

Chicago Tribune



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SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM



Debra Ward-Mitchell, assistant director of the Blanche Foxworthy Infant Care Center, left, and Jennifer Bennett Collins, second from right, play with children at the care center in Harvey on March 5. The center is one of only two programs in Illinois that provide day care for the children of teen parents pursuing their high school education. **VINCENT ALBAN/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Infant care center gives high schoolers safety net

Free service helps Thornton Township District 205 teen parents stay in school

By Zareen Syed | Chicago Tribune

Irmony Sneed gathered her toddler son Joziah's belongings on a recent afternoon, weaving his arms through his coat and leading him out into the hallway where tiny backpacks and even tinier shoes are stacked inside cubbyholes.

It was 3:15 p.m. and she'd been awake since 4:30 a.m. to get them both ready for school. The next day, she'll do it all over again.

Sneed, 18, is one of 10 moms enrolled at Thornton Township District 205's Blanche Foxworthy Infant Care Center in suburban Harvey, 23 miles south of Chicago.

For more than 25 years, the teen parents in District 205 have had the option to drop off their babies at the center during the day to continue attending high school instead of dropping out due to a lack of child care.

The free program, licensed by the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services, appears to be one of only two in the state where a child care center is an extension of services for students funded by a school district. A similar program was created in Joliet Township High School District 204 and is dubbed "our sister center" by teachers in District 205's program.

Sneed got pregnant with Joziah when she was 16. He's about to turn 2 and already knows big words like "basketball."

"He's a boy — he's rough, he's energetic, he's smart — definitely smart," Sneed said. "When he wants certain

things, he talks very well, like he'll say 'juice cup,' which means he wants juice in his cup."

The center in Harvey — a small modular school building — has three child care rooms: Tiny Travelers for babies 6 weeks to 1 year old, Blooming Butterflies for 1 to 2 year olds, and Little Explorers for the sweet spot between ages 2 and 4.

While the moms are busy taking biology and English, their babies are flipping through picture books, learning shapes and colors and playing musical games in circle time.

Turn to Day care, Page 4

More tornadoes hitting Illinois

Experts cite warmer winters, hotter Gulf of Mexico as contributors

By Avani Kalra
Chicago Tribune

Illinois saw more tornadoes than any other state in 2023. Byron Hurley experienced that reality firsthand after three tornadoes touched down near his Chatham home in central Illinois last year.

"My house got hit on May 7. May 14 was a nasty supercell that hit Chatham," Hurley said. "We also got some large hail on July 23. I rode that storm out in my car, taking cover at a drop-off area at a church just outside Chatham."

According to Matthew Elliott, a meteorologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Illinois experienced 118 tornadoes last year — the third most in its history. The numbers have not yet been finalized, Elliott said, but are unlikely to change.

The number of tornadoes in any state fluctuates significantly from year to year, said Jeff Frame, a professor of climate, meteorology and atmospheric sciences at the University of Illinois. According to Frame, the biggest component is the state's number of "outbreaks."

The Glossary of Meteorology, published in 2000, describes a tornado outbreak as multiple tornado occurrences caused by the same weather event.

The third biggest tornado outbreak on record in Illinois occurred March 31, 2023, with 36 tornadoes in one day. The second largest outbreak was 50 years ago in 1974. Frame said most years with high numbers of tornadoes see at least one tornado outbreak.

"Weather patterns in 2022 were not conducive to a lot of thunderstorms and tornadoes," Frame said. "But in 2023, they were helped along by a couple of big events, starting with a large tornado outbreak across the U.S."

The 2023 numbers were a

Turn to Tornadoes, Page 2



A man who goes by the name Steezy looks at his drawings over burn marks on a wall Thursday underneath the Lawrence Avenue viaduct at DuSable Lake Shore Drive in Chicago, following a fire that destroyed multiple tents and personal belongings of those who live there. **VINCENT ALBAN/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Uptown viaduct fire brutal reminder of hazards to homeless

By Caroline Kubzansky and Rebecca Johnson
Chicago Tribune

Hours after the fire truck left and debris was swept away, Uptown's Lawrence Avenue viaduct still smelled like smoke.

Soot blackened the walls and the ceiling of the underpass. It crept onto the siding a few feet

below the cars hurtling up and down DuSable Lake Shore Drive.

"It's usually fried, but not this fried," said a man who calls himself Steezy and lives about 100 feet from the viaduct.

Early Thursday morning, a woman had reportedly set her tent on fire, and before the Chicago Fire Department could respond, at around 4:40 a.m., two other

storage tents burned up in the homeless encampment under the viaduct.

No injuries were reported, said Fire Department spokesperson Larry Langford. A Chicago Department of Transportation representative said the underpass was inspected Thursday

Turn to Viaduct, Page 2

House OKs spy program's renewal

GOP member adds 2nd-vote provision, stalls move to Senate

By Farnoush Amiri and Eric Tucker
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House voted Friday to reauthorize and reform a key U.S. government surveillance tool following a dramatic showdown on the floor over whether the FBI should be restricted from using the program to search for Americans' data.

The bill was approved on a bipartisan basis, 273-147, though it will still have to clear the Senate to become law. The surveillance program is set to expire April 19 unless Congress acts.

Passage of the bill represented a much-needed victory for Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., who has been wrangling

with conservative critics of the legislation for months. A group of 19 Republicans revolted to block the bill from coming to the floor earlier in the week, forcing Johnson to make late changes to secure their support.

The legislation approved Friday would extend the surveillance program for two years, rather than the full five-year authorization first proposed. Johnson hoped that the shorter timeline would sway GOP critics by pushing any future debate on the issue to the presidency of Donald Trump if he were to win back the White House in November.

Still, the legislation teetered precariously Friday morning as lawmakers voted on an amendment — vociferously opposed by Johnson, the White House and sponsors of the legislation — that would have prohibited the warrantless surveillance of Americans.

Turn to Program, Page 6

Leaders highlight crime-fighting plan

As Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson joined police Superintendent Larry Snelling to praise efforts to give police the tools to stop crime and repair fraught relationships with residents, they at first avoided the elephant in the room: the Tuesday release of body camera video showing the shootout in which tactical officers making a traffic stop shot and killed 26-year-old Dexter Reed last month.

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