

THE COLUMBIA CHRONICLE

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A TWIST ON AN OLD SPORT Chicago Bike Polo has been around for about six years, and its popularity is surging. Most major cities in the United States have bike polo leagues and organizers credit the Internet with helping them communicate. They hope to create an organization that will encompass all cities. The Chicago league meets every Sunday in Garfield Park, 100 N. Central Park Ave., and anyone can join. For more, see page 24.

Rachael Strecher THE CHRONICLE



A CLASS ACT

THE DAYS of tumbling as an infant seems like child's play in comparison to the circus, contortion, aerial and gymnastics classes' students are taking at the Actors Gymnasium in Evanston, Ill. Geared toward people of all ages and backgrounds, students stretch their limits while learning various circus skills like flipping and flying on a trapeze without hesitation.

» SEE PG. 15



HAROLD AND KUMAR ARE BACK

AFTER DISAPPOINTING sales at the box office, *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* became jolted into the cult classic spotlight when it was released on DVD. Now, four years later, actors John Cho and Kal Penn team up again to portray the lovable duo for the film's sequel, *Harold & Kumar Escape From Guantanamo Bay*. The Chronicle spoke with Cho and Penn about all of the hijinks that went into making the film.

» SEE PG. 19

Elevator inspections past due

Experts say Chicago inspections are behind on the whole

by Becky Schlikerman
Associate Editor

NOT ONE of more than 30 elevators in Columbia's main campus buildings has been inspected within the last year. Experts said inspections ensure that elevators run safely, so a lack of inspections could have serious consequences.

A Chronicle investigation discovered that all elevators in major Columbia buildings had expired elevator inspection certificates from 2006. These elevators have not been inspected in the allotted 12 months deemed by city code. Most had not been inspected since 2006; in some cases more than two years have gone by without a city inspection. The elevator at the Dance Center, 1306 S. Michigan Ave., has not been inspected since March 2004.

However, Columbia officials said they comply with all city regulations and the elevators are safe.

"Our elevators are safe and there is no issue that should be of concern," said Mark Lloyd, chief marketing officer and associate vice president of College Communication and Marketing.

According to Lloyd, Columbia has 49 elevators in all of the buildings that the college owns.

The dates on the past-due certificates were confirmed by Bill McCaffrey, spokesman for the Department of Buildings, the city department that oversees elevator inspections. He said elevators are supposed to be inspected on an annual basis, but there are times when they are put aside because

inspectors prioritize inspecting elevators that have been complained about.

The inspection requirements are part of Chicago's Municipal Code.

And just because it hasn't been inspected in the past year doesn't mean that it's unsafe, McCaffrey said.

But John Quackenbush, a safety consultant with almost 50 years of elevator experience and a member of the American Society of Safety Engineers, a professional safety organization, said the lapse in inspections is concerning.

The purpose of doing the inspections is to make sure that maintenance is being performed and any safety issues are corrected, Quackenbush said.

"These are very dangerous electromechanical devices and they need to be inspected," Quackenbush said.

The more time that passes between inspections could mean more problems may arise and add up, he added.

Some of these problems can be elevators running with the doors open or oil and grease buildup, which is a fire hazard, Quackenbush said.

Other issues include sudden stops, doors closing forcefully and the elevator not leveling properly, which means the elevator wouldn't stop parallel to the building's floor, causing a tripping hazard, said Dick Gregory, a member of Illinois Elevator Safety Board and chair of the Chicago Elevator Code Committee.

But the biggest concern is hoist cables breaking, Gregory said. If this were to happen, the elevator would fall for a few floors and then stop with the emergency brake, he added.

» SEE ELEVATOR, PG. 14



The Chronicle went to all main Columbia-owned buildings and found that none of the elevators had been inspected in more than a year. Chicago's Municipal Code requires that elevators be inspected once a year.

Emilia Klimuk THE CHRONICLE



GAMING CULTURE

RAFAEL FAJARDO has been designing and publishing games for over eight years with his publishing company SWEAT. The goal of Fajardo and SWEAT is to make socially conscious video games to raise questions about social issues, particularly on immigration. Fajardo continues to create these types of video games at the University of Denver.

» SEE PG. 5

Arts & Entertainment



Nathan Drackett stretches during an Intermediate Gymnastics class at the Actors Gymnasium, 927 Noyes St., in Evanston, Ill., on April 8. Actors and actresses from various theater troupes learn more about gymnastics, tumbling and theatrical aerial work at the training center. The center is also home to the Piven Theater Workshop.

Jody Warner THE CHRONICLE



Students in the intermediate aerial arts class on April 8 stretch their legs as they prepare to practice on the trapeze and aerial fabric.

Jody Warner THE CHRONICLE

No clowning around

Circus program aims to break inhibitions as students perform circus stunts, tricks

by Derek Kucynda
Assistant A&E Editor

SUSPENDED 40 feet in the air, with aerial fabrics tied and tucked between their legs, students take a deep breath and let go of their inhibitions. Falling from the fabric like a ragdoll, one can only assume they might hit the ground with a painful thump.

However, with mere feet separating the students from the blue mats, the fabric stops their fall just in time for them to

strike an elegant, swan-like pose for spectators. This routine is one of the many lessons students are required to learn for their Intermediate Aerial Arts class at the Actors Gymnasium, 927 Noyes St., located in Evanston, Ill. Open for more than 13 years, the Actors Gymnasium is a circus and performing arts school that caters to students of all ages, according to Jared Kling, the general manager of the Actors Gymnasium.

The school's main area of focus is education, which includes year-round classes in circus and aerial arts, contortion, gymnastics, juggling and other disciplines, Kling said. The craft of circus and aerial

arts is not an easy task, Kling said, and many students have said the classes there have taken them out of their comfort zone. Lessons they learn at the school can test their nerve and daring. Beginning students who are afraid of performing flips on cushy, blue mats or on a 20-foot high trapeze find the school to be a comfortable environment to learn how different circus techniques can relinquish their fears and inhibitions, he said.

Nathan Drackett, who has been a student and part-time teacher at the Actors Gymnasium for more than five years, said the school has a multitude of students, from those who are adept at circus and aerial arts to people with no experience at all. He said everyone has a bit of apprehension with taking a class at the Actors Gymnasium.

"It's really good, because it forces people to go outside of their zone," Drackett said. "The faculty here is good at pushing people's limits and getting them to do something they usually wouldn't be comfortable doing, like jumping up on a trapeze or doing a backflip."

As a teacher, Drackett said he realizes the importance of making newcomers feel comfortable by assisting them step-by-step and demonstrating proper safety, especially when a student is suspended 20 to 30 feet in the air.

"You have to understand people's comfort zones and how much to push them," Drackett said. "You don't want to push them away, but you also want them to get to the next level."

Drackett has applied his acquired circus arts skills to other productions and shows in the Chicago area. Most recently, he was a part of the Lyric Opera's production of "La Boheme" as a juggler.

"It really helps as an actor to put [these

skills] on your resume [because] it broadens your audition range and your physical and mental flexibility as an actor," Drackett said. "Any physical class that gets you to focus on what your body is doing really helps with character work and creating a physical character."

One of the teachers at the Actors Gymnasium, Jill Heyser, said many actors and famous circus arts performers come to instruct master classes at the school, teaching them real-life circus skills and tricks.

"We've had Elsie Smith of Gemini Trapeze, who is also a part of the Cirque Du Soleil ensemble, and other world-class jugglers and musicians [come]," Heyser said. Heyser also said many students and faculty at the center simply enjoy the workout and increased stamina they receive from practicing and concentrating on circus and aerial arts.

"People have come here to work out muscle issues, and it builds a lot of core and upper body strength," Heyser said. "Also, people really enjoy being able to learn something that is so fun and exciting at their own pace. It's definitely something amazing [you] can tell other people you're doing."

Although she now teaches at the Actors Gymnasium, Heyser has been with the program since 1998, when she was a student at the Actors Gymnasium. After becoming a teacher, she said she has noticed a strong sense of a community of actors looking to be more physical with their acting and movement.

"I think [the Actors Gymnasium] is a very successful program because it gives people a sense of accomplishment in a supportive

» SEE CIRCUS, PG. 28

» **KUMAR:**

Continued from PG. 19

Kal Penn ends up in the hospital after peanut dust scare

I was as psyched in real life to do a scene with Neil Patrick Harris as Kumar was in the fictitious sense to actually pick him up on the side of the road.

Cho: I remember Kal almost dying, which isn't funny. Kal is allergic to nuts. There was a scene where he falls through a heat vent, and they had used, as dust from the vent, nuts. He had to be taken to a hospital, and it was a bad situation.

Penn: John likes that because when I was at the hospital getting my life saved, he was the center of attention.

Cho: I licked the residual nut powder off the vent.

Penn: He sat in my trailer eating pistachios until I got back.

Do you foresee a third Harold and Kumar adventure?

Cho: It really just depends on if people vote with their dollars for this movie.

Penn: The reason we have a sequel now is because we have the support of fans of the DVD, but we're also four years older. So if you want to see a third movie, would you please go see it opening weekend and then we can make it next year instead of four years from now where we'll be considerably older?

Cho: My body is declining at an incredible rate.

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Participants in the Intermediate Aerial Arts class on April 8 practice a series of warm-ups, stretches and yoga techniques before class begins.

Jody Warner THE CHRONICLE

» **CIRCUS:**

Continued from PG. 15

Students learn body awareness at circus arts school

environment," Heyser said. "If you look at the student base and watch how many returning students we have, [with] at least 70 percent of the students returning, it really tells the story about the success [of

the program]."

One of Heyser's students, Meaghan Falvey, 16, has been taking classes at the Actors Gymnasium for seven years and is currently in many of the advanced levels of circus classes there, including Intermediate Aerial Arts. She said she loves taking classes at the school and enjoys spending her time at the Actors Gymnasium and being able to work out, as well as learn new circus techniques.

"It's a good atmosphere to learn in," Falvey said. "You get to learn new things

because there is always something to learn here, since it's an art form. Plus, it's a good workout, and it releases endorphins."

At the school, Falvey said she has become more aware of her body and the space she uses. As a result, she understands how to stretch properly and knows what holding certain positions does to the body. In addition, she has become more aware of the types of food she eats and how her diet affects her well-being and stamina.

"I either want to be a circus performer or a surgeon, and both careers typically deal with body awareness," Falvey said. "As a result of doing circus [training] here, I know so much more about the way my body works than anyone else."

Classes began on April 7 for the spring session. There are still openings for those interested in taking some of the adult classes.

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MORE CIRCUS INFORMATION

Available Classes

- 500 Clown: Risk, Play, and Relationship
- Circus and Aerial Arts
- Contortion
- Gymnastics
- Acrobatic Stills
- Juggling

Prices and Times

All classes are part of a 9-week session
 \$140 for a 60 minute class
 \$205 for a 90 minute class
 The one exception is the Gymnastics class, which costs \$120 for a 60 minute class

Location

927 Noyes St., Evanston, Ill., 60201

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THE FALL OF TROY	4/22
AS TALL AS LIONS	4/23
VIC RUGGIERO	4/24
COLD WATER MYSTIC	4/25
THE PHENOMENAUTS	4/25
THE EFFIGIES	4/26
BED LIGHT FOR BLUE EYES	4/27
THE CASUALTIES	4/27
BLOODHAG	4/29
COMPANY OF THIEVES	5/02

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