic empowerment and community progress in an area where shuttered and dilapidated homes and business structures currently dominate the landscape.

"Most of the people we assist have never taken advantage of banking; they are intimidated by the financial system," said Nancy Brown, Senior Director of Bethel's Family Economic Success department, which deals with employment and home ownership issues in addition to supporting CSC activities.

"So, we are teaching them the basics of banking, such as reconciling a check book. We are providing them with the financial literacy they need for asset building." Eight separate eight-week classes are taught by Bethel and CSC employees each year on Tuesdays and Thursday evenings as well as on Saturday afternoons. Brown added the center is perpetually seeking students for the instructions, which covers such subjects as goal-setting, budgeting and credit.

Mitropoulos said the CSC is plowing virgin soil in its attempt to establish a "responsible" banking model that revive economically depressed communities by going after previously ignored potential clients. "We really couldn't even define what our expectations should be at the beginning. . . We didn't know where to set the bar to measure its success." Five key products are vital organs in the CSC's financial arsenal and form

the foundation of the pursuit of its mission.

The New Start Checking program assists clients with opening and re-establishing bank accounts; the Individual Development Account (IDA) managed by Bethel is a program that matches up to \$2,000 of client's savings toward a home, business venture or education with private and government grants in kind and a short-term (6-12 months) loan program with a nominal interest rate provides a payday loan alternative.

Bethel's HUD certified counseling services and classes and non-deposit required check cashing services for government benefit and payroll checks complete the primary product line of the CSC.

Burns, a member of the FDIC's Center for Economic Progress' Alliance for Economic Inclusion subcommittee, added that though much of what the CSC does is unique to its location and similar ventures of the bank are located in other distressed communities. "We're not trying to keep the model to ourselves; we're trying to plant seeds [of economic prosperity] all over." He and Brown cited five recent homeowners who benefited from the CSC's micro enterprise services as well as a business owner who got his start there two years ago. Each agreed the center is on the cusp of a financial revolution and seek to make savers, responsible borrowers, and eventual owners of their clientele while "empowering the pursuit of the American Dream" for communities that were previously on the outside looking in.

## Letter to the Editor

### PUBLIC SERVANTS BOYCOTT BREAD AND BUTTER

The Lawndale Alliance developed a series of community awareness workshops that ran on three consecutive Tuesday evenings, from May 12, 2009 through May 26, 2009. The topics included the Pros and Cons of the Olympics; an overview of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and a TIF Town Hall meeting to provide a status report on the 7 TIFs that impact North Lawndale.

The Lawndale Business and Local Development Corporation gave a verbal commitment to participate in the TIF Town Hall meeting on April 26, 2009. The Lawndale Christian Development Corporation confirmed their participation in the TIF Town Hall meeting on May 1, 2009.

Telephone conversations with Alderman Dixon, Alderman Burnett and Alderman Fioretti led us to believe they would participate in the TIF Town Hall meeting. We did not get responses from Alderman Carothers, Alderman Smith, or Alderman Munoz. None of the aldermen attended any of these meetings.

On May 5, 2009, the City reneged on their promise to assist with coordinating the meetings, and canceled their appearances for all three meetings. We had been working with the City on the TIF Town Hall meeting since August, 2008 and the Neighborhood Stabilization Program meeting since November, 2008. Mercy Housing, the City's delegate agency for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, refused to participate in the meeting series because the City canceled. The Chicago Rehab Network representative did not respond to our invitation. NHS, who administers programs for mortgage foreclosure, went back on their verbal commitment to send a housing counselor to the Neighborhood

Stabilization Program meeting. Fortunately, the meeting facilitator for the Neighborhood Stabilization meeting is an associate board member of NHS. She prepared a Power Point presentation on the mortgage foreclosure process and the Neighborhood Stabilization program.

While no reason was given initially for the City's cancellation, the Acting Commissioner of the Department of Community Development told us to coordinate with our alderman. We didn't understand this, because Alderman Dixon had insisted on being on the agenda for all three meetings, and we accommodated her. The Acting Commissioner also indicated that our meeting was not on the Department of Community Development's master schedule. She mentioned that the City would be holding a meeting on the Neighborhood Stabilization Program at the KIPP-Ascend Charter School on May 20, 2009, the day after our meeting. We later learned that Alderman Dixon was the sponsor of the May 20th meeting, and representatives from the City provided a **3-minute presentation** on the \$55 million Neighborhood Stabilization program.

On May 6, 2009 the representative from the Communities for an Equitable Olympics, who was scheduled to participate in our Olympic panel discussion on May 12, 2009, canceled, due to "extenuating circumstances." On May 11, 2009, the Director of Neighborhood Legacy for Chicago 2016, canceled his appearance on the panel because Chicago 2016 decided not to hold any meetings in North Lawndale unless they were sponsored by the Douglas Park Advisory Council, in Douglas Park. A subsequent conversation with the secretary

See Alliance page 5

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This summer, (through our "Preserved For Excellence" program), we will offer teenagers and adolescents the opportunity to participate in something productive and educational. Some of those opportunities include dance, journalism, media applications and much more. The program will run each Friday during two sessions from 10:00am-1:00pm and 1:00pm-4:00pm. During these two sessions students will engage in these character building activities. On August 28<sup>th</sup>, we will culminate with a Summer Ball at Douglas Park Field House, 1401 S. Sacramento from 5:00pm-9:00pm, students will be able to showcase what they have learned. It can assist students in High School in completing service learning hours as required for graduation. Space is limited! To register contact us at 773-826-2929 ex 213

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## Alliance from front page

of the Douglas Park Advisory Council revealed that the organization has nothing to do with the Olympics.

On May 12, 2009, the Executive Director of the Lawndale Christian Development Corporation (LCDC) attended the meeting on the Olympics, and indicated that she would not be able to attend the May 26th TIF Town Hall meeting because she had a board meeting the same evening. She committed to providing a written report. The Executive Director sent an e-mail on May 29, 2009, indicating that she didn't send the report before the TIF Town Hall meeting because she had death in her family.

We received LCDC's report on June 4, 2009. The organization is located within the boundaries of the Ogden/Pulaski TIF, and has leveraged \$2 million in funding from the Midwest TIF with other public funding. LCDC convenes the LISC New Communities Program Quality of Life Plan for North Lawndale, which informs the \$100 million Ogden/Pulaski TIF Redevelopment Plan. LCDC indicated that they have no current plans to access funds from the Ogden/Pulaski TIF.

On the day of the TIF Town Hall Meeting, representatives from LBLDC and NHS sent e-mails indicating that they would not be able to participate in the meeting because they were extremely busy with paper work. They also indicated that they weren't comfortable participating in meetings that could be perceived as being political. NHS administers the \$1 million Greystone Initiative, the \$9.75 million Neighborhood Improvement Fund for the Midwest TIF and the \$1 million Neighborhood Improvement Fund for the Roosevelt-Homan TIF. LBLDC administers the \$2.25 million Small Business Improvement Fund for the Midwest TIF.

We want to be clear that the Lawndale Alliance respects elected officials, City department heads and the City's delegate

agencies. In spite of the fact that we did everything that was asked of us, fourteen invited guests failed to participate in our meetings. As a result, the community missed a great opportunity to learn how to access programs that are funded through our own tax dollars. Unfortunately, this is more of the rule in North Lawndale, rather than the exception.

Going through elected officials should not be the only means of gaining access to education about tax-funded City programs and services. We should be able to call City departments or Chicago 311 and make arrangements for Department heads to come out to the community.

Neither the City, nor elected officials should be in a position to compel the City's delegate agencies not to make public appearances in the communities they serve. These independent, tax exempt organizations are obligated to provide community outreach, education and services to the community. Likewise, city governments and elected officials are accountable to the public and should not allow politics to hinder their ability to provide information or services to local citizens. After all, Chicago's motto is "the City that works together."

The silver lining in this dark cloud is that the Lawndale Alliance successfully hosted these meetings utilizing the resources available to us. We thank our panelists, meeting planning committee, DePaul University, WACA and Dvorak School for making this event a success. In closing, we respectfully request that, you would advocate for policies that make City services accessible to people regardless of political affiliation, or clout. Any questions regarding the facts outlined in this letter may be addressed to Valerie F. Leonard at 773-521-3137, or [valeriefleonard@msn.com](mailto:valeriefleonard@msn.com).

Sincerely,  
**THELAWDALEALLIANCE**

## Attention Tenants Affected by Foreclosure!

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**June 27, 2009 - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

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For more information, contact Frances Pratt, Foreclosure Outreach Advocate/Lawndale Christian Development Corporation (773) 762-8889 ext. 20 or [fpratt@lcdc.net](mailto:fpratt@lcdc.net).

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**CHICAGO TALENT DEVELOPMENT HIGH SCHOOL** is a new, non-selective, college preparatory high school opening in the West Garfield neighborhood in August of 2009. Our school will enroll 150 ninth graders next year and reach our full enrollment of 600 students in 2012. We're currently seeking secondary language arts, mathematics, and art teachers, guidance counselors, and social workers to work with our scholars next year! Chicago Talent Development is seeking to create a culture that values teacher professionalism and student success. We offer: Salaries competitive with Chicago Public Schools, Maximum teaching loads of seventy-five students with maximum of twenty-five per class, Daily collaborative and individual planning time, High quality, job-embedded professional development, The opportunity to build one of the premiere high schools on Chicago's West Side.

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## LEGAL NOTICES

**A NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,** pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was filed by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County under file no. D09117959 on May 12, 2009 under the Assumed Name of Davis Unique Construction Services with the business located 1540 S. Drake Ave. 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl., Chicago, IL 60623. The true name and residence address of the owner is Wilbert Davis, 1540 S. Drake Ave. 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl., Chicago, IL 60623.

**A NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,** pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was filed by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County under file no. D09118137 on June 10, 2009 under the Assumed Name of Hollywood Tours of Chicago with the business located 3619 N. Drake Ave., Chicago, IL 60618. The true name and residence address of the owner is Sandy Toth, 3919 N. Drake Ave., Chicago, IL 60618.



**Lanre O. Amu**  
Attorney at Law

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## CWCS from front page

The school additionally adheres to the Ka Boom philosophy of providing all children in America with playground space within walking distance. This effort was backed up by more than 200 volunteers who completely constructed a modern, fenced in play area adjacent to the school in one day. The play area includes gardening space for students to practice their horticultural skills as well.

One-size-fits-all report cards are not the measure of student progress at Chicago West Side Christian School. Rather, goal-setting conferences are held for each individual, allowing achievement to be tailored to emphasize their strengths and improve upon their challenges.

While citing financial concerns as the chief challenge of their administration, Ms. Harris and Ms. Post acknowledged their "resourcefulness" in getting the job done as they bask in the reward of their collective efforts.

"The achievement I appreciate most is being able to consistently motivate and empower kids to love learning," said Ms. Harris.

Recalling the graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders farewell addresses to the school earlier, Ms. Post added her satisfaction came from hearing them "say how much they feel like they belong and appreciate the high expectations we set for them here. "Kids want to succeed," she said. "They just need to know that you expect them to."



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## AT THE FLICKS

David H. Schultz, film critic

**THE PROPOSAL (\*\*)** Recently in an interview promoting this movie, star and co-executive producer Sandra Bullock remarked that today most romantic comedies are not very funny. Because they involves two elements of force, a romance and a comedy that are usually one over the other. And hardly ever successful with both in the same movies.

But “The Proposal” tries throwing everything into its script. While trying to find the perfect comedic pitch between the characters and screen chemistry between Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds. While the script isn’t very sharp or clever; the movie does borrow enough to make it familiar to what we’ve seen before in other movies.

Especially when it comes to this film’s basic premise of Bullock as Margaret Tate, an uptight female boss for a book publishing firm whose so feared and tyrannical. Still, Bullock is pale by comparison to Meryl Streep in “The Devil Wears Prada”.

Bullock presents her variation as a woman with no life beyond her work. With the only visible man indirectly in her life; Ryan Reynolds plays Andrew Paxton, her overworked and neglected male secretary who anticipates her every need that sometimes disrupts his plans.

But this movie steals a page from 1990’s “Green Card” when Tate who is a Canadian, could be deported for a year by the immigration services. So she drafts her male secretary pretending to be engaged to her that is suspected as an act of fraud by the immigration officer. Mr. Gilbertson (Denis O’Hare).

This move would not only keep Margaret in the country at work, but save Andrew’s job. But Andrew seizes the opportunity to blackmail here back, to risk imprisonment if given a top editorial position.

Upon his terms, the charade begins, by not without a threat from Mr. Gilbertson who gives them the weekend to convince him or expose their fraud.. When the posing couple has to travel to Alaska for a family gathering for the birthday celebration of Andrew’s spunky grandmother (the scene stealer Betty White) at his parents’ (Mary Steenbergen and Craig T. Nelson) estate.

While Margaret is the “fish out of water” who doesn’t know much about Andrew as he does about her. When she discovers his family is described as the “Alaskan Kennedys” that owns most of the small town’s businesses. Andrew has the typical estranged relationship with his father (Craig T. Nelson) who wants him to take over the family business, instead of pursuing his publishing dream.

While clearly, “The Proposal” is nothing special, it’s at least no embarrassment (maybe a little ridiculous) to watch. In fact, “The Proposal” is often funny and engaging (pun intended) film achieved primarily through the charm and appeal of Bullock and Reynolds that keeps the film entertaining and amusing, but lacking enough distinction in its presentation. PG-13; 107min. A Touchstone Pictures Release – Presented at selected theaters

**IMAGINE THAT (\*1/2)** Considering all the elaborate movies there are these days. And almost as the film’s title implies; “Imagine That” is a lame comedy that is old fashion in its approach through its story premise.

Compared to most movie blockbusters, this is low tech, done without GCI animation and special effects wizardry to visually fill in our imagination. Or in this case, Murphy’s maniac response to his screen daughter’s imagination. By its premise, this movie might want us to use our imagination. Something that movies used to do. But with the short attention span of today’s youth being raised on video games, iPod, iphones, etc. Don’t count it! Eddie Murphy puts in a lot of energy over the acting portraying Evan Danielson a career driven, overworked financial manager whose work obligations gets him criticized by his equally busy ex-wife, Trish (Nicole Ari Parker) that results in alternative weeks and an estranged relationship with their 9 yr. old daughter, Olivia (Yara Shahidi) whose obviously masquerading her neglect through her invisible friends in an imaginary world and a Peanuts-type security blanket.

Where Olivia refuses to relinquish the blanket on the school playground. Her tantrum leads to Evan taking Olivia to work with him, Where Evan’s track record is being upstaged by hot shot executive, Johnny Whitefeather (Thomas Haden Church), a self styled mystic with Zen –like affectations and lots of fake Indian ramblings that are more annoying than offensive. While disguising his obvious, ruthless and competitive nature for the top post at the firm.

Meanwhile in her father’s office, Olivia makes some drawings suggested from her invisible friends that are written over Evan’s meeting notes. Evan has a meltdown during the meeting from trying to interpret his daughter’s work that later happens to be prophetic investment tips that become true.

Evan realizes the success he’s having at work, by following Olivia’s orders in making a fool of himself to gain more investment tips from the invisible friends’ suggestions through Olivia,

Formerly titled “Nowhereland” during its production this family comedy might be the closest attempt for Murphy to do “Harvey”: But. Murphy is no James Stewart and there is not giant invisible rabbit around.

Then the film travels a familiar route that occurs in these kinds of movies. After the retiring boss Tom Stevens (Ronny Cox) sells his interest to an industrialist tycoon (Martin Sheen) who orders Evan and Johnny to compete for the to spot in the west coast firm.

Again, Murphy’s character momentarily takes his eye off the prize; that leads him to break in and disrupt a kids’ sleepover to get Olivia’s blanket. But eventually and predictably, Evan comes to his senses in time to help his nervous daughter sing at the typical and overly used school recital finale in the film.

Sadly, “Imagine That” comes off seeming rather useless and witless in this movie where the game’s over before it can get started here. PG; 107min. A Paramount Pictures Release – Presented at selected theaters

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