

The North Shore Weekend

“Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.”
— Benjamin Franklin

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 20 | SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 21 2025

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SUNDAY BREAKFAST

Wilmette’s Andy Walberer and hundreds of others will make history in the Chicago River this weekend
pg 18



MAN ABOUT FILM

Our reviewer praises *The Smashing Machine* for its inspiring portrayal of endurance and emotional honesty
pg 16



JUKE BOX HERO

Meet music man Steve Hill, a Minneapolis native who fell in love with Lake Bluff during a Fourth of July celebration and now lives here
pg 8

Nick, Kate, Caroline, Alice Morgan, Nancy and Ron Fletcher



PHOTOGRAPH BY MONICA KASS ROGERS

BEHIND THE BAGPIPES

Nancy and Ron Fletcher of Lake Forest reflect on a shared passion for conversation as they prepare to co-chair this month’s legendary fundraiser for Lake Forest Open Lands Association.

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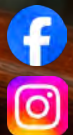
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Marathon swimmer Andy Walberer of Wilmette vies to match on Sunday what Johnny Weissmuller accomplished in the Chicago River 98 years ago

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NORTH SHORE DOINGS

EDITED BY CHEYANNE LENCIONI
THE NORTH SHORE WEEKEND

SEPTEMBER 20 BUSKER FEST

Evanston Central Street presents its Busker Fest From 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. This celebration of street performance throughout Central Street will showcase a myriad of entertainers, from musicians to dancers, hula-hoopers, jugglers, poets, comedy, and more. This event is free and open to the public. Tipping the talent will be emphasized and encouraged.

centralstreetevanston.com

SEPTEMBER 20 GOOD FEST

Come for an evening of community, music, BBQ, and supporting a good cause at St. John's church in Wilmette. Proceeds support Family Promise North Shore. Music will be provided by Tributosaurus and Antler Chandelier and BBQ will be from Backyard Barbeque.

stjohnswilmette.org

SEPTEMBER 20 THE HISTORY OF COFFEE

This adult program at Northfield Public Library will feature a presentation from coffee roaster and biologist, Dr. Brian Moskalik, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Start your day learning about the world's most popular beverage. Registration is required.

wnpld.org

SEPTEMBER 20 TO 21 PATTERNED BY NATURE

Celebrate our universal attraction to patterns through playfully planted gardens and nature-inspired artistic installations that stretch the imagination at the Chicago Botanic Garden's "Patterned by Nature" event. Visitors are invited to explore garden beds and installations throughout the garden that feature dynamic patterns, transformational art, and

upcycled fashion.
chicagobotanic.org

SEPTEMBER 20 TO 21 RACHMANINOFF AND THE TSAR

The Writers Theater 2025/2026 season begins with *Rachmaninoff and the Tsar*, a tale of Sergei Rachmaninoff, who recently escaped Russia in 1917. This new musical from Hershey Felder features him as the pianist and main role accompanied by Jonathan Silvestri.

writerstheatre.org

SEPTEMBER 21 & OCTOBER 12 KENILWORTH WALKING TOURS

Kenilworth Historical Society presents its annual walking tours, exploring different architectural styles throughout the village. The two-hour tours begin at 1:30 p.m. at the Kenilworth Train Station. Tickets may be purchased online.

kenilworthhistory.org

SEPTEMBER 22 WINNETKA WALKING TOURS

Winnetka Historical Society offers two walking tours to finish off the season. Registration is required and information can be found online.

winnetkahistory.org

SEPTEMBER 22 FINANCIAL FRAUD IDENTIFICATION PANEL

Join Chief Informant and Security Officer Michael Zielinski from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Kenilworth Union Church as he and a guest panel discuss ways to prevent financial fraud, as well as develop AI and social media literacy.

kuc.org

SEPTEMBER 23 SUNSET YOGA

From 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. in September, immerse yourself in the beauty of Lake Forest Open Lands Association's Melody Farm Nature Pre-

serve while relaxing into a gentle, restorative yoga session that will incorporate breathwork and mindfulness. All abilities welcome!

lfol.org

SEPTEMBER 25 CHICAGO'S BEER WARS

Join Lake Bluff Library for this adult program from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Learn about prohibition and Al Capone.

lakeblufflibrary.com

SEPTEMBER 26 ART OF CARING

Join hands with old and new friends to celebrate the bounty of fall and ensure Lake County's most in need are lifted up at Knollwood Club in Lake Forest. The Women's Board of Catholic Charities Lake County hosts the 33rd annual fundraiser to support the life-giving and critical work underway in Lake County.

catholiccharities.net

SEPTEMBER 26 SCARECROW FEST

Downtown Highland Park closes out its concert series with its annual Scarecrow Fest. Enjoy four live concert performances in Port Clinton Square and the return of Scarecrow Trail through downtown businesses.

enjoyhighlandpark.com

OCTOBER 2 AND 16 SIT AND KNIT

Spend an afternoon with fellow knitters from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room at Northfield library. All levels of experience are welcome. Basic supplies will be available and a library staff member will be present to help beginners. Registration is required.

Wnpld.org

OCTOBER 3 TO 5 THE GREAT HIGHWOOD PUMPKIN FEST



Gorton Center's Oktoberfest

This year's Great Highwood Pumpkin Festival is benefiting SaLT (Service and Learning Together). Enjoy live music, pumpkins, skeleton displays, and spooky fun. Leashed dogs are welcome.

celebratehighwood.com

OCTOBER 4 DISCOVER YOUR HOME'S STORY

Wilmette Public Library is partnering with a local historian to explore the history of Wilmette homes. This program is held from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and is for teens and adults. Registration is required.

wilmette.library.info

OCTOBER 5 THEN AND NOW AUTO SHOW

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., enjoy food, fun, cars, and entertainment for the whole family. This car show will take place at West Lake Forest Train Station. More than 100 cars will be on display and a food truck station will provide food and beverages.

lflbchamber.com

OCTOBER 7 BATTLE OF THE BUSINESSES TRIVIA NIGHT

Join Winnetka-Northfield-Glencoe Chamber of Commerce for first trivia night. From 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., this event will be held at North Shore Country Day School. Ticket purchases include food and soft drinks. This is a BYOB event with ticket raffles and prizes.

wnghchamber.com

OCTOBER 8 TO 26 NIGHT OF 1,000 JACK O'LANTERNS

Experience Chicago Botanic Garden's annual autumn event, held October 8 to 12; 15 to 19; and 22 to 26. This ticketed display of jack o'lanterns includes food and drink items available for sale, themed jack o'lantern carvings, and demonstrations by artists.

chicagobotanic.org

OCTOBER 15 JOSSELYN'S COCKTAILS FOR A CAUSE

Josselyn invites you to an evening of celebration and impact at its signature fundraising event, with all proceeds benefiting Josselyn programming. This event will be held at the Glen View Club.

josselyn.org

OCTOBER 18 GORTON'S OKTOBERFEST

The Gorton Center hosts its annual Oktoberfest fundraiser with an evening of food, drink, and entertainment. All fundraising proceeds will benefit Gorton's cultural and educational programs.

gortoncenter.org

OCTOBER 26 ARTEMIS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA FREE CONCERT

Enjoy a free concert at Trinity Episcopal Church in Highland Park at 3 p.m. Reserve seats at

artemischamberorchestra.org

OCTOBER 27 TRICK OR TREAT AT THE LIBRARY

Children, teens, and adults can trick or treat at Lake Bluff Library during the week before Halloween. Check in with staff at the first floor circulation desk for treats. Costumes are optional but encouraged.

lakeblufflibrary.org

To submit your event for consideration, please email events@nsweekend.com

NORTH SHORE SPORTS

BY BILL MCLEAN
THE NORTH SHORE WEEKEND

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
GEORGE PFOERTNER

FAST START, STURDY FINISH

Lake Forest High School's field hockey team strikes often early, tops Lake Forest Academy 5-1.

Entering last weekend's field hockey game at Lake Forest Academy (LFA), Lake Forest High School (LFHS) coach Cat Catanzaro was concerned about her Scouts' dearth of scoring.

During a three-game stretch from August 29 to September 2, her reigning state runner-up squad had tallied only two goals.

At LFA's home field on September 12, LFHS struck for three goals—in the first six minutes. Concern abated, swiftly.

"That was nice to see the girls get off to such a fast start," Catanzaro said after her crew's 5-1 victory.

Scouts junior forward Katherine St. Amand scored two of the goals in the first quarter, and senior forward Daisy Grottolo notched the other. LFHS senior defender Reagan Brown scored a pair of goals in the fourth quarter, as the visitors improved their overall record to 4-4.

"A lot of our player were able to get some meaningful minutes, which will prove impor-

tant in the next couple of weeks," added Catanzaro.

Freshman Clara Danz (a Lake Forest resident) scored the Caxys' lone goal, with senior Peyton Pollak (Highland Park) and sophomore Ashley Beans (Lake Bluff) providing the assists.

"The team struggled initially to adjust to the higher level of play," said LFA coach Meredith Norman. "However, they played a much stronger game in the second half. We could have come out of the gates with a bit more speed and intensity.

"Overall," she continued, "I'm happy with the effort and corrections we were able to make throughout the game."

Catanzaro mentioned how youthful (three freshmen, two sophomores on varsity) Norman's side is and praised LFA's coaches (Ardelle Hagar serves as an assistant coach) and the Caxys'

collective work ethic.

"Their players will continue to grow this season," said Catanzaro. "They could make some noise in the playoffs."

Pollak and seniors Christina Quiroz and Zoe Wolfberg—three of the Caxys' six returning varsity players—make up the backbone of the team, Norman noted.

"They are working hard to keep the ball moving from our defensive end through to the forwards," said Norman. "The new and younger girls are bringing some speed and grit to the team."

Norman appreciated the opportunity to take on LFHS, a perennially strong program.

"They looked good," she said. "Their top girls are fun to watch."

LFHS visits Stevenson High School at 4:45 p.m. Friday and Oak Park and River Forest High School at 9 p.m. Saturday; LFA hosts Highland Park High School at 4:45 p.m. Friday.



Katherine St. Amand

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JUKEBOX HERO

Meet music man Steve Hill, a Minneapolis native who fell in love with Lake Bluff during a Fourth of July celebration and now spins vinyl at home in the village with his wife and three children.

BY JACK QUICK
THE NORTH SHORE WEEKEND

Enter a living room filled with the aroma of old fireplace wood and a large cabinet of old distressed records below a spinning turntable and you're likely to find Steve Hill. In addition to his role as Executive Vice President at Chubb Insurance, this father of three also sings and plays guitar in Bushwood—a Lake Bluff-based band consisting of Hill, Craig Pierson, Tom Cahill, Paul Bradley, and Hill's college buddy Michael Goldsberry.

When speaking to Hill, it's clear that he is a true music man—from his obsession with classic rock bands like Led Zeppelin and The Band to his vast collection of vintage vinyl records, ranging from crowd favorites like Bruce Springsteen, to obscure, "If You Know You Know" names such as Moby Grape.

It's safe to say Steve has lived many lives, and his journey to Lake Bluff was not straightforward. Yet along that winding journey, music seemed to be his north star.

Hill's first encounter with the North Shore came through one of the area's most cherished traditions—Fourth of July. "I was interning one summer in Schaumburg, and one of my fraternity brothers from Drake University, Mike Goldsberry, convinced me to come up to Lake Bluff for the Fourth of July. One solid Fourth of July in Lake Bluff leaves an impression."

Even though the grandiose nature of Lake Bluff's Fourth of July celebration lingered in the back of Hill's mind, he and his wife Anne still considered themselves "city people." Three kids (Max, Owen, and Madeline) and multiple cities later, the Hills finally moved to Lake Bluff to put down deep roots. Since then, you can almost always find a Hill family member somewhere in Lake Bluff—whether playing baseball, grabbing a bite to eat at Bluffington's Cafe, or venturing down to the beach for a dip.

A Minnesota native, Hill describes his upbringing in terms that sound almost cinematic. He recalls a symbiotic community where all the local Minneapolis bands knew each other and regularly played gigs together.

"I think I owe a great deal of my love of music to the Minneapolis music scene. I was born in '71, and I was about 12 years old when the Minneapolis music scene just erupted. You had acts like Hüsker Dü, Soul Asylum, The Replacements, Trip Shakespeare, and of course Prince," he says. "I was

14, hopping on the bus to go skate with all the Minneapolis punks, and that music was the soundtrack for that time in my life."

Hill credits the Minneapolis punk scene of the mid-eighties as the father to the early '90s Seattle music scene. Without the punks up north, big-name bands like Nirvana would have likely never existed.

Closely associated with his attachment to music is his bond with physical forms of music, mainly in the form of vinyl records. As soon as you walk into Hill's house, the turntable and speakers are front and center, coupled with rows and rows of classic albums. You'll find such iconic titles as Led Zeppelin III, Born to Run, The Last Waltz, and of course Dark Side of the Moon, many of them original pressings from their release dates.

What started as a necessity for Hill to listen to the albums he loves has turned into a passion for owning physical versions of incredible music.

"When I first started buying albums, it was all on vinyl," he explains. "Then by the time I was in middle school, cassettes were there, and then that eventually turned into CDs. In about '91 bands stopped pressing vinyl altogether, and it wasn't until about 2010 that there started to become a palpable interest back in vinyl records," says Hill. "For me, buying records remained a necessity. Used albums sold for a dollar and that was simply the cheapest way to consume large amounts of music."

The funny thing is that a great portion of Hill's discovery of great music was through older friends giving him old vinyl records that they didn't want, or have use for anymore. A lot of the time, it was a "one-man's trash is another man's treasure" type scenario, as the records that Hill was given were taste-expanding records. In addition to that,

he says there have been records he has come back to by chance—that initially weren't his cup of tea, but now have become some of his favorites.

"I have this theory about records," Hill explains. "There are records that right out of the gate, you're like 'oh who can't love that?' But you usually burn through those pretty quickly, it comes too easy. Then there are these other records, one's that take time to reveal themselves. I listened to them a million times, and the fact is that they're not changing, but I am, and that makes me see and feel something different than I did when I was 15, or 22, or 42."

He also shares how the 1977 record, Marquee Moon, by New York band Television, fell into the second category of his record theory. It was an album that upon first listen did not hit him, but years later, was an album that Hill came to love.

"You'll see Marquee Moon on 'best albums of all time' lists pretty consistently, and it's been that way my whole life," adds Hill. "When I first listened to it, I was kind of like



Steve Hill in concert. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK QUICK

"I want to like it, but don't quite get it" Then flash forward 15 years, all of a sudden it just sort of clicked."

Besides music, Hill is a family man at heart. His wife and children are the epicenter of his world.

"All these other things you chase in life, seem to be lacking in dimension and true value. Even though I love music, my wife and children inspire me more than anything," he says.

Today, whether he's strumming his guitar in the living room, performing with Bushwood at a local venue, or enjoying an evening with his family on the Lake Bluff beach, Hill has seamlessly woven together his passions for music and family life.

In a town that first caught his attention during a single Fourth of July celebration, he's built a life where both his musical ambitions and his role as a father can flourish. For Hill, Lake Bluff has proven to be the ideal stage for all the things that matter most.



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#HASHTAG

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ILLUSTRATION BY TOM BACHTELL

#ON MY NIGHTSTAND

The Third Gilmore Girl: A Memoir by Kelly Bishop. A friend gifted me this because my girls and I are obsessed with the show *Gilmore Girls*. I am also reading *Friends with Secrets* by Christine Gunderson for book club. Additionally, I am reading *10 to 25: The Science of Motivating Young People* by David Yeager, Ph.D. After hearing the author speak, I thought the book would be a big help in raising two tween girls.

#IN MY EARBUDS

I am listening to the podcast *Scamanda* which is a true story about a woman who faked cancer for over a decade; it's mesmerizing! As for music, while driving lots of carpools, I listen to a ton of pop music, especially Dua Lipa.

#ON MY MOBILE

I follow things that make me happy and organizations I am involved with. Of course, I follow @wings_program and @wings_nslc. My girls and I recently joined the National Charity League (NCL) Winnetka chapter and I follow @nclwinnetkail to see incredible posts of moms and daughters volunteering together. As a board member of Pitch Your Peers—Chicago, I follow @pitchyourpeerschicago to see the amazing work our board is doing to fund local Cook County nonprofits. I also have several guilty pleasures on my Instagram. I am sold on anything related to Mahjong; hoping it will help me with my weekly games. I follow @pagesix for celebrity news and @tuckernuck for clothing inspiration.

KIM FREZADOS moved to Winnetka in 2015 with her husband, Greg, and their twin daughters, Caroline and Lilly, now age 12. After spending 18 years in Chicago building a successful fundraising career at the Shedd Aquarium, The University of Chicago, and The Art Institute of Chicago, she made the decision to pause her professional work to focus on raising her children. During her 10 years on the North Shore, she has dedicated her time and talents to volunteering with a range of impactful nonprofits, as well as actively supporting her daughters' schools, Hyde Park Day School and North Shore Country Day School. She also manages her family's charitable foundation, now in its fourth generation, and has begun instilling in her daughters the values of philanthropy and charitable giving. On October 4, she will co-chair WINGS' 25th Annual Purple Tie Ball. Held during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, this event raises essential funds to support survivors. This year's theme, An Enchanted Garden of Hope, promises an unforgettable evening with captivating entertainment, a spectacular live auction, and an abundance of flowers and festive energy. In addition to her leadership on this event, she is proud to be a founding member of the WINGS North Shore Leadership Council. WINGS is the largest provider of domestic violence services in Illinois and, over the past 40 years, has provided more than one million nights of safe housing to survivors.



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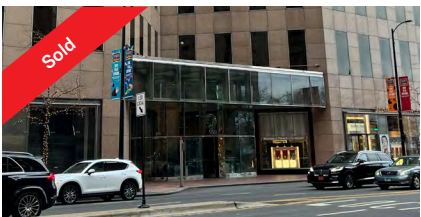
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BEHIND BAGPIPES

From PG 1

BY MONICA KASS ROGERS
THE NORTH SHORE WEEKEND

At 10 a.m. on a brilliant Tuesday morning, the sun is as bright as the plaid dresses worn by Nancy and Ron Fletcher's granddaughters. Dressed for a festive family photo, the little girls scamper 'round a bend in the path at Middlefork Farm Nature Preserve to catch up with their dad, leaving Ron and Nancy free to chat.

It is here that on Sunday, September 28 from 4 to 7 p.m., the Fletchers will co-chair the 2025 iteration of Bagpipes & Bonfire, Lake Forest Open Lands Association's (LFOLA) epic fundraiser.

"We love everything about Bagpipes & Bonfire," says Nancy. "The face painting, log tossing, Highland dancing, awe-inspiring parachute jumps and bonfire. But what brings tears to our eyes every year is the powerful performance of 'Amazing Grace' by 100 bagpipers. It's unforgettable."

Ron, clad in the Fletcher family tartan jacket he'll be wearing at the event, agrees.

"Our daughter Kate and her family join us every year," he says. "It's become a family tradition."

For the Fletchers, co-chairing the upcoming event is just one way they support the Lake Forest community and LFOLA's important work here. The couple moved to Lake Forest in 2020 to be closer to their younger children and their families. Learning about LFOLA's mission and impact on conservation, they quickly stepped up to help.

"I've served on the Board for three years and continue to be impressed by the organization, its leadership and community support," says Ron. "They accomplish so much with a small but talented and dedicated staff."

Getting down in the trenches, Ron also joined LFOLA's Wednesday work crew about a year ago.

"From what I see when Ron returns, it's a mix of good company, muddy boots, and making sure your puffy jacket doesn't get too close to a burn pile!" laughs Nancy.

The Fletcher's passion for conservation is a natural outgrowth of their upbringing and family experiences.

"We both came from families that loved the outdoors," says Nancy, who fondly remembers fishing, hunting, and snowmobiling in Minnesota and Canada.

Meanwhile, Ron grew up in Iowa next to his grandfather's truck farm and spent summers on Clear Lake or exploring America's national parks. But it was the experience of piloting planes over the changing American landscape that galvanized the Fletchers' interest in preserving open lands. Both Ron and Nancy had studied law and pursued successful



Bagpipes & Bonfire will return on September 28.
PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF LAKE FOREST OPEN LANDS ASSOCIATION.

careers—Nancy as CEO of a national trade association, and Ron as an investor, when single engine aircraft became a part of their life. Flying allowed the Fletchers to live in Washington, DC, while still spending time with family in Minnesota and visiting out-of-town children.

"My interest in conservation really took off in the 1970s after I began flying," Ron explains. "Early on, I often flew at night, seeing the stars above, farm lights below and clusters of city lights. But over time, I watched the stars fade from pollution, the farm lights disappear, and city lights spread. I became concerned for our planet as I watched in real time the open land disappear. LFOLA has given me a chance and a vehicle to participate in a local solution. I'm deeply grateful for that."

Through their family foundation, Ron and Nancy have been aiding Chicago and North Shore nonprofits, with LFOLA as a key beneficiary. One recent example? Supporting the organization's initiative to improve the trails at the Derwen Mawr Nature Preserve. Funds from the foundation have gone to create the Fletcher Family Prairie Path there.

"Volunteerism is a vital part of our retirement," adds Nancy. "For Ron at LFOLA, and I love my work with Elawa Farm, the Forest Park Conservancy and the Lake Forest



This popular fundraiser offers fun for the whole family.

Garden Club. Some retirees decide to travel, improve their golf game or build a new home. We chose to focus on family, friends and volunteerism. We are so grateful for LFOLA and to be living in Lake Forest. So many people have done so much over many years to make

this the wonderful community it is today. We want to do our small part to add to that."

Northern Trust is proud to be the presenting sponsor of Bagpipes & Bonfire. For more information or to become a patron, visit lfola.org.

Men's Health: Addressing Prostate and Sexual Health

Winnetka resident Paul suffered with prostatitis and low back pain for over 10 years. "The medications helped a little and I tried surgery but even after two procedures, I never knew if it was going to be a bad day or a worse day. Dr. Su helped me feel normal again like I could go about my life and not feel hesitant to go out with my wife or friends."



DR. KUAN SU



Call (847) 868-0408 to schedule an initial consultation or visit acupuncturenorthclinic.com

191 WAUKEGAN RD SUITE 102
NORTHFIELD, IL 60093

Dr. Kuan Su of Acupuncture North Clinic uses the time tested art of Acupuncture to help each patient relieve pain, improve sleep, and reduce chronic issues that other modalities have struggled with.

When Glenview resident David H. came to Dr. Su, he had been struggling with prostate issues for months. "It started with frequent urination, especially at night. I couldn't get a good night's sleep, and it felt like it was just getting worse. Then, I noticed some discomfort and wasn't sure what was happening." David, like many men, found himself embarrassed and reluctant to seek help, but the physical discomfort and emotional toll were undeniable. He also noticed it was starting to affect his mental well-being and social interactions.

Dr. Su, who has been treating men's health issues for over a decade, reassured David that he wasn't alone and that these conditions—prostatitis, urinary incontinence, and even erectile dysfunction—are common, but often underreported due to embarrassment. "It's easy for men to dismiss or ignore these issues, but they can impact quality of life. Physical health is tied to emotional well-being, and when one is suffering, the other can often follow," Dr. Su explained.

"After a few weeks of acupuncture, I noticed I wasn't getting up as often in the middle of the night. The discomfort was also reducing," David said. "And mentally, it was a game-changer. I wasn't constantly anxious about my health. I started to feel more like myself."

David's experience is not unique. Many men come to Dr. Su with concerns related to urinary health or sexual function—issues that, while difficult to talk about, can have a profound effect on daily life.

Take Mike R., a patient from Wilmette, who struggled with erectile dysfunction for years. "I felt like I wasn't the man I used to be. It

impacted my relationship, my confidence, and even how I viewed myself. I couldn't talk about it, and it was really hard," Mike shared.

Mike sought out acupuncture after hearing about it from a friend who had found relief from chronic pain. "I didn't think acupuncture could help with what I was going through, but I was willing to try anything. After a few sessions, I noticed I was starting to feel more like myself—more energy, less anxiety, and better function."

Dr. Su's holistic approach also focuses on lifestyle factors that can exacerbate men's health issues, such as stress and exercise. For both David and Mike, Dr. Su recommended lifestyle adjustments to help accelerate their progress. These holistic changes complemented the acupuncture treatments and further supported their recovery.

"I really appreciated the way Dr. Su handled everything with such understanding and compassion. He didn't make me feel ashamed, and he gave me the tools to take charge of my health again," Mike said. "Now, I feel like I have my life back. I'm more confident, I'm active again, and my relationship is stronger."

If you or someone you care about is dealing with prostate issues, sexual health concerns, or the emotional toll of these conditions, know that you don't have to settle. At Acupuncture North Clinic, Dr. Su provides a compassionate, holistic approach to men's health, helping his patients regain balance, vitality, and confidence.

If you're ready to take the first step toward feeling better, call today to schedule an initial consultation with Dr. Su. Your health and well-being are worth it.

Dr. Su is accepting a limited number of new patients due to high demand. In an effort to protect his current patient base, **he is limiting the number of new patients to 9 before the end of September.**

It's time you let your golden years BE GOLDEN!

CROCE PLAYS CROCE

A.J. Croce, son of legendary folk singer-songwriter Jim Croce, brings his father's music alive on stage October 9 in Skokie.

BY TRICIA DESPRES
THE NORTH SHORE WEEKEND

Singer-songwriter A.J. Croce can't visit the Chicago area without thinking of the recording of his father Jim Croce's performance at Harper College—a recording captured mere months before his untimely death and discovered many years later.

"At the time, 3M had a new two-inch reel to reel tape recorder that they were experimenting with, and they put these in a few different universities around the country that had good, qualified engineers

running them," Croce explains. "And because universities were such a hotbed of music at the time, they captured this great stuff that belonged to the artist afterwards."

Today, that recording serves as the bridge between the father he lost and the music he carries with him wherever he goes.

"Right now, I'm listening to his music every day," says Croce from his home in Nashville. "I have lots of live recordings from different places and slightly different versions of his songs, but it's the master recordings that are the most recognizable."

It's these songs—from "Operator (That's Not the Way It Feels)" to "Time in a Bottle" to "I Got a Name"—that Croce will lovingly perform when he comes to the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie on October 9 as part of his Croce Plays Croce tour.

"I stick with the originals mostly in terms of my dad's catalog," explains Croce, who will also perform music from his critically acclaimed album *Heart of the Eternal*, which has already found itself in the Top 20 on the Billboard Americana/Folk Albums chart and the Top 40 on the Billboard Current Rock Albums. "I play through my dad's albums every day because it's part of making sure that every show is great. I also take requests every night. A lot of times people will request a deeper cut and I want to make sure that I can play it as well as possible."

He laughs but make no mistake—Croce Plays Croce is a big undertaking for the 53-year-old, especially as he will visit over 30 cities in the next three months.

"I mean, it's what I love to do," Croce says. "It is a calling and it's a challenge because there's times when everyone wants to talk to you and there's times when no one does. It's a roller coaster of a business, but I can't imagine doing anything else."

It's a roller coaster of a life that Croce's father also loved living, but one that ultimately took his life at the age of 30 in a plane crash while out on tour.

A.J. was only 2 years old at the time.

A year later, Croce not only found himself still dealing with the loss of his father but the total loss of his eyesight as a result of physical abuse suffered at the hands of his mother's then-boyfriend. While portions of his eyesight were restored by the age of 10, Croce continues to face vision challenges.

But that doesn't stop him.

"I think there's a confidence in who we are at a certain age," he says quietly. "It doesn't mean there's not insecurities here and there, but I think that you get to an age that you have an identity that you understand. You have a sense of who you are in every way."

But his dad's old recordings can still take him back.

"When I was working the publishing, I would be archiving and listening to rare recordings and home recordings and demos and all of kind of stuff, more for the sake of business and less for the sake of art," Croce recalls. "So, there was an artistic element to it, but it was about making sure that the music was archived and preserved and that his legacy was preserved. And I was happy to do that behind the scenes for so many years."

But performing these songs feels different.

"When I take one of my dad's songs and put myself into it, I feel there's a deeper connection to his music," he says. "I feel like in the moments where I make it my own, I have this deeper connection. And that's the beauty of it."



A.J. Croce
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM SHEA



A.J. Croce in concert.



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THE SMASHING MACHINE

This biographical portrait of mixed martial arts icon Mark Kerr inspires in its portrayal of endurance and emotional honesty.



BY FELIX MCMILLAN,
MAN ABOUT FILM
ILLUSTRATION BY TOM BACHTELL

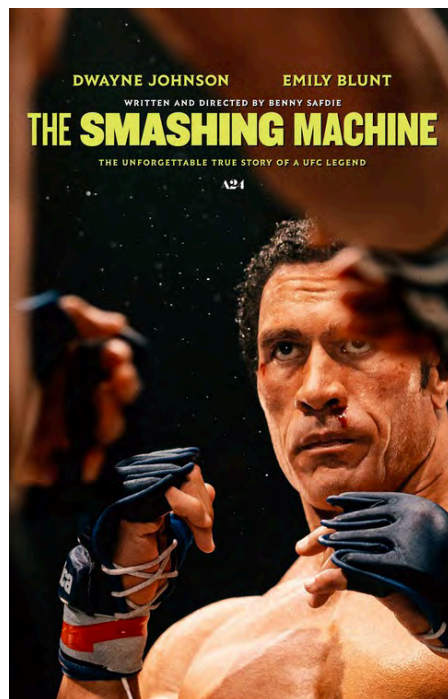
VERDICT:

Gritty, moving, and unexpectedly humane, The Smashing Machine is less about combat than about endurance. It leaves you winded, but also strangely uplifted—a reminder that in life, as in the cage, the true measure is not perfection but persistence.

It takes a rare film to make you feel the ache in your bones as keenly as in your heart. *The Smashing Machine*, Benny Safdie's biographical portrait of mixed martial arts pioneer Mark Kerr, does precisely that. For all its bruising fight sequences and sweat-drenched gyms, this is not a movie about winning belts. It is a film about enduring struggle, about dragging oneself through darkness with nothing but stubborn will for company.

Dwayne Johnson, in his most transformative role to date, inhabits Kerr with startling conviction. Gone is the familiar charisma of "The Rock." In its place is a figure of immense physical power and startling fragility. The prosthetics alter his face, but it is Johnson's disciplined restraint that carries the performance. He gives us a man who can crush opponents in the cage, yet cannot master his own fears, dependencies, and wounds.

Emily Blunt offers the perfect counterbalance as Dawn Staples. She is not written as a savior or a mere ornament, but as a steady mirror—reflecting back to Kerr both the wreckage of his choices and the possibility



of something beyond them. Their scenes together provide the film's true heartbeat: tender, exasperated, sometimes bleakly funny, but always shot through with compassion.

Safdie refuses to glamorize the violence. The fight scenes are visceral, but often filmed obliquely—through the mesh of the cage, from awkward angles that emphasize exhaustion rather than triumph.

This is deliberate. The victories are fleeting, the damage permanent. The film makes clear that the real battle is not fought under bright lights, but in quiet rooms afterwards, when no crowd is there to cheer.

There are biographical beats that feel compressed, arcs that could have been explored more fully. Yet the film's power lies not in narrative neatness but in its emotional honesty.

The Smashing Machine insists that survival itself can be heroic, even when success is ambiguous, even when the fighter is broken.

For audiences who know nothing of mixed martial arts, the film still resonates. It is about any human being who has stared down their own limits, stumbled, and chosen—against all sense—to stand again.

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NORTH SHORE FOODIE

ESTHER'S MATZO BALL SOUP (WITH NOODLES)

Aunt Esther knew best—at Rosh Hashanah, the matzo balls deserve company



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BHOFACK2

BY JOHN CONATSER
THE NORTH SHORE WEEKEND

Serves 6-8

INGREDIENTS

- 4 large eggs
- ¼ cup schmaltz (chicken fat) or neutral oil
- 1 cup matzo meal
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ cup seltzer water
- 12 cups chicken stock
- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 celery stalks, sliced
- 1 onion, halved
- 2 cups cooked egg noodles
- Fresh dill, for garnish

PREPARATION

In a bowl, whisk the eggs with schmaltz. Stir in matzo meal, baking powder, salt, and seltzer. Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. With wet hands, form mixture into golf-ball-size rounds. Drop in and simmer gently until puffed and cooked through, 30–35 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

In another pot, bring chicken stock to a simmer with carrots, celery, and onion. Cook until vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Remove onion. Add matzo balls and noodles to the broth. Warm through, ladle into bowls, and garnish with dill.

Every Jewish holiday has its debates—brisket or roast chicken, kugel (sweet or savory?), and whether matzo ball soup really needs noodles. Aunt Esther, God rest her soul, dismissed the argument with a shrug. “Of course it does,” she’d say. “Otherwise, it’s just matzo balls floating in a hot tub.”

Rosh Hashanah carries no Passover-style restrictions, which makes it the perfect time to slip a few egg noodles into the broth. The matzo balls bring comfort; the noodles bring fullness, and together they make the kind of bowl that feels like abundance at the start of a new year.

Add the apples and honey, a round challah, maybe brisket if you’re feeling ambitious—and you have a meal that says “this year, may you be well-fed and well loved.” And if an aunt overfills your bowl with noodles, consider it a blessing.



CHURN, ANDY, CHURN

Hitting the water in this weekend's Chicago River Swim will be about more than clocking a swift race time for Wilmette's Andy Walberer and hundreds of other entrants.

BY BILL MCLEAN
ILLUSTRATION BY BARRY BLITT

The winner of this Sunday's two-mile Chicago River Swim should be required to belt out a Tarzan yell after emerging from the body of water known for being dyed green every St. Patrick's Day.

Johnny Weissmuller, after all, portrayed the Ape Man in 12 movies and finished in first place the last time—in 1927—the Chicago River's main stem served as a competitive waterway for swimmers.

At 7 a.m. on September 21, some 500 qualified open-water swimmers will hear the first gun at the Dearborn Street Bridge and propel until they reach the finish at the Clark Street Bridge.

Have you prepared your lungs for a victory shout, Andy Walberer?

"I'm hoping to finish in the top 25 percent," says the 53-year-old, who lives in Wilmette, trains often in Lake Michigan, and is one of only 335 humans to have achieved the Open Water Triple Crown—completing the English Channel (20.9 miles), Catalina Channel (20.2), and the Manhattan Island 20 Bridges (28.5) swims.

"The views of Chicago's architecture during the swim will be awesome," he adds. "Will make it special, too. But what will make the swim truly unique is the Chicago River itself. It's a renewal story."

The Chicago River Swim is a milestone for the City of Big Shoulders, celebrating environmental progress, community impact, and a renewed connection to the river.

The river is at its cleanest levels on record.

Proceeds from the event will benefit ALS research at the Ozdinler Lab at Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine and youth swim lessons at the Kroc Center in the Pullman area of Chicago.

Two-time Olympic swimmer and 14-time World Champion Olivia Smoliga (a Glenbrook South High School graduate), who earned a gold medal as a relay member at the Rio 2016 Summer Olympics, is another Chi-



Andy Walberer

What will make the swim truly unique is the Chicago River itself. It's a renewal story.

cago River Swim entrant.

Walberer attended West Catholic High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and raced for the Falcons' swimming team all four years, mostly as a 500-yard freestyler. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering (Chemical) at the University of Michigan, he earned his PhD in Chemical Engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

But his commitment to the books in college didn't slow him down in the pool.

"I was a faster swimming at the age of 28 than I was at 18," says Walberer, who did not suit up for Michigan's Big Ten swimming team but won a national championship in 1993—as a leader on the University of Michigan Solar

Car Team.

Walberer met his future wife, DePauw University graduate Jani, while training one day at a natatorium. All of their children—Jack, 22; Emily, 19; Reid, 15; and Abby, 13—have climbed start blocks and raced as swimmers.

The pandemic paved Andy Walberer's path to marathon swimming (minimum distance: 10 kilometers).

"Pools were closed for most of 2020, so a group of five of us swam regularly in Lake Michigan," recalls Walberer, who lives three blocks from the lake. "One of the guys in the group competed in the Chicago Skyline Swim (23 miles) that year, and I witnessed the swim from a kayak, as part of his support crew."

The experience spurred Walberer to try his hand—as well as his other hand, his shoulders, his core, his legs, and his heart—in the 2021 Chicago Skyline Swim.

"That was the hardest thing I'd ever done," says Walberer, who logs between 25,000–35,000 yards per week when he's in full training mode. "My shoulders, my hands, and my wrists were all sore after that swim. I was spent psychologically, too, having swum against the waves."

"I then slept for 36 hours straight."

Walberer completed the first leg of his Triple Crown in July 2022, conquering the Catalina Channel Swim near Long Beach, California. That swim started at 10:30 p.m.

Only a month later, he circumnavigated Manhattan Island at the 20 Bridges Swim test. Turnarounds don't get much quicker than that in the Open Water world.

About a year before churning the English Channel from England to France in 2024 to cap off his Triple Crown, Walberer weathered a variety of Kaiwi Channel challenges between the islands of Molokai and Oahu in Hawaii.

The first significant obstacle was a cookiecutter shark.

It had attached itself to Walberer's chest in hour six.

"Grabbed it, got it off me, and then I threw it," he says. "I'd been warned about the aggressive sea life in Kaiwi."

The second major snag?

Another not-so-sweet cookiecutter shark.

Walberer shrugged off that bite, too, and swam for nine more hours.

"It's good to have athletic goals in addition to professional goals," says Walberer, a partner and the leader of Global Chemicals Practice at Kearney, a Chicago-based management consulting firm that advises governments and businesses.

"Talking about my deep interest in marathon swimming with others has allowed me to ask, 'So what are you passionate about outside of work?'" he continues. "I enjoy hearing about what energizes and excites people."

The North Shore Weekend

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