

LIFE+TRAVEL

‘Monumental’

An Illinois historian’s graphic novel spotlights his ancestor: Oscar Dunn, the first elected Black lieutenant governor in Louisiana and the United States.

Peace and simplicity: Midwest communities with Amish families approach tourism with varying degrees of interest, creativity and commercialism.



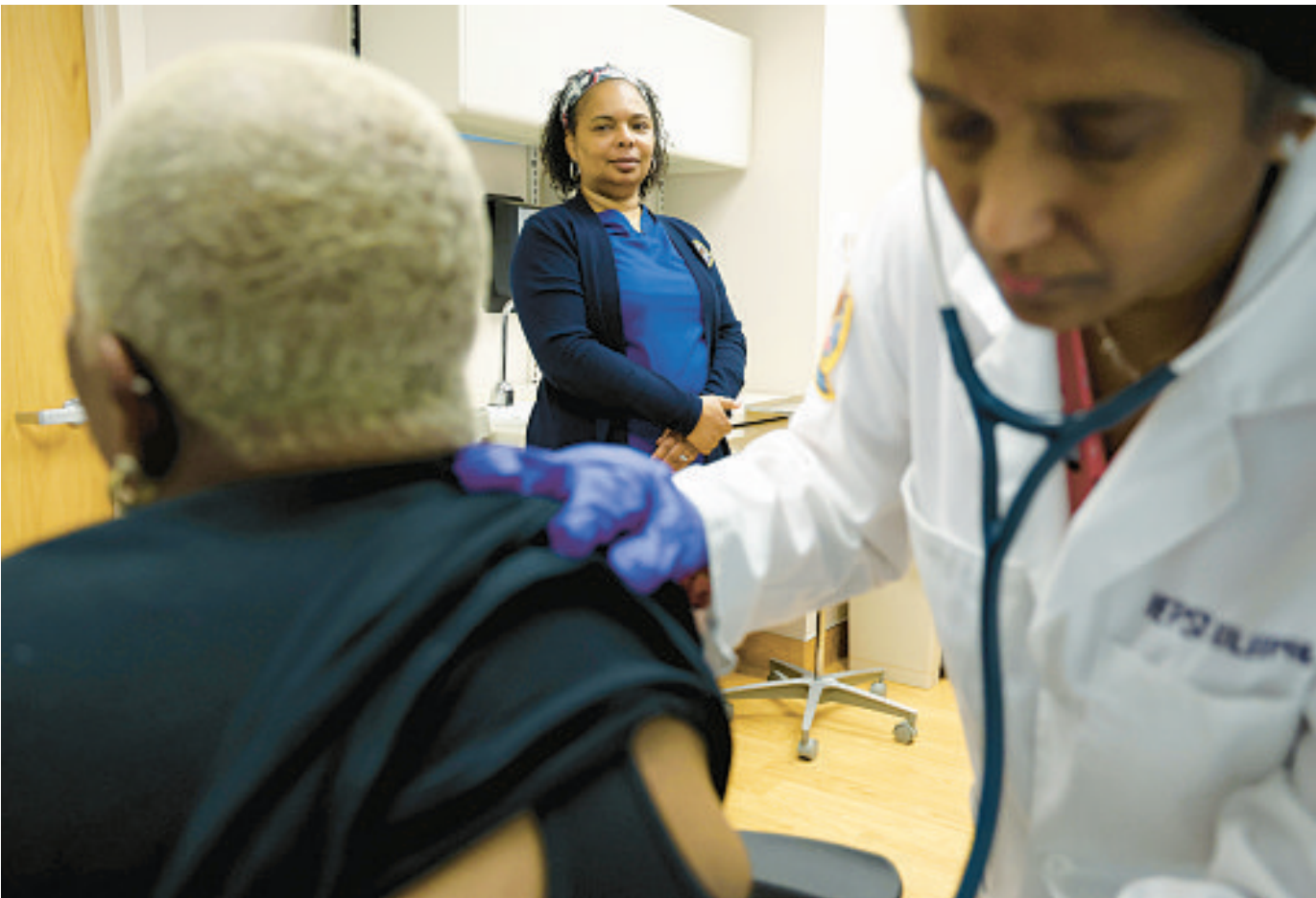
SWEEPING EPIC

‘Oppenheimer’ leads critic’s picks for films that will strike gold at 96th Academy Awards. **Michael Phillips** in **A+E**

JORDAN STRAUSS/INVISION/AP

MEDICAL MISCONDUCT PART 4 OF 4

Chaperones may be one way to prevent sexual abuse of patients — but health systems don’t always require them for sensitive exams



KEEPING WATCH

Story by **Lisa Schencker and Emily Hoerner** | Photographs by **Stacey Wescott** | Chicago Tribune

Tearha Hill typically stands to one side of the room, with her eyes trained on the medical exam happening in front of her.

The licensed practical nurse watches the doctor. Every few seconds, she looks at the patient’s face, searching for signs of distress.

As a chaperone in the Women’s Health Clinic at Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital, Hill is present for sensitive procedures including Pap smears, breast exams and pelvic exams, acting as a witness and helping to protect both patients and doctors.

“As a chaperone, we have to ensure patient and provider comfort — for safety, privacy and dignity,” said Hill, who serves in that role in addition to her regular duties.

Preventing patient sexual abuse is an issue that’s gained national attention amid the fallout from scandals such as Dr. Larry Nassar’s abuse of female athletes; the hundreds of allegations leveled at former University of Southern California gynecologist George Tyndall; and Columbia University’s acknowledged failures regarding gynecologist Robert Hadden, also accused of sexually abusing

Cheryl Stevenson, center, a licensed practical nurse and chaperone, watches as Dr. Hepsi Kalapala, right, examines Quying Holmes at Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital in October.

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hundreds of patients.

In Illinois, the Tribune recently exposed how several large Illinois health systems allowed health care workers who were accused of sexually abusing patients to continue working, sometimes leading to additional harm.

In one of the most egregious local cases, at least 30 patients have accused gynecologist Fabio Ortega of sexually assaulting them. Several women alleged in lawsuits he assaulted them after NorthShore University HealthSystem — now known as Endeavor Health — already knew he was under police investigation. Ortega pleaded guilty in 2021 to sexually abusing two former patients and was sentenced to three years in prison; his medical license was permanently revoked. Endeavor has settled 21 civil lawsuits related to Ortega.

The Tribune found that Endeavor and other health systems have faced few consequences from state or federal regulators for allowing providers accused of sexually abusing patients to continue working. Sometimes, all regulators required was a plan to do better in the future.

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Hydrogen energy delivers hope, concerns

Major investment seeks expansion centered in Midwest

By **Karina Atkins**
Chicago Tribune

Hydrogen, the most abundant element on earth, could be key to fighting climate change, but only if private companies, local communities and the federal government can agree on how to regulate it.

The stakes are high. Without a robust infrastructure to produce and deploy hydrogen energy, the U.S. will lose out on a crucial clean energy source. However, bringing this infrastructure to scale may be fraught with unintended

consequences like skyrocketing consumer electricity prices, worsening air pollution and even more greenhouse gas emissions.

The Biden administration has touted hydrogen energy as essential to achieving net-zero emissions nationally by 2050, and made a historic \$7 billion dollar investment to build seven regional clean hydrogen hubs across the country, including a Midwest hub.

The Midwest Alliance for Clean Hydrogen (MachH2), a partnership of over 70 private and public entities, has been awarded up to \$1 billion of these federal funds to create the hub, which will span Illinois, Indiana and Michigan.

Turn to **Hydrogen**, Page 2



Frank Pettis, a community organizer at Clean Power Lake County, stands at the Yeoman Creek Landfill on in Waukegan Feb. 28.
VINCENT ALBAN/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

ELECTION 2024

A fealty in Trump’s delegates in Illinois

Some tout election denials, others say vaccines were useless

By **Rick Pearson and Jeremy Gorner**
Chicago Tribune

The 51 Illinoisans running as Republican Party delegates in the March 19 primary who are pledged to make Donald Trump the GOP nominee for president include two members of Congress, several candidates for the U.S. House, former and current locally elected officials and a few frequent and often unsuccessful contenders for other public offices across the state.

Many of Trump’s delegate candidates share the former president’s false claims that the 2020 presidential election was stolen and the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol was merely a protest of “patriots.” But a deeper examination of the delegates’ backgrounds, their public comments and social media posts shows some also have repeatedly promoted the belief that COVID-19 vaccines were useless — including a state veterans’ home nurse — and some have pushed conspiracy theories that 5G phone transmission towers, wind turbines and QR codes lead to digital government tracking.

Despite the Republicans’ call for election integrity in the wake of Trump’s 2020 loss, one of his downstate delegate candidates was previously indicted for forgery over his petitions in a failed bid for Congress. The case was later dismissed on a technicality.

Another Trump delegate candidate is a former congressional

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INSIDE



PRIME VIDEO

Rockford Peaches still resonate today

Why the “A League of Their Own” television show continues to resonate with fans — and why the Rockford Peaches remain timeless.
Chicago Sports

War saps festive mood of Ramadan

Preparations in Jerusalem for the Muslim fasting month have been subdued because of the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, now in its sixth month. **Nation & World**

Mayor Lightfoot’s defining day

Read an excerpt of Tribune reporter Gregory Royal Pratt’s new book, “The City is Up for Grabs: How Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot Led and Lost a City in Crisis.” **Opinion**, Page 15