



A model for tiny homes,
BIG COMMUNITY

COVID-19

Small businesses: 'It's all personal'

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

Local restaurants are adjusting to the Stay at Home order while other businesses are considering how to reopen under Governor Walz's most recent guidelines.

Hi-Lo Diner (4020 E. Lake St.) closed the Sunday night before the government shutdown of restaurants. It was a hard decision, but co-owners James Brown and Mike Smith were worried about the safety of their staff members and wanted to take some time to evaluate things.

Thanks to a PPP loan, the diner reopened for take-out last weekend, starting with dinner on Saturday, April 25. "We had 32 employees before the pandemic and will be able to bring a lot of them back on," stated Brown.

They are excited to be reopening, even if it is just for take-out, and Brown pointed out it is a huge help to be able to offer beer and wine to-go. They plan to also offer Bloody Mary and mimosa kits, in addition to brunch Saturdays and Sundays.

"I think the future of small business - and specifically restaurants - is to make it personal," observed Brown. "Small businesses give our community

IT'S ALL PERSONAL >> 3



West River Road is closed to northbound traffic to allow trail users more space to maintain social distancing. Sections of Cedar Lake Parkway, Lake Harriet Parkway, Lake of the Isles Parkway, Lake Nokomis Parkway, and Main Street S.E. are also closed. Because residents are still congregating in groups, playgrounds, skateparks and athletic fields have been closed. Tennis court nets have been removed and basketball court rims blocked. Gatherings are limited to 10 people or less, and trail users urged to stay six feet apart. (Photo by Terry Faust)

GAMES, MUSIC & ART >> CONNECT

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN Play a game together with your neighbors when you join in the LoLa Scavenger Hunt.

"Walks outside are still allowed, and are good for your physical and mental health. I intended this scavenger hunt to bring an element of novelty and excitement to an ordinary walk in the neighborhood, and also encourage neighbors to walk farther and longer," observed local artist Jinjer Markley. "Also, it's a game that we can play 'together,' and even check on each other's progress by following the hashtags. My hope is that more frequent distance-greetings with our neighbors will make us all feel more like part of a community." >> 10

A firsthand account

FROM THE FRONT LINE

By STEPHANIE FOX

Workers begin to show up at the small grocery store in South Minneapolis in the dark, to bake the bread that will be sold throughout the day. First responders and those who might be health compromised start arriving two hours later, at 6 a.m., just as the sun is rising, to shop for what they might need.



Stephanie Fox

The staff will be there to help, working in the deli and the butcher shops hidden behind the scenes, or in the front, operating the cash registers, stocking shelves and cleaning surfaces, until the store closes at 8 p.m., as the sun is setting.

When the COVID-19 virus first appeared as a health crisis, grocery stores were just a place to shop for food. But on March 25 the mayor of Minneapolis, followed by Gov. Tim Walz, ordered a lock down of all but essential services. Grocery stores were suddenly pushed to the front lines.

FROM THE FRONT LINE >> 12

While you're at home during this extended break from school, try these ideas from Free Forest School



Free Forest School Executive Director Anna Sharratt said, "This idea started as an outdoor play group. It has turned into a river I've been riding for several years now." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

KIDS LEARN THROUGH PLAY

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Let them be kids, outdoors. Let them learn through unstructured play in nature.

That's the cornerstone belief of Free Forest School, a volunteer-led program that operates in 200+ cities across the country.

Right now, their weekly outdoor gatherings are, of course, suspended, but it's easy to put the principles of Free Forest School to use during this extended break from school.

Longfellow resident Anna Sharratt developed the idea for the program five years ago, when her young family lived in Brooklyn, N.Y. She and her husband had signed their four-year-old up for a pre-K learning program, and the kids didn't set foot outdoors for a whole month.

Sharratt, who grew up alongside Minnehaha Creek and camping in the BWCA, was stunned. She said, "In my way of thinking, learning and nature are inseparable. I had hoped to meet other families in the neighborhood, thinking we could get together outside of school, chill out, and play. I found parenting in New York City to be very competitive. The idea for Free Forest School grew out of that longing for non-competitive, quality time spent outdoors with other families."

Two months after Sharratt started the first chapter of Free Forest School in Brooklyn, her family moved to Austin, Texas. Once seeds were planted in those two places, people started contacting her from around the

"Kids are hard wired to learn through play in nature, but parents can get in the way with too much structure and over-scheduling." ~ Anna Sharratt

country asking, "How can I start this up in my town?"

Focus on supportive communities for parents and kids

The Free Forest School model is straight forward; it focuses on creating supportive communities. Parents can parent in different ways while encouraging child-led, unstructured play.

Sharratt said, "There are so many people who attend our play groups. Adults say they forge a deeper relationship with their kids through unstructured play, because so many of their usual power struggles disappear. There is less adult talking and explaining, there are fewer rules."

The suggested age range for children is 0-6 years, but the majority of kids are 1-4. Every Free Forest School chapter has a director. It's that person's job to recruit parent facilitators from the community and to train them.

One of the ongoing Minneapolis sites is Theodore Wirth Park, where a Free Forest School chapter has met on Monday mornings at a certain trailhead for the past four years.

Sharratt explained, "We have a strong emphasis on place-based learning, so we go back to the same place throughout the seasons. Kids love to explore in the rain and mud of April, the heat

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Rebuild Repair Recycle

ENVISION COMMUNITY: A model for tiny homes, big community

"There's a terrible housing shortage, but that's just part of it. The headline, and one of the things that's really different with our model, is that we're creating an intentional community - one where residents feel a sense of belonging. This movement has to be led by people who have experienced homelessness, and we have to be certain that what we're building is desirable for those same people."

- Dr. William Walsh, Envision Community advisor

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Dewayne Parker became homeless in 2017. For lack of a better option, he ended up sleeping for months on the Green Line train. One winter night, that sleeping arrangement very nearly got him killed.

Parker said, "Everybody knows it's dangerous living on the streets. What I want the broader community to understand is that anyone can end up homeless. Some of the most intelligent and resourceful people I've ever met lost their housing. It doesn't take much for things to fall apart."

Parker is one of five homeless or previously homeless community members serving as leaders on a new housing model called Envision Community. After meeting for more than a year, the group has embraced the idea of starting a community of "tiny homes" for the poor and homeless to be built somewhere in South Minneapolis.

Tiny, deeply affordable homes

Envision Community is a proposal to build and operate a two-year live demonstration of an intentional community made up of 15-30 people living in tiny homes, with the goal of creating health equity.

The tiny homes, just a few hundred square feet each, would be deeply affordable - appealing to the growing number of low-income people shut out of the metro area's housing market. They would be part of a cluster development centered around a larger, shared community house for meals and other gatherings.

What does it mean to be shut out of the housing market? For starters, many people with

low-wage jobs simply can't afford the high cost of rent in the Twin Cities. Other barriers to housing are having a criminal record, a poor credit score, a past eviction, or a chemical dependency problem. Landlords can easily avoid renting to someone with any one of the above.

Working full-time, single-parenting two kids and homeless

When there is nowhere else to go, people without a safety net may quickly end up living on the street.

Sherry Shannon did. Born and raised in South Minneapolis, she first became homeless while working full-time and single-parenting two children. It was a long road from homelessness, to living in a shelter, to transitional housing, to the apartment where she now lives in Roseville.

Shannon is also an Envision community leader; she is candid about her struggles, which include a PTSD diagnosis, and her successes. She said, "Once I got into stable housing, I could finally start working on my disability. Things came together pretty quickly then. I started talking about my situation, and trying to help other people move forward too. Last year, I won the Dorothy Richardson Award for community leadership."

"After I gave my acceptance speech in Chicago, a couple of ladies came up to me and asked, 'How did you ever get through all this?' I told them, 'I couldn't have done it without a place to call home.'"

Costly medical problems, homelessness go hand-in-hand

The Envision Community, if approved by the city of Minneap-



Sherry Shannon is one of five formerly homeless community members leading the Envision Community. Behind her is an architectural drawing of the project. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

olis, would be the first community of tiny homes in the Twin Cities Metro.

Another first would be forming a strong collaboration with the health care system. Doctors also desire innovative housing models after seeing how often homeless patients turn up at hospitals with complicated, costly medical problems - many of them caused by being homeless.

Dr. William Walsh believes that homelessness is a public health crisis. A reconstructive surgeon at Hennepin Health Care and a researcher at the University of Minnesota, he serves as advisor to the Envision Community team. Dr. Walsh said, "Homeless-

ness profoundly affects a person's health, and puts enormous strain on the health care system."

He added, "There are moral and financial motivations for the health care system to get involved in ending homelessness, but with the current failure of affordable housing - we can't fix it. What's needed is an innovative new model like Envision. We can bring housing costs down without compromising the quality of life for people moving into our housing model. With a strong emphasis on building community, as well as building homes, the quality of life of life for our residents will go up."

Envision it

The Minneapolis City Council unanimously approved an intentional community cluster development ordinance last November. This allows for a new type of affordable housing for people transitioning out of homelessness. A collaborative made up of representatives from 17 different organizations, and led by members of the Twin Cities homeless community, are working together to plan what the Envision Community will be.

The Pohlad Foundation funded the construction of a pilot tiny house for Envision. It will be set up in the parking lot of Elim Church in Northeast Minneapolis later this summer. Additional funding for Envision Community has come through the Family Housing Fund and the McKnight Foundation.

Two adjacent city lots will be needed to build the project on, with easy access to public transportation and walkable amenities. The property has not yet been found.

If you want people to listen, you have to speak up

Rome Darring is also a community leader on the project. When he first got involved with Envision, he found it hard to share his story of being homeless. He said, "I've gone through a lot of changes since this started. As an advocate for the homeless, I was at the State Capitol today participating in a press conference. I was so nervous about it that I couldn't sleep at all the night before. But I've learned that if you want people to listen, you have to be willing to speak - so I made myself stand up and do it."

Visit the Envision Community website at www.hennepinhealthcare.org/envision-community/ for more information.

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Small businesses: 'It's all personal'

>> from 1
a third place, not home or work, but it is a part of the community. We are swiping left on 'It's just business, it's not personal,' it is all totally personal, and that is how we can make it through this."

Brown is concerned for the undocumented workers in America right now. "They can't get unemployment, or federal stimulus money, it's really hard for them during this time," he said.

Hi-Lo will be open Thursday and Friday 4-8 p.m. Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 4-8 p.m., and Sunday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. "The best way to support us is to call in and order food," he said.

Fun City Dogs reopens for 10th anniversary

Fun City Dogs (2200 E. 25th St.) will reopen this week, just in time for its 10th anniversary on May 1, although its big party has been put on hold.

The doggy day care temporarily closed on March 23, 2020, when they had no boarders for the first time in five years. "Our daycare numbers had dropped significantly with people working from home," explained owner RyAnne Quirk. "My mother, 83 years, lives in my house and I was very concerned about bringing home the virus. We were all worried about getting sick. It seemed right to close for a few weeks and help flatten the curve."

Most of the other doggy day care operations in the Twin Cities remained open. Fun City Dogs sold dog food online with home delivery in the neighborhood.

A day after Governor Walz's new guidelines were released, Quirk was busy planning safety protocols. "There will be a gated area outside our front door for

dog drop offs. That way the customers and employees will have limited contact. The customer will remove the collar and leash, again to limit contact. The staff will then open the front door and bring the dog into the center. Going home will operate the same way; the customer will call for pick up, we will bring the dog to the front gate and the customer will put on the leash and collar to go home.

"Inside, the staff will have masks and continue our normal cleaning regimen. We already clean, sanitize and have air purifiers set up to combat canine parvovirus."

She added, "I feel like now is a good time to reopen."

34th Ave. businesses band together

Nokomis Tattoo owner Mike Welch has banded together with other 34th Ave. business owners as they are not only dealing with COVID-19 related closures, but also road construction for the second summer.

The group released a promotional video, and started a new Instagram account (34thAveNE-BA). Six business take turns posting photos and information, including Paddlesculpt, Berrysweet Kitchen, Grand Sunrise Mexican Restaurant, The Workshop, Replace and Nokomis Tattoo.

Welsh, who also serves on the board of the Nokomis East Business Association and the Nokomis East Neighborhood Association, closed his tattoo shop on Tuesday, March 17. He's grateful for his wife's teaching position with the Mounds View School District as his business income has taken a hit. He is doing some pet portraits on commission, and is thankful for a supportive clientele.



More and more customers are heeding the warnings and wearing masks in stores. Here, Doug Flicker purchases items from Assistant Manager Colleen Burke at the East Lake Ace Hardware. Workers wipe down the counter, card machines and barriers after customer purchases. (Photo by Terry Faust)

"This is completely uncharted territory for my business plan," he said.

Welsh pointed out that the biggest worry for businesses along 34th Ave. is rent payments. "None of us have extra money," he said. "It's a very scary time."

He encouraged residents, "Reach out to businesses and find out how you can support them."

The group has also released a new Nokomis t-shirt designed by Jeffrey K. Johnson from Replace, and all the profits go to a business of choice. Shirts are American-made and cost \$25-\$28. Pre-orders end May 8.

WRBA focuses on helping neighborhood businesses

The WRBA (West of the Rail Business Association) is focusing its efforts on offering programs free of charge that will be helpful for local, small businesses right now, and has put its other initia-

tives on pause. "We have capacity to help our community now, and we believe that is the right thing to do," said WRBA and Standish Ericsson Neighborhood Association Program Director Emerson Sample, who started in July 2019.

He observed, "Our team is distancing from each other, which has made communication and getting things done harder. Now some of our best conversations are around how to re-define success for a day at work, and what things we can do to have a positive impact as quickly as possible."

WRBA is focusing on sharing information through social media and other online options. Sample said he has two goals: to let as many businesses as possible know about the resources out there for them, and to help people know how to stay connected in the community by supporting area businesses.

"The WRBA has not officially re-launched yet, so it feels like

trying to jump start a car while you're rolling down a big hill," said Sample. "I've accepted that this is a powerful virus that we have to respond to, that we don't have the tools to tell it what to do. I'm just trying to control the best of my ability to flatten the curve, and help people come out on the other side in as good of shape as possible."

Messenger offers free listings on What's Open page

The Longfellow Nokomis Messenger has added a free self-serve What's Open page to its web site to help businesses connect with community members. Go to LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com and click on What's Open.

After creating a free account, businesses can quickly post their current hours, what they're offering, and contact information, and then update the listing as needed.

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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.

I've seen the world of marketing dramatically change during my years with the *Messenger* working to help businesses develop the most effective marketing plan. My clients today have many more options to get their messaging about products and services to their client base than they did 20 years ago. Many of our print advertisers also use Facebook and other social media corridors to reach their target audience. Some also have fairly elaborate websites which provide valuable information about their business operation and its mission.

Is Facebook a business owner's best friend? Yes, Facebook can be a great tool for a business owner but sometimes businesses may not be aware of the obstacles that exist to really reach your target audience. For one, if you are familiar with the Facebook algorithm, you know that Facebook has its platform set up such that for most users the posts they see are most likely those of their family and friends. For a business promoting their products on Facebook, they should realize that only 5 to 10% of their followers will see their post through what's known as organic reach. That's when a business that has, perhaps, 1200 followers but might reach only 60 to 120 of those followers with any indi-



View from the Messenger

By DENIS WOULFE, Denis@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com

Is Facebook your best friend?

vidual post.

As the user of your Facebook account, you can check your reach by looking at any individual post and comparing your followers with your "reach." If you think that your post is going out to everyone who likes your business, I'm sorry to report that just isn't happening.

The other reality is that as a business owner, your goal is to bring in new business. Facebook and other social media can be a great tool for reaching your existing fan base, but ultimately you are trying to reach new customers who have never heard of your business. That's not going to happen if your posts on Facebook about Half Price Burger Night are most likely seen and "liked" by your Mom, your next door neighbor, and your cousin who lives in Chicago. Just because you reach someone or have a follower doesn't mean that the follower is someone local or someone who can buy your product.

Then there's the notion that Facebook is free. Let's face

it: if you have to hire someone to manage your social media accounts and put up content, that's not free. Worse – if you are the owner and spend your days and nights curating your social media accounts, that's not good either. We all learned the concept of Opportunity Cost in Economics 101, and if you are spending a lot of your time as a business owner on social media, then many other aspects of your business operation are being ignored. Time is money, after all!

Social media, for that matter, can be a mixed blessing as having a Facebook page means that others can post on your site if they have had a bad meal, a bad roofing job, or something else. Once you commit to having that social media presence, you have to be vigilant about monitoring the site and responding to feedback from other posters. Knowing how social media can embolden folks to say things online that they would never say to someone face to face, dealing with the repercussions of negative publici-

ty can be challenging, to stay the least.

I might also add there that not every business lends itself to social media. If you have a restaurant or brewery, you likely have a following who watch for deals online, but if you're a contractor, or nonprofit, or someone from another industry, your social media site may not be the first place that people look.

Likewise, I also know of some businesses that spend thousands of dollars setting up their websites. Some businesses have updated their websites many times over the years but still don't have visitors to the site. Again, just because you build it doesn't mean that people will see it. You need something to draw people to your website and not every business has it.

As I often tell my advertisers, promotion is about getting in front of prospective clients on a regular basis. It's true that there are often better approaches in advertising--using colorful photos

and graphics, having people in your advertising, using quotes, and using approaches that appeal to people's sense of humor, their compassion, and their humanity. But much of my advertisers' messaging focuses on encouraging folks to Buy Local and reminding readers that as business owners, they have a stake in Longfellow and Nokomis neighborhoods just like residents do. And my advertisers have also heard me advise this over the years: Repetition, repetition, repetition. Studies suggest that consumers need to see an ad message seven, eight or more times before they actually pull the trigger and make a purchase.

It is, after all, a symbiotic relationship – businesses need residents as patrons and residents need businesses to stabilize their community, contribute to the local tax base, and make their neighborhood have the kind of Walkability Index that is the envy of every other neighborhood. Wouldn't everyone want to have their coffee shop, their dentist, and their mechanic within walking distance of their home? True, you certainly can "like" your second cousin's coffee shop in Seattle on Facebook, but you LOVE the coffee shop that's only 5 minutes from your front door. That's the beauty of Buying Local!

Letters to the Editor

Online tech services crucial for nonprofits

Dear Editor:

The Hennepin County Sheriff Foundation (HCSF) is an independent, nonprofit, charitable organization dedicated to strengthening public safety through youth-based activity programs, prevention, intervention, education, outreach, and 21st century crime-fighting tools and programs. It is essential that we have access to the most efficient communication and information-sharing tools, especially as public safety issues become increasingly complex and our community weathers through the COVID-19 outbreak. Because of this, it is important for our leaders to protect access to online tech services that allow organizations like the HCSF to meet the challenges of the day with force.

Each year, we identify and respond to new and emerging concerns within the community, and it is evident today how quickly one public safety challenge can become a dev-

astating crisis when our health and safety officials are not able to preemptively and diligently contain the situation. That's why it is important to us that we have an open, adaptive stream of communication that we can update as a situation develops.

HCSF uses a multitude of digital tools for outreach and communications, and as a board we stayed connected using Google's G-suite and its array of apps and tools. In the last year, there has been lots of discussion regarding the regulation of the tech industry but little discussion as to how community-led organizations could be impacted.

We are concerned that regulation, if not planned and written to consider groups like ours, could undermine the work of organizations in seemingly unrelated sectors such as law enforcement.

Our communities are safer because of the foundation's support of volunteer deputies, and we have better relationships with young residents because of outreach programs. Coordinating all of these programs on a nonprofit foundation's budget requires access

to affordable online programs, and we're lucky to have them. I hope our experience sheds light on the need to ensure these programs remain open and available to organizations across Minnesota.

Lou Frillman
Hennepin County Sheriff Foundation

Demand details on 5G

Dear Editor:

Myriad Twin Cities residents have been asking city councils and mayors for transparency in the rollout of 5G in our communities. At this time, with 5G's signal promising to be 300x stronger than current 4G signals, questions about environmental, animal and human impacts have not been answered by city council members in all counties. Many fear that we may be facing the implementation of a network that will undo all of our good work in increasing insect and wildlife populations, and will additionally impact the health of our communities. Reports from areas around the world of the imple-



mentation of 5G vary depending on the source.

Minnesota is notorious for slow implementation of projects that should require an environmental review, however nothing in the press indicates that this project is "rolling out" much less facing a review. We hear whispers that there is 5G signal infrastructure throughout Minneapolis, but the city council apparently doesn't know (or won't divulge) where the signal receptors are located. If, as is whispered, these sites are already located in both schools and hospitals, what does this mean for the health of our children, the staff in all loca-

tions as well as hospital patients?

Anyone concerned about this issue should immediately request their city council member and mayor put a stop to future implementation of 5G without offering the citizens an opportunity to get answers and weigh in. At a minimum, a map that shows current and future 5G installation sites throughout our communities is in order.

Please join me in putting pressure on our representatives to release information about this very pressing issue.

Annette Rondano
Longfellow

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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@longfellownokomisessenger.com. Unsigned letters will not run.

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The *Messenger* is for profit and for a purpose – and we don't sacrifice one for the other. We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that

is both black and white. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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HOPE FOR THE HEARTBROKEN

Over the past month, the Coronavirus pandemic has upended our lives, and many of us are struggling to adjust to the new normal. Unemployment, job insecurity, health scares, and general anxiety are common features of life during this topsy-turvy time. But for many of us, this pandemic comes at the absolute worst time – at a time of grief.

If someone you love has died, whether due to COVID-19 or not, it may feel like the world is spinning out of control. It's common to feel out of sorts when we are grieving under normal circumstances, but with everything else we are experiencing, death of a loved one right now may feel like too much to handle. I want to offer some words of advice and comfort for those who need it most.

Take a deep breath

It's okay to slow down and take a moment to gather your thoughts. Death is not an emergency, so if you are having trouble sorting through your jumbled ideas, press pause. Think about your wishes for a service and what you know about the deceased's wishes for a service. Do you want burial or cremation? What kind of service do you want? Write your wishes down; sort through your thoughts over time. You can honor and remember your loved one the way you want, but it may look a little different. Be flexible with timing; don't let anyone rush you.

Hang onto these moments

There's a fair chance you were unable to be with the person who died just before their death. Most facilities aren't allowing visitors in order to keep patient populations healthy. You are not alone in this heartbreak. Perhaps you can ask staff to take pictures of your loved one – a picture of their face, a picture of staff holding their hand – either before or after death. If you are able to be with the person you love, take pictures together. Times like this can be a blur; pictures can help us freeze these moments to help us remember and work through our grief later.

Be present with your grief

When you hurt with grief, it can hurt so much you may wish you could feel anything else. Grief is a healthy, natural reaction to losing someone we love, and it's okay to sit with these feelings and experience them. Remember to eat and hydrate, then do what feels right. Light a candle, say a prayer, write a letter to them, draw for them, walk in nature, cry your eyes out, laugh your heart out, remember the best moments you shared. Share your grief with others and let them know what you need. Grief

An inspired journey



By **ANGELA WOOSLEY**,
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is not the time to be Minnesotan about it – ask people directly. They likely want to help but have no idea what to say or do. You're doing them a favor to ask for their help.

Adapt your funeral

Due to limitations on gatherings, you may be planning a simple service with only a few people present. Don't forget to include people remotely! With a Zoom meeting, Tribecast service, Facebook Live, or other webcast/livestream service, you can include people from far and wide at the funeral. For folks who can't participate online, let them know when the service will be and ask them to light a candle or say a prayer at that time. Look at your list of wishes and see what you can include in a service now.

Plan for the future

Next, think ahead to the coming months. Eventually, guidelines about social distancing will relax, allowing you to hold a celebration of life that incorporates the elements you can't include now. To help you focus some of your energy (and possibly your feelings of grief), work on plans for that larger celebration of life now. Gather together their most treasured belongings, enlist friends to make handmade crafts, sort through photos for a video or picture board, make a playlist of songs, and find the perfect readings.

Advice you can ignore

One last note about planning: If your loved one "didn't want you to make a fuss" about their death and asked you to keep it simple, you are allowed to take that advice with a grain of salt. We come together to honor, remember, and grieve for the person we loved, but more than anything, grief rituals are for US, the living. Rabbi Earl Grollman might have said it best: Grief shared is grief diminished. Find those points of connection and share your grief with rituals that speak to your love and your loss. The person you have lost is worth it.

Angela Woosley is a trained mortician, educator, end-of-life doula and celebrant who recently started Inspired Journeys in the Twin Cities, the first of its kind natural deathcare provider.

Go ahead: Let some things go and break a few house rules

I don't really know what to tell you. Every person is so different, and what you need right now, in this time of pandemic, is different from what someone else might need. And some of your needs will change from day to day. Some of you will find solace in a new yoga practice, learning to play the ukulele, and doing virtual museum tours. Others need to take a nap, and snuggle on the couch watching movies.

You might need a good cry from time to time. Or a good run. Some of us need to read poetry and listen to the daily briefings every day at 2 p.m. All of us need to keep getting things done, despite the fact that we're at home much more of the time and the dishes are piling up in the sink because we're always home and we're doing all the cooking and the projects are strewn from one end of the house to the other.

I don't know what you should do. But I can tell you this one thing. We all need a little kindness right now. When you're irritated with the way everyone else in your house is doing things and your child is melting down for the umpteenth time today, remember that everything has changed in the last few weeks. Even the grocery stores are different. Your family is feeling it, too. It's ok to not keep it all together right now.

Now is the time to give in to things. You know how there's some things that you never, ever do with your kids...not bad things, just conventional rules that you don't break? But every once in a while you let it go just this one time? Like during the holidays or on birthdays? I don't know what those rules are for you, but if you find that you're falling apart or everyone else in your house is falling apart, it might be time to break one of those rules. As a treat.

If you feel like running away, chances are good that others in your house feel the same way. Is there a way to run away together? Can you pull together rather than pulling apart? What might running away look like in this time of pandemic? Maybe you look at each other and say, "I'm tired of this, too. Let's have a picnic." And maybe your picnic is in the yard or at the park or maybe it's on the living room floor. Perhaps, running away is ordering ice cream from one of the local small businesses. Or watching the comedians on YouTube while drinking orange juice out of fancy glasses. Maybe it's a video call with family or friends...while you're all watching the same movie?

If you're a couple without kids, these things still apply. Be kind. To yourself and each other. Let go of something that doesn't matter. If you're a single person, living alone, it's even more important. When you're tired of everything, it's time to walk away from the shoulds and the oughts. Break out the fancy glasses and the phone calls or video chat.

Have a little grace



By **AMY PASS**

Yes, of course, it's important to find the new routine in daily life now, to eat nutritious food, get some exercise, sleep regularly, and get the work done. To be grateful for one thing every day. To do something for someone

outside your family every day. I, personally, have been watching for the routines my family is settling into so that I can reinforce them, keep coming back to the same things. Developing a rhythm helps our brains to rest and eases some of the constant background stress. But it's also important to let some things go. Maybe even one thing every day. Be kind to yourself. Be kind to each other. We are all fighting a hard battle.

Amy Pass earned her master's degree in marriage and family therapy from Bethel Theological Seminary. But perhaps her greatest lessons have come from raising two children and maintaining a 21-year marriage.

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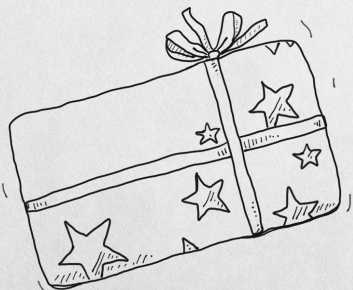
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What categories should the newspaper add? Let us know.

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TIP #10: Commission something



Home Improvement

ROOFTOP PRAIRIE

Nokomis family doesn't have to go far to relax

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

When Steffanie Musich sits on her green roof looking out over the rooftop prairie and the tree canopy, it's hard to remember that she's in the city.

That sense of peace and relaxation without having to get in the car is exactly what she was aiming for.

The 11-year Nokomis resident, her husband Matt and son live within blocks of Highway 62 and Cedar, surrounded by the constant hum of traffic and roar of airplanes. They're also close to Lake Nokomis, and have dedicated years to the intricacies of water quality and sustainability issues.



"Water quality and stormwater management are really big values for us," observed Nokomis resident Steffanie Musich as she drinks a glass of water on her rooftop garden. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

The green roof is an extension of those values, and a way to demonstrate how it can work in a neighborhood.

When Musich read about the green roofs being installed by Omni Ecosystems of Chicago, Ill. they resonated with her. She didn't want the type of living roof that merely had a sedum

tray of close-to-the-ground plants. Instead, she envisioned a prairie.

The problem is that a roof with 1.5 to 2 feet of soil material is heavy – and gets even more so with a load of snow on it. Plus, the costs of a roof like that are typically beyond what a homeowner can pay.

But Omni Ecosystems offered an innovative system using a new lightweight growing medium with a higher capacity for stormwater management, which allows them to build lighter green roof systems that require less structural capacity. Omni's projects include the O'Hare Terminal 2 Concourse, Harvard

Business School, Chicago's Wild Mile, and McDonald's corporate headquarters.

The 300-square-foot green roof at the Musich residence cost about \$17,000. That doesn't include the cost of replacing the garage or the flat roof that is underneath.

While the initial cost is higher than a regular roof, the Musich family believes the positive impacts on their mental health, the extended life of the flat roof beneath it, and the environmental impacts are worth it.

It was 2015 when they began envisioning the project. The couple hired Craft Design and Build from Uptown Minneapolis as the general contractor, and Jody McGuire of SALA Design as architect. Steffanie and Matt saved on costs by doing much of the construction themselves, including all the painting, stucco, and finishing work, putting in time in the evenings and weekends. For the rest, they refinanced and rolled the cost in.

It is important to them that the living roof will last 50-100 years, 3-5 times longer than a traditional roof.

The green roof doesn't heat up as much in the summer, and it provides insulation in the winter. "Green roofs help with urban heat island effects," observed Musich.

ROOFTOP PRAIRIE >> 7

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Benefits of green roofs

>>CLEAN WATER

Ordinarily, rainwater picks up contaminants and heat as it rushes across roofing and other hard surfaces on its way to lakes and rivers. Green roofs hold onto much of the rain, reducing the runoff that would otherwise cause water pollution and decreasing the need for additional (and expensive) stormwater treatment infrastructure.

>>LONGER-LASTING ROOFS

Because the waterproofing membrane is underneath the other layers of the green roof, it is protected from factors that can cause roofs to fail: extreme heat, UV radiation, and thermal swings. In general, green roofs last longer than conventional roofs, reducing both consumption and waste.

>>COOLER BUILDINGS AND CITIES

The plants on a green roof shade the building, and further cool it through the natural process of evapotranspiration. If enough roofs in a city are greened, they can combat the urban heat island and help mitigate the effects of global warming.

>>HABITAT CREATION

Green roofs create green spaces in the built environment that birds and beneficial insects can use as habitat. Green roofs also beautify cities, creating better habitat for humans as well.

>>CLEAN AIR

Green roofs improve air quality by taking up carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, and by filtering airborne particulates.

~ Information from mngreenroofs.org



The green roof is part of an overall system for managing stormwater on site. The Musich family also overseeded the lawn with plants that help capture water and mow it at 4 inches. (Photos by Tesha M. Christensen)

done some regrading. They added a raingarden for Steffanie's birthday last year that holds more water and keeps it from flowing immediately into the street. They plan to add another in the front in an effort to hold as much water as they can on site.

Over the years, they had also overseeded the backyard grass in favor of plants (such as clover) that help capture water and provide habitat for pollinators. They mow at 4 inches to allow for a deeper root system, which in turns means the plants are able to take more water into the ground than if the lawn was mowed shorter – a tip she learned through her master gardener training.

The best practices guidelines have been to hold a one-inch rainfall, although Musich foresees that may change as the state has been experiencing more and more high rainfall events. "One inch was unusual and on the high end, but now we're seeing 2-3-4-6-inch rainfall events," she said.

Musich pointed out it's important to keep raingardens 10 feet from a building foundation to avoid basement flooding. Using a French drain between homes helps the water move and protects both homes.

Due to the way their home sits on their corner lot, their backyard is essentially their neighbor's front yard. The new garage and green roof helped them carve out a private space.

"Plus we're up in the canopy," said Musich. "We get to see the birds and the squirrels in their element."

'Cathartic to care for natural space'

Initially, they planted 24 plugs with six different sedges, forbes, and grasses that were overseeded with a mix of annuals and perennials. Not everything was native.

White asters, white yarrow, black-eyes susan, mountain mint, purple coneflower, bachelor buttons, baby's breath, columbine and more grow on the roof. The rooftop prairie starts blooming in April and continues through fall.

"The first thing that starts to bloom is the baby's breath, which is self seeding. We'll get a field of white which is beautiful at night," said Musich. The first year, many poppies bloomed but they haven't seen any since, and the wild indigo bloomed just the first two years. Meanwhile, the purple coneflower was elusive until the summer of 2019.

"It's been very interesting to watch the evolution of the plants and the way they cluster and change," said Musich.

The maintenance of the roof each year is minimal. "I'll come out here and weed a couple times a month," remarked Musich. "If I'm having a particularly stressful week, I'll be out here more frequently. It's very cathartic to care for a natural space."

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Bonus: brewery space and sauna

The two-car garage on the property was rotting and didn't have footings under the cement slab. So they tore it down and started from scratch. The new three-car garage uses three sets of three tri-lam beams made of manufactured wood to distribute the weight. A room in the center helps support the load of the roof. As an added bonus, they moved their longtime home brew operation into the new space and got it out of the house.

The garage is connected to the house via a main floor breezeway and a second story deck. An upstairs door offers the only way to access the green roof. Near the plants is a beehive decorated by local artist Jamie Anderson.

Nestled in the prairie is a sauna that's been a great way to pull the neighborhood together in the winter months.

Green roof part of system of rain gardens and more

When the house needed a new roof eight years ago, Steffanie and Matt opted for a "cool roof." The steel roof reflects sunlight and heat away from the building, reducing roof temperatures by 50-60°F over a typical shingle roof and helps the house stay cooler inside. The material is also a lifetime product.

"Water quality and stormwater management are really big values for us," observed Musich. She started Friends of Lake Nokomis, and has served on the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board since 2014.

Given their proximity to Lake Nokomis, Musich wanted to replace an impermeable surface with one that would hold water in place and not flood the city's stormwater system. "Part of what we're trying to do is keep stormwater on our property for a longer period of time to reduce the volume of water the city infrastructure needs to manage during a storm event," she explained.

Their green roof can hold a one-inch rainfall. More than that runs off the backside where they've

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YOU CAN WRITE YOUR OWN WILL

A lot of people are asking how to write their own wills during this Covid-19 situation. We are all having to think about the fact that we just may die before we've been planning to. I've been helping people with estates, trusts, wills, health care directives, powers of attorney, and inter-generational transfers for about 40 years. So I've been to this rodeo once or twice, eh? This column is not legal advice – just general education. You can also check out the Minnesota State Attorney General's website at <https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Consumer/Handbooks/Probate/CH1.asp> I also advise talking to an experienced lawyer to figure out what you need for your own specific situation.

Yes, you can write your own will if you follow some basic rules. Here are the most common problems:

1. Any will should be signed, dated, and witnessed by two people who sign their names - as witnesses - in front of the testator (the person whose will it is). The testator can sign it and then take it to two different (adult and legally competent) people and say, "This is my will. Please sign here as witnesses to my saying 'This is my will and my signature.' "

They do not need to know what is in the will. They do need to think you know and understand what you are doing.

2. There are a lot of people – well-meaning lawyers among them – who think the testator and the witnesses also have to have their signatures notarized. This is not true, and this kind of "obedience to the form they are used to" leads to too many people not getting their wills done. The real reason for the extra rigamarole was to cut down on the number of will contests by "shifting the burden of proof" to the contestant (opponent) rather than the proponent (in favor) of the will. As it has turned out, this hasn't made much actual difference.

3. The most common mistake is thinking a notary takes the place of, or is just as good as, two witnesses – it doesn't. Notaries are needed for real estate documents and powers of attorney. A health care directive (also called a "living will") can be witnessed by two people or a notary. But that option does not apply to a will.

4. As for stating how you want things divided and distributed after you're gone – the devil is in the details. Remember, there are going to be different points of view after you're gone.

Legal tips

By **DAVE PORTER**
612-722-1001,
Probator@Earthlink.net



Most often, there are very real – and very firm – opinions about what you "really wanted." The best way to avoid this is to keep it simple and get some competent help. I tell people who want to write their own wills, "It's a lot like doing your own plumbing behind a plaster wall. By the time they find out it's leaky, it gets really expensive to fix."

5. The person writing their own will can get caught up in a swirl of conflicting and competing emotions and thoughts. This can result in wording that makes perfect sense to the person who wrote it, but turns out to be hard for everyone else involved to agree on what was meant.

Plainly put, people who write their own wills can make more work for lawyers than they meant to. I once handled an estate of a woman who lived over by Wagner's Greenhouse. She was a real antique collector, and

would often take whatever was left over after estate sales, take it all home to her own garage, and sort through things looking for treasures. And she left a house full of things like original Thomas Edison cylindrical wax records, with Edison's own voice. She wrote her own will, but it got complicated when she started assigning "whatever is in the front bedroom to my nieces and nephews on my husband's side, the back bedroom to my cousins, and the kitchen. . ." We ended up with something like 32 people all wanting to get in the house at the same time, each with their own ideas about what they were entitled to. Her estate sale had so many antiquers lining up the night before that the neighbors called the cops just to get some peace and quiet before the sale. One of the cops turned out to be a niece of the decedent, so she got the bright idea of handing out numbers to everyone herself so that the buyers could get back in their cars and get some sleep before the sale opened up. Long story short, it cost an extra \$10,000 in various lawyers' fees just trying to straighten things out.

6. Half the job of writing a straightforward estate plan is figuring out what you want. The other half is writing it up clearly and simply, and using the right

documents. Sometimes a living trust is a good idea – but not always. You're giving an awful lot of power to someone who can rob you blind. Same with a power of attorney. Transfer on death deeds make sense IF there are a very small number of recipients. I'm talking like one or two here, because the recipients are going to be the immediate owners, and if they want to sell, their spouses are going to have to join in, too. I've got one going now where all five kids – and their respective spouses – now have to agree on whether and when to sell, AND price, terms, timing, and getting all the documents signed.

7. A will can be handwritten. It still needs to be witnessed by two people. I've done a few by hand, writing as clearly as possible while sitting next to someone literally on their death bed at 3 in the morning. I don't recommend it, and I sure as heck don't want to be doing it for someone infected with this Covid-19 stuff.

So - do it before you need it. Please. Your family and friends (and even your lawyer!) will be grateful.

David K. Porter is a lawyer with more than 35 years experience in estate planning, probate, trusts, and real estate. He is certified as a real estate specialist by the Minnesota State Bar Association. He's at: 5208 Bloomington Ave., Minneapolis.



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*Russ Henry,
Owner and Soil
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Here are 3 tips for growing healthy soil:

1) Keep the ground covered: Bare ground encourages weeds and damages soil. Use mulch, leaves, or ground covers, like creeping thyme, throughout the landscape.

2) Plant native perennials, trees, and shrubs: Native plants offer more nutrition for pollinators. Choose plants that bloom at different times so bees can find food in your garden every day of the growing season.

3) Transform your lawn: The best lawn is a garden. Eliminate mowing, fertilizers, and pesticides by transforming your lawn into garden space. Native landscapes are much easier to maintain than lawns!

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Gypsy moth eradication program planned for May

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), in collaboration with federal, state, and local partners, is proposing to treat gypsy moth populations in the Nokomis area of Minneapolis this spring.

A state monitoring program found a high number of gypsy moths there in 2019. Follow-up site visits also found gypsy moth egg masses, which indicates there are reproducing gypsy moth populations.

The MDA is proposing a management plan to eradicate gypsy moths on 298 acres in the Wenonah neighborhood, with the northern boundary extending into the Keewaydin neighborhood. The proposed treatment area is bounded by the following streets:

- North - 53rd St. E.
- South - Highway 62
- East - 34th Ave. S.
- West - 24th Ave. S.

Two information sessions were held in late February at Crosstown Covenant Church and Keewaydin Recreation Center in the Nokomis neighborhood.

Kimberly Thielen Cremers, MDA Plant Pest Manager said, "We also did a direct mailing to residents in the targeted area. Our staff put flyers in public spaces like bus stops, gas stations, and apartment complexes. All literature was written in English, Spanish, and Somali. We

do not have a plan for additional public meetings at this point. However, if there is community interest, our staff can arrange to come and speak at an event." Contact project manager Marissa Streifel at marissa.streifel@state.mn.us, if interested.

Gypsy moth in U.S. since 1860s

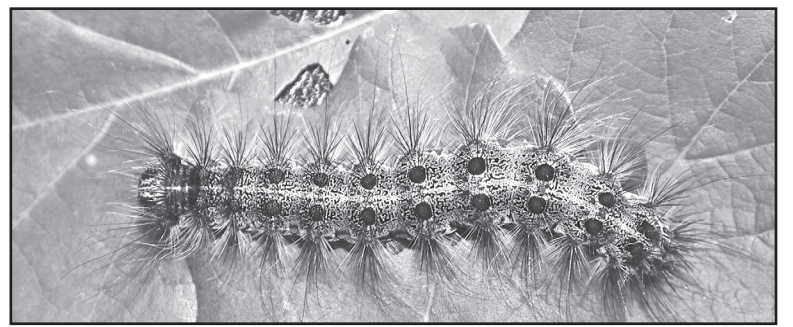
The European gypsy moth is not native to the U.S. It has worked its way west from Massachusetts, where it was introduced in the 1860s. Isolated populations are appearing in different parts of Minnesota, as gypsy moths continue to advance south and west.

Large numbers of gypsy moth caterpillars can cause a reduction in tree growth, branch dieback, and eventually tree death. The treatments proposed for 2020 will decrease the likelihood of defoliation, and will slow the expansion of gypsy moths in Minnesota and beyond.

Since 1973, the state of Minnesota has been actively surveying for gypsy moths. Minnesota's first gypsy moth eradication project was conducted in 1980. Since that time, over a million acres have been treated in Minnesota to eradicate or slow advancing gypsy moth populations. Treatments have been conducted throughout the Twin Cities metro area, including the Lowry Hill area of Minneapolis in 2018.

'Destructive pest'

The gypsy moth is a leaf-eating insect. It belongs to the same order as butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera). It feeds on more than 300 trees and woody plant species found in Minnesota, and is considered one of the most destructive pests in the U.S. For more information about the MDA's gypsy moth program, email gypsy.moth@state.mn.us



Gypsy moth caterpillars are voracious eaters, and can strip entire trees of their leaves. As an invasive species, they have few natural predators in Minnesota. Repeated defoliation can kill trees, change the mix of tree species in an area, and affect dependent wildlife. (Photo courtesy of MDA)

Foray to be used locally

For the proposed treatment in the Nokomis neighborhood, the MDA and its partners recommend using Foray: a water-based, organic, biological insecticide that kills gypsy moth caterpillars. The active ingredient in this product is the naturally-occurring bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki* (Btk), and the crystalline proteins it produces. When ingested, the proteins are toxic to gypsy moth caterpillars and other butterfly and moth caterpillar species that are actively feeding.

Thielen Cremers said, "We get a lot of concern about other butterfly and moth species being affected. Foray will only affect caterpillars in the early stages of development that are actively feeding. Applications are made

before the general monarch population in this area has returned."

Foray does not affect humans, mammals, birds, or most beneficial insects including bees. Gypsy moth caterpillars stop feeding and die within a couple days. Foray is broken down naturally by sunlight. Two applications (made about a week apart) are used to make sure all gypsy moth caterpillars in the treatment area are exposed.

The proposed treatments will take place in May when gypsy moth caterpillars are very small. Treatments generally happen early in the morning using an airplane or helicopter. The treatments are applied at low altitudes, approximately 50 feet above the treetops. Aircraft are equipped with the latest available technologies to ensure application is accurate. Non-forested areas such as large fields, stretches of pavement, and open bodies of water are not treated.

Thielen Cremers explained, "If a person is out during an application, they will smell a slight fermenting in the air. The product is applied at a rate of one-half gallon per acre, and more than 90% of that is water. Most people will not notice more than a fine mist, if even that."

"Exact dates and times of application will depend on weather conditions and caterpillar development. You may see or hear the low flying aircraft in your neighborhood at the time of application."

To learn more:

- The MDA will mail a postcard that will identify a time-frame for the treatments.
- Go to www.mda.state.mn.us/gmtreatments to sign up for text or email messages.
- Call MDA's Arrest the Pest line (888-545-6684).
- Follow MDA on social media: [Twitter.com/mnagriculture](https://twitter.com/mnagriculture), www.facebook.com/mnagriculture

Marketplace

WHAT'S OPEN

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List basic information for free in self-service platform. Opt for upgraded listings to post menu and discounts, and to put listing in print.

Messenger

Want ads must be received by the Messenger by May 18 for the May 28 issue. Call 651-917-4183 for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Messenger's website at www.LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com

Messenger Want Ads are \$1 per word with a \$10 minimum. Send your remittance along with your ad to *Messenger Classifieds*, 5139 34th Ave. S. #17097, Minneapolis, MN 55417; e-mail denis@longfellownokomisessenger.com; or call 651-917-4183.

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Call the Minnesota Day One Crisis Hotline at 1-866-223-1111 if you or someone you know is seeking shelter due to a dangerous relationship or needs to create a safety plan. B-20

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Games, music and art connect >> from 1

Markley has lived in the Wonderland Park area of Longfellow for over six years with her husband Presley and her 13-year-old daughter. She was inspired by a similar activity in Lexington, Ky. where her mother lives. As

Longfellow already has an established group of artists, it was easy to replicate the neighborhood game here.

She got enough volunteers to run two concurrent scavenger hunts – one in upper Longfellow,

and one in lower Longfellow. The hunt started on April 15 and will continue through May 15.

"Go on walks in your neighborhood, looking in windows for art. Don't forget to say hi from at least six feet away if you see a neighbor – even if it's just with a wave. If you find art in a window, take a selfie with the art in the background – try to find all of the artworks on the scavenger hunt flyers, visible at www.jinjer-markley.com/lolaqac. If you post the selfie on social media, tag it #lolaquarantineartcrawl or #lolaqac. You could follow the tags to see who else is out and about in your neighborhood!"

The maps are also available online at the League of Longfellow Artists (LoLa) Facebook page or www.LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com.



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Go to work if providing critical services



Nokomis East Neighborhood Association

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Nokomiseast.org

@NokomisEast Facebook

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- Business Grants
- Food Shelf info
- Renter's Rights
- Government News

Daily posting on local resources and developments

Neighborhood sing

Each night at 7 p.m., neighborhood join in the Seven Oaks Front Porch Sing.

Kristi Anderson, who has lived on Isabel Ave. for three years, was inspired by news reports of Italians singing on their balconies, and people singing in Spain and Israel. When she heard about the local idea of singing "Imagine," she pulled out the email list from National Night Out and suggested they step out onto their front steps or yards, sing and dance together.

"We have a pretty enthusiastic group of people," said Anderson. "It's nice to see your neighbors out there."

The sing started with Isabel Ave. homes and stretched out from there. Anderson sends out an email each day with a list of 3-4 songs, lyrics and links to song videos. Fellow resident,



Kristi Anderson, at right holding Barney, appreciates seeing her neighbors at least once a day from a distance while they come together to sing. With her, from left to right, son, Josh (holding Boomer, the white dog); daughter, Taylor; and husband, Scott. One day, Caitlin Nightingale, whose parents live on Isabel Ave. and who is without a studio due to COVID-19, offered to snap photos of families on their front steps, part of her #frontporchproject. (Photo courtesy of Caitlin Nightingale Photography)

Phil Hide, who also lives in the middle of the block, has taken over setting up a speaker to share the songs via Spotify each evening. They've done the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun" a few times, knowing it is a song some hospitals play when patients are released or removed from ventilators. In mid April, they sang a song from local musician Nachito Herrera, who returned home after COVID-19 hospitalization. For fun, they've also done the Hokey Pokey.

At the end of each Sing, they clap together in gratitude for frontline workers.

Anderson is glad to have an updated email list of neighbors. Sophia Kim used the list in April

to put together a care package of prepared food for her friend – a single parent of a 12- and 14-year-old who has been working double shifts at the Hennepin County Medical Center emergency room. More than a dozen neighbors contributed to that effort. Neighbor Ann Prosser used the list to get the word out that Blue Cross and Allina were seeking homemade masks and to share other resources for making them.

Anderson includes a bit of art in her emails, as well: a photo of the painted rocks she sees while out walking her dogs. She began attributing them to the Rock-Painting-Artist Fairy – who turned out to be neighbor Gina Jorgensen.

Brighten somebody's day with a kind word

Belle's Tool Box will stamp and mail letters to local seniors

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The crew at Belle's Tool Box has wrestled with how to best use their "tools" at this time, and has reached out to a senior center in the neighborhood.

They are encouraging children to draw and write messages to an elderly person confined to their home. Place in a plastic bag and leave in the box located

on the Belle's Tool Box gate on 34th St., just south of 42nd Ave. Owner Lucy Elliott will see that the messages and drawings get to homes of folks who could use a little cheer!

Regarding concern about handling items, Elliott said, "I will handle the items appropriately, and am confident the staff of Longfellow/Seward Healthy Seniors will, as well. Connections between old and young seem especially poignant right now."

Contact Lucy Elliott with questions or suggestions at belles-toolbox@gmail.com.



A table along 39th Avenue South had free food for the taking in a gesture of neighborliness. (Photo by Terry Faust)

Lola Art Crawl cancelled for 2020 as alternative formats explored

On Tuesday, April 14, the steering committee for the League of Longfellow Artists (LoLa) notified artists and supporters that they are cancelling what would have been the 12th annual LoLa Art Crawl originally scheduled for Sept. 19-20, 2020. Given the high likelihood of a fall resurgence, or simply a continuation, of COVID-19 infections, they felt that it would be risky and impractical to invest time and money in preparing for the crawl as usual. Instead, they will be exploring other ways to share the creative output of LoLa artists with the community.

Artists have been understanding of the decision as they are coping with the effects of the coronavirus and physical restrictions in their own lives. "I am disappointed and heartbroken," said Maya Brown of mayamade. "I do however understand and think it's the best decision for everyone."

The crawl has been an annual event since its founding in 2009, and the committee members – Steve Clark, Lisa Anderson, Sharon Parker, Sue Romain, Chris Miller, and Ken Wenzel – came to the decision to cancel it with a degree of disappointment and resignation.

The decision was informed by a few realizations: (1) Public health concerns around welcoming strangers into close proximity inside artists' yards, homes, studios and small businesses; (2) Uncertainty about what lies ahead and the likelihood that it would have to be called off as we got closer to the date; (3) The financial hardship faced by neighborhood businesses, which provide a significant portion of the funding that makes the crawl possible.

The group expects to employ a mix of social media, the LoLa website, and home and business activities throughout Longfellow for

community members to explore and enjoy the richness of the artist community and small independent business partners in appropriate physically distanced ways.

When you go on walks and bike rides in the neighborhood, look for art all around you – on buildings and utility boxes, in the windows and front yards of artists' homes, and even on top of Little Free Libraries (one LoLa artist, Terry Faust, makes "Wee Weather Vanes" for LFLs)—as we continue to make and share art in sometimes surprising ways.

"We will grow out of this setback. And we will flourish," said co-founder Bob Schmitt.

"We move ahead with courage," said co-founder Anita White.

The annual LoLa art crawl started with 42 artists at 20 sites and has grown ever since, with 119 participating artists in 2019 exhibiting at 56 sites. LoLa looks forward to meeting with the public again next year.

The 'Warbler Wave' is coming

Numbers will soar in mid-May

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Longfellow resident Dave Zumeta walks the neighborhood every day, with eyes and ears lifted toward the sky. He has been an active birder for 61 years, and this guy knows his stuff. He has identified 182 different species of birds between the railroad bridge at 27th St. and West River Rd., and the Lock and Dam #1 – a distance of less than four miles.

Zumeta was hooked on birding by the time he was eight years old. It's an activity that doesn't require any fancy equipment to get started, especially for children. It's a great family activity, and many species can be seen without binoculars.

Zumeta said, "All you need to do is to look and listen when you walk outdoors."

Many people think spring is the most exciting time of year to

bird watch. The "Warbler Wave" has officially started, which means that the northern migration of these small songbirds (5" average length) to their summer breeding grounds has begun.

The warblers are trickling in from Central America and Mexico, but their numbers will soar between May 10-20 in the Twin Cities. Some of them will stay in this area all summer, but many more will continue their migration to Northern Minnesota and Canada. According to Zumeta, "A person can see a ton of these little birds before the trees leaf out."

Warblers are Zumeta's favorite birds, bar none. He not only knows the subtleties of their markings, but can also recognize their songs. His favorite place to watch for warblers isn't Costa Rica or the Greater Antilles Islands. It's a sinkhole on 34th St. and 47th Ave. just a stone's throw from his house. He said, "Seven Oaks Park is the reason

we moved where we did. I think it's one of the best places to bird watch anywhere – and it's a warbler magnet."

Zumeta has seen 26 different kinds of warblers there over the years. Even their names are beautiful: the Mourning Warbler, the Hooded Warbler, the Golden-winged Warbler, and the Bay-breasted Warbler, to name a few.

Because the sink hole is a large, natural depression in the ground, it affords protection for migrating warblers from wind and cold. The best days for birding, according to Zumeta, are nasty, rainy, windy mornings in mid-May. He said, "I've seen dozens of Yellow-rumped warblers hopping around on the pavement feeding on days like that. The park is surrounded by ornamental conifers such as white pine, white spruce, and northern white cedar. Warblers and other songbirds feast on the insects living in the buds."



Why get excited about warblers? They're incredibly diverse, colorful, and beautiful. They're great singers too: a delight to the eye and the ear. They are passing through the Twin Cities right now from their wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America. Pictured here is the American Redstart, courtesy of Nina Koch (Tropical Wings, River Falls, Wis.). (Photo by Nina Koch)

Zumeta is a longtime co-leader of the Longfellow Community Council spring and fall bird walks in the River Gorge.

1st of 3

This is the first of three consecutive stories on Birds in the Mississippi River Gorge with local bird expert Dave Zumeta. Watch for Raptors in the June Messenger. These stories are meant especially for families with young children. If your child is interested in bird migration, look up the Blackpoll Warbler – an almost unbelievable long distance marathon flier.

He has generously offered to take out family groups of up to three people for one-hour informal warbler walks between April 25 and May 25, if all are willing to practice social distancing. The suggested minimum age of children is seven years old. Binoculars (and binocular skills) are helpful, but not necessary.

Dave Zumeta can be reached at dzumeta@comcast.net for questions or scheduling.

KIDS LEARN THROUGH PLAY

>> from 1

and humidity of June, the snow and ice of January."

Place-based learning might come as something of a relief during this time of staying at home, or close to home. According to Sharratt, young children are just as happy, maybe happier, going back to the same place over and over again.

Now that even playgrounds are closed or discouraged, here's the best news yet. Find a scrappy patch of woods near your house; any nearby nature spot will do. Take the kids there and, after

making sure it's reasonably safe, led them take the lead in their own unstructured play.

Sharratt encourages parents to think back to their own memories of childhood, asking, "What places in nature were most meaningful for you? It's probably not the trip your whole family took to a national park, though it could be. It's more likely a tree you loved to climb by yourself, or a vacant neighborhood lot where you built a fort with your friends. These are experiences that give kids a sense of autonomy, which is especially

In a nutshell

Free Forest School ignites children's innate capacity to learn through unstructured play in nature, fostering healthy development and nurturing the next generation of creative thinkers, collaborative leaders, and environmental stewards.

important in this time of 'helicopter parenting.'"

Every day outside

It is unlikely that Free Forest School playgroups will be meeting this summer, given the current health emergency.

"There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing."
~ Scandinavian saying

In the meantime, the website is resource rich, and includes a COVID-19 inspired initiative called Every Day Outside on the blog. It's a place to share ideas, play prompts, inspirations, and ideas for child-led activities. There are also weekly emails that dive deeper into the value of unstructured play for the whole family. For more information, visit www.freeforestschool.org or email info@freeforestschool.org.

"It may look like we're educating children, but we're really educating adults," said Sharratt. "Kids are hard wired to learn through play in nature, but parents can get in the way with too much structure and over-scheduling."

So, even though Free Forest School isn't formally meeting right now, Sharratt said the emphasis hasn't changed one bit. Today is the perfect day to get outside with your kids. Let them cross a stream on rocks or climb a tree. They might look like they're "just playing," (and what's wrong with that?) but they're also developing their sense of spatial awareness, large and small motor skills, balance, critical thinking, and much more.

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A firsthand account

FROM THE FRONT LINE

>> from 1

I now work at a supermarket, signing on partially to do my part to help with what I call 'the war effort.' But, part of the reason was that, on March 20, Donald Trump announced, with what was almost a throw away line, that schools could forgo standardized testing in the face of the pandemic. Few noticed, but I did. I was employed scoring standardized test essays from across the country. My job was suddenly and unexpectedly gone. What else could I do to supplement my journalism income?

I walked over to my local grocery store and asked, "Are you guys hiring?" They were. They handed me some paperwork and a store t-shirt and I was suddenly on the front lines, an essential worker.

Much of my job is walking the store with a terrycloth rag and a bottle of pink specialty sanitizer, wiping down any surface that people might touch. I also help customers find items and give advice about ingredients and cooking.

A grocery store, it turns out, is an ideal place to see how people react to a pandemic. With a few, you can see the panic on their faces when they come in the door, acting startled if anyone gets within 10 feet of them. Most arrive trying to follow the new (and ever changing) rules. People do their best to stay six feet from



While Longfellow Market is not the store where Stephanie Fox works, the market has also had to make changes to its operations. Brad Best runs the cash register for Anna Mason at Longfellow Market. Anna's mom made the mask for her. (Photo by Terry Faust)

other customers and staff – there are signs reminding people to do so – something difficult in a store where the aisles are narrow. For some customers, sheltering in place is difficult and they see a visit to the grocery as their daily chance to interact with humanity.

At first, hardly any customers wore masks. Now, you can see many secure their masks just before they enter the front door. The store provides customers with hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes and thin plastic gloves to use, if anyone wants to do so.

Adjusting to the new world of a pandemic can be difficult. Some people would insist on bringing their reusable bags from home and would get upset and even hostile when asked not to do so. It was almost as if these bags were a talisman against climate change and to not use them for even a few weeks would bring disaster. The bags could carry the

virus and created extra work for staff members. As customers noticed that more and more stores around the country banned the bags, and locally, stores no longer charged the five cents for paper or plastic, this became less of a problem.

Another change was when the store added an online shopping option, where staff members fill up carts of food and meet customers in the parking lot. Curbside pickup counts for only about five percent of the store's business, only about 10 to 14 orders a day, but for those who need it, it's an important and essential service.

Before the lockdown, many patrons ate out at restaurants or used take-out. Now, with many restaurants closed, people found themselves forced to cook. A lot of shoppers who seldom cooked decided that cooking might be a fun distraction. Those who know

little about cooking now can depend on store employees for advice.

One shopper was looking for 'regular rice.' "That's gluten free rice," he said looking at the package. Well, yes. All rice is gluten free. This rice will work. Another customer was looking for a specific jarred 'picante sauce' as an ingredient. Picante is Spanish for spicy. Any spicy salsa would work, we told him.

Some products became hard to find. Before the lockdown, few people, except for the most dedicated hobbyist, baked their own bread. Once people found themselves confined to their homes, many decided baking bread sounded fun. For a few weeks, flour seemed to disappear from the shelves and would be snatched up by the lucky customer who happened to arrive at the store at the right time.

Yeast became as valuable as toilet paper. Some people complained that people were hoarding yeast. No one was. It was simply that some once seemingly dull and easy-to-find items like yeast became in huge demand.

The toilet paper situation has a more complicated backstory. Before lockdown, people would use the bathrooms and toilets at work, school or places like restaurants, which use commercial paper made at different factories than the paper meant for home use. The lack of toilet paper was seldom caused by 'hoarders' but simply because the factories making the home-style paper couldn't keep up with the doubled demand.

With the increase of business, the store hired a number of new people, including some high school students. Most employees say they are not worried about

working with and interacting with the public. For some, the virus does not seem more than a vague threat to them personally and they're happy to help with the culturally shared effort against the virus. Part of the job is to stay upbeat for the sake of customers. One employee, Andrea, is the store's unofficial ambassador, chatting with everyone she meets and cheering them up during these stressful and difficult times.

The store is still hiring. But, even with the increasing business, the store's manager hopes that in the future, the local economy will become a rising tide and that businesses that are now shuttered will again thrive. It's part of a "We're all in this together," attitude, he said.

I look out the front window of the store. It's a sunny afternoon and customers are still arriving. I see a familiar sight in the park across the street. A man is walking his beautiful German Shepard dog for the second time that day, taking advantage of a chance to get some fresh air. Life goes on.

During the course of a four-hour shift, I've walked around the store more times than I can count, but my Fitbit reads 8,500 steps. The lock down might end soon – or not. But, whatever happens, most people working here are in it for the long haul, making sure everyone can have access to the food they want while staying safe. They were once just clerks but now, they are essential workers and everyone finally appreciates how much they contribute.

* Editor's note: The photo on this page is not from the same store where reporter Stephanie Fox works.



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