

## 2026 FALL SCREENS GUIDE

A look ahead to what's coming in movies, television and streaming, including Sorkin's Facebook follow-up and a new Poehler comedy

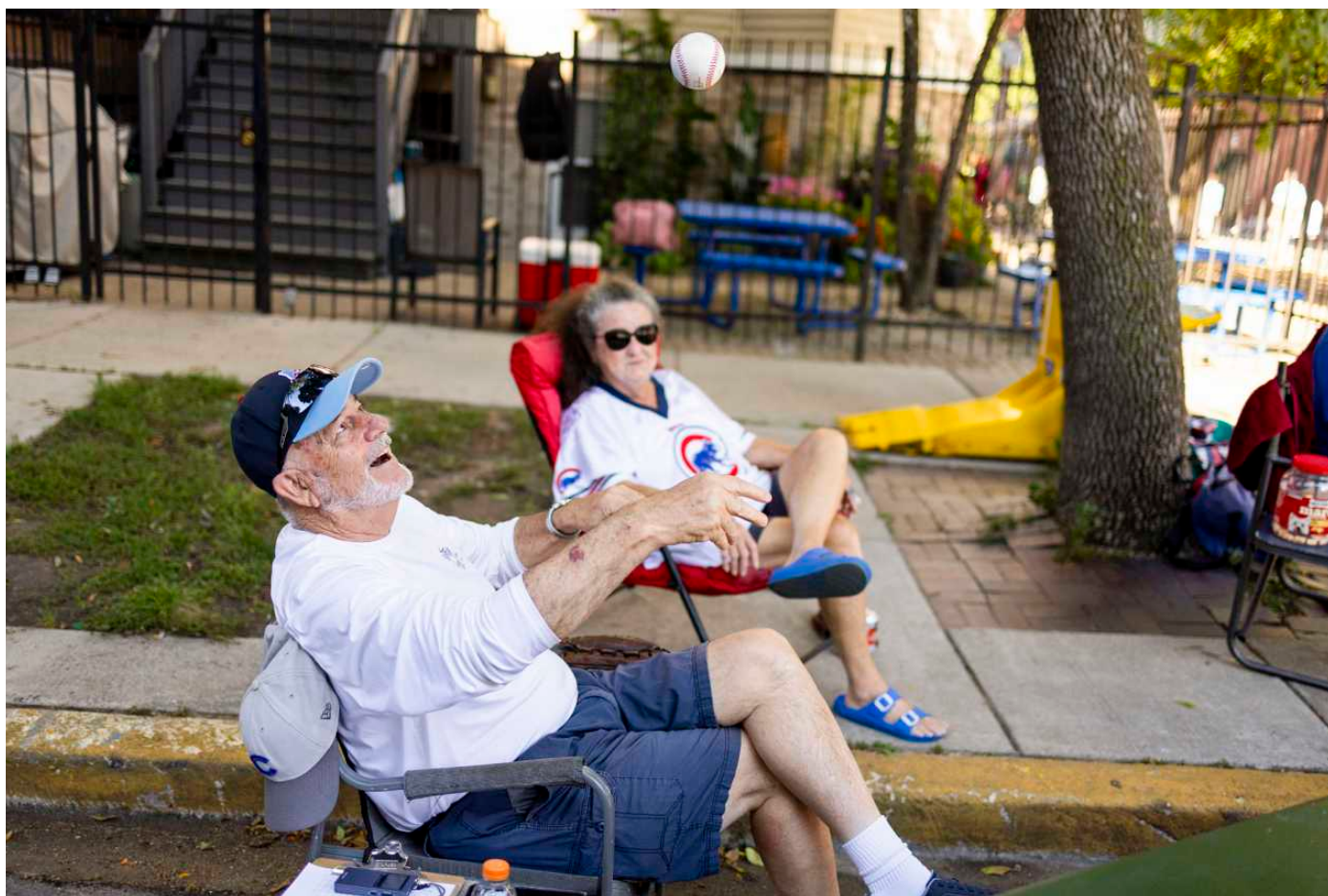
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## SPECIAL REPORT

## 'That's taxpayer money'

Illinois ignores rules and red flags as 'servant leader' runs up \$100M state tab, then closes 2 hospitals

By Joe Mahr and Lisa Schencker  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

In a region already struggling to keep hospitals open, the Chicago area was at risk of losing two more — during a pandemic — when Dr. Manoj Prasad convinced state officials he was just the man to save them.

Prasad said he'd spent decades as a "servant leader" fixing struggling hospitals and clinics. He could trim budgets. Boost staff morale. Maintain quality care. And he had found a partner willing to finance it all.

All Prasad needed was for the state Health Facilities and Services Review Board to allow him and his business partner to buy West Suburban Medical Center and Weiss Memorial Hospital, both owned by the same company. The board gave them the green light.

Over the next several years, the hospitals received more than \$24 million in state grants while racking up debts of roughly \$100 million in state loans and unpaid taxes. Then they closed, eliminating more than 400 beds, erasing roughly 1,400 jobs and cutting neighborhood residents off from valuable medical care.

Along the way, state officials missed red flags while failing to follow rules designed to prevent something like this from happening, a Tribune investigation has found.

Records suggest the health facilities review board did little to vet Prasad and his partner before agreeing to let them take over the hospitals in Oak Park and Uptown in 2022. Then, when Prasad resurfaced with pleas for taxpayer dollars, the Department of Healthcare and Family Services handed over tens of millions in loans while doing little to track how the money was being spent.

The hospitals also received state grants from another agency, the Illinois Department of Public Health, that required them to submit third-party audits under a state law meant to ensure tax dollars are spent responsibly. There is no record of the state receiving any such audits, yet the department kept sending cash — even as its own inspectors documented the hospital buildings' deterioration.

Meanwhile, the for-profit firm operating the hospitals, led by Prasad, broke

See **HOSPITALS** on Page A12

## The hot corner

ONE WRIGLEYVILLE SPOT HANGS ON TO ITS ROOTS  
AND BALLHAWKS AS THE CUBS MARK THEIR 150TH ANNIVERSARY

By Andrew Carter | CHICAGO TRIBUNE

**O**n the last day of June, the flags danced in a stiff wind above Wrigley Field and Moe Mullins arrived more than three hours before first pitch, just like usual. He set up his camping chair under the ash tree at the corner of Waveland and Kenmore, across the street from the back of the left field bleachers, and the neighborhood slowly came to life.

In time, the street vendors appeared and the merchandise stands opened and the patio at Murphy's, a block away, started to fill in. Soon, the spectators gathered along the brick wall and waited for the bleacher gates to open. For a while, though, it was quiet, and the last refuge of old Wrigley, and its old neighborhood, belonged to Mullins.

He is the unofficial mayor of Waveland and Kenmore avenues, the elder statesman among the characters who give it character. The Chicago Cubs this weekend are celebrating their 150th anniversary as a National League member. They've spent 110 of those years at Wrigley, where the corner just beyond left field remains old-school, a small throwback in the middle of ever-expanding change.

The Cubs have bought up many of the nearby buildings. The rooftops are a little less organically charming and a lot more expensive. Trendy bars and restaurants have moved in all over. Even Wrigley's iconic marquee comes with a corporate sponsor, and has for more than a decade.

The corner, though, remains the corner. Lawn chairs. Lifers. Good banter, some of which is even suitable for children. The most prominent ad there is handwritten, for the Gatorade that Dave Davison sells out of a cooler: \$3 for Cubs fans and \$4 for Cards fans, with the \$5 for White Sox fans crossed out and replaced with "stay thirsty."

Davison, like Mullins, has been on the corner for a long time. It's home to an eclectic collection of oddballs, super fans, ballhawks, townies, Cubs workers, dog walkers (free treats) and the occasional and keen-eyed, curious tourist, who can sense good company when they

See **CORNER** on Page A4

**Above:** Moe Mullins tosses a baseball as he and Mary Ellen Gourley hang out at corner of Waveland and Kenmore avenues outside Wrigley Field before the Cubs host the White Sox on Aug. 17. **EILEEN T. MESLAR/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

## INSIDE



JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

## History of his own

Pete Crow-Armstrong crashed the Cubs' 150th anniversary party at Wrigley Field on Saturday with three home runs in front of a who's who of all-time franchise greats. **Sports**

## War emboldens Iran

After six months of war, Iran's leadership has coalesced around a hard core of military generals and clerics who are ready for a long confrontation with the U.S. **Nation & World, Page B5**

## Solutions elusive for a 'rapid kill' soybean disease

Little known about fungus found at Pike County farm

By Finnegan Belleau  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

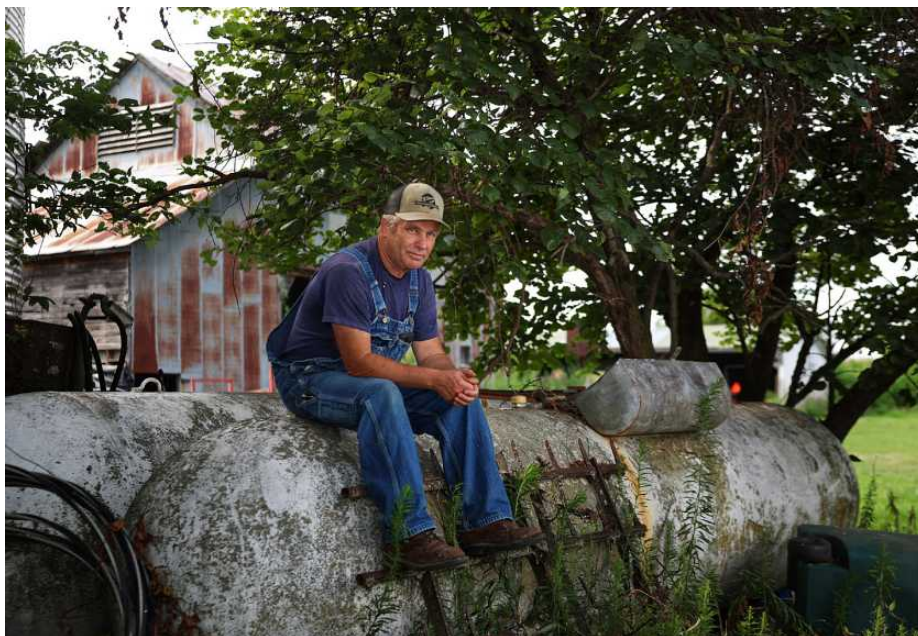
Reagan Hoskin considers herself a rule follower by nature.

After graduating high school in 2018, she spent the summer monitoring crops for her father, carrying out his instructions to a T: Zigzag along soybean fields. Scan the crops at vantage points. Note anything that looks out of place.

Then one day, at the very edge of the family's Pike County farm in western Illinois, she spotted a patch of yellow plants.

"I'm like, 'Aw man, the rest of the field had looked fine,'" Hoskin said. "Now I'm gonna have to actually walk down there and look at it."

She previously learned how to identify soybean diseases and suspected this was sudden death syndrome, a severe but manageable ailment.

See **DISEASE** on Page A10

Ron Hoskin, an attorney and farmer, sits on a tank at his farm on Aug. 13 in Pittsfield, Illinois. Hoskin's daughter, Reagan Hoskin, was the first to discover red crown rot while out surveying the family's soybean fields in 2018. Hoskin and surrounding farmers are frustrated by the spread of the fungus since then. **STACEY WESCOTT/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

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## WEATHER FORECAST

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179th year No. 242  
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# Amsterdam by bike engages visitors’ senses



Sightseeing is more than just seeing. To get the full experience of a place, you need to feel, hear, taste and smell it. On a recent visit to Amsterdam, I made a point to focus on sensual travel... because this is a city made to engage all the senses.

I always rent a bike here. I want to feel the bricks and pavement beneath two wheels. The lack of hills and the first-class bike lane infrastructure make cycling here a breeze. The clerk at the rental shop must be tired of explaining why they don’t carry mountain bikes in this flat land. When I ask, he responds — in classic Dutch directness — “Mountain bikes in the Netherlands make no sense at all. When a dog takes a dump, we have a new mountain. You pedal around it ... not over. It’s no problem.”

I ride off along the shiny wet cobbles, my Amsterdam experience framed by my black bike’s handlebars. I get pinged by passing bikes and ping my bell to pass others. When it comes to bike bells, there’s no language barrier. For my own safety, I wish I had a bigger periphery. Amsterdam is crowded, and cars, trams, bikers and pedestrians seem to float by from all directions in silence ... lost in the white noise of breezing through this dreamy city on two wheels.

Reaching the Red Light District, I stop to use a classic old street-corner urinal. It’s painted a deep green and designed to give the user plenty of privacy from neck to knees and a slice-of-Amsterdam view at the same time. The pungent smells of pot smoke and someone else’s urine compete with the dank smell of the canal. I’m reminded of a new Amsterdam



Renting a bike in Amsterdam is one of the best ways to appreciate the city’s sights, smells and overall vibe. **DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI**

fact I’ve learned: A handful of people drown in the canals each year. When their bodies are dredged up, very often, their zippers are down. They were very drunk and, rather than using the civilized urinal as I did, they used the canal ... splash ... their final mistake.

Across the lane, an abundant woman in a cliché of lingerie eyes me seductively from a window, framed in red. I think to myself, “This is probably the most unforgettable trip to a urinal I’ll ever have in my life.”

Back on my bike, I continue to a square called Museumplein, where Amsterdam’s three big art museums are gathered. I stop a moment to take in the

square. It strikes me that much of Amsterdam still looks like it did three or four centuries ago, during the Dutch Golden Age, when this was the world’s richest city.

Long lines plague the Dutch Master-filled Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum — both understandably popular (book ahead). But there’s rarely a wait at the Stedelijk Museum, nicknamed “the bathtub” because of the striking shape of its modern architecture. Inside are 20th-century favorites (Dalí, Picasso, Kandinsky) and crazy contemporary art. I’m not a big fan of the abstract style, but the artwork at the Stedelijk is

really fun (perhaps really, really fun if you’re into marijuana — sold with a smile in the city’s many “coffee shops”).

The city’s biggest green space, Vondelpark, is just a short pedal away. I roll by snippets of Dutch conversation — families with kids, romantic couples, strolling seniors, and hippies sharing blankets and beers.

By now my sense of taste is ready for a little attention. Last night I enjoyed a grand rijsttafel (literally “rice table”), a ritual dish for tourists in Holland. Not a true Indonesian meal, it’s a Dutch innovation designed to highlight the best food of its former colony — specifically to

show off all the spices that, in some ways, originally motivated the colonial age. The dinner includes 20 dishes and a rainbow of spices with white rice to mix and mingle on your plate and palate. Working your way through this tasty experience, it’s clear why the Dutch called Indonesia “The Spice Islands.”

Tonight, I’m in the mood for something more historically Dutch. I opt for a snack of herring with pickles and onions — and two shots of Dutch gin.

Pedaling back to my hotel, I rattle over those shiny cobbles just inches from the murky canals — thankful I resisted the herring man’s offer for a third gin.

I pause at the crest of a bridge, which scenically spans the water. Making sure my zipper is all the way up, I gaze down the canal. It’s flanked by trees, parked cars, tethered boats and locals chatting happily — each contributing to the sensory appeal of Amsterdam.

A soft ping reminds me that I’m still in the bike lane, so I get back on and pedal home.

*Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.*

## CELEBRITY TRAVEL

### Grammy nominee shaped by travel

By Jae-Ha Kim  
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

Grammy-nominated saxophonist Dave Koz continues to combine his love of performing and traveling with his annual Somma cruise. This autumn’s seven-day trip will take music fans through Greece, Italy, Montenegro and Croatia, and will include his own sets, as well from other artists like David Benoit and Jonathan Butler.

“Our Somma cruise is happening (in November, where we’ll visit) some of the most beautiful ports of call in the Adriatic Sea,” said Koz.

Koz splits his time between Los Angeles and Sausalito.

This interview with Koz has been edited for clarity and length.

**Q: How important is it for people to travel?**  
**A:** Travel is really important to me. It’s shaped me as a human being in ways that I can’t even comprehend. We’re about ready to tour Asia — China, Japan, Indonesia — and for me it’s always really cool to absorb the culture that we’re in and bring that experience onto the stage at night. The cruises offer us ... a really special chance to travel the world and see cities that I wouldn’t normally see and get out there with our guests.

**Q: What other trips do you have planned?**  
**A:** I’ve got a sabbatical this summer in Puglia in a region of Italy that I’m very excited about.



Grammy-nominated saxophonist Dave Koz longs to perform his complete show at Carnegie Hall. **COLIN PECK**

**Q: What is your bucket list venue that you’ve yet to perform in?**  
**A:** I can’t say that I never performed in (Carnegie Hall), but I only played eight bars of one song in a multi-artist event, and it was probably 30 years ago. I remember my mom flew to New York City from Los Angeles just to hear me play eight bars of a song and that always stuck with me. But to actually do my show at Carnegie Hall would be a dream come true.

**Q: Have you visited places for work that were so nice that you traveled back?**  
**A:** Yes, absolutely. I remember going to Cape Town for the very first time to play. Somehow my music is super popular there, and I just fell in love with the city. I went back immediately as a tourist maybe about six months later.

**Q: What untapped destinations should people know?**  
**A:** There’s one city on our Somma cruise: Dubrovnik, Croatia. That was the backdrop for a lot of the vistas you saw on “Game of Thrones.” I think it’s an unsung hero of the region in Europe. It’s so beautiful and there’s so much to uncover there, but it’s kind of off the beaten path.

**Q: What’s the most important thing you’ve learned from your travels?**  
**A:** I probably have learned most about myself. I think travel is the best way to hold a mirror up to yourself because you get out of your comfort zone. You realize that the way my culture

does things is not the only way to do it, and it expands you as a person.

**Q: What are your five favorite cities?**  
**A:** If we’re talking about the United States, I’d say New York City, Chicago, New Orleans, Miami. If you’re in a party mood, I’m gonna say Boulder.

**Q: Where would you like to go that you’ve never been to before?**  
**A:** South America is an undiscovered part of the world for me that I want to get to know much better.

**Q: What is your guilty pleasure on the road?**  
**A:** I’m a coffee hound. I love finding a great coffee shop. You can really tell the personality of a city by their coffee shops.

**Q: What is your best and worst vacation memory?**  
**A:** My worst ironically was the first cruise that I ever went on with my brother, sister and parents. It was a Mexican cruise and it was just not my cup of tea. So I think it’s very ironic that I’ve become a cruiser and developed these cruise experiences for our guests. The best vacation memory was interestingly going with my whole family to the Middle East. We had a family vacation a number of years ago and all went to Israel and a couple of the neighboring countries. That was a very special experience to share with my family.

*For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.*

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

### Delta downgrades couple, refuses to pay for their accommodations

By Christopher Elliott | TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

My wife and I recently flew Delta Air Lines from Hartford, Connecticut, to Boise, Idaho. We had a 6 a.m. flight to Atlanta, so we woke up at 2 a.m. to ensure that we had enough time for check-in. There had been a storm in Hartford. We pushed back from the gate at 6:10 a.m. but didn’t lift off until 7:15 a.m. Even with this delay, our connection in Atlanta looked doable.

However, once we arrived in Atlanta, we waited 35 minutes for an open gate. Because of the wait, we eventually missed our 10 a.m. connection to Boise. Delta’s customer service was helpful, but there was no choice but to rebook us on the 8 p.m. flight to Boise. We received food vouchers, but the agent denied us any Sky Club participation because we didn’t qualify.

Both of us are over 75 years old. The run through the airport, coupled with a 2 a.m. wake-up call, left us exhausted. The representative suggested utilizing Minute Suites in the terminal in order to rest. She told us that Delta “might” reimburse us. We took her advice and crashed for two hours.

On the 8 p.m. flight, Delta downgraded us from the Comfort+ seats we bought to coach, as all Comfort+ seats were booked. I submitted a reimbursement request for the Minute Suites and a refund request for the Comfort+ seats through Delta.com. The site doesn’t allow for any explanations, and the airline denied both requests.

I’m frustrated. The site offers no way to appeal or explain the circumstances of our age and the long delay. Can you help me get my money back? — John Fisher, in Wethersfield, Connecticut

**A:** Delta should’ve refunded your seat downgrade automatically. It also should’ve been specific about whether it’d cover your stay at the Minute Suites.

Let’s look at the downgrade first. You paid for Comfort+, and you flew in coach. This is a no-brainer. Under U.S. Department of Transportation regulations, if an airline downgrades you to a lower class of service, it must refund the difference in price. You don’t need to negotiate or fill out a form; it should be automatic. Delta’s rejection of your refund request for the seat difference suggests a glitch in its system or a reviewer who wasn’t paying attention.

The Minute Suites expense is trickier. Airlines generally don’t cover hotel or sleep accommodations for weather-related delays. Your delay in Hartford was caused by a storm, and the late arrival of your aircraft meant that a gate wasn’t available. Technically, this is an “act of God,” and Delta’s contract of carriage — the legal agreement between you and the company — says that it isn’t liable.

The agent’s use of the word “might” was unfortunate. In the travel industry, “might” usually means “no.” If a representative suggests that you incur an expense, get it in writing. Ask for a voucher at the counter. If they can’t give you a voucher, ask them to note the promise in your passenger record (PNR). Without this paper trail, you’re at the mercy of an anonymous adjuster (usually AI), who sees a weather delay code and hits “deny.”

You did the right thing by keeping your receipts and writing to the airline. When the automated system failed you, you could’ve escalated your complaint. I list the names, numbers and emails of the Delta executives on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org. A brief, polite email to one of them often fixes these glitches.

I loved the ending of this case. You contacted Delta’s executives on your own after finding the emails on my site. You politely pointed out the downgrade and the agent’s advice regarding the Minute Suites. The airline reviewed your case quickly. A representative followed up with instructions for securing the reimbursement for the Minute Suites and the refund for the seat downgrade. Delta also added 10,000 SkyMiles to both your accounts as a gesture of goodwill.

*Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliot.org/help or chris@elliott.org.*