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Parkways Foundation's Brenda Palm on society, corporate trends and baseball



By: [Laura Bianchi](#) March 01, 2010

At home in Wicker Park, **Brenda Palm** tears pages from *Outside Magazine* about little-known ski slopes. "I dream about helicopter skiing, when I get up the courage," says Ms. Palm, 36, executive director of Parkways Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Chicago Park District. Less scary:

Follows society pages of **CS**, **Michigan Avenue** and **North Shore** magazines. "We want to be in constant contact with our members; I'll mention that we saw their photo."

Susses out corporate trends in the **New York Times**, **Wall Street Journal** online, **Sun-Times** and **Chicago Tribune**. Noted a *Times* article about corporate logos becoming lighter and more welcoming: "That's an indicator that a company is refreshing its brand, and charitable giving might be part of that."

Admires **Kurt Vonnegut's** "unique way of exploring the human tragedy, then hitting you with that comedy right after." But felt "the cringe factor" reading "Look at the Birdie: Unpublished Short Fiction," early works printed posthumously. "I'm looking at something private; did he want me to read this?"

For day trips to Midwest minor league baseball games with her husband, refers to "**Cougars and Snappers and Loons (Oh My!)**," by *Sun-Times* columnist Dave Hoekstra. "It's a heartfelt collection of (baseball) essays, a piece of Americana."

Raised on opera by her classically trained mother, "I'm drawn to bands with dramatic, orchestral overtones," like **Radiohead** and **Arcade Fire** on her iPod.

Gives as a gift "**The Book of Daniel**," by E. L. Doctorow. "It's a very powerful story on what it is to be American."