

BLUE ISLAND

Person under investigation after house fire

Multiple neighboring buildings damaged

By Olivia Stevens
Daily Southtown

One person is under investigation after a fire tore through one home in Blue Island and damaged two neighboring buildings early Monday morning, city officials say. Firefighters responded to “heavy fire conditions” that erupted at the 2038 Vermont St. residence at about 4 a.m., damaging an adjacent home and business, Vanessa’s Beauty Salon, the city said in a news release Monday afternoon.

Spokesperson Tom Wogan would not disclose the name of the person in custody or how the fire started. “The gentleman who is in custody does have some burn injuries,” Wogan said. The man was being treated at a hospital and has not been charged, Wogan said. One firefighter who responded was also treated for heat exhaustion and another refused medical care, he said. Wogan said no inhabitants of the home were present when the fire began. Two cats, a ferret and a dog were rescued, though the dog, a German shepherd, escaped and has not been found, fire Chief

David Haywood said. “Our guys got him into a yard, but with all the chaos and stuff, they might have opened the gate and he might have got out,” Haywood said. The family was offered housing support from the Red Cross but declined, opting to stay with family, Wogan said. Families and individuals sat in nearby yards and on front steps Monday morning, shaded by umbrellas with the temperature above 80 degrees, as firefighters continued cleanup efforts into the afternoon, preventing traffic on the Vermont Street. Edward Castellano said police

woke him early Monday morning, banging on the door of his home next door to the house where the fire started. He said a little before that, he believed he heard a loud sound but wasn’t sure if it was a dream. “I was in a deep sleep, and I thought I heard a boom, an explosion,” Castellano said. He said he guessed it could have been a car crash or something more minor than a house fire. Castellano, 55, said his home, where he lives alone, is uninhabitable due to damage to its foundation. He waited Monday morning at a neighbor’s home across the street’s front steps for his sister to

pick him up. He said he felt sad recalling memories of his home that was passed down through relatives. He also said he regularly got his hair cut at Vanessa’s Beauty Salon, which was vacated Monday afternoon. “My grandparents lived there, and I grew up in this house too,” Castellano said. “After school, I’d go there and watch cartoons and drink coffee with my grandfather, spend a lot of time there.” The city said police and the Office of the State Fire Marshal continued to investigate the fire.

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Sensory exhibits offer a chance for children to play while gaining developmental skills during a Wee Ones program at the Children’s Museum in Oak Lawn. A mini golf outing Aug. 2 will help support that program and others. ROBERTO CASTILLO/CHILDREN’S MUSEUM IN OAK LAWN PHOTOS

CHILDREN’S MUSEUM IN OAK LAWN

New golf fundraiser goes mini

By Melinda Moore

The Children’s Museum in Oak Lawn is taking a new approach to fundraising with an event geared toward families: a mini golf outing on Aug. 2 at PGN Fun Village in Palos Hills. “One of the things we’ve heard from our visitors and members regarding our fundraising events is that it would be nice to have fundraisers that can include the whole family,” said Robert Castillo, the museum’s development associate. “Families are looking for experiences, and this event is a chance to create lasting memories, share laughter, and enjoy one final, joyful moment of summer before the busy school year begins.” The event will be held rain

or shine, but Castillo had a bold prediction: “There will be no rain! We must think positively!” The outing features “a fun-filled day of making new friends and connecting with other families,” he said, adding that it includes a round of mini golf, raffles, pizza lunch and gaming tokens. The raffles will include “child-inclusive” baskets. “Think toys and experiences like the zoo and other children-focused items,” Castillo said. The event takes place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., so participants can start with lunch, golf or games. “It’s not a shotgun start. It’s on your own time,” said Adam Woodworth, who’s been executive director of the museum for almost 20 years.

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Children play at a sand table at the Children’s Museum in Oak Lawn as part of its Wee Ones program. In addition to monetary donations, the museum welcomes art supplies and volunteers.

PARK FOREST

Autumn Ridge Apartments representative meets with officials

Complex may be sold


Jerry Shnay

When money talks, everyone listens. The village of Park Forest recently filed a complaint in Will County demanding Red Oak Management, the owners of the dilapidated Autumn Ridge Apart-

ments, be forced through receivership to turn over the property to a third party and lose all assets it has in the units, as well as jeopardizing its corporate life. According to new Village Manager Jon Kindseth, although the complaint was filed “we had not yet begun the full serving process other than to the owner. This is what caused them to come to town this (past) week.” The action was a shot over the financial bow of Red Oak and may have been the reason real estate investor Joseph Bialostozky flew in from New Jersey and met village officials including Mayor

Joe Woods and Kindseth to work on a game plan to set things right. According to those in attendance, Bialostozky is expected to return soon with a potential buyer who would then assume control of Autumn Ridge through a basic ownership sale, make all needed repairs and improvements including elevators that work, new heating and cooling systems for all units and paying the nearly \$500,000 water bill owed to the village. On its web site, Red Oak Management claims a portfolio of 24 assets in five states. It is hoped none has the problems that beset

the apartments on Sycamore Drive. In recent weeks, with temperatures often hovering above 90 degrees, and with little or no air-conditioning units working in the complex, Village Trustee Randall White began taking donations of window fans and air conditioning units for the tenants. According to White, some of those units needed makeshift adjustment to fit in apartment windows. One anonymous source donated 40 units, but since then, White said, there have been few, if any, such offerings. As of last week, at least one of the four apartment buildings in the

complex had its air-conditioning system restored. If Bialostozky listened when threatened with a lawsuit, it might be well if he or his financial successor heard some of the voices who live under difficult conditions. Carmel Davis might tell him that in her two years as a tenant at Autumn Ridge, she dealt with mold, black water from her water pipes and some flooding. Of her 88 neighbors, she says that about 15 to 20 form a tight-knit support group to help each other.

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