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# THE NORTH LAWNDAL COMMUNITY NEWS

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PUBLISHER : STRATEGIC HUMAN SERVICES

VOLUME NO. 13 - ISSUE NO. 35

ISSN 1548-6087

October 7- October 13, 2010

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

## Universoul Circus Has A Westside Connection *Omar Dudley of the Slam Dunk All-Stars*

Universal Circus is in Chicago for 12 days of Circus excitement. Included in this year's performance is a young man that was born right here on the Westside. Omar is part of the Slam Dunk All-Stars that perform basketball acrobatics and trickery. His name is Omar Dudley.

Omar is 21 years old. He is a short 5'-2" and full of energy and love for the crowd, especially the children that come to see the performances. "I grew up on 18<sup>th</sup> and Hamlin," said Omar in an aftershow interview conducted by NLCN. Omar went to Suder Elementary School and Crane High School. He went Crane while living in Lawndale. With Universoul Circus, he gets Mondays off to site see or relax. But when in Chicago, "I visit my family almost every day," said Omar.

North Lawndale Community

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**Omar Dudley, earns dream job with UniverSoul Circus**



**Omar Dudley (black t-shirt), visits North Lawndale Youth during intermission to take photos and give words of encouragement to stay focused and make their dreams a reality.**

## ALD. DIXON, LAWNDAL BUSINESS AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORP. HELP FURNITURE COMPANY OPEN REHABBED BUILDING IN LAWNDAL

Nicholas Short



**Alderman Dixon speaks on the recent move of Nationwide Furniture Distributors and what it means for economic development in the 24th Ward**

On September 24, Nationwide Furniture Distributors, Inc. opened a rehabbed building at 1000 S. Kostner Ave., which could mean more opportunities for North Lawndale residents. 24th ward Ald. Sharon Dixon and the Lawndale Business and Local Development Corporation (LBLDC) helped make it possible.

During the grand opening, there was a luncheon for clients who were interested in Nationwide Furniture Distributors, Inc.'s business and a ribbon cutting ceremony to officially declare the new building to be open. Eric Strickland, Executive Director of LBLDC, was "very excited" about the furniture company working

with LBLDC. He said that the company "did a tremendous job" of reviving the building, which has been vacant for at least 20 years. Strickland was very impressed with the building itself: "It looks good and we look forward to working with them in the future as they grow their company," he added.

24<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman Sharon Dixon was also responsible for the birth of the newly rehabbed building. Alderman Dixon, who attended the grand opening, had to introduce a resolution, introduce an ordinance, and send letters to county commissioners who were responsible for approving the project.

There were four steps involved in the process of the facility and Ald.



**Owner Mr. Jarad, (in red tie) cutting ribbon of newly moved-in and rehabbed facility at 1000 S. Kostner Ave. with 24th Ward Ald. Sharon Dixon and Bernard Jennings of LBLDC.**

Dixon was involved in three. Ald. Dixon introduced a resolution to the city council to obtain permits. She also introduced an ordinance to the county for a Cook County Class B Property Tax reduction. The reduction in taxes resulted in property taxes being reduced at the level of 10% instead of the normal 25% with the idea keeping jobs and businesses in Chicago. Both were passed.

Industrial Program Director E. Bernard Jennings, another LBLDC member, was also satisfied with the outcome of the building. Jennings played an important role in helping Nationwide Furniture Distributors, Inc. establish their new location. "I put a lot of work and effort into that project. It took us some time to get to that grand opening and I think they

should be very, very proud of what they accomplished. I think it was very rewarding to the community," he said.

Jennings assisted Nationwide Furniture Distributors, Inc. as they obtained their Class 6B designation—a designation that is for properties that are used primarily for industrial purposes where the owners have developed or will develop a new facility, rehabilitate an existing facility or reoccupy an abandoned one. He believes that opening a new business within the North Lawndale area will bring more prosperity to its residents. "This is another project in the series of rebuilding the industrial companies that were the major base

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Visit us on our website at [www.nlcn.org](http://www.nlcn.org) for more articles, photos, information and more.



North Lawndale Community News  
Winner of the 2005 SBC Beyond the Call Award

North Lawndale Community News  
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Presented By Congressman Danny K. Davis &  
Residents of the 7th Congressional District

# NLCN

## 2010 Focus

### Youth & Reflection

Much has happened since October of 1999 when we first published the North Lawndale Community News more than eleven years ago. Many have contributed, supported, volunteered, written, taken photos, done research, and/or completed our workshops. We have helped many and many have helped us.

When the North Lawndale Community News began in October of 1999 as the North Lawndale Community Newsletter, a focus was established. First, we thanked God for making the newsletter possible. We stated that confidence in the good of the people was the motivating force behind it. Many resources and events are available to us and our neighboring communities and the role of this newspaper is to provide you with that information. Since then it has become a newspaper, larger in newsprint layout and organizational size.

In 2001, our focus targeted the "Revival of the Family". Many of us were then and are now concerned about the state of the family in our community. We focused on providing helpful and useful suggestions to strengthen and restore vitality to the family unit.

In 2002, we targeted "Wholistic Wellness". Our hope was that everyone in our community join us as we moved in the direction of creating a balanced life in which family, work, recreation, community participation, and spiritual endeavors worked together in harmony.

In 2003, we targeted "Education and Training". As a community, we are dominated by results of low educational levels, high unemployment, a hostile economic environment, and unbearable crime and murder statistics. Still, we pushed forward to improve life in our community on many levels and by many people from within the community, as well as concerned people from outside the community.

In 2004, the North Lawndale Community News focused on helping our community acquire a better quality of life through higher levels of reading and responsible wealth creation.

In 2005, it was Technology, Business Development, and Employment. We chose to include a strong focus on providing information and articles on resources in those areas because there was a growing unemployment rate in North Lawndale and some of its neighboring communities that are among the highest of all the 77 Chicago communities.

In 2006, the primary focus for SHS/ NLCN was Health, Education, and Welfare. Health is essential to a good life. Education is necessary for the pursuit of happiness especially in an economy driven society. Welfare is unavoidable in showing man's humanity (love) toward man.

In 2007, the primary focus for SHS/ NLCN was People and Education. Our history of people is great. People have strived to create progress in our community, raised their families, created businesses, triumphed over adversaries, and worked in the community. All year long NLCN focused on articles related to people and education throughout our newspaper, weblog, and website that serves the Westside of Chicago.

In 2008, the primary focus for Strategic Human Services and the North Lawndale Community News during 2008 was the Church, Financial Literacy, and Technology. There are many problems that face North Lawndale and its neighboring communities. Anyone of them are the most important to any individual when it is his, her, or their biggest battle.

In 2009, the primary focus for SHS/NLCN was 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 selfcare practices.

In 2010, our primary focus will be to live and reflect on our previous years of focus, as we progress to a better quality of life.

## The North Lawndale 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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*The North Lawndale Community News is funded by the dedicated work and support of the community, and made possible with grants from The Steans Family Foundation, The John D. and Catherine MacArthur Foundation, Harris Bank Foundation The Leo S. Guthman Family Fund ( Lynne C. Rosenthal), The Soderquist Family Foundation, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), J-Lab Institute, AfterSchool Matters, SBC (now AT&T), The Illinois State Board of Education (State Senator Rickey Hendon), State of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, DCEO through Sate Rep. Art Turner, The McCormick Tribune Foundation, the National Black Caucus of States Institute, Advocate Bethany Fund, and contributions from our community, advertisers, and readers. The North Lawndale Community News was started with a grant from the North Lawndale Small Grants Initiative now known as the Small Grants Human Development Corporation, and the Steans Family Foundation.*



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The North Lawndale Community News

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## Every Child, Every Vote, Every Minute – COUNTS!

*Voter Registration Drive &  
Children's Parade Highlight 'Step  
Up for Kids Day'*



Chicago – As time ticked away before the October 5<sup>th</sup> voter registration deadline, Illinois Action for Children and the Carole Robertson Center for Learning teamed up on Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup> to 'Step Up for Kids' in Chicago's North Lawndale community.

As children and parents marched through the neighborhood to the sounds of a marching band and calls to register to vote, Illinois Action for Children and Carole Robertson Center for Learning staff passed out voter registration information to residents passing by.

When the children's parade route returned to the Carole Robertson Center for Learning, the voter registration form distribution began in earnest. Community members who were not already registered were able to fill out the proper registration forms, and many residents who were already registered also took advantage of the opportunity to update their registration information prior to the October 5<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Similar scenes played out across Illinois as part of the national 'Step Up for Kids Day,' as Illinois Action for Children and other leading early care and education organization conducted similar voter registration events statewide.

"In many ways, the course for the future of our children will be set by this year's elections," said Illinois Action for Children President Maria Whelan. "The only way you can vote in the best interest of your children is to get registered, and that was a big part of what we did here and throughout the state on Monday."

This 'Step Up for Kids Day' event and its participating organizations do not endorse any candidate running in any campaign for elected office. This event was coordinated by Illinois Action for Children in partnership with the Every Child Matters Education Fund.

### LBLDC from front page

for the Lawndale areas," he said.

No tax increment financing (TIF) funds were used in the process, he said. Instead, a new program called the Small Business Improvement Fund (SBIF) was used by LBLDC and Nationwide Furniture Distributors, Inc. to attain the vacant building and a parking lot located across the street from the building. The fund helps make improvements to small business properties in select Chicago neighborhoods.

Nationwide Furniture Distributors, Inc., a wholesale furniture company, is a family-owned business that covers Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Michigan. The company started in 1987 and became incorporated in 1992, said Jamal Jarad, one of the company's owners. So far, it manages 15 employees. And according to Jarad, the store is "thinking about adding 10 more." Its old space was 41,000 square feet and the new location has 200,000 square feet.

The company obtained and renovated the new location with much assistance from LBLDC, which was "formed in 1985 to promote the economic health of Lawndale and adjacent areas through retention and expansion of business, and to provide new opportunities for residents through local training and employment," according to the company's website.

For more information about LBLDC and what it has to offer, people can call the company at (773) 265-8500 or e-mail the company at [info@lbldc.org](mailto:info@lbldc.org). LBLDC also has a website: [www.lbldc.org](http://www.lbldc.org).

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**For further information** contact Valerie at 773-521-3137, or [valerieleonard@msn.com](mailto:valerieleonard@msn.com). Visit the campaign website at <http://vote4valerie.voterspace.com>. Visit the campaign blog at <http://vote4valerie.blogspot.com>. Follow Valerie on Facebook, MySpace, Scribd, and Twitter.



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## LANE CHANGE: More Luck than Good Intentions Prevented Fatality in Shooting

A Commentary by Travles R. Lane - [the1tlane@yahoo.com](mailto:the1tlane@yahoo.com)

Many years ago, I had my own Margaret Matthews moment with an unruly child that had me pulling my pistol. So I can understand where the 68-year-old lady was coming from recently when she decided she'd had enough of the harassment heaped upon her by the two abusive little thugs throwing rocks at her and shot one of them. After all, this is America, and everyone has a right to bear arms, and/or use them when they feel like it, er, I mean, if it's necessary.

Well, while many of her neighbors are calling Ms. Matthews a heroine for popping a cap in one of the little hoodlums terrorizing her, I tend to think perhaps she could have tried a couple more resorts before pulling out that last one and blasting away. And like

his foolish parents should be doing—and that is all they should be doing—I thank God she did not kill the child. Believe, this woman is no hero; she is merely as lucky as the child she shot.

Anyway, back to that Sunday morning about 12 years ago when I pulled out my last resort, an old .357 magnum Smith & Wesson hog leg I used to keep under the seat of my car, to confront a big, swearing 15-year-old boy in my backyard back in Silverdale, North Carolina.

I had come outside to find this boy, his teenaged brother and four or five other of his male cousins playing basketball in the hoop I'd put up for my own three sons, who were not allowed outside for disciplinary reasons that morning. Well, during the course of their play, this big boy started cussing up a storm in the backyard as I was about to get into my car and take a drive to a friend's house. I had to delay the trip.

I walked from my car in the driveway to the back yard and explained to the young man and his relatives, all big strapping teenagers and a 25-year-old, they were welcome to play ball in the backyard, "but that cussing has to go."

In reply the big boy doing the cussing told me he didn't want to hear what I had to say. I asked him to leave. He told me I could not make him, and he was not going to leave.

Though exasperated, I did not argue with the child. I acted. I walked the equivalent of a block down the road, knocked on his mother's door and told her to please come get her son out of my yard. "I do not argue and fuss with children," I remember saying to her.

Well, his mother, a large, imposing presence of a woman, did come back with me and told her son to leave my yard and go home or to his aunt's house just beyond my backyard. And the boy responded by cussing her out and telling her he wasn't going to leave.

So, she went back home without so much as a word to me as to what she expected me to do about this unwanted child she was leaving at my house keeping up a racket. That is when I got my gun and walked back toward the boy, cocked the weapon and insisted that "son, you are either going to walk out of this yard, or they are going to have to carry you." And at that moment, I was determined to shoot him.

But for the grace of God, and the sudden motivation of his kin folk to gather around and hustle him on out of my yard, I was spared the sort of investigation that the Chicago Police Department conducted to determine that Ms. Matthews acted in self-defense when she pulled the trigger on her tormentors. In my state of feeling absolutely violated and frustrated, I too, was ready to throw some lead and laws or consequences be damned.

I was not going to be disrespected in my own yard! That's basically what I told the Onslow County sheriff deputy who questioned me after the boy's mother called 911 about my resorting to the gun after she'd gone home. They declined to investigate further.

To this day, the fact that I did shoot that boy remains a pivot point in my life because I do not have to live with having shot him. Although I simply only wished to wound him below the leg as I approached, I cannot be sure the shot would not have been fatal. And this doubt persists despite expert skills with firearms I acquired during my years in the Marine Corps.

And that is my trouble with the shot Ms. Matthews took at the boy she ultimately only wounded. If she just meant to frighten him, why not simply shoot into the air? And where did she acquire the expertise to have the confidence she could shoot at him and not intend to strike him fatally?

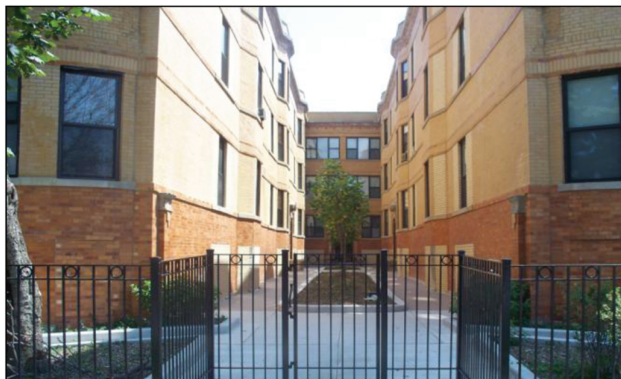
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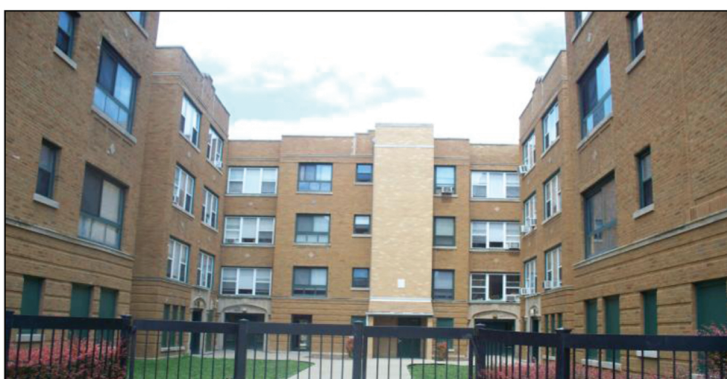
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# The City of Chicago's Budget Should Remember "The Least of These"

Valerie F. Leonard

The City of Chicago is facing a record budget deficit of \$650 million dollars for 2011. While I realize that tough decisions must be made, the Mayor and City Council should consider "the least of these", and make them a priority in the budget. The 24th Ward is plagued by a number of issues, including youth violence, limited supply of decent housing that is affordable to people who live in the community, and high rates of unemployment. A perceived lack of transparency in the City's budgeting and financial reporting processes doesn't help the situation.

Over the years, community residents have voiced concerns about the fact that youth have more and more idle time on their hands, with fewer opportunities for employment and extracurricular activities. The Mayor and City Council should specifically target more funds for programs to run during out of school hours, including before and after school, and on the weekends. These programs should align with school curriculum and provide opportunities for mentoring and job skills development. The City should work very closely with the Chicago Public Schools to make them the center of community activities, or mini "town centers". This includes more community schools that will serve students, parents and community members who need outlets for recreation, job training and social skills development.

North Lawndale is one of the poorest communities in the City, with a median income of \$24,000 for a family of 4. This was in 2005--before the economy bottomed out in 2008. Yet, new housing, much of which is being constructed with subsidies from the City (including TIF dollars) State, and federal government, is affordable to households earning from \$65,000 to \$90,000. The City of Chicago represented to HUD on its first application for \$55 million in Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds, that North Lawndale and West Garfield Park were among Chicago's communities of greatest need with respect to foreclosure and the need for more affordable housing alternatives. Two

years later, only 5 investments have been made in the North Lawndale, and none in West Garfield Park.

North Lawndale was excluded from Round 2 Neighborhood Stabilization Program funding for \$98 million dollars. The City indicates that this funding was focused on certain Census tracts that have high foreclosure rates, but stand a good chance of recovery. Apparently, the City was not as optimistic about North Lawndale's chances of recovery, and our situation has only worsened over the past 2 years. Blocks that did not have issues with abandoned foreclosed properties when the City applied for Round 1 funding now have 2,3, and 5 or 6 boarded up homes.

Unfortunately, not every abandoned foreclosed property qualifies to be rehabbed and sold for affordable housing under this program. The City should petition HUD to get an amendment such that communities like North Lawndale and West Garfield Park qualify to get funding under Round 2, and that the City may be allowed to use Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds to purchase other abandoned properties that may not otherwise qualify for the program.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program should also be used to expand opportunities for people to be trained in green construction. A good example is the Community Male Empowerment Program, which hires ex-offenders and pairs them up with seasoned contractors to renovate foreclosed and abandoned properties. It should be noted that the City has, or will receive an additional \$168 million under this program for Round 3 funds. It is not clear whether or not North Lawndale or West Garfield Park will be eligible to receive funds under Round 3.

Every year the City's budget documents indicate that thousands of jobs have been created through the tax increment financing (TIF) program. Discussions with the Department of Community Development have indicated that they don't track the number of jobs that are being created by each TIF. Yet, the ability of the

TIFs to create new job opportunities is the City's key selling point to get community buy-in for forming new TIFs. As we talk among ourselves, our conversations often point to the fact that we can't recall any of our neighbors being hired as a result of TIFs in the community. This could be happening--just no one knows about it.

HUD Section 3 requires that developers of HUD-funded projects make a good faith effort to hire public housing residents and low income residents of the community in which the projects are being developed. There are a number of HUD-funded projects in some of the TIFs that impact North Lawndale. However, there does not seem to be any public record of any low income people from the community being hired on the construction projects. The City should use the budgeting and reporting process as a marketing opportunity. TIF fund revenues and expenses should be disclosed in the City's budget document, with a report outlining how many people got jobs as a result of each TIF, and as a result of complying with HUD Section 3.

These are a few ideas of some ways the City can use the budget and reporting process to look out for "least of these". Hopefully, the new political and economic realities may present an opportunity for more transparency, and bring a new sense of

urgency to address these issues.

Valerie F. Leonard is a North Lawndale resident, and convener of the Lawndale Alliance. The Lawndale Alliance is a group of residents who have come together to address community concerns, including community development, education and affordable housing. Any questions regarding this article may be addressed to Ms. Leonard at 773-521-3137 or [valerieleonard@msn.com](mailto:valerieleonard@msn.com).



## Dudley from front page

News (NLCN) brought a group of 54 youth and parents to an evening show where Omar came to visit the kids and parent chaperones before the show. He also came back during intermission to take pictures with them. Universoul Circus honored the youth participating in NLCN's CAGI program by allowing Omar to visit with them in the stands and they provided tickets at a discount. Omar started out tumbling with the Jesse White tumblers when he was 12 years old. His passion started when he watched them perform at his school and he said, "Those guys are cool and I want to be cool like that."

Omar has been focused and committed ever since. "Mr. White will always be my coach," he said. Omar also performed with the Ringling Bros and Barnum and Baily Circus for four years and was approached by Cedric Walker, the founder and CEO of Universoul Circus. Walker had seen him perform with Ringling Bros. and told him whenever he ended his time there would love to have him perform with Universoul Circus.

Omar said that he has always wanted to perform with Universoul Circus even during his days with the Jesse White tumblers. He got his chance when they would perform in Universoul Circus' pre-show.

Omar was homeschooled at the age

of 17 when he left school to perform with Ringling Bros Circus on the road. He has his high school diploma but wants to go to college and get a degree. He performed in two event shows with Cirque De Soleil here in Chicago. ed shows and has performed pre-shows. Chicago Boys is another group that Omar and his brothers started in 1999. "I perform for the kids and feeds off the crowd," said Omar. It's a dream come true at Universoul.

Omar wants to give back to the community as a coach on the Westside. When asked about stunts for movies, he said, "I have had connects with movies such as 'Like Mike' stunt doubling for Lil Bow Wow, but was unable to because I was on the road. Omar has also performed in half-time shows with NBA and he performed at Obama's presidential inauguration. He was the one who injured his ankle at the event.

The UniverSoul Circus plays in Chicago inside Washington Park, now through Oct. 17. Good seats remain for most shows. The Washington Park site is at 51st and Payne Dr. (corner of Cottage Grove). the tickets prices start at \$12 to \$30. Children under 1 are FREE You can purchase on line on at the box office on site from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Their website is [www.universoulcircus.com](http://www.universoulcircus.com). There is also \$15.00 discount coupon Ad in NLCN. It's a great show with eleven different acts and say hello to Omar Dudley for us.



**Pre-show clown taking photos with youth and parent chaparones at UniverSoul Circus**

## Health Resources and Services Administration

### NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC OF FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT For Lawndale Christian Health Center, LCHC Health & Wellness Center Project

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (44 CFR Parts 1500 through 1508) and the HHS General Administration Manual Part 30 Environmental Protection (February 25, 2000), HRSA has determined that the LCHC Health & Wellness Center Project proposed by Lawndale Christian Health Center will have no significant adverse impact on the quality of the human environment. As a result of this FONSI, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides discretionary grant and cooperative agreement awards to support health centers expand their capacity to provide primary and preventive health care services to medically underserved populations nationwide.

Lawndale Christian Health Center in Chicago, Illinois, has applied for a grant under the Facility Investment Program (FIP) initiatives. The applicant proposes to use FIP funds to demolish three buildings and construct a new 4-story, 65,000 square foot community center with medical services and a parking lot at 3700 - 3762 West Ogden Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. The applicant has submitted an Environmental Assessment (EA) that documents impacts of the proposed action. This EA is incorporated by reference into this FONSI.

Additional project information is contained in the Environmental Assessment for this project, which is on file at the following address for public examination upon request between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Lawndale Christian Health Center  
3860 W. Ogden Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60623  
Attn: Melissa Chrusfield  
Phone: (773) 843-3608  
Email: [melissachrusfield@lawndale.org](mailto:melissachrusfield@lawndale.org)

No further environmental review of this project is proposed prior to final approval from HRSA.

#### Public Comments

Any individual, group, or agency disagreeing with this determination or wishing to comment on these projects may submit written comments to Lawndale Christian Health Center, Attn: Bruce Miller, CEO, at the above referenced address.

HRSA will consider all comments received within 15 days of this "Notice" prior to final approval from HRSA.



## WEST SIDE NAACP CANDIDATES FORUM



Jason Ferguson (pictured in front - right photo) and others among the more than 100 people in the audience Sept. 26th, at Christ the King High School at 5088 W. Jackson Boulevard, listen as Independent candidate for governor Scott Lee Cohen (top photo standing) gives opening remarks during a candidate forum sponsored by the West Side Chapter of the NAACP. Cohen, who began his bid for governor after a scandal forced him to withdraw from the lieutenant governor's race, was joined in the forum by (top photo seated from left) Green Party governor candidate Rich Whitney, Democrat lieutenant governor Sheila Simon and Cohen's running mate, Baxter Swilley. David Miller, the Democrat Illinois Comptroller candidate, also addressed the audience before leaving early for a previous engagement.

Photos by TRAVLES R. LANE



In less than 60 days the citizens of Chicago will have the opportunity to select candidates for several state and national positions. We'll fill a seat that is being reluctantly vacated by a sitting United States Senator, and we'll determine who would be best to serve as governor, lieutenant governor, state treasurer, and state comptroller.

We will decide whether the elected officials who currently are in office are providing necessary services or whether they should be replaced. We will analyze whether these elected officials are focused on people or politics. Our decisions will have a direct impact on many areas, including: education, housing, veterans affairs, and civil rights. It is for these reasons that the Chicago Westside Branch of the NAACP took the lead in hosting and facilitating a candidates forum where local citizens could listen to and ask questions of those who want to serve.

This forum, which was held on Sunday, September 26, 2010, at Chris the King School, attracted a diverse audience of people who eagerly anticipated interacting with all candidates vying for governor, lieutenant governor, United States senator,

and state comptroller positions.

We applaud gubernatorial candidates Rich Whitney, Scott Lee Cohen; lieutenant governor candidates Sheila Simon and Baxter Swilley; and state comptroller candidate David Miller for recognizing the importance this type of forum. Each candidate patiently and professionally accepted questions from the audience and provided answers.

The environment was cordial, and the discussions were lively. The candidates' forum would have been enriched had any of the Republican candidates, the sitting governor and gubernatorial candidate Pat Quinn, candidate for United States Senate Alexi Gianoulis, and state treasurer candidate Robin Kelley been present. All were given ample notice of the forum, but obviously did not see the benefit of being personally available to listen to the voters and to provide meaningful answers to questions. These absent candidates might want to reflect on their poor decision making prior to November 2; otherwise, they can expect to receive from the voters exactly what they gave during the candidates' forum--nothing.

## AT THE FLICKS

David H. Schultz, film critic



**SECRETARIAT (\*\*\*)** A few years behind the last race horse movie, "Seabiscuit", "Secretariat" is another one of the best known race horse winners that is more of recent memory to most. As Secretariat happen to be the first in 25 years to win the triple crown title in 1973. This movie is not only documents this historic event through the series and events of each re-enacted horse races.

But this time around, the real triumph over adversity belongs to the horse's owner, Texan housewife and mother, Penny Chenery (played well in earnest and quiet determination by Diane Lane) who drops her family's dinner to take on her parent's family business that happens to be a male dominated sport and business.

When Penny receives a phone call that her mother has passed away; Penny leaves her family to initially handle the funeral arrangement in Virginia.

Instead, Penny finds herself having to insert her opinion to protect her Dementia suffering father's (Scott Glenn) financially troubled Meadow Stables ranch that breed race horses that haven't productive lately.

When the farm's trainer orchestrates a shady horses selling deal to be sold to a rival stable that Penny's father refused to approve. Penny confronts the trainer on the facts of the arrangement. Only to realize there's a conflict of interest in the attempted deal that leads her to firing the trainer.

And there's an important "flip of a coin" to be determined over two stud horses' two off-springs that could yield a prize winning racer. James Cromwell is the aristocrat stable owner- breeder, Mr. Phipps that usually gets the better horse in the past from Penny's father. who happens to be his son.

This appears rather odd that Cromwell's cliché uptight character is quite unexplainably distant and

aloft from his now ailing son and tries to restrain from his apparent disapproval of a woman dealing in a man's sport and business regardless of the family ties.

It appears again Mr. Phipps got the better out of the two. Until when the horse gives birth in the stable. Penny is amazed by how instantly the yearling stands on her legs.

From this point on, the film becomes Penny being the strong, determined woman bucking the odds in a man's world who believes this horse could be the champion that pulls the ranch out of debt. Penny begins to put the pieces together. First, obtaining the services of a colorful yet experienced horse trainer, Lucien Laurin that "dresses like 'Superfly'". Played well in an understated homosexual manner by John Malkovich who's clearly this film's stand-out performance that could earn him a well deserved Supporting Actor Oscar nomination. And then Penny tabs a controversial horse jockey, whose competitive spirit allegedly caused him to race a horse until its heart burst.

Naturally, Penny stay at Meadow Stables to manage her father's business eventually stirs some family disputes with her practical minded yet strangely semi-supportive husband-lawyer, Jack Tweedy (Dylan Walsh) whose expresses concern for his wife missing out on their children development that includes the elder daughter growing socially conscience from a controversial school play to participating in a Vietnam War protest rally..

But when Secretariat begins to win races and her father finally succumbs; the attention and responsibilities fall more on Penny who can only result to phone calls to talk and keep informed on her family. Until the family realize the importance

See Flicks page 7

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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. 1026039079 on September 17, 2010 under the Assumed Name of Creative Design Construction Inc. (CD Construction Inc.) with the business located 28 E. Jackson, Chicago, IL 60604. The true name and residence address of the owner is Larry Hill, 18118 New Orleans, Hazel Crest, IL 60429.

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### Flicks from page 6

in what their mother is doing that help encourage them.

While Penny and her horse become competitive rivals to another horse owner Pancho Martin (Nestor Serrano) and his horse, Chad who wins one race over Secretariat early on. Now Pancho Martin's anger during the press conference to express his determination to foil the hype around Secretariat's Triple Crown bid seems to take on villainous edge that almost suggests a violent threat. Pancho is no Apollo Creed!

With brief moments from a supporting cast that includes a moustache thick wearing Nelsan Ellis (of HBO's "True Blood") as the stable assistant; expolitico Fred Dalton Thompson as the board member that ignore the "men's only" rules to help get her foot in the door and suggests the colorful Lucien Laurin for her new trainer.

Director Randall Wallace has delivered a well mounted, familiar, underdog saga with sharp photography close-ups during the horse racing sequences and credible performances. Still, "Secretariat" is not enough, of a breed apart.

When it comes to its tolerable script that provides us with numerous incidents we've seen before along with cliché snags in these characters and situations that are routine and predictable in their cinematic execution.

"Secretariat" is a descent fact based, family oriented movie that is relatively interesting on the aspects of the business behind the sport along with Penny's growth into a strong independent woman dealing in a man's world.

**PG; 110 A Walt Disney Pictures Release - Presented at selected theaters**

**IT'S KIND OF A FUNNY STORY** (\*\*\*) "It's Kind of a Funny Story" is a quirky kind of movie about teen suicide centering on a distraught 15 yr old New York teenager, Craig (Keir Gilchrist) whose walking the streets while being depressed for a year over a girl he desires that's out with his best friend

Craig decides to check himself into a psychiatric ward. Where Craig begins to have second thoughts from what he observed. Where Craig is first introduced to who appears to be a doctor that turns out to be a patient, Bobby (Zach Galifianakis in an understated performance that far from his usual comedic tone)

Soon after, when questioned by Dr. Eden Minerva (Viola Davis); she decides to admit Craig for a five day evaluation period. Craig changes his mind. But once, Craig's parents arrive; the overworked father (Jim Gaffigan)

and his fragile worrier mother (Lauren Graham) decides its better Craig stay in the hospital that teenagers have to share with the adults during the hospital's floor renovation.

Later, Bobby re-appears to give the kid the grand tour, before he given a room to share with silent, bed-ridden and tall India-born patient. This begins to show some character traits and situations familiarity to the 1975 Oscar winner "One Flew over the Cuckoos Nest".

Craig befriends the Indian roommate who initially refuses to talk. While even though Zack Galifianakis is no Jack Nicholson. As Bobby, he's a guy who knows a few things --having attempted suicide 6 times.

Bobby begins to mentor the youth into learning to live in life and take things as they come before responding.

The realization comes into clarity for Craig after he settles into the hospital environment. Where Craig spots another teen patient Noelle (Emma Roberts). he begins a relationship that is later disrupted by a visit from the girl he long obsessed over, Nia (Zoe Kravitz) who turns out not to be what he thought she was. As Craig realizes too late, the girl of his dreams, Nia is willing to cheat on his best friend, by jumping into a hospital bed with Craig that gets him busted by Noelle, that caused the momentary lap in judgment and break-up between the two Until, naturally Craig realizes his mistake and who he should be with..

Still as "Funny Story" might be considered as a variation on a teenager who "flew over the cuckoo's nest" But writer-director Ryan Fleck and his co-writer Anna Boden tends to used the premise with a coming of age" spin that is a homage to their fondness of those 19 80's teenage coming of age comedies from the late Chicago born filmmaker John Hughes from "Pretty in Pink" to "Sixteen Candles" and his most popular, "The Breakfast Club" that are shown in snippets throughout this film

Craig's mind even has a dream sequence as the lead singer to a rock band consisting of the hospital patients doing a music video concert style version of the aptly chosen Queen featuring David Bowie hit, "Under Pressure" that is a tribute to Matthew Broderick's downtown Chicago song and dance number from Hughes' Ferris Bueller's Day Off".

But this personal admiration walks a thin line that takes the edge off, that goes against what director Ryan Fleck achieved in his previous film, Half Nelson" about the life of a drug addicted school teacher. Fleck adapts a softer tone for his most commercial effort to date; considering the plight and demands that lead to teen suicide that are varied and aren't explored enough here

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Still, this is a singular movie that I generally liked for its awkward approach. Even though, it's a little basic for such a serious subject. But instead of "Funny Story" being the kind of heavy handed downer that this film could have been,

Craig is the everyday teen whose under these circumstances is given the passion, the confusion, the friendships and ultimately, the revelations of teenage life that will make him a survivor with a better understanding, to what he's been doing to himself with a little help from Bobby and the psyche ward.

**PG; 100min. A Focus Features Picture Release - Presented at selected theaters**  
**LIFE AS WE KNOW IT**  
**(\*\*1/2)**

An ambitious caterer, Holly

Berenson (Katherine Heigl) and an equally promising sports network assistant director, Eric Messer (Josh Duhamel) had a disastrous first date. But this doesn't deter their mutual friends, a happily married couple, Peter and Allyson (Hayes MacArthur and Christina Hendricks) who keeps them wrap in their family events This includes being named godparents to their newborn baby, Sophie.

Even though Holly and Eric have obvious contempt for each other doing amusing barbs and insults when they are at the couple's home. When apart, Holly and Eric are actively involved in their separate careers. Holly looking to expand his caterer biz with a restaurant. While Eric seeks the opportunity to advance and direct an entire sports

**See Flicks page 8**

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### Flicks from page 7

telecast of the Atlanta Hawks.

Then Eric and Holly receive separate phone calls revealing the tragic news of the married couples' death in a car accident. Their baby was not involved in the crash. But after the funeral, the deceased couple's lawyer informs Eric and Holly they were named as the baby's guardians who must now live in the couple's home. But they are only given temporary custody since Eric and Holly aren't married and are barely friends. Well, that is what we are suppose to think, even though we know this is a love-hate relationship in disguise

But for the sake of the child and trying to honor their best friends' wishes, Eric and Holly occupy the house to care for the bay. While receiving unannounced check-up visits by an evaluating social worker (Sarah Burns) that usually catches Eric and Holly at odds with each other.

Naturally, the commitment to the baby puts on Holly and Eric's career goals and private lives. When they realize they are trying too hard to live like their deceased friends. they decide to act more like the single career persons they are, who happen to be sharing a house. they calendar a schedule trying to balance their obligations to Sophie along with their careers.

Holly finally makes a love connection with Sam (Josh Lucas) who happened into her shop during lunch and leaves a business card and conveniently is a baby doctor that becomes Sophie's doctor

Eric tries to return to his womanizing ways in dating that he brings home that oddly enough, Holly allows and jokes later about Eric 's lack of keeping a promise.

I don't think so! This is one of several missteps in this film before it falls into a predictable finale. When Eric accepts a job offer in Phoenix that tears the make-shift family apart. Even though Eric's exit makes it easy for Sam to easily fill the romantic void in Holly's life.

When Eric returns for the Thanksgiving holiday to learn for cost effective reasons, Holly is planning to sell the house. Eric's appalling reaction makes Sam who either acting more like an adviser than potential suitor takes a civilized approach, telling he's out while Holly and Eric have some emotional baggage to resolve that later only makes the twosome realizes what the deceased friends were doing all the time, using their past matchmaking attempts to show the couple they were somehow meant to be a family. It's a nice gesture, if only real life and love that we know was that logical, but we know better than that, and so should the script writers who fail to show the right support to Greg Bertlani's directorial effort here.

Even though this doesn't make a big difference, but does add some ethnic flavor to this comedy. There are some nice brief roles from DeRay Davis as the opinionated store clerk at holly's shop and Faizon Love as the sport addicted cabbie unable to control the baby; While Eric tries to direct the Hawks payoff game in the control booth.

"Life As We Know It" may have honorable intention in showing two career driven people forced together by circumstance they should be more aware about that their lives that can't overcome its sitcom feeling.

PG-13; 110min. A Warner Bros. Pictures Release – Presented at selected theaters