

NEWS
& SCHMOOZE

AILEEN SIMONS



Program offered for 'extraordinary' kids

Hope that everyone is enjoying summer so far! My family just got back from a vacation in Mackinac Island ... where it was 55 degrees and raining. You should see my suntan!

Prior to my "fun in the sun" vacation, I logged many hours at the baseball fields watching my son umpire at BGRA games. My favorite part of his umpiring was that I got to talk with lots of the moms watching their sons play. It was especially great to catch up with an old childhood friend, **Lisa Umans** (Lisa Mantelman back then). Lisa told me about a great kindergarten enrichment program that she teaches called Extraordinary Kids. This weekly two-hour program gives kindergartners a hands-on and interactive approach to learning science, math, language arts, music, creative dramatics, art, social studies and geography. The class, which is taught throughout the North Shore, is available this fall at the JCYS

in Buffalo Grove. Lisa put me in touch with the co-owner and director of the program, **Carol Modes**.

Carol explained that every summer, she and her co-director, **Susie Blau**, explore different things to help enrich Extraordinary Kids. This summer, Carol and Susie found the perfect opportunity to learn first hand about paleontology, since they teach a whole unit on dinosaurs. They volunteered their time to participate in an excavation called The Mastodon Project, sponsored by Waubensee Community College, the Illinois State Museum and the city of Aurora, Ill.

Carol explained what she learned. "In 1933, a crew of workers from the city of Aurora began to dig ground to create the Phillips Park Lake. As workmen dug, they unearthed bones of the prehistoric dinosaur, the mastodon. Bones that came out of the ground were

estimated to be between 10,000 and 22,000 years old. Stories suggest that the workmen were forced to leave several more bones in the ground as the lake excavation project drew to a close."

This spring, scientists selected a dig site in what is now called Mastodon Lake. That site has been drained and the search is currently on for more mastodon bones. Although Carol and Susie did not find any bones, they did learn a lot. "It was a very authentic dig," Carol said. "Although it was hard work and sometimes tedious, it was very fascinating."

The great part about this story is that anybody can participate in The Mastodon Project until Aug. 8. If you are interested in digging or would like to tour the park's Visitors Center and Mastodon Gallery, visit the Web site at www.waubensee.edu or call (630) 466-7900, Ext. 5757. If you would like to register a child for the fall 2004 class of Extraordinary Kids, call (847) 945-7632

On stage

If you're looking for some great entertainment, look no farther than the Buffalo Grove Park District! Its summer musical, "Evita," will be presented at Stevenson High School at 7:30 p.m. July 23 and 24 and 2 p.m. July 25.

Buffalo Grove village trustee **Jeff Berman** has a substantial role in the production. "He is sharing the spotlight with his two beautiful daughters, **Claire** and **Laura**," said **Robin Racusen** of the park district. "He is truly very talented."

Robin explained that "over 75 percent of our cast are Buffalo Grove residents. We also have several families, parents and children, who have decided to spend their summer with us as cast members and make special memories for their family by participating in the 'Evita' experience."

Additional cast members
(Continued on page 95)