

Top-tier TV and movies

In a tumultuous year for Hollywood, standouts include Chicago-set “The Bear” and Netflix’s “The Diplomat,” writes Nina Metz. And movie critic Michael Phillips looks back at the top 10 best (and worst!) films of the year.

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WAITING IN FEAR

A migrant mother from Venezuela struggles to find health care in Chicago

By Nell Salzman | Chicago Tribune

Esperanza Mendez worries she may be dying, though she doesn’t say it out loud to her two young children. There is a cyst on her neck, which she said feels like it’s putting pressure on her brain and causing pain in her head. The lump has been growing for three years, and now her whole body aches, especially her arms and legs. She has trouble opening and closing her fists. “I feel terrible. My head hurts so much,” she often says while pressing her thumbs on her temple. “*Me siento muy mal. Me duele mucho la cabeza.*”

A few weeks ago, worried about her health — as well as that of her kids, who she suspects are malnourished from their journey migrating to the United States from Venezuela this summer — Esperanza set out to get medical care in her new city. She entered a public health system that is already feeling the strain of caring for thousands of other uninsured people with exacerbated health needs — emotional, physical and more. She recently spent 14 hours waiting for care in the emergency department at one of the busiest Level 1 trauma centers in the nation. The prolonged wait time, exhaustion and uncertainty that Esperanza, 47, and her kids experienced are symptoms of a U.S. health care system that caters to people with citizenship, medical insurance and means. More than 24,000 migrants — mostly from Venezuela — have come to Chicago since August 2022, and are depending on health care from a patchwork of hospital emergency departments and free and charitable medical clinics. Esperanza was unable to receive

Turn to Migrant, Page 10

Above, Pedro Mendez, 9, sits with his mother, Esperanza Mendez, while she waits to get a CT scan at Stroger Hospital in Chicago on Nov. 21. Esperanza wanted her children Yuledy and Pedro to be seen for various medical concerns after their 52-day journey from Venezuela to Chicago, and Esperanza wanted to be seen for a lump on her neck. ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Calling Solis could be risky business

Former alderman expected to testify in Burke corruption trial

By Jason Meisner, Megan Crepeau and Ray Long
Chicago Tribune

In video after video, jurors in Ed Burke’s federal corruption trial have gotten an unfiltered view of a Chicago powerhouse. Burke, pink-faced and impeccably dressed, swears and swaggers and schmoozes. He waxes eloquent about Chicago history. And, federal authorities allege, he speaks about extracting private law business from people with issues at City Hall as casually as if it’s the weather.

Daniel Solis, the man wearing the hidden camera, is seen only in flashes: jittery close-up views of his wristwatch, his fidgety fingers, the zipper of his jacket.

But this week, jurors could finally meet him.

Burke’s own attorneys could call the alderman-turned-FBI mole as a witness as early as Monday. The crucial decision to put him on the stand will shape the rest of Burke’s landmark racketeering trial.

It would be a chance to try to undermine Solis’ credibility, and by extension the highly damaging recordings he made. But that strategy could blow back on Burke just as easily, experts told the Tribune.

“It’s a bit of a chess game,” said Nancy DePodesta, a former federal prosecutor now in private practice. “The government made the first move and decided not to call Solis ... If the defense doesn’t call Solis then they’re left with the tapes, (and) you don’t get to cross-examine the tapes.”

“It’s obviously risky, and it could backfire that they’re calling Solis,” she continued. “But on the other hand, maybe it’s a bit of a Hail Mary.”

Prosecutors decided months ago not to put Solis on the stand, apparently betting that the recordings would speak for themselves.

Turn to Trial, Page 14

INSIDE



MATT SLOCUM/AP

Ohtani to Dodgers in 10-year, \$700M deal

What’s next for the Cubs, who were among those vying for him? Plus, Paul Sullivan on the circus around the courtship. **Chicago Sports**

Israel squeezes Palestinians in Gaza

Warplanes strike safe zones in southern Gaza on Saturday as residents struggle without food and sleep outside. **Nation & World**

Chicago at a pivotal moment for political left

North Side alderman looks for way to bridge socialism, pragmatism

By Alice Yin
Chicago Tribune

Ald. Andre Vasquez was almost done arranging chairs inside a barren church basement in Edgewater when he stopped to listen to a woman deliver a warning. The Rev. Beth Brown, a member of the Chicago police community commission, began tallying on her fingers the reasons Mayor Brandon Johnson should scrap his new plan to house migrants in encampments staffed by a security contractor. Too many people in tents that wouldn’t withstand winter temperatures, overseen by a controversial private company, Brown said. Vasquez, Johnson’s hand-

Turn to Vasquez, Page 2



Ald. Andre Vasquez, 40th, helps set up a tarp for a break-dancing event in Chicago’s Lincoln Square neighborhood on Sept. 10. ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

