



Isuroon: a portal to better health

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Isuroon is a robust word in the Somali language.

According to Isuroon Executive Director Fartun Weli, it can be used as a verb, a noun, or an adjective. It is also the name of the organization she leads.

She said, "Somali words are conceptual. While the short translation of Isuroon is 'a woman who cares for herself,' the long translation is 'a woman who has gotten everything she needs to be strong, healthy, independent, empowered, beautiful, vivacious, and confident.' The mission of our organization is to be a space where every Somali woman can be all of those things."

Isuroon was founded in 2010 to address the unmet health care needs of Somali women and girls in this community. Through group meetings, one-on-one counseling, and carefully designed teaching sessions, staff offer education on issues including self-care and social connectedness, healthy eating, pre-natal health, the impact of female genital cutting/mutilation, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, domestic and sexual violence, pregnancy prevention, child abuse, understanding HIV/AIDS, and navigating a complex health care system.

Weli and her 11 employees have a lot on their plates. Their resources are available to any Somali woman who wants to improve her health and wellness, and that of her family – to give her the tools so that she can thrive in Minnesota and beyond. Through education and coaching, women and girls learn to manage their health care preventatively, strengthen their economic self-sufficiency, and develop their innate leadership skills.

Isuroon serves a population that likely came to Minnesota from refugee camps. ISUROON >> 9

BARK RANGER PROGRAM STARTING SOON

NPS staff creating new way for people and dogs to enjoy Coldwater Spring

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The Bark Ranger Program is a joint venture of the National Park Service (NPS) and their non-profit partner, the Mississippi Park Connection. In early January, a cadre of four-legged volunteers and their owners will be sworn in at Coldwater Spring. New recruits to this awareness campaign will pledge to leash their dogs while walking at Coldwater Spring, pick up dog waste, and respect wildlife and habitat restoration.

NPS land manager Neil Smarjesse, leads the habitat restoration crews at Coldwater Spring. He said, "We would like to create a different way for people and their dogs to experience this place. We're adjacent to the Minnehaha Dog Park, but we are not an off-leash area. When dogs are kept leashed, grassland-nesting birds (like the newly returned clay colored sparrow) aren't disturbed. We are welcoming back indigo buntings, Baltimore orioles, fox, coyote, deer, and many other species."



The Bark Ranger trainings on Jan. 4 and 9 will be a great opportunity to engage with staff and volunteers, and to learn more about both the histories and the lay-out of Coldwater Spring. (Photo courtesy of NPS)

The 29-acre site was added to the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area in 2010, with the goal of restoring the landscape to a prairie oak savannah. A major renovation, which included seeding 13 acres of prairie and wetlands, was completed in 2012. More than 1,000 trees, shrubs,

grasses, and wildflowers have been planted on the property.

Paula Swingley is the NPS volunteer coordinator. She said, "People love this place for many different reasons. The paths here aren't straight-to-a-place paths; they meander. It's a place to enjoy the prairie in all seasons.

As part of the Bark Ranger training, there's the added bonus of learning some of the non-visible history of this site. You can still see the Spring House and the ore bins, but there is so much more to learn."

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'It should never have happened'



Leigh Ann Block visits the bench in Mattock's Park dedicated to her daughter, Mikayla Olson Tester, who was murdered by her father on Labor Day weekend 2004 at age 5. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Mother warned officials ex-husband was dangerous before he killed child and himself

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Mikayla Olson Tester might be a happy 21-year-old woman today if the family court system had listened to the warnings of her mother.

Instead, it's been 15 years since she was murdered by her own father, and the weight of not being believed by the court system still weighs heavily on mother Leigh Ann Block (formerly Olson). She has spent the last 15 years putting together the pieces of this tragedy, trying to figure out how to prevent this from happening to anyone else.

"Fifteen years later I'm trying to protect women and chil-

dren from going through what we did because I can't save her," said Block.

"It should never have happened."

Calculated murder 2 weeks after he took daughter on vacation

It was her father's turn to have the five-year-old on Labor Day weekend 2004, right before she was going to start kindergarten at Randolph Heights School.

The Ramsey County court had given St. Paul resident John Tester, age 41, joint custody and over 50 percent parenting time, over the objections of Block.

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This series seeks to put a face on domestic abuse and intimate partner violence.



They're reusing household fabrics for a new purpose

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Get a glimpse inside the lives of families navigating education decisions

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The sun sets on Bergan's SuperValu as it closes

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'It should never have happened'

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Her ex-husband prevented Block from caring for Mikayla and threatened and intimidated them both. But the people she tried to get to protect her and Mikayla failed.

The police, a custody evaluator, mediator, attorneys, Referee Earl Beddow Jr., and Judge Michael F. Fetcsch didn't pay attention to his threats, coercive control or post-separation abuse, and instead gave him the standard custody and parenting time schedule.

"I tried to do everything within my power to protect her but the law was not on my side," said Block.

On that day 15 years ago, when Block answered the door of her home she shared with Mikayla, and saw two St. Paul police officers, she knew the news was bad.

It was the news a battered woman fears most.

"Mikayla is dead, isn't she?"

Block knew without being told. She had received a strange call from her ex-husband earlier that day. He had instructed their only child to call Block and tell her they were going on a journey in a new car.

Tester then took his daughter to a rural Wisconsin road outside of Osceola on Saturday, Sept. 4, 2004, shot her in the head, and then turned the gun on himself.

It was over three years since the couple had split up.

Tester's sister-in-law, Gina, told the *Star Tribune* that Tester had done it to get back at Block.

The Polk County Sheriff's Department called it a "cold and calculated murder" that took months to plan.

"I had warned the courts that Mikayla's life was in danger," said Block, a smart, capable and re-

spondible woman.

But no one in the family court system believed her in time to save her daughter. The fact that no one in the justice system did anything to protect her daughter still haunts Block.

"Despite a well-documented history of threats to abuse me and my child, my ex-husband was allowed to have unsupervised visitation with our daughter," said Block. "John's abusive behavior did not affect the custody/parenting time decisions. It was clear to me that the domestic violence and threats to harm me and our daughter had no impact on the court."

Mikayla's funeral was held on the day she was supposed to start kindergarten.

Court wouldn't let her protect daughter from father

Block's attorney, Mark Anderson of Burnsville, told the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* shortly after Mikayla was murdered by her father that Block lived for her daughter. "She was a very, very dedicated mother; and she did everything she could to protect that little girl from people, but it was the one guy she could never do anything about because he had court-ordered visitation," observed Anderson.

In their divorce decree, they shared joint legal custody. Tester was granted parenting time of 4.5 hours with Mikayla on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, as well as from 9 a.m. Saturday to 5 p.m. Sunday on alternating weekends. "Even though I had sole physical custody, Mikayla's father had over 50% of the parenting time and spent more quality time with our daughter. I 'agreed' to this arrangement because I had no choice," said Block, after her first attorney, Martha Eaves (SMRLS),

told her to "quit pushing John's buttons." Eaves also told Block that the courts would grant him 50% custody anyway.

Nightmare began after baby was born

Block graduated from Central High School in St. Paul in 1985, the same school her grandparents and mom had attended. She got a good job at Montgomery Ward, and met John Tester a year out of high school through mutual friends.

They dated off and on between 1986 and 1998, when they got married at Como Conservatory because they had a baby on the way.

Block remembers that Tester was competitive and compared himself to others constantly. He really enjoyed boating, and they had lots of fun on the weekends. But it wasn't until she gave up her apartment and moved into "his house" on Palace St. (he never called it theirs even after they got married) to save money, that she felt trepidation about marrying him.

Things started gradually. Like many men, he didn't really start showing his abusive side until their daughter was born when the focus was no longer on him, although Block can look back now and see some earlier red flags.

"It's supposed to be the happiest time in your life when you have a baby," observed Block, "but that's basically when my nightmare began."

From the time Mikayla was born, Block remembers that her ex-husband would get angry at the amount of care and attention Block gave her.

Sometimes he would pin her down on the bed and make her listen to their daughter's screams in the next room.

They both agreed that Block



Mikayla Olson Tester would have been 21 on Nov. 29, 2019. Because of her spirit, her mother Leigh Ann Block is still fighting for other kids in abusive situations with an unhealthy and dangerous parent. She was her mother's "sweetie-girl." Her daycare provider called her Cinderella and brought her to Mattock's Park to play. She called herself "Mika" when she was little because she couldn't say "Mikayla." She loved her family, music, Disney princesses – especially Ariel, dressing up, playing with stuffed "animals," and her cat Smokey. Her mother remembers going on walks with godmother Kris, and Mikayla's blond hair flying in the wind. "Feel the breeze, Mikayla Nicole," Block would say.

would stop working when their daughter was born, and care for the baby, as well as manage the care for Block's dad who was battling Stage 4 carcinoma cancer and lived with them. She was dependent upon her husband, and that was just how he wanted it.

She timed her trips out of the house to fall when Tester wasn't home, and made sure she was back before he was. It wasn't easy, though, as he called her reg-

ularly to make sure she was at home. He wanted to know exactly what she was doing when he wasn't around and who she was with. He followed her from room to room to listen to her phone conversations. She started keeping journals to track what her husband was doing, and asked her best friend to hide them.

He started threatening to kill Block and their daughter on a

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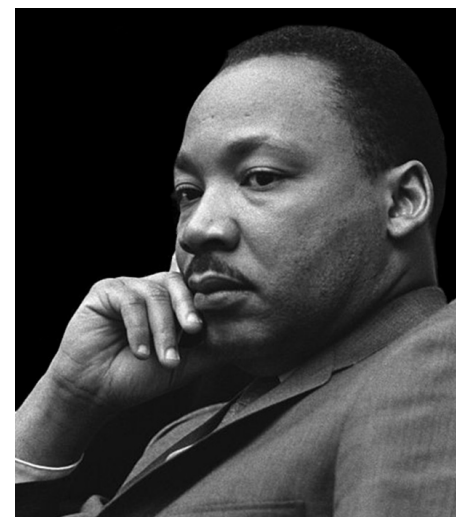
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Learn more: z.umn.edu/mlktribute2020



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'It should never have happened' >> from 2

weekly basis, sometimes while holding a large knife in his hand, and mimicking killing motions. Ten minutes later he would deny everything. The gaslighting became more regular.

"He was very smart," said Block. "He never physically left marks."

He told her she was fat and made fun of her crooked teeth. He told her that she'd never find anyone as great as himself if she left him. She remembers suffering from the cognitive dissonance of hearing him talk about how great he was and listening to the terrible things he said to her.

At night, when the baby was hungry and started to cry, he screamed at Block to "shut her up! Some of us have to work."

Due to his rages and his frequent marijuana use, Block avoided leaving Mikayla home alone with him. "It's a horrible thing to not want to leave your children with their father," Block remarked.

At home, Block did all the childcare while Tester went boating or snowmobiling with his friends almost every weekend, but out in public Tester was a doting dad. In fact, five months before he murdered Mikayla, he took her to Disney World.

He tightly controlled their finances, and gave her a paltry \$20 a week allowance. Friends and family helped Block buy diapers and other baby things.

She told herself that she was going to "stick it out" until Mikayla was in kindergarten.

Then came the day in March 2000, when she couldn't stop herself from calling the police because she was so scared. It was a Saturday, and she had planned to buy tickets for "Bear in the Big Blue House." Tester refused to let her leave the house, so she called her sister-in-law to tell her she couldn't go. Angry, Tester ripped the cordless phone out of her hands. She ran to another room to use the old-fashioned wall phone, and told her friend that "things aren't ok right now," and returned upstairs. His behavior was so threatening that she grabbed the cordless phone again, ran out on the porch, and called 911. The phone went dead when he ripped the line out of the wall.

When the three squad cars arrived, Block asked herself, "What have I done? He's going to kill me."

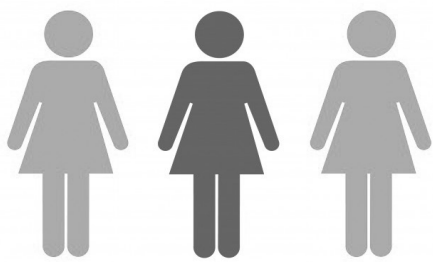
She obtained her first order for protection (OPF), and he was banned from the house except to pick up Mikayla for visits. Angry that he'd been kicked out of "his house" due to an order for protection, Tester filed for divorce. Block had no money for another home, daycare, or an attorney.

Post-separation abuse unchecked

Fearing what Tester would do despite the OPF, Block put a baby monitor in the garage. Tester worked third shift, but one night she heard a noise in the garage and called the police. The cops found him inside with the hood of her vehicle up and a quart of oil sitting by the open gas tank. He told the cops he was just there to pick up some tools. He was arrested for violating the OPF.

The morning after Halloween, Block looked out the window of her new apartment, and

1 in 3 women experience domestic violence by their partners



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her Blazer was missing again. She had changed the vehicle's door key after an earlier suspicious incident, but not the ignition key. She reported it stolen, and three weeks later it was found wrapped around a tree in Rochester. It had been involved in a vehicular homicide when two kids took it on a joyride despite the passenger seat having been cut out.

Shortly after, Block flipped through the notebook she and Tester exchanged with their daughter, recording important details to share with the other parent. Inside, she found the ignition key to her Blazer.

Tester was letting her know he could get to her, despite the OPF and their divorce papers.

Before he murdered Mikayla, Tester quit his job in order to get his child support reduced, and then worked secretly for cash while receiving unemployment benefits.

Tester put Mikayla in the middle of Block and himself, because he couldn't control Block any more as she started a new life with Mikayla. Mikayla started asking her mother distressing questions like, "why is Daddy mean?" One day Mikayla asked her mom if she was going to die. "No," Block told her. "Why do you ask?" "Because Daddy said you were," replied Mikayla. He told her that if mom starting dating that she wouldn't love Mikayla anymore.

He stole and refused to return their daughter's favorite stuffed animal, even though she had trouble sleeping without Hippy. He told their daughter she was fat.

Block was always on alert, waiting for the next thing to happen.

Tester continued to threaten Block and yell obscenities at her during exchanges of Mikayla. But when she told the officials involved in their case – the people she thought were supposed to help her – they didn't give him any real consequences. After Tester tampered with Block's vehicle, he had been instructed to see Mikayla at the Children's Safety Center for supervised visitation. After a month or two, Tester wanted to take Mikayla to a family reunion, and Ramsey County custody evaluator Kelly Gerleman allowed it, despite Tester's threats to take Mikayla away from Block and despite his threats to kill them both. Moreover, Gerleman removed Mikayla from the Safety Center indefinitely. Gerleman told Block, "John needs to be given the chance to demonstrate good behavior."

Block was warned by officials that if she fled with her daughter, she would be arrested for kidnapping. And then, Tester killed Mikayla.

Block called each one of these professionals after Mikayla was murdered, but she never got an apology, nor did any suffer consequences in their jobs for their role in Mikayla's death.

"They failed miserably," said Block. "I didn't get any help. Nobody listened to me. I was not some crazy ex-wife. I was a loving mother trying to protect my child. This is what parents are supposed to do – keep their children safe from harm. There's something really wrong with the system and that's an understatement."

She added, "They were minimizing. I still feel like I'm being minimized because I didn't have any bruises."

Not hit, but still victims of abuse

Block is tired of hearing the common myth that "it takes two to tango."

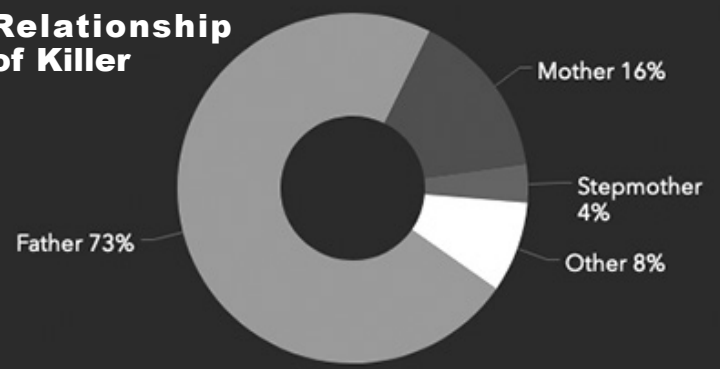
She's tired of the stereotypes about the kind of woman who gets abused. "It doesn't matter how much money you make or your status," she observed. She doesn't think people want to believe that someone with a few kids who lives in a nice house could be an abuser or a victim, but that doesn't stop it from being true.

She's tired of hearing that women are vindictive and make up abuse to get back at their spouses. She's ready for people to start believing women and children.

"Abuse survivors are constantly trying to prove themselves," she observed. "There should be no question." She supports a national resolution, H. Con.Res.72, "expressing the sense of Congress that child safety is the first priority of custody and visitation adjudications, and that state courts should improve adjudications of custody where family violence is alleged" (115th Congress [2017-2018]). This resolution makes it standard to put the safety needs of children first rather than parental rights, and Block and friend Bonnie Roy are pushing for state legislation that will also support putting the safety of children first through the Minnesota Chapter of the Stop Abuse Campaign.

Block began recording her abuse in journals in the spring of 1999, and now it's 2019. Kids are still not being protected, despite the Adverse Childhood Experi-

Relationship of Killer



Graphic courtesy of Center for Judicial Excellence

Four murdered in Minneapolis

19 killed in intimate partner homicides in 2019

On Thanksgiving Day 2019, Raven B. Gant's ex-boyfriend shot and killed her in front of her minor daughter in North Minneapolis. Later, over the holiday weekend, Kjersten Marie Schladetzky, and her two sons, William and Nelson were killed in a triple murder-suicide by their father and Kjersten's ex-husband, David, in south Minneapolis.

Raven, Kjersten, William, and Nelson are Minnesota's most recent confirmed intimate partner homicide victims. There have been 19 confirmed intimate partner homicide victims as of press time on Dec. 21.

On the morning of Dec. 1, David Schladetzky, 53, shot and killed his two sons, William, 11, and Nelson, 8, outside of their home at 2738 Oakland Ave. He then entered the house and shot and killed his ex-wife, Kjersten, 39, before killing himself. Police officers responded to calls of gunshots and found the two boys in the front yard. As officers arrived, they heard shots coming from inside the house. Kjersten and David's bodies were later found inside the home. A divorce was finalized between the two in June 2019.

Randall Watkins, 41, faces a second-degree murder charge for the killing of 27-year-old Raven Gant, who was shot in the back. The Hennepin County Attorney's Office says it will seek an enhanced sentence in this case due to the presence of

the child.

Intimate partner homicides have a devastating impact on children. Children are injured and killed. Additionally, witnessing the murder of a parent due to intimate partner homicide can have long-term adverse effects on children. In the Violence Free Minnesota 30-year retrospective on intimate partner homicide in Minnesota, a child witnessed the homicide of their parent in 22% of the 685 cases from 1989-2018.

"The safety of our children is directly linked to intimate partner violence of their parents," said Violence Free Minnesota Executive Director Liz Richards. "Protecting our children is an essential part of our work to end intimate partner violence. We must find the words – and the solutions – to say that these deaths are the fatal result of power and control; and we can take action as a community to end intimate partner violence."

Raven Gant, and Kjersten, William, and Nelson Schladetzky's lives will be honored at an intimate partner homicide memorial on Jan. 28, 2020, and included in the 2019 intimate partner homicide report to be released on Oct. 1, 2020.

If you are a victim experiencing abuse, contact Day One at 866-223-1111 to connect with services.

Information courtesy of Violence Free Minnesota, formerly the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women.

ences (ACEs) research on how much kids are affected by threats, intimidation and physical violence.

"I may not have been hit, but Mikayla was still a victim of domestic violence," she said.

"There's still no law that protects children in abusive situations."

Minnesota has nine best interest factors, and only one is related to domestic violence. "The best interest is not putting your children with an abusive father," said Block. She believes that if a parent is abusive, they should not have joint custody. They should not have access to their children.

"I want to be part of a positive change that will prioritize these kids' lives," said Block.

And so she keeps telling her story.

"We shouldn't have to beg for these laws to protect our kids," said Block.

"We need to start looking out for each other."

She has devoted her time to promoting prevention, testifying

at government hearings against 50/50 custody laws, and speaking out so that no more children die because of domestic violence.

According to the Center for Judicial Excellence, at least 728 children have been murdered by a divorcing or separating parent since 2011. Seventy-three percent of the perpetrators are fathers. Many of these children are killed in murder-suicides, as Mikayla was.

In the 30 years that Violence Free Minnesota (formerly the Minnesota Battered Women's Coalition) has been tracking femicides, at least 685 people were killed due to relationship abuse. The youngest victim was just 22 weeks old; the oldest was 88.

"Mikayla was mentally and physically abused by her father, as was I. And we dealt with it basically from her birth in 1998," said Block.

"I don't want any other child to have to go through what Mikayla went through."

Contact editor at tesha@longfellownokomisessenger.com.

The Motley Conversation

Messenger

Join the conversation, and let us know your diverse and varied thoughts on the issues that affect your neighborhood. Send letters and guest commentaries to news@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com or call 612-345-9998.

Let's give a hand to our newspaper carriers, those wonderful people who are out delivering the news before many of us wake up. As winter sets in, give your newspaper and mail carriers a hand. Keep sidewalks shoveled and ice-free, and make sure there's a clear pathway to your front door. Some folks even clear a house-to-house trail on their lawns so the carriers don't have to go up and down steps. It could speed delivery, just a tiny bit.

Nearly 30 million U.S. households still get a newspaper delivered to their doorstep, according to 2018 data from the Pew Research Center.

The job hazards are what you'd expect – dogs, sprinklers, rain, snow and sleet.

The carriers may not be what you'd expect. Henry Huggins, the beloved fictional character created by Beverly Cleary, epitomized a time when kids filled the majority of newspaper routes. Today, most carriers do the routes as a second job. This side hustle pays for vacations, cabins, and home repairs. For some, it's a way to stay active and fit when they retire.

Delivering newspapers has been a crash course in business training for many famous folks, including Walt Disney, Warren



Too Much Coffee

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN, Tessa@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com

Shovel the walkwalks, say hi to your newspaper carriers

Buffett, Kathy Ireland, former Vice President Joe Biden, actor Tom Cruise, and director David Lynch.

Our newspaper carriers aren't TMC Publication staff members, but employees of Fresh Heir, a small business that delivers for a variety of neighborhood newspapers in the Twin Cities. They earn their wage based on the number of papers and routes they deliver. Carriers can earn \$13-15 an hour and their hours are flexible. To accommodate those without cars, the Fresh Heir van drops bundles off at street corners. Carriers can then fill their bags multiple times over the next hour or so without them becoming too heavy, and then work through way up and down the street. A 12-inch stack of newspapers weighs about 35 pounds, so a carrier is always balancing how much they can carry versus the length of the route. In poor weather, the carrier places

the newspapers in polybags (that can be recycled by readers), and in better weather they roll them with a rubber band to make it easier to throw.

It takes some muscle and finesse to deliver a paper to your front steps. I can tell you that my arm got pretty tired by the end of my routes this summer, and some papers didn't make it exactly where I was aiming. My apologies for those of you that found your papers closer to the bushes than your front steps.

Some of our carriers have been delivering the same routes for years, and although I tried to talk them into being interviewed for this column, they all declined, leaving the spotlight for others. These carriers regularly walking our neighborhood streets help keep them safe. And they feel connected to the homes they're serving.

Every once in awhile a newspaper carrier makes it into the

newspapers they're delivering. Here are a few stories compiled by the News Media Alliance:

- In 2018, Howard Shelton was shot on the job. He is a carrier for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. The 60-year-old was delivering to customers on his route when his car was stolen and he was shot. His customers set up a GoFundMe to help with his expenses while out of work. It was the first time in 20 years Shelton missed work.

- In 2017, Mari Schlegel was delivering the *Lincoln (Nebraska) Journal Star* when she noticed a home on her route was on fire. After calling 911, Schlegel knocked on the door of the house to wake up the resident, Debra Sherard, and alert her to the fire. Thanks to Schlegel's quick thinking, Sherard and her pets escaped the house unharmed, and the fire department was able to put out the fire before it spread further through the

house.

- When Debbie Brazell, a newspaper delivery woman for Columbia, South Carolina's *The State* newspaper, noticed that papers were piling up in the paper box of a long-time subscriber on her route, she thought something had to be wrong. And she was right. The 93-year-old resident had fallen and couldn't get up, so Brazell called 911. The woman, it turned out, had fallen and blacked out on Friday, and was not found until Brazell arrived on Monday.

Feel free to leave a tip for your carrier during these tough winter months (it's customary to tip a carrier \$5 to \$10 per month, and up to \$25 during the holidays), and I'm sure they'd also appreciate a smile and a thank you.

Newspaper carriers don't just deliver papers; they also deliver democracy door to door, according to Lindsey Loving, a spokesperson for News Media Alliance. "Without newspaper carriers, many people wouldn't receive the news that keeps them informed about their communities," she said. "Both the news and newspaper carriers play critical roles in preserving our democratic society, and we couldn't be more grateful to them."

I completely agree.

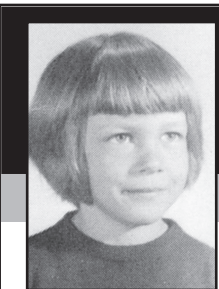
A little bit about me... I grew up on a cattle and crop farm in north central Iowa. With no brothers, every day was "Take Your Daughter to Work" day. I have vivid dreams every fall about helping with the harvest.

My father and I both loved horses and ranch rodeos, and my earliest career choice was to work on a ranch. That career never happened, but it's still fun to think about.

It's striking to realize that after many generations of farmers on both branches of the family tree, no one in my extended family farms today.

Our farm was in a rural area known as Heathen Valley. We had many friends and many youthful adventures in our rural neighborhood, which was near a landmark still known as Four Corners. It got its name because with ponds and the east fork of the Iowa River, you could fish at all four corners.

My sisters and I attended a K-12 school, where my graduating class was the second-largest in school history. There were 34 of us, and almost two dozen of us classmates began kindergarten



Meet Our Staff

By JANE McCLURE

Asking questions, talking about interests and events

together.

I always liked to read and write, so journalism was an extension of that. My newspaper career began at age 12, as a writer for small weekly newspapers. I worked with some wonderful editors and correspondents during that time. School news and sports were my first "beats," but I also covered local meetings.

One paper let me hang out in the back shop where the paper was produced. The young people who helped were known as "printers' devils." Many of us get to revisit those days at the Minnesota State Fair Newspaper Museum, housed in the 4-H Building.

After high school, I graduated from Iowa State Uni-

versity. My career path never strayed from community journalism, with papers in Iowa and Minnesota. I moved to the Twin Cities in 1983 and live in Macalester-Groveland neighborhood in St. Paul, after many years in Merriam Park.

Many, many people and stories come to mind when looking back on my career. One of the strangest was in the early 1980s, when a rural Minnesota high school bought a portable breath tester to use with the junior-senior prom attendees. The story was picked up by the wire services. Today we'd say it went viral.

Another story a few of you might remember is the all-night public hearing on I-35W ex-

pansion in south Minneapolis, back in 1992. It may have been the last public hearing on such a topic with that format. To those who stayed all night with me, I salute you.

My current work has me editing *Access Press*, a monthly paper for people with disabilities, and writing for community papers including the *Villager*, *Monitor* and *Messenger*. I do some writing for *Food Service News* and other trade publications.

My work is largely focused on St. Paul city and county government, land use and regulatory issues, although I do venture across the river to do Minneapolis stories from time to time. I also write and research St. Paul history.

A few random thoughts on my work life:

- *Issues take time to be resolved. I began writing about what became the Green Line light rail in 1983. I also remember when the Blue Line was Hennepin County's third transit priority. It was the first light rail line built in the Twin Cities.

- *The second thought is that so many things have changed over my years of writing. How communities organize, who is involved, what form outreach takes, which issues are important ... things in some ways look very different than they used to.

Journalism itself has really changed. I remember listening to the wire services machines humming and clicking in the background of a newsroom or hearing the bells for major news. I remember when getting a fax machine for a newsroom was a big deal.

But what hasn't changed is the need to get the news out, deadline after deadline. And for me, it continues to be a great general education. You learn something new every day.

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The Longfellow Nokomis Messenger is a monthly community publication in the Longfellow and Nokomis areas of Minneapolis, owned and operated by TMC Publications, CO. Visit our website for our calendar and publication dates.

Story ideas always welcome.

Keep in touch with the Messenger. Letters to the editor under 200 words and news releases for publication can be sent via e-mail to news@longfellownokomisMessenger.com. Unsigned letters will not run.

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Messenger

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Re-using household fabrics for a new purpose

NEIGHBORHOOD BAG PROJECT

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Laura Brown and Lauren Callis Erickson shared a stand at the Midtown Farmer's Market on several Saturday mornings last summer. They had a couple of sewing machines set up, and were surrounded by piles of fabric.

Callis Erickson said, "We taught market-goers to sew simple drawstring bags. The bags were made from salvaged, thrifted, or previously used fabric squares, ribbon, and cord. We sewed a lot of bags with children. Most of the bags weren't perfect, but they held produce anyhow."

Everybody has to bring a shopping bag to a farmer's market, so why not make your own?

Brown remembered that shoppers would often stop at their stand and say things like, "I have so much fabric at home; I just don't know what to do with it."

Brown explained, "We believe there is value in leading by example. It's easy to make something beautiful and useful from what you already have. Change it, use it, or pass it along. That's where the Neighborhood Bag Project is coming from."

The two Minneapolis-based artists travelled between five different farmer's markets last summer sewing drawstring bags.

Callis Erickson said, "We started the Neighborhood Bag Project to get outside our usual circles of connection. Many of the people we met at the Midtown Farmer's Market were already on-board with repurposing. One woman shopped with a bag she had made from an old tent. Another



Artists Laura Brown (left) and Lauren Callis Erickson (right), co-founded the Neighborhood Bag Project to promote community art-making and fabric recycling. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

used a mylar balloon – apparently mylar is pretty durable."

Repurposing fabrics is an area of recycling that is getting a lot of attention lately, as people become aware that fabrics need to be dealt with responsibly, too. The fashion industry is believed to contribute 10% of the greenhouse gasses warming the earth.

If you can give fabrics a

second, third or fourth life by repurposing, why not do it?

Callis Erickson is both an art therapist and an entrepreneur. She said, "I'm pleased to offer opportunities through the Curiosity Studio in the Northrup King Building in Northeast Minneapolis for adults to explore art as it relates to their whole selves. We offer regular courses and

workshops for creative exploration using non-traditional materials."

Her other venture, called an Upcycled Closet, is in the same location. Callis Erickson provides secondhand items sourced to be functional, sustainable, and expressive. She said, "I'm a staunch believer in buying used, mending it, or making it yourself. I wrote my Master's thesis on working with used and recycled materials in the art practice. I feel that, as a culture, we have really learned to distance ourselves from our trash – and that has had very negative consequences."

Brown agreed, saying, "The more removed people are from their trash, the more they feel they can ignore it." Her areas of specialty are letterpress and silk screen printing, both of which she teaches at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. Brown's studio, called CHEER!, is located in the Casket Arts Building in Northeast Minneapolis.

Also an avid sewer and quilter, Brown said, "I've been to so many estate sales where I've seen tons of fabric left behind by just one person. Even though I have a bad habit of collecting sewing machines, I don't ever want to be that person with rooms full of unused fabric."

Try it yourself

On Jan. 22, Callis Erickson will teach a Bag Making Class from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Seward Coop Franklin Store. All sewing skill levels welcome. On Jan. 25, she will teach a Visible Mending Class from 1-3 p.m. at Winsome Goods. This beginner course is for anyone interested in repairing their own clothes. Learn to use simple, visible



"Fiber has always been a community practice, whether based on the necessity of needing to make something or the simple need for fellowship. It's largely been assigned to women, though not entirely. If you can remove yourself from thinking that what you make has to be perfect, then being creative is a great experience."

~ Lauren Callis Erickson

stitches to rebuild clothes and make them last longer. Each participant will receive their own mending kit.

Brown concluded, saying, "We believe that the process of creating will bring anyone joy. People seem to have a huge appetite right now for getting out of the house, turning off their phones, and doing something creative. Remember that everything is an experiment, and nothing needs to be perfect." Her upcoming classes at CHEER! are Learn to Use Your Sewing Machine on Jan. 18, and Block Printing on Fabric on Feb. 1, with other dates coming soon.

For further information, contact Laura Brown at www.laurabrownart.com and Lauren Callis Erickson at www.anupcycledcloset.com and www.curiositystudio.com.

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Education

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"You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives." Clay P. Bedford

INSIDE SCHOOLING DECISIONS

Get a glimpse into the lives of local families who are navigating through the many educational choices available today, and forging a path that fits their families.

HOMESCHOOL

Meet Longfellow resident Julianne Hide, parent of Landon (age 10), Holden (7), and Isla (3). She's married to Phil.

Why did you select this school?

We began homeschooling when my eldest started to suffer with anxiety at school. We did our best to address the issue, but he was not happy at school. After looking into options for other schools we decided to give homeschool a try. We're into our third year now. It's so much fun to learn together.

What do you appreciate most?

We greet each day with the idea of doing what feels right. Sometimes we stick with the plan, sometimes we grab an opportunity to get outside and enjoy the weather. We go to nature center programs, theaters and museums. The kids are able to pursue their area of interest in long sessions uninterrupted. Play is part of everyday. We attend a homeschool group each week and have made many friends.

What are the challenges?

The challenges have come in the form of being willing to accept that each homeschool day looks different depending on the



mood of the kids. Sometimes we have to change the plan. Our daily rhythm also has to adapt to the needs of the kids as they change. As long as I'm willing to keep going with the flow I know everything will be fine!

What skills do you think are most important for schools to teach kids in 2020?

I think the skills needed for 2020 revolve around getting

people to work together to solve problems. Creative thinking. Good communication skills. The strength to believe in yourself.

Share your school hacks or tips.

I think the best 'hack' I've come across is actually just really talking with him my kids and letting them help guide our learning. Anytime I let them lead they blow me away with their willingness to work.



CHARTER SCHOOL: Career Pathways

Meet Kelina Morgan, whose daughter Nasi is in ninth grade at Career Pathways, one of the Minnesota Transitions Charter School options.

Why did you select this school?

I chose Career Pathways for her because it was close to my employer, and it offered a non-traditional way of learning, with small class sizes.

What do you appreciate most?

Career Pathways also is a welcoming place with diversity of race, culture, religion, and sexual orientation. It's a place where my daughter feels a sense of belonging. We've lived in various cities, including Vadnais Heights and Somerset, Wis. It was important to me that she attended a school where the staff and students welcome diversity.

What skills do you think are most important for schools to teach kids in 2020?

I believe that acceptance and appreciation for differences is a valuable skill to learn, as well as life skills needed to find and maintain a career if college is not the choice.

Share your school hacks or tips.

Because education is important to us and can open many doors, our family hacks on how to help kids learn are 1) read to kids early and daily, 2) require they read at least 20 minutes five days a week, and 3) purchase workbooks for their next grade level that they complete over the summer breaks to continue learning.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL: Northrop Elementary

Meet Gina Brusseau, PTA President at Northrop Elementary School, a K-5 school at 4315 S. 31st Ave. She is mom to Finnegan (grade 2) and Stella, who will be a kindergartner in fall 2020. Rounding out the family is her step-daughter Becca and husband Karl.

Why did you select this school?

We chose Northrop because it was our neighborhood school, had an environmental STEM focus, and had a great reputation in the neighborhood. Big factor: late start.

What do you appreciate most?

We love the community, the entire staff is awesome, and the teachers are dedicated.

What are the challenges?

Diversity - as it is declining based on the demographics of the neighborhood. We wish we had more diversity representing an urban school.

What skills do you think are most important for schools to teach kids in 2020?

Social emotional learning, environmental, STEM, working hard, teamwork, individuality, respect, and caring for others.

Share your school hacks or tips.

Be involved with your kids education, be involved with your PTA, volunteer when you can, and connect with other families.



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IMMERSION SCHOOL: Yinghua Academy

Meet South Minneapolis resident Starr Eggen Lim, who is married to Albert. Her daughter Lily is now in 11th grade at Highland Park High School, and daughter Magdalena is currently a ninth grader at Highland Park High School. They are at Highland because Yinghua Academy has an agreement that kids can continue their Chinese education at an appropriate level at Highland Park in St. Paul.

Why did you select this school?
I chose Yinghua Academy because it is a total immersion school meaning that the entire school is focused on Chinese and not just one area or several classrooms. Being that our children are Asian and adopted, it was a good fit as they would learn much about their birth culture as well as having Asian role models and influence. Many kids at that time who were attending the school were also adopted from China, so I felt it would help normalize their experience as kids and adolescents. I had read many books about some of the difficulties Korean adoptees had in the 1970s who grew up in rural areas with little acknowledgement about their birth countries or even issues being racially different than most of their peers. I really wanted to find a school that would allow my kids the opportunity to be around many other Asian kids and many who also had similar birth stories.

What do you appreciate most?
Having my kids learn to read, write and speak Mandarin has so many advantages. If they ever chose to search for their birth parents, or even wanted to live or experience their birth country, having the language and cultural understanding would help to cross over so many barriers that could inhibit that from happening. I also wanted to give them the opportunity to feel at ease around other kids in college who may be international students from their birth country, whereby they could understand



and feel a part of that community. I had read that some kids who were never given these opportunities would sometimes go to college and didn't feel like they fit in with the Caucasian population (even though these kids had grown up in "white" culture), so were initially not accepted into those circles... And even though they looked like the Asian international students, they did not fit in there because they did not understand the culture, so were not initially accepted there either.

Yinghua Academy not only provided this backdrop for my kids, but also having a second language like Mandarin allows so many doors to be opened for them. When learning a second language at the tender age of five, kids absorb things so much easier. Having the ability to read, write and speak can open potential careers opportunities, as well. The school's academic expectations are quite rigorous and kids have adapted well into all kinds of high school experiences. I liked that the school uses Singapore math, allows for different levels of learning in math and Chinese, and provides many extra curricular activities after school. They also put on a dynamic Chinese New Year program every year which is held at

Bethel University, and is almost always sold out. As adoption from China has slowed, Yinghua Academy continues to grow as many kids from all sorts of backgrounds attend the school.

What are the challenges?
Chinese Immersion is not for everyone. Yinghua does have some expectations for kids to do quite a bit of learning in a more traditional style and hasn't, at least in my experience, allowed for a lot of diversity in teaching styles or methods. Parents need to be in tune to what their specific child's needs are and how best to meet those, but Yinghua has worked well for our family.

What skills do you think are most important for schools to teach kids in 2020?

As far as the most important skills for kids to learn, I would think preparing them to be global citizens is a priority. Language immersion does help to accomplish this. Critical thinking is probably one of the most important skills for kids to learn as our current administration (in my opinion) has become so harsh on scientific research, facts, and the media in general. Learning how to decipher facts from fiction and how to ask questions is critical to our society's survival as a democracy.

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Health & Wellness

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"The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, not to worry about the future, or not to anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly." Buddha

Use Enneagram as tool for self-discovery this year

Workshop host Holly Johnson shares why she values it and how it is helpful



By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Holly Johnson is committed to helping people better understand themselves and others through the Enneagram. She offers regular workshops on this tool. The next is slated for Feb. 11, 2020 from 6-9 p.m. at Spiritgarage. Go to spiritgarage.org to find out more info and register.

Johnson is also pastor at Spirit Garage, which meets at the Hook and Ladder Theater and Lounge. She paused while writing two holiday sermons in December to share a bit more about the Enneagram with the *Messenger*.

Just what is the Enneagram?

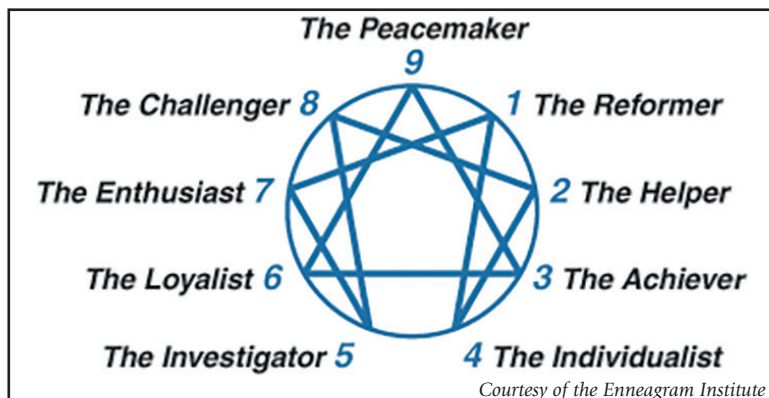
The Enneagram is a tool to help us understand how we live, move, see and respond in the world. It lays out nine basic styles

of people, though there are an infinite number of expressions of each of the nine numbers.

What drew you to the Enneagram and how have you found it valuable in your own life?

When I was in seminary out in Berkeley, Calif., everyone was talking about it. I was drawn to it because I like tools for self-discovery, and also tools for understanding other people.

Some people think it's funny to have a pastor do this kind of work; certain kinds of Christianity think that anything that doesn't come out of the Bible comes from the Devil. I'm not that kind of a pastor. I believe in studying all kinds of things, and self-awareness helps us understand our styles of spirituality better, as well.



What is your Enneagram number?

I understand myself to be a "social two with a three wing, and a super well-traveled 8 line." And if that doesn't make sense to you but you're intrigued, come to a workshop!

How can people use the Enneagram as a tool for self-discovery?

The Enneagram helps us understand that we see and experience the world in a particular way, like a lens. Understanding that we have a lens, and that it is different from other people's, helps us see what motivates us, and how that shapes our lives. Sometimes this lens sees things accurately, and sometimes it is

distorting things. Bringing an awareness to this helps us see where our way of being is helpful, and where it might be hurting us or others. Once we have that awareness, maybe we can think about a different way to see things or respond.

In what ways can the Enneagram help people live in harmony with others?

Similarly, when we figure out that other people see the world in different ways, and have different motivations, hopefully we can bring some grace into our relationships and quit trying to make everyone believe, act, behave and respond the way

we do. For example, one of the types (sixes) is going to plan for all possible problems that might arise before you go on vacation. That's okay – just let them do that. They'll be prepared for things you never thought of. Another type (eights) has a tendency to have a pretty large presence in a room, and can be quite intimidating to people. Another type (nines) doesn't like making decisions, particularly if it means siding with one person and not another. So, if they never have an opinion about where you should go to dinner, that's probably why.

How can the Enneagram help people achieve better health and wellness?

The Enneagram is a tool for emotional intelligence, so as a tool, it helps us bring awareness (and hopefully grace) to our own way of being, and also helps in relation to one another. Emotional intelligence is an important indicator in job success, and helpful in relationships of all kinds.

What resources do you recommend people use to learn more about the Enneagram?

I'm enjoying "The Road Back To You: An Enneagram Journey to Self Discovery" by Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile. That's a book and a podcast.

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ISUROON: A portal to better health

>> from 1

To be a stable presence rooted in the Somali community, they purchased a building at 1600 East Lake Street last year. Weli explained, "One of the ways we are different as an organization is that we don't just operate within our 55407 zip code. Our women come from everywhere. Now we are easy to find."

The barriers to health and wellness for immigrants and refugees are significant. Food insecurity can be a problem for Somali families, especially new arrivals. Weli explained why a disproportionate number of Somali families have female heads-of-household (54% nation-wide.) She said, "After 911, it got much harder for Muslim men to enter the US. While the typical Somali family consists of mom, dad, and children, it's common for males 18+ to arrive 3-5 years after the rest of their family."

These separations cause a lot of stress. Weli believes the burden is made worse for Muslim women because of cultural stereotypes. She said, "Many Americans (especially white women) think that because we're covered, we are insecure, oppressed, and in need of rescue. This is not true! We need to diffuse these stereotypes, which are also perpetuated by the media. Who are Muslim women in general, and Somali women in particular? We are intuitive, alert, and sociable; we didn't grow up feeling inferior

"We're grateful and excited to announce that Isuroon has received a Community Innovation Grant of more than \$200,000 from The Bush Foundation. The grant will empower our work to reduce disparities in reproductive health care for African immigrant women in Minnesota with female genital cutting. The voices and needs of women who have experienced female genital cutting will drive this grassroots effort," said Fartun Weli, Executive Director. "We express gratitude on their behalf."

to anyone. We are unique."

To address food insecurity, Isuroon opened a food shelf six years ago. Weli explained, "I didn't think it was part of our mission, but our elders started asking for one. We went to Governor Dayton's Office, and they tried to be helpful. They connected us with the big, established food distribution networks in the Twin Cities but, ultimately, it didn't work. Understand that when you've lived in a refugee camp, you are given food handouts all the time. Then, when you finally come to this country and find out how hard it is to be self-sufficient, you are still given strange, unfamiliar food. It can be very demoralizing. We needed a new model for an ethnic food shelf, and we created one."

The Seward Co-op is an annual donor to the Isuroon Food Shelf through their SEED Project, where shoppers can round up to the nearest dollar in support of a different local non-profit organization each month. Isuroon typi-

cally receives \$20,000 + from one month's donations. Weli said, "The Seward Co-op is great. They don't pressure us to buy foods that aren't culturally appropriate. We were able to serve 1,100 families with their donations last year, and the size of an average Somali family is seven."

Isuroon staff members are trained to interact with clients in a way that reflect the agency's core values of trust, transparency, and empathy. Weli said, "We work relationally, which means that listening is at the heart of everything. What we are trying to do here is replicate what our moms did back home. In the Somali culture, we have our own definition of what makes someone strong. When I meet a Somali woman who can't read or write, I worship her. Do you know how hard life is when you can't read or write? We value women for the strengths that they have, rather than judge them for what they lack."

As an organization, consid-



Executive Director Fartun Weli said, "There are things I'm not good at, but I am good at is busting down doors. There is power in keeping people dependent on the system. What I'm trying to do with Isuroon is make sure Somali women and girls are not becoming dependent." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

er requesting an Isuroon speaker to help your group connect with the experiences of Somali women, or to obtain culturally competent consulting and training for health care providers, policymakers and other leaders. As an individual, consider attending a workshop to learn about the Somali community here in the Twin Cities. Weli said, "Our organization has so much to offer. What can we do for you? We're here to engage communities. Connect with us!"

For more information, go to www.isuroon.org.

Briefs

Affordable housing for 55+ opens along E. Lake St.

Minnehaha Commons in the Longfellow neighborhood of Minneapolis has opened at 3001 E. Lake St. Developed by Alliance Housing, it offers affordable units for 44 people ages 55 and older who have experienced homelessness.

Minnehaha Commons offers 44 studio apartments with rents between \$500 and \$692 per month, which are affordable for people with incomes less than half the area median (\$47,150 annually). In comparison, a studio apartment in Minneapolis costs more than \$1,050 a month.

Rent subsidies from various sources are available for people with very low incomes (\$21,000 or less annually) so they can afford the monthly cost.

Touchstone Mental Health will provide services for tenants that includes a 24-hour front desk and onsite staff for individual support, assistance, and community referrals.

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In Our Community

Messenger

Send us your news! When you submit your press release it will be considered for both the newspaper as well as the Messenger Facebook page (Facebook.com/LongfellowNokomisMessenger).

Art inspired by music

Vine Arts Center, a nonprofit, volunteer-run art gallery located at 2637 27th Ave. S. is inviting all artists to submit their work for the Creation by Sound - Art Inspired by Music exhibit. The show will run Feb. 8-28. Submission are due Jan. 15 and can be in a variety of mediums, paintings, sculpture, collage, assemblage, photography, etc., which are inspired by music, sound, noise, a musician or group, album or body of work. More at www.vineartscenter.org.

Elder Voices meets

Elder Voices (Telling Our Stories) will meet the fourth Friday of December (12/27) and January (1/24) at Turtle Bread Company, 4205-34th St. from 10-11:30 a.m. There will time for people to tell or update their elder stories, the challenges and joys of elderhood. There will be a year in review look back at 2019 and a forecasting look ahead to 2020.

Bid farewell to SENA program manager

Attend the Goodbye Happy Hour for Standish-Ericsson Neighborhood Association Project Manager Bob Kambeitz on Thursday, Jan. 2, 5:30 p.m. "Just a note to the community to thank you for letting me serve you as staff at SENA for the past 18 years, as I

move on to a new adventure," said Kambeitz. "I thoroughly enjoyed working with all of you, making these neighborhoods a great place to live!"

Pasta dinner Fundraiser Jan. 8

Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church (5011 So. 31st Ave.) will host the annual pasta dinner on Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2020 from 5-7 p.m. to benefit the Minnehaha Food Shelf. Treat yourself to a great meal and help your community at the same time. There will be a band and opportunities to win prizes. For more information: www.minnehaha.org/foodshelf.html. Tickets are \$15 per person and children (ages 10 and under) are free.

Garden club Jan. 8

Longfellow Garden Club presents: Exotic Plant Collections at U of M on Jan. 8 at 7 p.m. (social half hour and set up chairs at 6:30 p.m.) at Epworth United Methodist Church, 3207 37th Ave. S. Learn about the newest U of M conservatory with four biomes of tropical and Mediterranean plants. See photos from the 1,500 species of plants growing there from climates in ten countries in the southern hemisphere.

Small business help

The Minneapolis Small Business Team staff holds regular open

hours at the East Lake Library on the third Tuesday of each month from 3-5 p.m. to consult about resources and support for small businesses. Everybody is welcome; no cost, no appointments.

Community Connections Feb. 1

On Feb. 1, 2020, from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., the city of Minneapolis will hold its annual Community Connections Conference at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The 2020 conference theme is "We count." Read more about the conference at Minneapolismn.gov/connectionsconf.

Free Nature Connections for 55+

This January, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) launches Nature Connections, a new program designed for adults 55 & up. Join MPRB naturalists at Loring Park or Matthews Park for varied indoor and outdoor activities focused on nature, including bird-watching, winter tree identification and flower arranging. All sessions are free. More at bit.ly/MPRBnatureconnections.

Bo Ramsey show

Grammy Award-winning artist, two-time Grammy-nominated producer, Iowa Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Iowa Blues Hall of Fame

Uprising Theater Company announces 2020 season at Off-Leash Area Art Box

Uprising Theatre Company announces its 2020 season with four enterprising plays – all new to the Twin Cities area – written by transgender and nonbinary playwrights. All shows will be performed at Off-Leash Area Art Box, located at 4200 E. 54th St.

Season tickets are on sale now at boxoffice.uprisingtheatreco.com. Single general admission tickets for individual shows go on sale soon. General admission tickets are \$20 with every performance offering pay-what-you-can options starting at \$5.

The 2020 Season line-up:

March 6-23, "Doctor Voynich and Her Children: A Prediction," by Leanna Keyes. Directed by Ashley Hovell. Dr. Rue Voynich and her apprentice Fade travel the American Heartland dispensing herbal medications. Covertly, they perform abortions, which have been illegal since "the Pence days."

June 12-27, "Skimmed," by Anthony Sisler-Neuman. Directed by Caroline Kittredge Faustine. In this absurd romp around the business of making babies, Zeke and Sydney are ready to start a family, but since

there are no little swimmers "in house," they need to get some an alternative way. Can their marriage survive the scheme?

Sept. 11-26, "Oddity," by Ashley Lauren Rogers. Directed by Emily England. In this Steampunk Body Horror piece, a trans man "Gender Specialist" is brought into a secret Victorian-Era medical facility, deep within the earth to solve the mystery of a series of murders and body mutilations. As the specialist meets the sole survivor and begins to unravel the secret, his claustrophobic paranoia sets in and he finds it hard to believe anything he's told.

Nov. 6-21, "The Place That Made You," by Darcy Parker Bruce. Directed by Anthony Sisler-Neuman. In the aftermath of a tragedy, Jonah attempts to reunite with his best friend, Ben returns to her childhood home, and a giant white whale haunts the coastline of a sleepy Connecticut town. A modern day queer re-imagining of Jonah and the Whale, this dark comedy becomes a ghostly tale of love, loss and glory in small town America.

inductee, Bo Ramsey, will make a rare Twin Cities appearance on Saturday, Feb. 22 at The Hook &

Ladder. He will perform with Tom Feldmann. More at thehookmpls.com.

Events belong right here.

Reach readers with an ad on our Community page.

Denise@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com



**Nokomis East
Neighborhood Association**

STATE OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Hear from city and state public officials, public services, area organizations and NENA about 2019 accomplishments and plans for 2020.

Tuesday, January 14, 2020
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Lake Nokomis Community Center
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Sunday School for all – 10:00am
Traditional Worship – 11:00am
Espanol – 1:30pm
January 5 – one service at 10:30am
January 8 - All Church Gathering Potluck
Meal at 6:00pm

Epworth United Methodist

3207 37th Ave. • 612-722-0232
www.epworthmpls.org

Pastor Steven Reiser
Adult Study 9:30 am
Sunday Worship: 10:30 am
Children's Class 10:45 am
(Childcare Provided ages 0-4)
(Wheelchair Accessible)
Upcoming Events:
Cabin Fever every Wednesday @9:30-11:30 am (No Cabin Fever Jan. 1)
January 8 - Beer & Bible @ Merlin's
Rest 6:30 pm

Minnehaha Communion Lutheran

4101 37th Ave. S. • 612-722-9527
www.minnehahacommunion.org

Pastors Dan and Sally Ankerfelt
9:45 am-Sunday Worship & Sunday School
Jan 8th at 6:00 pm-Meal & Songs of My Life Service
12 Step Program-Mon thru Thurs
Everyone Welcome/Wheelchair accessible

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M,T, Th, F: Rosary at 8 am, Daily Mass 8:15 am

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4600 E. 42nd St. • 612-722-8000
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10:30 am Adult Faith Formation
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Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls

5212 41st Ave. S. • 612-724-3691
www.trinityfalls.org

Pastor Matt Oxendale
8:30 & 10:30 am Worship
(1st Sunday 10:30 am only)
AA Sun & Tues 7:00 pm

PROJECT OF NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCHES

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WHAT'S DEVELOPING ?



Monte and Patricia Martens were patrons of Bergan's for 35 years. They said, "[We are] sad that our old-school grocery store is no longer. We will miss the friendly workers and the ease of shopping, along with the great values. They always treated customers with respect and gratitude." (Photo by Terry Faust)

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

Bergan's update

Bergan's Supervalu at Cedar and Minnehaha Parkway has been family owned and operated for 30 years, but it will be torn down and replaced with a new multi-use building that houses a Lunds and Byerlys. The longtime grocery store closed its doors for the last time the week before Christmas 2019.

The new Lunds & Byerlys at 4715 Cedar Ave. will be about 23,500 square feet. Above it will be four stories with 125 apartments. Units will include studio, alcove, one and two-bedrooms.

Under one section of the

building will be 30 covered parking stalls, with access to a 35-stall lot in the northeast corner that accesses Longfellow Ave. Another lot off Cedar will have 44 stalls.

A second-level parking garage with 125 stalls will serve the residential units.

In addition to the unit terraces the exterior facades will feature projecting and recessed balconies on upper floors that will allow residents to take advantage of private outdoor space. On the fifth floor and top floor, the building includes an indoor gathering room and outdoor deck for residents to enjoy amenities and views of the parks and lakes adjacent to the site.



Friendship Academy expands

Friendship Academy of the Arts plans to create an upper campus in the existing building at 3320 41st St. E., about three blocks southwest of the 38th St. light rail station.

The 1.53-acre lot currently has a 28,000-square-foot building that will be rehabilitated to accommodate office and classroom spaces, gymnasium, and cafeteria spaces, and a 2,400-square-foot vestibule will be added. The current one-story millwork building was constructed in 1945.

The existing loading docks adjacent to Dight Ave. will be demolished. A new 24-stall paved parking area and playground will be built north of the building, and a wraparound driveway added along the property's north and west sides. The project will also include a new sidewalk along Dight Ave. in an area without a current sidewalk on either side of the street.

Once complete, the new campus will serve 350 students in grades second to eighth grade, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year.

The proposed redevelopment will include predominantly interior renovations with a



small addition to accommodate classroom space. The redevelopment will also include 24-vehicle parking stalls, 46-bicycle parking, increased green space, internal circulation for drop off areas to accommodate traffic flow, and landscaping to screen the proposed parking lot and beautify the parcel.

Friendship Academy of the Arts is a National Blue Ribbon, tuition-free, public charter school located (2600 E. 38th St.) just a few blocks away from the proposed development. The proposed second school location will serve the upper grades of Friendship Academy of the Arts. Founded in 2001 and authorized by Pillsbury United Communities, Friendship Academy of the Arts has a strong track record of addressing the dire opportunity gap for African-American students in Minnesota through its high-quality education and arts program, according to Executive

Tierra Encantada under construction on Minnehaha

A new building with the popular incandescent panels found on the University of Minnesota Children's hospital is under construction along Minnehaha Ave.

The new Tierra Encantada Spanish Immersion Daycare and Preschool (4012 and 4016 Minnehaha Ave.) will open in spring 2020, and is the first site built specifically for the company.

One single-family home was demolished to make room for this new 12,000-square-foot, three-story building. The Hiawatha location will be licensed for approximately 260 children with four infant classrooms, four toddler classrooms, three young preschool classrooms, three inter preschool classrooms, and three pre-k classrooms



A 3,300-square-foot, fenced playground will be constructed in the backyard on a poured rubber surfacing material, and there will be two large indoor gyms.

There will be just four parking spots off the rear of the building. Drop-off for children will occur along Minnehaha Ave.

When full, the center will employ approximately 50 full-time staff, who will all receive medical and dental insurance, paid time off, paid holidays, paid training, and discounted child care.

Director Dr. B. Charvez Russell.

Due to family and community demand, FAA is planning to expand from a K-7 program with one section per grade to a PK-8 program with two sections per grade, and is need of additional school facility space. It currently has about 170 students in grades K-7. Students wear uniforms to fosters an equitable and respectful school climate.

Transportation is provided within Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park and certain communities on the border-line of these communities. The school expects about 85% of students to come via bus and 10% via car.

28th bridge, street won't reopen until June

Bogged down by record rainfall, an unexpected watermain break, extra coordination with utilities and the early onset of freezing weather, the 28th bridge project over Minnehaha Creek is behind schedule.

It was supposed to be done in 2019, but residents can expect 28th St. to remain closed through June 2020.

The bridge foundations and outside framework have been completed. However, the site has been shut down now through spring when temperatures are warm enough to ensure the concrete decking sets at the appropriate strength to safely support vehicle traffic.

Over winter, crews will install a temporary sidewalk over the creek and will ensure that pedestrian and bike access are maintained across 28th Ave. Additionally, temporary lights, winter maintenance activities and traffic control will be in place during the winter season.

"This delay means a significant impact to nearby residents and continued inconvenience for the whole community," observed Ward 12 Council Member Andrew Johnson. "I also believe that if Public Works could do anything more to speed up the timeline or restore greater access through the winter, they would. They are doing what they can to make the best of a bad situation. Thank you for understanding and for your continued patience."

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DEADLINES
Messenger - Feb. 14
Monitor - March 2

B Line route may extend to St. Paul

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

After hearing from community members, planners now recommend extending the B Line to downtown St. Paul.

The B Line will run along Lake St., Marshall Ave. and Selby Ave. Initial plans called for the B Line to only go as far east as Snelling Ave.

Planners recommend that the existing Route 21 along that corridor remain on a limited basis, running on Lake St. between Hennepin Ave. and Minnehaha Ave. every 30 minutes.

From April to October of 2019, B Line staff attended or hosted 26 community events, participated in bus ride-alongs and stop pop-ups, and connected

with over 1,500 individual people to help inform the planning process and preliminary recommendations for the B Line.

Community input on preliminary recommendations is still being gathered to shape a draft corridor plan for the B Line.

This draft plan will be released for public comment in 2020, and will include more detailed information on planned station locations. To co-host an event or schedule a presentation, contact Cody Olson, Community Outreach Coordinator, at BLine@metrotransit.org or 612-349-7390. The Metropolitan Council will consider approval of a final B Line corridor plan in 2020.

New CEO of VOA from Longfellow

Volunteers of America Minnesota and Wisconsin (VOA MN/WI) is pleased to announce that

Longfellow resident Julie Manworren has been named its new President and CEO. Manworren will start work with VOA MN/WI on Feb. 28. VOA MN/WI serves more than 25,000 people in over 110 neighborhoods and communities across Minnesota and Wisconsin with 800 employees and 1,400 volunteers. It has an annual budget of over \$46 million.



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Coldwater Spring carries historical and cultural significance for some Dakota tribes, as well as being considered a sacred site by other Dakota tribes. Coldwater Spring is a part of the Fort Snelling Historic District, protected as both a National Historic Landmark and National Register listed property under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act.



Canines participating in the Bark Ranger Program will receive a shiny collar tag. Sign up to be a Bark Ranger Ambassador (a volunteer who helps lead future trainings) and receive a stylish bandana, too. (Photos courtesy of NPS)

BARK RANGER PROGRAM

>> from 1

Bark Ranger trainings will be held on Jan. 4 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and on Jan. 9 from 9 a.m. to noon. The drop-in events will include a 30-minute walking tour of the site led by rangers. The address for Coldwater Spring is 5601 Minnehaha Park Drive South. GPS coordinates are: 44.901602, -93.198256. Registration isn't required, but by going to <https://parkconnection.org/events> and signing up on Event Brite, you'll be notified of weather-related changes or cancellations.

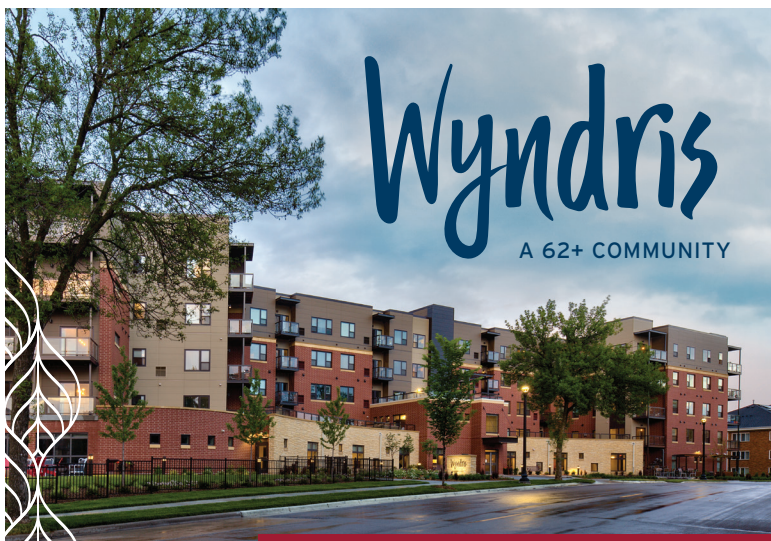
There is no cost to participate. There are four handicapped accessible parking spots on-site, and plenty of metered parking spots on the street. Canines participating in the BARK Ranger Program will receive a shiny collar tag. Sign up to be a Bark Ranger Ambassador (a volunteer who helps lead future trainings) and receive a stylish bandana. In either capacity, Swingley clarified, "Participants will absolutely not do any law enforcement. They are just there to demon-



**B - bag your dog waste,
A - always keep your dog
on a leash,
R - respect wildlife and
habitat restoration,
K - know where you can
go.**

strate good practices."

Americorps intern Claire Jaeger Mountain was instrumental in bringing the Bark Ranger Program to Coldwater Spring. She said, "The trainings will be a great opportunity to engage with staff and volunteers, and to hear stories unique to this historic and beautiful place."



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