

DAILY Southtown

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Homewood teacher dies of COVID-19

39-year-old had been hospitalized for weeks due to complications

By Mike Nolan
Daily Southtown

A 39-year-old teacher from Homewood who had been hospitalized the last several weeks with complications stemming from COVID-19 has died.

Cherie Garza, a reading specialist at Crete-Monee Middle School in University Park, had been at Loyola University Medical Center

since late July, with pneumonia brought on by the virus followed by bacterial pneumonia affecting not only her lungs but her heart and kidneys as well, according to her family.

She died peacefully Monday afternoon, according to her family.

In a message Tuesday to district families, Kara Coglianesi, superintendent of Crete-Monee School District 201-U, described Garza as “an outstanding teacher, colleague and friend to so many.”

“Our students and staff at Crete-

Monee Middle School will miss her motivational speeches, volunteerism, love of reading, cooking, all things musical theater, and her undying devotion to her beloved Chicago Cubs,” Coglianesi wrote.

Garza had been at Crete-Monee Middle School since 2012. Before that she worked for four years as a reading specialist in Homewood Elementary District 153.

Garza had held off getting the COVID-19 shot as she did more

research, particularly in light of the fact her mother has had severe reactions to medicine, such as the flu vaccine, and was initially advised by her own doctor to hold off, her sister, Janene Preston, told the Daily Southtown last month.

She said at the time the family hoped Garza’s health struggle would prompt those wavering on getting the vaccine to be inoculated.

Earlier in July, Garza started out with muscle aches one day, then a fever the next and ended up testing positive for COVID-19, her sister

said.

On July 19 she was taken by ambulance to Franciscan Health in Munster, Indiana, before being airlifted to Loyola on July 23, according to Preston.

Garza’s and Preston’s parents, Gene and Jan Kiepura, live in Homewood, and Gene is an elder at Living Creek Christian Church in Monee.

Preston said her brother, Jacob Kiepura, died in 1992 at age 14 when he was in a car crash while on a mission trip in Mexico.

mnolan@tribpub.com



Garza



Naturally fascinating

Suzy Lyttle, a program coordinator for the Forest Preserve District of Will County, and host of the video series “The Buzz,” takes to a kayak during an episode filmed at McKinley Woods in Channahon. **FPD OF WILL COUNTY**

Online videos featuring Will County Forest Preserves gaining buzz

By Bill Jones
For Daily Southtown

When the Forest Preserve District of Will County set out in the summer of 2020 to do a monthly nature show as a way to stay connected with forest preserve users amid the COVID-19 pandemic, host Suzy Lyttle said they knew from the start they wanted a very specific vibe: educational and informative but laid back, something with which people could connect.

“We don’t want to just give a book report,” Lyttle said. “We want to make sure this is exciting.”

The result, a program called

“The Buzz,” connected not only with users of the forest preserves but also the National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials. The organization recognized the show earlier this year with a 2020 award in the Marketing and Communications division. NACPRO recognizes excellence in parks and recreation across the nation, and its award committee noted it was impressed with the quality and humor of the Will County show.

Lyttle, who celebrated her eighth anniversary with the forest preserve district on Aug. 5, said it was “super exciting” to get the news that “The Buzz” had been

recognized.

“It took me a while to sink in that it’s national,” she said. “It’s super awesome that our little show is making big waves across the country.”

Chad Merda, the forest preserve district’s digital communications manager, films and edits each episode. He said it meant a lot to win an award for “The Buzz.”

“We put a lot of time into each episode,” Merda said. “It’s nice to see we’re getting a positive response and feedback.”

Changing focus

Lyttle’s job as an interpretive

naturalist has always involved educating people and helping them to connect with nature. Typically, that means in-person programs out in nature, but COVID-19 forced a pivot away from those. Lyttle’s efforts quickly shifted to Zoom and Facebook Live, and she loved the work they were doing in the virtual realm. It was nice to have an outlet through video, so they started talking about how they could take those concepts to the next level.

“I just wanted to do something bigger,” said Merda, who has been with the district since March 2016. “A longer format allows us to go more in-depth into topics, lean into our experts more than the

other videos.”

Furthermore, “The Buzz” was an opportunity to showcase different preserves and animals around the county, just as more and more people were turning to outdoor entertainment and reconnecting with nature amid the pandemic.

“A lot of people who visit our visitors centers are like, ‘I had no idea this was here,’” Lyttle said. “To highlight some of the special things that are right in our backyard is one of the reasons we did this whole show.”

Merda said they knew they wanted a single host for the show

Turn to Videos, Page 2

Little Company of Mary site of a major medical advance in 1950



Ted Slowik

Edmund Lawler’s new book about doctors who pioneered a kidney transplant in 1950 at Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park begins with an account about how the procedure has been largely forgotten.

Lawler describes how visitors to a Chicago-area display that documents milestones in organ transplant history are often surprised to learn of the event. “That can’t possibly be right,” Lawler quotes a source as saying. “I’ve never heard about that, and I’m from Chicago.”

The historic event seems even more astonishing 71 years later because of where it occurred. One

would expect doctors to achieve the first procedure of such magnitude at a major research center in Boston or Paris, or perhaps one of Chicago’s big university hospitals.

“They are amazed the transplant took place at a community hospital like Little Company — better known for delivering babies than for originating medical breakthroughs,” Lawler writes.

Lawler’s captivating introduction draws readers into “The Graft: How a Pioneering Operation Sparked the Modern Age of Organ Transplants.” Publisher Anthem Press of London provided a copy for review.

“I’m glad to be able to tell the story because it’s been lost to history,” Lawler, 68, said during a telephone interview from his home in New Buffalo, Michigan.

Readers may recognize the surname. I have written columns about Edmund Lawler’s uncle,

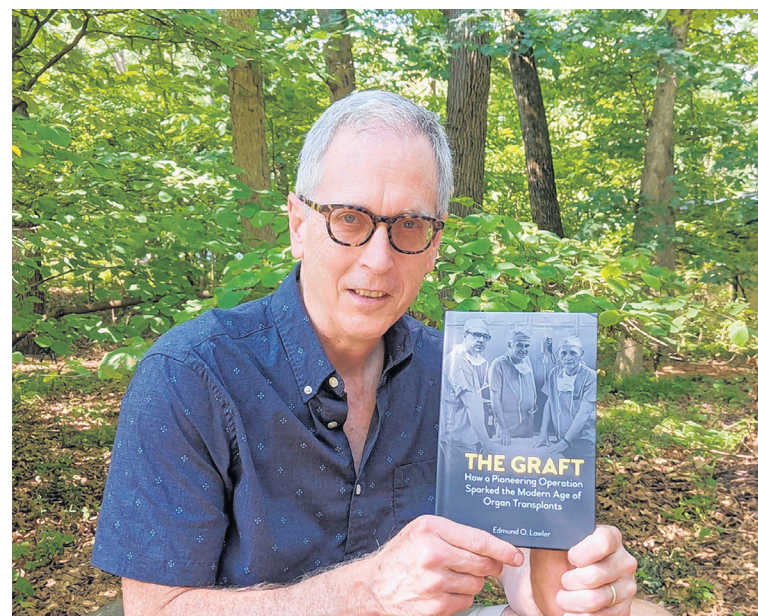
Jerry Lawler of Palos Heights, a retiree who wrote a delightful memoir about his career as a commercial pilot for TWA.

Good writing runs in the family. Edmund Lawler teaches journalism at DePaul University. He was an editor and reporter at various newspapers and worked for Crain’s and Associated Press. He previously has written six business books.

“The Graft” is a family affair. Lawler told me he decided to tackle the topic after his uncle encouraged him for years to write the book. One of the two main doctors profiled in the nonfiction account is the late Richard Lawler, who was Jerry Lawler’s uncle and great uncle of Edmund.

The other physician instrumental in the procedure was the late James West, who later developed drug and alcohol addiction

Turn to Slowik, Page 3



Edmund Lawler holds a copy of a book he wrote about doctors who transplanted a kidney into a patient at Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park in 1950. **EDMUND LAWLER**



Tom Skilling’s forecast High 82 Low 63

Chicago Weather Center: Forecast on back page

Vol. 42 No. 195



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BRIDGE

East-West vulnerable, South deals

<p>West ♠ 10 9 5 4 ♥ Q J 10 3 ♦ K Q J 10 4 ♣ Void</p>	<p>North ♠ J 3 ♥ 8 5 ♦ 9 6 5 ♣ K 9 8 5 3 2</p>	<p>East ♠ K Q 8 ♥ 9 7 2 ♦ 8 7 3 2 ♣ A J 7</p>
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Today's deal is from a recent tournament in Australia. New Zealand expert James Coutts, now living in Australia, was South. Coutts won the opening diamond lead with his ace and was quite pleased with his contract. He led a low club to dummy's king at trick two, hoping to claim if the trumps split 2-1. West's discard made this deal far more difficult.

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♦	3♣*	3♦

5♣ All pass

***Pre-emptive**

Opening lead: King of ♦

East captured dummy's king with the ace and shifted to the king of spades. Coutts won with his ace and led a spade to dummy's jack and East's queen. East shifted to a heart, which Coutts won with his ace and then ruffed a spade in dummy. A diamond was ruffed in hand and Coutts then cashed the king of hearts and ruffed a heart. A club to the 10, taking the marked finesse, left this position:

<p>West ♠ 10 ♥ Q ♦ Q ♣ Void</p>	<p>North ♠ Void ♥ Void ♦ 9 ♣ 9 8</p>	<p>East ♠ Void ♥ Void ♦ 8 7 ♣ J</p>
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Coutts cashed the queen of clubs to draw the last trump, and West could not defend the position. West held the top card in all three side suits, but any discard would give Coutts his eleventh trick. East would have done better by playing on diamonds when he won his ace of clubs, but that does nothing to diminish Coutts's terrific play.

— Bob Jones, tcaeditors@tribpub.com

Blue Island man charged in connection with I-57 shooting

By Mike Nolan
Daily Southtown

A Blue Island man has been charged with attempted first-degree murder in a shooting Friday on Interstate 57 that police said stemmed from a domestic disturbance.

Kevin Albrecht, 42, was taken into custody Saturday after a number of police agencies and the state police SWAT team swarmed an area near 163rd Place and Ridgeland Avenue in Tinley Park.

State police said they were notified just before 11:30 a.m. Friday of a report of a shooting in the north-bound lanes of I-57 at 147th Street/Sibley Boulevard.

The driver and only occupant of the vehicle that was shot at was a 42-year-old woman from Manhattan, who was not hurt although her vehicle was struck by gunfire, according to state police. Police said the shooting was related to a domestic disturbance.

Police said both vehicles were traveling north, and

Albrecht fired shots at the woman's vehicle. Albrecht fled and the woman was able to drive away and flag down a state trooper, police said.

The investigation led police to Tinley Park on Saturday and state police said at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, officers were in the 6000 block of 163rd Place and saw Albrecht fleeing on foot.

Multiple agencies were involved including state police SWAT team members, with officers

establishing a perimeter, state police said. Albrecht was apprehended at about 3 p.m. northwest of 159th Street and Ridgeland, police said.

Felony attempted murder and aggravated discharge of a firearm charges against Albrecht were approved Sunday by the Cook County state's attorney's office, and Albrecht is in custody at the Cook County Jail. He is next due to appear Oct. 4 at the Markham courthouse.

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Speak Out

What's Speak Out?

Speak Out allows readers to comment on the issues of the day. Email Speak Out at speakout@southtownstar.com or call 312-222-2427. Please limit comments to 30 seconds or about 120 words and give your first name and your hometown.

When a minor hijacks a car, nine times out of 10 it's not for him. He's working for someone higher up. I say first change the law and let carjackers know they will no longer be charged as a minor. Also, get to the root of the problem and find out the person's or people's names that these carjackers are working for. It's time to change your strategy because what's being done now is not working. So far, all that is being done is we are fattening frogs for snakes.
BJ, Hazel Crest

any conditions, consider doing any of the above because we know organized religion is a complete bunch of bunk.
Dave, Oak Lawn

To Rus of Tinley Park, pertaining to the railroad crossing on 80th Avenue: It's not Tinley Park's job to maintain the railroad crossing. It's Metra's job, if he wants to drop a dime and give them a call. I'm sure they're aware of it, though.
Kathy, Elwood

After watching the Democratic way the War in Afghanistan was ended, is Joe Biden the man you want to run our country for three and a half more years? Our open borders will allow the Taliban, Islamic militants and other terrorists to get on a plane bound for Mexico and walk across the border into our country. The news media has continued to cover for your president. I'm disgusted with where our country's headed. We should organize rescue for all Americans we left behind. Maybe at 85 I'm too old to fight but I'm big enough to be used for a sandbag. We leave no one behind. Let's go get them, America. Stand up for the Americans we left behind.

Here we are on the 20th anniversary of 9/11. When it comes to carnage, nothing compares to religion. You may be Christian and say, "Well, my religion never flew planes into buildings," and that is true but your religion did promote slavery. Your religion did carry on inquisitions. People who promoted your religion burned others at the stake. Still other people who called themselves Christians hung young girls as witches. At the pope's behest your religion carried out the Crusades. Christianity has plenty to be sorry for and Christians should be on their knees apologizing to nonbelievers who never ever, under



Chicago police Superintendent David Brown addresses reporters during a news conference in March to announce updates on a vehicular hijacking task force operation.
JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Don, Chicago Heights

It seems as though some states are voting on abortion restrictions. Well, I'll go along with that except for one thing. I believe that when people vote on abortion laws, it should be like a general election with the exception of one thing: No male person can vote for or against the law. It should be women only. After all, women are the ones who are producing children for us and they have the say over their bodies, not men like us. We're just the standbys. We caused those women to be pregnant. Let the women decide one way or the other. It's just a thought.
John, Bridgeport

Please stop with the President Donald Trump and Grand Old Party hypocrite nonsense. Before you start

calling names, do research or at least pay attention. Trump's date to withdraw from Afghanistan was tentative. The exit was conditional. It was negotiable and a work in progress. President Joe Biden or his handlers went in and botched the exit, leaving equipment right down to military uniforms. Other countries destroyed the equipment so the enemies wouldn't benefit from it. Also, Americans were left behind. We had none of this during Trump's four years. There was a great economy and prosperity. There's something sick about defending Biden's administration. Wake up. Worry about the mess now. There's way more to this Afghan situation than presented.
Maggie, Orland Park



Lottery numbers

For yesterday's numbers and recent drawings, go to chicagotribune.com/lottery or use your mobile device to scan the code at left.

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Videos

from Page 1

rather than a rotating role, and Lyttle stood out on camera because "she's in tune with what people respond to." Lyttle said after working with crowds, it felt natural to get in front of a camera. The right attitude is crucial for both, she said. "Excitement and enthusiasm — it's contagious," Lyttle said. "If (I can) keep talking and sharing this passion with everybody, it doesn't matter to me if there's an audience or camera."

The show debuted in July 2020, when Merda said the district was seeing "a huge

uptick in forest preserve usage" and social media interaction. He said the response was immediate and "overwhelmingly positive."

"It's been a great experience," he said. "I'm really happy we were able to launch something like this and showcase what Will County has to offer."

Making adventure films

The team has an eye toward what is happening each particular month in the forest preserves when planning episodes of "The Buzz." Merda said they try to make the topics interactive as well.

"We have a pretty big social media following, and we monitor and read every single comment that comes in," Merda said. "So we have a pretty good pulse on what people respond to, what people have questions about."

They also want to get people to check out new spaces. Lyttle said oftentimes people know the preserve they live near but not much about the rest of the district. "The Buzz" is out to open their eyes. With each episode, they try to make people feel involved, motivated and inspired to check out new places in the forest preserves.

"That's the whole idea behind this," Merda said. But sometimes, "The Buzz" simply goes with the flow of nature. Merda said much depends on what they can actually capture on film any given day.

"The thing with wildlife is it's highly unpredictable," he said.

Lyttle said hosting "The Buzz" has been an adventure. The team has filmed in

all kinds of weather, including launching kayaks in December to reach nesting islands on Lake Renwick Heron Rookery Nature Preserve, where they found nests, bones and other things left behind. Merda was almost completely underwater while filming beaver activity at the Monee Reservoir. And they followed crews to film a prescribed burn.

"The fire episode was quite wild," Lyttle said. "It was very smoky and very hot."

Lyttle said her eyes were watering and she did not think she looked her best on camera that day, but those moments have been worth it to introduce people to flora and fauna in the preserves. The hope is that in addition to people being motivated to see new places, they will care about new animals or even plant native species in their own yards — "homework," as Lyttle calls it. "I like sharing my passion," Lyttle said. "It's just fun as a platform. We don't have to go all the way to the rainforest to have awesome things. This is just your local preserve that can be right in your backyard. We have salamanders, but you may have never known we have salamanders. It's just really important for me to highlight all these hidden treasures and encourage people to take action."

Merda said a favorite for him was July's episode, which was completely shot by drone.

"It was a lot of work, having to go around and fly each of the preserves, but it really gave people a different view," he said. "Some of the kayaking ones have been pretty fun, because it's a totally different experience and it gives people a different view of some of

the places they may never go into. There's different little surprises."

It seems to be working. Lyttle said she is recognized from her appearances on the show, and people are coming out to see places they watched on "The Buzz." And some have told her the show has inspired them to get involved. She encourages those folks to consider working for the district.

"If you want to be outside, there's plenty of jobs here at the forest preserves," Lyttle said.

Merda said the district plans to continue producing "The Buzz" beyond the pandemic because of the positive response, with an aim toward furthering support for the preservation and protection of natural areas.

"It's nice to see that we're putting this out there and we're not just putting this into a black hole," Merda said. "As far as I know, we're the only conservation district in the area that's doing things like this. It's entertaining. We have fun with it. It's not totally serious. We're lighthearted and fun, but people are also learning while they're watching it. We're fortunate to be able to go and shoot a bunch of this stuff and have the support of the forest preserve district."

"The Buzz" airs live on the forest preserve district's Facebook and YouTube pages at 8:30 p.m. on the last Wednesday of each month. But recordings remain available in those spots and on the district's Instagram page. It also airs on cable in New Lenox, Tinley Park, Joliet, Romeoville and Naperville.

Bill Jones is a freelance reporter for the Daily Southtown.

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