

# Chicago Tribune



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*“This bus, if you stay on long enough, it’s so much fun. But you have to have spirit for it.”*

— “Peppermint the Elf,” a 21-year Chicago Transit Authority employee



Santa Claus with Mia, 10, from left, Maya, 11, and Shakita, 10, on the CTA Holiday Bus at West Jackson Boulevard and South Austin Avenue in Chicago on Dec. 8. Santa and his elves will ride 16 of the CTA’s 128 bus lines by Christmas. **JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

## SNOWFLAKES, CANDY CANES AND 36,000 LED LIGHTS

The making of the CTA holiday fleet

By Ilana Arougheti | Chicago Tribune

Early in December, “Peppermint the Elf” said she opened the door of a Chicago Transit Authority bus for a commuter in a suit and tie. The man boarded the bus, awash in red and green light. The poles for standing riders were striped red and white like candy canes, with tinsel wreaths and reindeer all over the walls. The air was heavy with cinnamon and Bing Crosby.

The man in the suit sat down on the CTA Holiday Bus, his chair patterned with snowflakes. He accepted a miniature candy cane from Peppermint. Then, she said, he burst into tears, saying that he felt like a kid again.

He’s far from the first Chicago commuter to stumble into a surprise winter wonderland on the holiday fleet, an elaborate 32-year tradition employees say brings nostalgic joy to customers.

“This bus, if you stay on long enough, it’s so much fun,” said Peppermint, a 21-year Chicago Transit Authority employee. “But you have to have spirit for it.”

All of the seasonal characters on the CTA’s

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## Jurors hear final arguments on Burke

Prosecutor tells panel to focus on ‘words that came out of his mouth’

By Jason Meisner, Megan Crepeau and Ray Long  
Chicago Tribune

For all of Edward Burke’s speeches, his waxing on about Chicago history and his self-anointed role as City Council parliamentarian, it was the words he spoke when he thought no one was listening that mattered most, prosecutors said in closing out arguments in Burke’s corruption trial Friday.

Among them: “The cash register has not rung yet,” “They can go (expletive) themselves,” and “Did we land the tuna?”

As those now-notorious phrases were posted on screens for the jury, as well as an image of a smirking Burke behind his City Hall office desk as he talked about the ringing cash register, Assistant U.S. Attorney Sarah Streicker said it was their ticket into Burke’s real frame of mind.

“What’s the best evidence of Burke’s intent? The words that came out of his mouth,” Streicker said in her rebuttal argument, which wrapped up a marathon 16 hours of closings from prosecutors and defense attorneys over the course of three days. “And those words were captured on recordings.”

Burke used his immense power as head of the Finance Committee to tawl for business for his private law firm, Streicker said, and his position gave him a unique way to shake down his marks.

Streicker reminded the jury of a recorded call between Burke and another Democratic heavyweight, Gery Chico, talking about a construction company that



Burke

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Karen Nevotti, 47, left, of Albany Park, and Karen Bunkenburg, 50, of Naperville, watch the Nebraska vs. Pittsburgh NCAA women’s volleyball semifinal game at The Globe Pub in the North Center neighborhood of Chicago on Thursday. **TRENT SPRAGUE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

## College women’s volleyball is drawing record interest, and Chicago fans are all in

By Alysa Guffey  
Chicago Tribune

When Tarah Dickerson, a longtime volleyball referee from Chicago’s Lincoln Square neighborhood, goes to watch college women’s volleyball at a bar, she is used to having to request the match be shown on one of the restaurant’s numerous screens.

Sometimes the bar doesn’t

even have the network the sport is showing on. Even if it does, servers tend to show the match on the smallest television, meaning Dickerson and her friends ave to cram into the corner of the establishment.

That was not the case Thursday night as Dickerson and four of her friends gathered at The Globe Pub in North Center, where the NCAA Final Four women’s volleyball

matches were the main televised sport playing on TV and over the bar’s speakers. Dickerson and her group whooped and clapped as Nebraska took a strong early lead en route to defeating Pittsburgh.

“We like it here, having the space and ability to watch our favorite sport and hang out,” Dickerson said.

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## Israeli troops shoot, kill three hostages

Military expresses sorrow over mistake in Gaza City fighting

By Karin Laub, Najib Jobain and Jack Jeffery  
Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Israeli troops Friday mistakenly shot to death three hostages in a battle-torn neighborhood of Gaza City, and an Israeli strike killed a Palestinian journalist in the south of besieged territory.

The deaths underscored the ferocity of Israel’s more than 2-month-old onslaught in Gaza, as a U.S. envoy was trying to persuade the Israelis to scale back their campaign sooner rather than later.

The hostages were killed in the Gaza City area of Shijaiyah, where troops have been engaged in fierce fighting with Hamas fighters in recent days. The soldiers mistakenly identified the three Israelis as a threat

and opened fire on them, said the army’s chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari.

He said it was believed that the three had either fled their captors or been abandoned.

Hagari said the army expressed “deep sorrow” and was investigating.

Hamas and other militias abducted more than 240 people in their Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war, and the hostages’ plight has dominated public discourse ever since. Their families have led a powerful public campaign calling on the government to do more to bring them home.

Demonstrations in solidarity with the hostages and their families take place nearly every day. Israeli political and military leaders often say freeing all the hostages is their top aim in the war alongside destroying Hamas.

Still, in seven weeks since ground troops pushed into

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## Suspects plead not guilty in carjacking

The two are accused of holding a Beverly family at gunpoint while robbing them and stealing their 2012 Audi sedan.

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## Giuliani ordered to pay \$148 million

A jury awarded \$148 million in damages to two former Georgia election workers who sued Rudy Giuliani for defamation.

Nation & World

