

A+E

‘You have to listen to your characters’

“My Favorite Thing is Monsters” returns after seven years, headaches included.

**Tony Awards:** Best musical is guessing game, but not all the deserving were nominated.



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LIFE+TRAVEL

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SUNDAY, JUNE 16, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## Verbal abuse, a ‘sex-driven’ culture

Ex-employees describe toxic environment at Guaranteed Rate

By Lizzie Kane and Talia Soglin  
Chicago Tribune

Victor Ciardelli beamed as his mortgage company, Chicago-based Guaranteed Rate, launched a “financial wellness” and “personal well-being” app last fall before a live audience in Times Square with wellness celebrity Deepak Chopra. “Something we are passionate about at Guaranteed Rate is caring about people and their overall well-being,” Ciardelli said in a video of the event posted online. “We wanted to make sure that we

did something to help people in their general stress and alleviate pain.” But in the days following the launch of the app, which offers home loan applications and other financial services alongside yoga classes and nutrition advice, Ciardelli wasn’t happy. Yelling at executive leadership on company calls, he referred to his employees as “failures,” complained that the team did not show him from a particular camera angle and said “Marketing is a f---ing disaster,” according to two executives who

were on the calls. Despite Ciardelli’s public remarks on the importance of personal well-being, many former employees told the Tribune they experienced or witnessed persistent verbal abuse and a misogynistic environment while working at Guaranteed Rate. As part of a Tribune investigation, reporters interviewed nearly 80 former employees and reviewed court records, internal company emails, written exit interviews and

**Turn to Guaranteed, Page 14**



Founded in 2000, Chicago-based Guaranteed Rate is one of the largest mortgage lenders in the country. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

She may have a full ride to Harvard, but as an undocumented immigrant without a job permit, her future is uncertain



## ‘I worry that my degree won’t be worth it’

By Laura Rodríguez Presa  
Chicago Tribune

Simone Peña found out she had been accepted to Harvard with a full scholarship after school one day while she was getting ready to go clean houses with her parents, as she did most evenings and weekends. She recalled staring at the computer screen for a few minutes, unable to move or speak until her mother went to hug her. “I got in,” she whispered to her mother. The three cried, celebrating a moment they never dreamed would be theirs. Then, they set out for their evening job, the family’s livelihood. Amid the mundane tasks of their cleaning routine, there was an undercurrent of triumph — a silent acknowledgment of the extraordinary journey they had undertaken together from Mexico to Chicago four years prior, when they decided to immigrate to the U.S., running

Simone Peña Hernández uses a backpack vacuum while helping to clean an office with her family in Chicago on Thursday. An incoming junior at Harvard University who immigrated to Chicago from Mexico without documentation, Simone, 20, hopes to find stable work after graduation with a dual concentration in government and visual art while pursuing a master’s or law degree. **JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

away from cartel violence in their native town. Now a rising junior at Harvard, Peña still returns home every school break to clean houses with her parents because she is repeatedly denied internships and other programs due to her immigration status. Even if she graduates with the highest honors from Harvard, as she did from Carl Schurz High School, she may never become the lawyer she wishes to be without the possibility of getting a job permit. “I worry that my degree won’t be worth it,” Peña said. Peña’s struggle casts a spotlight on the harsh realities faced by young undocumented immigrants in the United States and their parents. Without a job permit, her future and career dreams are threatened by bureaucratic red tape and political gridlock. Yet, amidst the

**Turn to Permit, Page 4**

## Study says: Check for depression in dads too

Fathers can be affected by health condition in postpartum period

By Kate Armanini  
Chicago Tribune

Joel Gratcyk remembers the moment he finally broke. He pulled his car off to the side of the road, tears streaming down his face. His newfound fatherhood was supposed to be one of the happiest times of his life. Instead, he was sinking deep into a heavy sadness while his infant son sat in the back seat. It was all too much. The stress, the lack of sleep, the lingering fear that he wouldn’t be a good parent. “I just knew, at that moment, I needed help,” Gracetyk, 42, recalled. “There was too much going on, and I just couldn’t do it myself.” He’s not alone. An expanding volume of recent research has indicated that fathers, along with their female partners, can develop postpartum depression. Most experts estimate that around 10% of dads will experience the condition, while about 14% of moms will. Now, a new University of Illinois at Chicago pilot study suggests that men should be routinely screened for PPD. It’s part of a growing push to shift the dialogue surrounding men’s mental health, offering a more robust stream of support for the entire family unit. “To me, it feels blindingly obvious that we’ve created these gendered care silos, and that has led to the exclusion of dads from this time,” said Sam Wainwright, lead author of the study and an assistant professor of internal medicine and pediatrics at UIC. Ahead of Father’s Day, Gracetyk reflected on his sons, now 7 and 11. He hopes they’ll feel comfortable sharing their emotions and being vulnerable as they grow older. “Having those kinds of conversations with my sons, and seeing them be able to be honest and open with me, gives me hope for the conversation to continue to evolve,” Gracetyk said. Until recent decades, PPD was only associated with women, who undergo more clear physical and

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### Blast kills 8 Israeli soldiers in Rafah

The attack, coming more than eight months into a grinding war that shows few signs of ending soon, will likely fuel new calls for a cease-fire by Israeli protesters as public anger rises. **Nation & World**



### Can the starters save the season?

With an offense that hasn’t fully functioned yet and a shaky bullpen, it’s up to the starting rotation to save the Cubs’ season. Shota Imanaga was up to the challenge Saturday. **Paul Sullivan in Chicago Sports**

TODAY’S WEATHER



High 92 Low 77

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 22

\$5.75 city and suburbs and elsewhere  
177th year No. 168 © Chicago Tribune

