

More aid available for renters and landlords

From staff reports

Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Housing earlier this week opened the third round of rental assistance for tenants and landlords since the onset of the pandemic.

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) includes nearly \$80 million funded through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act signed into law by Congress in December 2020 and will offer up to 15 months of rental assistance and utility payment assistance for impacted renters.

“Over the course of this incredibly difficult year, our residents, especially

our most vulnerable ones, have faced unimaginable loss that is compounded by a systemic poverty and lack of access to safe, affordable housing,” Lightfoot said. “The Emergency Rental Assistance Program will not only help to relieve these residents of the fear of losing their homes and being thrown further into uncertainty and socioeconomic instability but allow our city to make significant progress in our mission to provide our communities with resources they need to thrive long after this pandemic is over.”

Chicago’s ERAP, along with other county and state assistance programs are

designed to keep Chicago renters in their homes as well as avoid the kind of multifamily foreclosures that were seen in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis.

Since the onset of the pandemic, eviction moratoriums at the state and federal levels have provided some protection to tenants who have lost income. However, last week, Governor Pritzker announced that the state moratorium on pandemic-related evictions will be phased out by August. During this time, landlords have also struggled to pay their bills due to reduced rent collections. ERAP represents assistance to Chicago renters to avoid a wave

of evictions, and to Chicago property owners to avoid foreclosures and resulting housing instability.

DOH has partnered with The Resurrection Project, which will provide case management services to administer 75% of the funds through an online platform designed by Unqork. Additional intake and application processing will be performed by over a dozen delegate agencies and will include in-person services to assist residents with limited access to technology and ensure that residents in need are informed of available assistance.

Applications are open now through 11:59 p.m.

June 8, at chicago.gov/renthelp. In addition, a call center will provide support in multiple languages to help renters and landlords complete their applications. The call center number is (312) 698-0202 and will be open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays. It will be closed Sundays and on Memorial Day.

To be eligible for ERAP, tenants must:

- Live in Chicago.
- Have suffered a hardship due to COVID-19, such as job loss, reduced hours or illness within the household.
- Be at risk of housing instability.

• Have earned less than the maximum household income during 2020 or at the time of application (income limits can be found at Chicago.gov/renthelp).

Landlords may apply for assistance on behalf of a tenant. Landlords may also register their properties using the online application and be notified if a tenant has started the application process for rental assistance. Household income limits apply, and proof of address, income self-certification, and other documentation are needed to qualify. Proof of citizenship is not a requirement for qualification. Funds will be distributed on a rolling basis.

Boitsov Ballet will expand

Acclaimed ballet teacher to launch production company

By Mary Hadac

Eight years after she brought her classical ballet school to the Southwest Side, Madame Elizabeth Boitsov is looking to expand.

An internationally acclaimed ballerina and ballet teacher, Boitsov recently hosted an invitation-only luncheon at her school’s storefront near Archer and Mason.

Several Southwest Side leaders, including elected officials and business leaders, attended.

The purpose of the small gathering was to announce the launch of a production company linked to the school and generate community support.

“Boitsov Classical Ballet Productions was formed to offer a solution -- to provide family-friendly fine arts productions that educate and inspire the young and the young-at-heart while being accessible and affordable,” Boitsov told

her guests.

Boitsov Classical Ballet Productions is looking to start staging productions on a semi-annual basis starting in 2023, with *Pinocchio* in the spring and *Hansel and Gretel* in the fall.

The cast of these productions would be filled primarily by professional ballet dancers, while also providing students at Boitsov’s school opportunities to be cast, enabling students to gain professional experience.

“I love to share my knowledge of performing and teaching ballet to prepare fine arts professionals for careers in ballet, but the major emphasis for dance is performance,” said Boitsov, a spry, cheerful woman who looks years younger than her age. “Dancing before a live audience is what all the work is for and where the magic happens.”

That matters, she added, because the average price of just one ticket to a ballet

performance downtown is about \$181 – making it out of reach for many Southwest Side parents who want to expose their children to the arts.

To make these productions even more accessible to the community, Boitsov’s production company will also stage smaller performances in community spaces such as public libraries and schools.

Before 2023 there are several things community members can do to help make Boitsov’s dream of bringing fine arts to Garfield Ridge a reality.

The company is currently looking for spaces to stage these performances with the hopes of eventually having a performance space of their own. There are opportunities for community members to become donors and receive advanced notices of productions and projects. Businesses can sign up to sponsor productions. There are also opportunities for volunteers to join and help run and promote events.

Those interested in helping Boitsov Ballet Produc-



Madame Elizabeth Boitsov outlines her vision for a ballet production company on the Southwest Side. – Photo by Lorena Paredes

tions can call the school at (312) 663-0844 or contact them through boitsovballet.com.

Background

Boitsov was born in the old Soviet Union and started practicing ballet at age 4.

As a young adult in the 1970s, she left home to teach ballet in Poland and later Sweden, before coming to the U.S. and eventually setting up shop in Chicago in early 1980.

With her husband, Vladimir, she founded her school in the South Loop, along with a ballet compa-

ny. Both thrived and drew critical acclaim until Vladimir died from lung cancer in 2000. The company shut down, but Boitsov maintained the school.

In 2013, she closed its downtown location and relocated to Garfield Ridge—a move she called “a dream” she and her husband shared, to make classical ballet more accessible to communities not normally exposed to it. Today, Boitsov lives in Garfield Ridge.

The school’s move was made possible through assistance from the Greater Southwest Development

Corporation, which over the past seven years has helped her organize her school from the business end.

The school teaches the Vaganova Technique of Russian classical ballet. “This technique is practiced around the world,” according to a statement on the Boitsov website. “It is the highest standard by which a professional ballet dancer is trained.”

The school accepts girls and boys as young as age 4 and teaches them all the way to adulthood, with an eye on them having careers as professional dancers.

Jump start stalled medical research, U.S. Rep. Rush says

Works with GOP colleague on bill to fund fight against disease

From staff reports

Legislation designed to fund research on treatments and cures for diseases including Alzheimer’s, cancer, blindness, juvenile diabetes and sickle-cell anemia was recently introduced by U.S. Rep. Bobby L. Rush (D-1st) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.).

The proposed Long-term Opportunities for Advancing New Studies (LOANS) for Biomedical Research Act (H.R. 3437) would authorize a federally-backed loan program for clinical trials that have received FDA clearance and are focused on finding much needed

treatments and cures.

“The accelerated development of COVID-19 vaccines over the past year has proved that significant investment in medical research and development can speed the development of cures and treatments,” Rush said. “Millions of Americans suffering from cancer, Alzheimer’s and other terrible diseases cannot afford to wait for vital treatments and cures while clinical trials are disrupted.

“We must use every federal avenue to restart U.S. biomedical research and ensure that the clinical trials necessary to take basic research to the bedside receive

the funding they urgently need,” the congressman continued. “I thank my colleague, Rep. Fitzpatrick, for joining me in introducing this important legislation to advance U.S. biomedical research and save lives.”

Rush said the pandemic severely disrupted clinical trials, negatively affecting patients who were enrolled in or awaiting clinical trials for deadly and debilitating conditions. He said recent research indicates that more than 1,000 clinical trials remain disrupted as funding and other resources continue to be diverted to address the ongoing pandemic.

The LOANS for Biomedical Research Act is designed to fill the funding gaps without additional deficit spending and at

minimal cost to taxpayers by creating a new class of investments called BioBonds. BioBonds are financial instruments comprised of loans to eligible biomedical companies and universities which have received FDA authorization for clinical trials advancing novel treatments and cures.

Since borrowers are required to be able to repay these extensions of credit regardless of project success, investors in BioBonds would be those with long-term, risk-adverse capital such as pension funds and insurers, rather than venture capitalists or pharmaceutical companies.

BioBonds are structured similarly to well-established bond instruments such as green bonds, which

are currently funding billions in renewable-energy and climate-risk reduction projects. However, loan financing is generally absent in biomedical research, which relies largely on venture-capital and pharmaceutical firm investments, which are generally only possible when there is a clear profit potential, for example, with late-stage research into to high-priced drugs for large patient populations. The absence of funding for “translational” research, which takes projects from the lab to early-stage clinical trials, leaves much promising research behind. Additionally, the current equity-based funding model for biomedical research is costly, thus increasing U.S. drug prices.

The LOANS for Biomedical Research Act is supported by the following organizations: Alliance for Aging Research, Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Association, American College of Rheumatology, Blinded Veterans Association, Chordoma Foundation, Choroideremia Research Foundation, Foundation Fighting Blindness, The Mark Foundation for Cancer Research, Melanoma Research Alliance, National Alliance for Eye and Vision Research, North Carolina Biotechnology Center, OculoTherapy, Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation, Smashing Walnuts Foundation, Sophia Sees Hope, and the Usher Syndrome Coalition.