



Group works
to reverse
wrongful
convictions
» 9

TSA agent, Longfellow man dies of COVID-19

**Grief-stricken wife
urges people to wear
masks to protect
themselves and others**

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Terra Girard wasn't planning to be a widow in her 60s. But things changed quickly in September when her husband Teddy got a sore throat and a cough, was hospitalized for COVID-19, and died nine days later on Tuesday, Oct. 13.



Gerald 'Teddy' Girard, age 67

"When I try to look ahead, all I see is a deep, black hole where my future used to be bright," said Terra.

"We were going to retire in a couple of years and travel. We were supposed to be one of those cute old couples, holding hands while we walked. We were planning what we wanted to do on our 65th wedding anniversary. I wasn't supposed to have to be alone for the rest of my life."

41 years of marriage

Gerald, known as 'Teddy,' and Terra met at a bar and knew they wanted to get married after a few months of dating. They enjoyed dancing and spending time together. They raised two children and have four grandchildren.

The couple celebrated their 41st wedding anniversary together earlier this year on June 23, 2020, in the same Longfellow home they've lived in since 1980.

"My husband was a kind, nurturing man, with rough hands that, when he touched my neck could calm me down in an instant. He had an amazing sense of humor. He had the kind of laugh that made people laugh with him," recalled Terra.

"He was my knight in shining armor. He rescued me from

TSA AGENT » 14

ON STREETS FOR DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE



Demonstrators who marched onto I-94 during the November 4 National Day of Protest are blocked from exiting by law enforcement officers who kept them on the interstate for more than five hours as 646 arrests were made. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

By JILL BOOGREN

On Nov. 7, 2020, the day the Associated Press called the election for President Elect Joe Biden, nearly a thousand people gathered in front of the former Third Precinct police headquarters at Minnehaha Ave. and E. Lake St. for "Together We Rise: March to Decide Our Future," a rally and march along E. Lake St. to Mercado Central.

CTUL (Centro de Tabajadores Unidos en la Lucha), one of the 34 organizations co-hosting the march, described the event like this:

"Together we rise from the ashes from the presidential election, the police killing of George Floyd, the COVID pandemic and the unfair systems that led us to this moment. It is clear that we cannot go back to normal but instead we must create a future where all of us – people of color, workers, tenants, immigrant communities – have a voice and our families can thrive."

ON STREETS » 10-11



'Together We Rise' demonstrators march along East Lake St. from Minnehaha Ave. to Mercado Central on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

Taking care of the George Floyd Global Memorial



Jeanelle Austin, lead caretaker at the George Floyd Global Memorial, stands near Peyton Scott Russell's striking portrait of George Floyd. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

By JILL BOOGREN

At the center of the intersection at 38th St. and Chicago Ave. S., a large sculpture of a fist holding a red, black and green striped Pan-African flag is surrounded by a circular garden. On Chicago Ave. facing north, candles, flowers and tributes are laid around a figure painted on the street, face down, with angel's wings – the place where George Floyd took his last breath. Next to this a giant portrait of George Floyd stands tall against the bus shelter.

In the months since Minneapolis police took George Floyd's life on May 25, people from all over the world have visited the memorial to

pay their respects, often placing tributes large and small on the surrounding sidewalks and streets. Tiny figurines, stuffed animals, votives, cut flowers and plantings rest alongside children's drawings, handwritten letters, protest placards, street art, murals and sculptures.

"It's a living memorial," said Jeanelle Austin, who as lead caretaker sees every single thing that is left there. Asked what it's like to witness new arrivals in this ever-changing space, she said "It's beautiful. Because it says that people are finding a way to express themselves."

TAKING CARE » 6-7



SHOP SMALL BUY LOCAL
Donations help Lake St.
businesses recover

PAGES 2-3



COMMUNITY DRIVEN:
Delivering free food to
those who need it most

PAGE 8



AGING WELL
Letting go
to live blissfully

PAGE 20

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Lake Street business reopens



Elias Usso is the owner of Seward Pharmacy and lead pharmacist, located in the main level of the new Hennepin County services building at Lake and Hiawatha. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Seward Pharmacy reopens

Pharmacist Elias Usso is the owner of Seward Pharmacy, and one of many Lake Street entrepreneurs. He opened his business in September 2019, lost almost four months of income after the unrest, and recently reopened.

Usso is one of more than 300 Lake Street owners to receive a grant from the Lake Street Recovery Fund, as well as additional funding from the UnitedHealthcare Group. These funds made it possible for him to replace two walls of broken windows, and to rebuild interior walls destroyed first by fire and then by water. The sprinkler system also destroyed all of Usso's inventory. His shelves of over-the-counter items are still mostly empty but he said, "I am very hopeful for the future, because of the people in this community."

Usso dreamed for years of owning his own independent pharmacy, where he could build connections with his customers and make a positive difference in their lives. The Seward Pharmacy is located at 2209 E. Lake St. It offers compounding services and free, same-day delivery service for prescription medications.

Donations help Lake St. businesses recover

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The Lake Street Council's mission is to engage, serve, and advocate for the Lake Street business community to ensure the vitality and prosperity of the commercial corridor. Before George Floyd was murdered, the staff of the small non-profit organization was going about their work in a fairly straightforward way. In the six months that have followed, everything about their work has changed.

The formerly vibrant six-mile long Lake Street commercial corridor lies in ruins, but there is still cause for hope.

Lake Street Council Executive Director Allison Sharkey said, "As the organization overseeing the Lake Street Recovery Fund, we have received an outpouring of support. So far, almost \$12,000,000 in donations has come in. More than 80,000 donors have contributed, from more than 30 different countries around the world. I saved a lot of the letters and notes that accompanied the donations. I would love to pass them around the office – but we don't have an office anymore."

The Lake Street Council shared space in the US Bank building across the street from the Midtown Global Market for years. Their building, like hundreds of others up and down Lake Street, suffered extensive damage in the civil unrest. The US Bank building was destroyed, but Sharkey said, "I really haven't had much time to think about our lack of an office. It's not at the top of my 'to-do' list."

Working remotely, Lake Street council staff members have been busy beyond anything they could have imagined. Sharkey explained, "We had to double the size of our staff, in-

cluding hiring professional accountants to handle the influx of donations. We now have outreach workers that speak multiple languages, including Spanish and Somali. They have knocked on the door of every Lake Street business, and discovered businesses we didn't know existed before."

First round of grants disbursed

The first round of grants totaling \$5.5 million was disbursed this month to more than 300 businesses and non-profits damaged or destroyed in the Uprising. Of those grants, 82% of the grantees were Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), or immigrants, and had, on average, four full-time employees.

The average grant size was \$15,000. Businesses or non-profits could apply for up to \$25,000 to repair building damage, replace inventory, equipment, or furnishings. This first round of funding helps provide a lifeline for BIPOC and immigrant-owned businesses during this fragile time.

No state or federal assistance granted

Sharkey said, "None of us have ever done anything like this before. We were as unprepared as if a hurricane or an earthquake had struck. The state of Minnesota requested a disaster declaration from the federal government, which would have brought resources, but the disaster declaration was denied. At the state level, the Minnesota House of Representatives has introduced a recovery bill, but the Senate has not passed it."

"Once it became clear that FEMA wasn't going to show up

and tell us what to do, we created a coalition of other experienced community organizations like the Latino and African Developments Centers. When the donations started coming in, we knew we didn't want to just get the money out quickly – we wanted to get it out equitably."

The majority of independent business owners on Lake Street were renters. Of those, 59% were uninsured, and an unknown number were underinsured. Many of the businesses have reopened, but their owners face an uncertain future. Sharkey said, "I believe we will see a lot of businesses fail in the next few months, under the double threat of COVID-19 and the economic losses brought on by this summer's unrest. It is imperative that those of us who live here support our Lake Street businesses."

She continued, "Every dollar spent on Lake Street helps keep store fronts open, employs community members, supports families, and fosters creativity and entrepreneurship. Don't forget to tell your friends and family that you're supporting these businesses. Show your Lake Street pride!"

There will be a second round of grants disbursed, beginning in December. Application guidelines, procedures, information about the decision-making committee, and the grant process can be found at www.visitlakestreet.com.

The Lake Street Council (501c3) will use 100% of funds received to help rebuild businesses and nonprofits damaged or destroyed on Lake Street. Donate via www.visitlakestreet.com, through GiveMN.org, or by sending a check to the Lake Street Council at PO Box 7091, Minneapolis, MN 55407.

Local businesses band together for promotion

"Shopping small and supporting local businesses has never been more important than it is in 2020," remarked Homespun owner Ben Cooney. "Dozens of small businesses are closing each week due to the financial strain COVID-19 has caused. Shoppers now have a chance to support multiple small businesses in South Minneapolis during the Black Friday/Small Business Saturday/Cyber Monday weekend."

A group of 10 small businesses in South Minneapolis are joining together to offer a special deal to customers: Buy four \$25 gift certificates, get one free. Customers can choose which five businesses they would like to support through their gift certificate purchase.

The participating businesses are: Homespun Gifts and Decor, Mother Earth Gardens, Sift Gluten Free, Moon Palace Books, Harriet and Alice, Tangletown

Bikes, Tare Market, Wild Rum-pus, Rue48 Salon, and Blooma.

Purchases can be made on Homespun's website (www.homespunmn.com) beginning Black Friday at 12:01 a.m. until 11:59 p.m. on Cyber Monday. Customers will have the choice to have their chosen gift certificates mailed to them for a small shipping fee (~\$4) or they can pick up their gift certificates at Homespun at 2709 E. 38th St. in Minneapolis.

NEBA Treasure Hunt kicks off Nov. 28

The Nokomis East Business Association (NEBA) is holding its first ever Nokomis East Scavenger Hunt. This community event will run from Nov. 28 through Dec. 12 to kick-off the holiday season. "Help us celebrate our vibrant neighborhood, local businesses, and seasonal initiatives safely in the midst of the pandemic," urge organizers.

The Scavenger Hunt includes:

- A hidden medallion
- Clues to 14 popular Nokomis East landmarks, and

- A new hashtag to promote your favorite area businesses and initiatives (#ShopNokomis)

NEBA will sponsor \$500 worth of prizes from member businesses to be split between five winners. Winners will be announced on Dec. 19, 2020.

The Nokomis East Business Association (NEBA) is a volunteer-driven, fully independent organization. For more information on "Nokomis Treasures" or NEBA, contact nokomiseastba@gmail.com.

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2020: The Year of the Pivot

2020 might become known as the year of the pivot.

In the newspaper business, we've been zig-zagging for years now, since the Internet changed the business we knew. In some ways, that prepared us for 2020. I was just barely part of news media at its financial peak when there wasn't as much competition, so I don't expect ads to roll in easily. I expect to have to hustle to pay the bills. In some ways, its helps to have entered this business during the Internet age because I've always seen the benefits and challenges associated with it.

At TMC Publications, we were already a home-based business, which means we didn't have to worry about how to pay the rent when revenue slowed to a trickle in April. We've been using a secure cloud-based system for years for our files.

We had moved to a VOIP phone system with a built-in video conferencing in 2019, and it sure came in handy this year. When we were all staying home, it was nice to see faces via video for interviews and sales calls, and its use is picking back up as we head into the colder winter months.

From 2004 to 2019, more than a quarter of the nation's newspapers folded, leaving be-

hind vast news deserts, according to research by the Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina. Reporters and editors employed by newspapers dropped by about half, pointed out *Des Moines Register* Executive Editor Carol Hunter in a recent editorial. Locally, we saw *City Pages* abruptly close in October, and the *Southwest Journal* plans to discontinue publishing in December.

While newspapers are facing challenges in an evolving world, what hasn't changed is our need for them.

"Newspapers have long served as 'watchdogs' over government. The pandemic magnified the significance of this role because the virus closed most government offices, and meetings of school boards, city councils and county officials moved onto Zoom," pointed out Iowa Freedom of Information Council Executive Director Randy Evans, writing to support National Newspaper Week in October.

He added, "The most potent tool of newspapers continues to be the spotlight. They shine it on problems that need to be addressed and on solutions that ought to be considered. They shine it on stories that are heart-

Too much coffee

By **TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN**,
Owner & Editor
Tesha@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com



warming and uplifting. At other times, they shine it on topics that might raise the blood pressure of readers."

We've certainly got our share of blood-pressure-raising issues right here in the Twin Cities this year, and we're working to help you understand the varying perspectives around us with our coverage.

It's been a year of challenges.

In response to this, newspapers nationally have come together to support the Local Journalism Sustainability Act. Read more about it below in Dean Ridings' guest column, and then call your legislators to voice your support.

One of the hardest parts for me is hearing comments folks make disparaging the media, as though they've forgotten what a vital role we have in this great democratic experiment.

America needs journalists.

We simply won't exist without them. I've always appreciated newspaper coverage of issues the most, as I think you avoid some of the echo chamber found on cable, television and social media.

Here at the *Longfellow Nokomis Messenger*, we recognize that we need to pivot to keep up with the changes in our society, while also building upon what makes us strong.

In November, we launched a new, user-friendly website that we'd been working on for months. I'm pretty excited about it, and I hope you will be, too. We have more options for how we share the story with you, and it's easier from the back-end, which means we spend more time reporting then on tech issues.

We're also working on a great new Marketplace to showcase advertisers and connect local shoppers with local business, an important part of our mission. It fits in seamlessly with our What's Open page. If you have a business, I hope you'll take advantage of our free What's Open listings and let folks know as you pivot in response to the coronavirus pandemic. You can go in and make as many changes as you'd like, and there are ways to upgrade your listing at affordable rates.

We're adding paid obituaries to honor those we've lost. We're

also adding paid announcements such as birthdays, weddings, engagements and births to celebrate what we have. This is the stuff of our lives, what connects our community, and so it belongs on both our online and print pages.

With your engagement as readers and advertisers, we can build our community and pivot together.

Letters

Cub needs to open 46th St. entrance for accessibility

To the Editor:

When the new Cub first opened, there was a welcoming entrance at 46th St., complete with carts and a self check-out counter, with nearby staff to assist.

In the past months, Cub has kept that entrance closed - in stark defiance to a city variance agreement to keep the entrance accessible during business hours.

Council member Andrew Johnson's staff have, several times, sent zoning officers to Cub to remind managers of the legal agreement - with no positive results.

Cub managers state there are security issues: well, then, hire security.

I have many times witnessed shoppers who use walkers and wheelchairs struggle to get to the back parking lot entrance. The walk is long and inconvenient for any shopper who chooses not to drive.

There has been talk of Cub trying to negotiate the variance order by shortening the open hours at the entrance. I hope not.

Particularly at night, the walk to the back of the store is arduous - also hazardous; a dimly lit walkway with parked cars blocking the view. Cub also claims that the store is losing money. Yet, they installed a pharmacy, near the 46th St. entrance, in the past year.

Kate Nelson at Andrew Johnson's office has been very helpful in trying to get these issues resolved with Cub. Nov. 13 was a deadline regarding the order for Cub's compliance - I didn't see any change that day, however. Andrew Johnson's office number is 612-673-2212.

Cub, please open your 46th St. entrance again. There is a bus stop near the door there, lightrail a block away, and a bike rack nearby.

Please afford all of your customers a safe and convenient way to access your store. Winter is upon us... do the right thing.

**Sharon Sanford
Howe**

In a divided time, saving local journalism is a bipartisan cause

In a presidential election year and in the midst of the dual crises of the coronavirus pandemic and widespread economic misery, the divisions among Americans can seem to easily overwhelm the bonds that unite us.

That's why it's so heartening to see in recent weeks that Americans of all persuasions, and their political leaders on both sides of the aisle, are coalescing around a cause for a community pillar with a history of helping this nation navigate past buffeting winds of turmoil: Saving local journalism.

And make no mistake, local journalism - primarily the newspaper that brings news of its community from high school sports to mayoral campaigns - needs saving. Even before the pandemic lockdowns and before shuttering Main Street businesses sent advertising revenue off a cliff, local newspapers were operating on a financial knife edge. They are being whipsawed by Big Tech companies like Facebook and Google that suck up nearly all available ad dollars while paying no or minimal compensation for the local journalism content they display on platforms.

A joint survey of 20,000 Americans, which was conducted

by Gallup and the Knight Foundation just before the pandemic unleashed its wrath upon the nation, found Americans understand very well the consequences of civic life without robust local journalism.

The vast majority of Americans, more than eight in 10, say - in general - that the news media is "critical" or "very important" to democracy. More Americans report they are following local news closely. A follow-up question shows that these citizens are more likely to vote and to feel attached to their communities.

Most encouragingly, Americans still see the news media as part of the solution and not the problem: Nearly half, 49%, say the media could do "a great deal" to heal political divisions, while another 35% say journalism could contribute a "moderate amount" of healing.

Perhaps the best example of this growing recognition of the importance of local journalism - and the urgent need to support it in a time of its own crisis - is the bipartisan response to an important piece of legislation introduced this summer by U.S. Representatives Ann Kirkpatrick, a Democrat from Arizona, and Dan Newhouse, a Republican

Guest columnist

By **DEAN RIDINGS**,
CEO, America's
Newspapers



from Washington state.

The **Local Journalism Sustainability Act** has attracted 78 cosponsors. These Congressional representatives range all over the supposedly immutable political divide - from liberal representatives, including Democrat Eleanor Holmes Norton of Washington, D.C., to conservative Republican Vern Buchanan of Florida.

There's a lot to like about the Local Journalism Sustainability Act, which will cost taxpayers nothing while helping the three stakeholders of trusted, fair and accurate journalism: People who subscribe to newspapers or other local media; businesses that advertise in local newspapers; and newspapers that staff their newsrooms with journalists who cover the community.

The legislation provides a sun-setting five years of tax credits for subscriptions, advertising and newsroom payrolls.

Whether or not this legislation passes in this election-shortened Congressional session, it still stands as a way forward for bipartisan action on a crisis that affects not just newspapers, but all elements of a thriving community. That's why, if you don't see your Congressional representative in the list of cosponsors for H.R. 7640, please consider asking him or her to be part of the solution that safeguards your access to local news and information.

Your right to know - your access to accurate and fair local news - transcends any partisan divide.

On behalf of its approximately 1,500 newspaper and associate member companies, America's Newspapers is committed to explaining, defending and advancing the vital role of newspapers in democracy and civil life. We put an emphasis on educating the public on all the ways newspapers contribute to building a community identity and the success of local businesses. Learn more: www.newspapers.org

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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.

Owner & Editor:

Tesha M. Christensen, 612-345-9998
tesha@longfellownokomisessenger.com

Advertising & Marketing:

Denis Woulfe, 651-917-4183
denis@longfellownokomisessenger.com

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Tesha M. Christensen

Contributing Writers & Photographers:

Jane McClure, Jan Willms,
Jill Boogren, Margie O'Loughlin,
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Iric Nathanson

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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Takoda Institute helps diverse students improve their lives

Get no-cost training in fields that are hiring

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Know someone in your life who deserves a shot at a brighter tomorrow? The Takoda Institute can help. Its no-cost education, career coaching, and training programs for adults have improved the lives of thousands of Twin Cities.

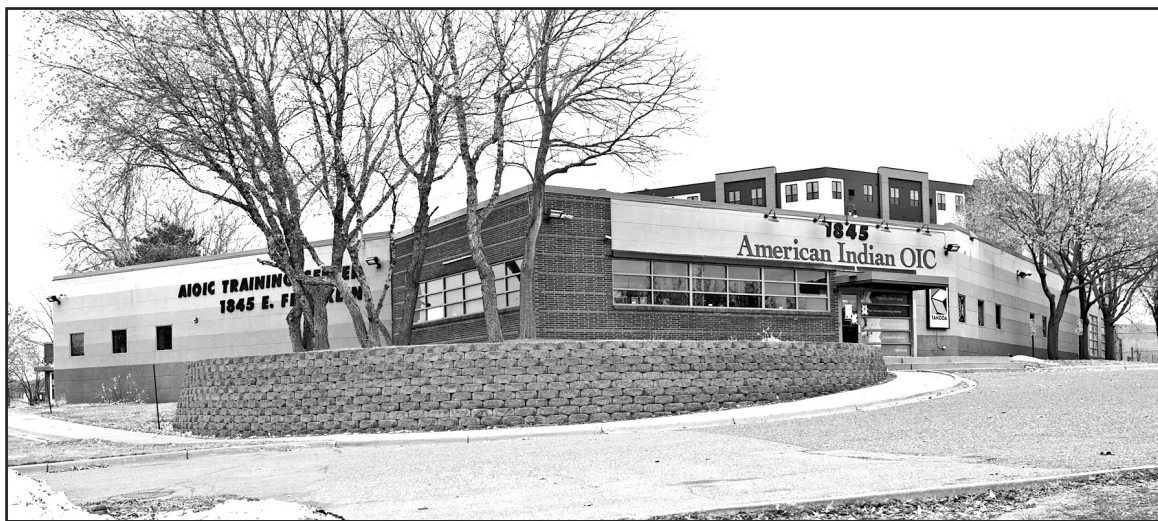
Today, the need is greater than ever.

Located on a rise of land at the southwest corner of Franklin and Cedar avenues, the Takoda Institute is the career pathways division of the American Indian OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Center) and has served the Twin Cities community for more than four decades.

Takoda Recruitment Coordinator Lyle H. Iron Moccasin grew up in the Longfellow neighborhood, where he attended Maria Sanford Junior High and Roosevelt Senior High schools. He said, "With everything that's happening in the world – now is the time to start planning for a better future."

So, what makes Takoda successful?

Its approach centers on individualized support. While it maintains strong roots in the Indigenous culture, its services are open to those of all cultural and



The Takoda Institute sits atop the busy intersection of Franklin and Cedar avenues. The name Takoda means "All are welcome" in the Dakota language. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

ethnic backgrounds. The name Takoda means "all are welcome" in Dakota, and broad student demographics reflect that inclusivity.

Each student treated as an individual

Iron Moccasin, an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation, has been with the organization for two decades. He said, "About half of our students have had some kind of involvement with the criminal justice system, and most come to us from our recruitment and outreach efforts."

Students credit Takoda's smaller class size, scholarships, staff encouragement, and range of support services as key bene-

fits. COVID-19 has complicated the delivery of those services and sent most of the trainings online, but there still is a high level of personal attention given to each student.

"We can't get you out of bed in the morning, and we can't get you to take a shower," Iron Moccasin said, "but we can work with you on just about everything else."

One person's story

Amy chose Takoda because the courses were short and offered at no-cost, but it was the support from fellow students and staff that kept her coming back.

"I probably wouldn't have been able to finish without the support I received," she said. "I was a mother, going to school

full time, and on public assistance – that made everything 10 times more difficult. We were together all the time here and just became family. The smaller class sizes helped a lot too because I was able to get one-on-one help from instructors."

Amy was in a car accident the day before she was scheduled to take her state board exams to become a Certified Nursing Assistant. When she was able to take the exam some time later, her Takoda instructor met her at the Red Cross when the test was over. They waited together while her results were tabulated.

After earning her certification, Amy went on to work at the Native American Community Clinic and eventually was hired as an instructor at Takoda. She

said, "I dedicated six months of my life to going to school, and it paid off."

Winter session enrollment open

Enrollment is now open for the next round of classes, which begin Jan. 4.

The Medical Office Program is a three-month career education program that trains students for entry-level positions in health-care administration. Upon graduation, students are prepared to work in patient registration, insurance verification, electronic health records and HIPAA certification.

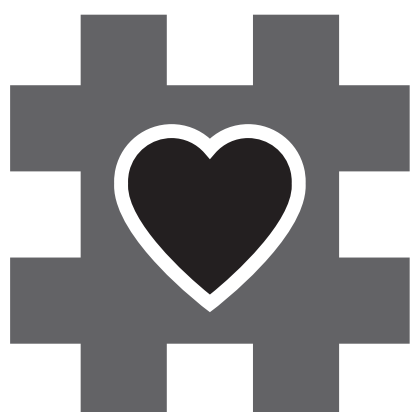
The Computer Support Program lasts 18 weeks. Students learn to maintain operating systems and networks. Upon graduation, students are qualified for entry-level technology careers such as computer support specialist or help desk technician.

Dates for other 2021 training programs, such as construction equipment operation, project management, and customer service will be added soon.

The challenges of 2020 won't disappear in January, but Takoda team members are optimistic about the impact their organization will continue to have in the New Year. "In 2021, we will continue to do what we've always done, which is providing career-focused skills in high-demand job areas," Iron Moccasin said. "Right now, everything is in motion and people need jobs."

The Takoda Institute is located at 1845 E. Franklin Ave. Information on training and services can be found at www.takoda.org.

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Taking care of the George Floyd Global Memorial

>> from 1

Answering a call

In the midst of the uprising, Austin's mother called her back home to the neighborhood where she grew up, a couple of blocks from 38th and Chicago, asking her to help - "because this is what you do." Austin flew in from Texas on May 29, witnessed the National Guard driving through the middle of the memorial the next day, and experienced the tanker driving through the protest on I-35W on May 31.

"That was the most traumatizing day of protesting ever, and I woke up the next morning... and I said 'You know what? I know how to tend to a memorial,'" said Austin. Having done so for a memorial for Black lives in Pasadena, Calif., Austin knows that it not only helps the movement, it is work that helps her heal. So on June 1, she began picking up trash and tidying up the site and has been dedicated to caring for the space since.

"My obligation is to pursue justice. That's my life's call," she said. "And so I kept tending to the memorial, because I saw no reason to stop."

Usually Austin discovers along with everyone else what's been placed at the memorial, even the larger installations like the fist, which just showed up in the middle of the street one day.

"That's part of the beauty of it being a living memorial... I get up at 6 a.m., I come when there's no one there, I'm like, 'Oh, that came today.'" She laughed, then pointed out that it isn't her job to patrol what can and can't be left there. Rather, it's to tend to whatever is left there. "If you leave it, know that it's gonna get taken care of."

Expressions of pain and hope

What some people consider art, Austin calls "creative expressions of pain and hope." The memorial is a place where people can be honest and real with the pain as well as the joy that they feel and experience, a place where kids and adults can be free.

She described an interaction with one mother, who had been looking all over for her son and eventually found him playing with Austin's nieces and nephews. The woman told her he doesn't usually play with other kids. They had tried therapy, coaching and social integration.

"She was like... 'Oh my gosh, this space has freed him to play in a way he has never felt free to do before,'" said Austin. "And so even in the midst of all the trauma, this place has organically provided a healing that I think is undeniable."

In October, a vehicle approached the south gate. A middle aged Black man was with his elderly mother, who lives a block away and wanted to see the memorial. It was her first time out during the pandemic, and she was unable to walk. So Austin walked in front of the car as the man drove into the space and pulled up right next to the fist. He pointed it out, asking his mother if she could see it. Likewise, the canopy covering the site where George Floyd died. She squinted, looking, and then asked, "Is that it? Is that black thing the tent?" When her son re-



Volunteers build a greenhouse to protect planters and other items from the elements. Double the requested donations came in, and volunteers built the greenhouse. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

plied yes, she said, "Okay. Okay. We can go now. Thank you."

This moved Austin to tears.

"To know that my elder had the opportunity to see the pulse of an international movement, the heartbeat of it, where it started... because she knows more than I do, the pain of lynching. She knows more than I do the struggle for Black liberation. She knows more than I do what it means to be Black in America, what it means to be a Black woman in America," she said. "So the privilege for me to be able to guide her to the moment, through her aged eyes to see what she could barely see, and feel satisfied, yes, she can go home now... This is how much it matters."

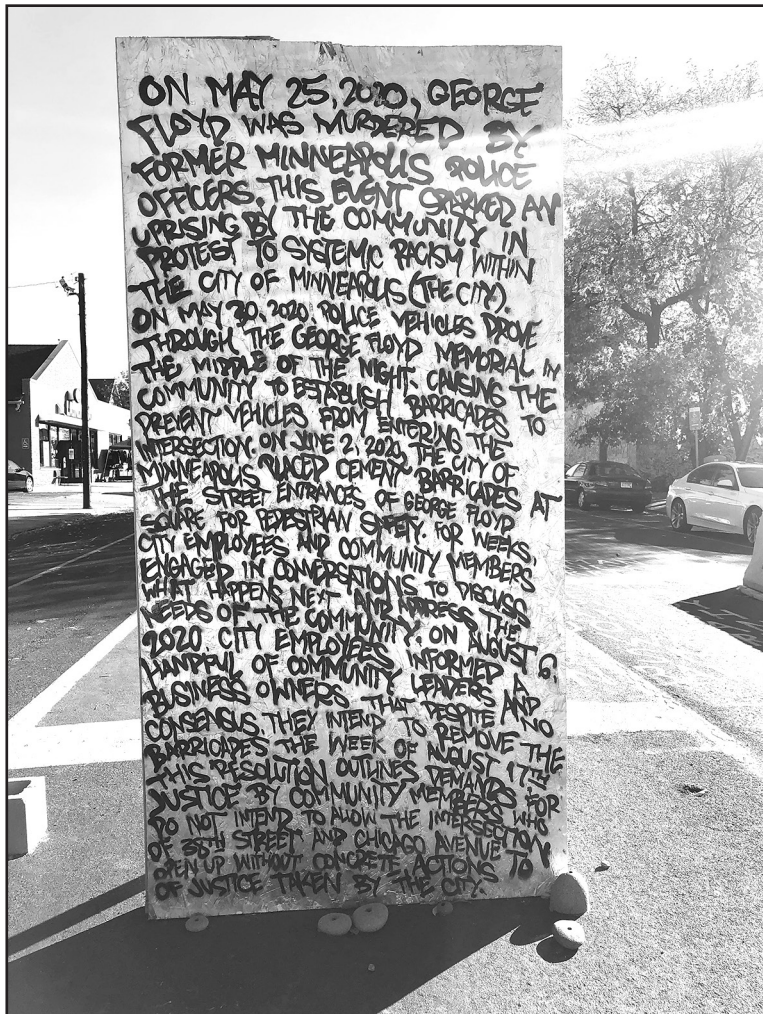
Tending to the tributes

There are two guiding principles for tending to the memorial. First, everything is someone's offering; nothing gets thrown away. Second, people are more sacred than the memorial itself.

Austin believes caretakers have a responsibility to tend to the space so people can experience it without distraction - not doing the work during the middle of the day or high peak hours. Their role, Austin described, is "to allow people just to feel that everything is as it needs to be for them in that moment and how they feel like they need to pay their respects." She mentioned seeing a gentleman who was walking his bike stop and pour water from his water bottle into a planter to water it, offer a blessing, and keep moving.

"Everyone is giving in their own way. And it's absolutely phenomenal," she said.

The routine for tending to the memorial is largely determined by the weather - rain, snow, high wind - but generally it is "show up, see who else shows up, assess the space, what needs to be done, do it." Volunteers take a section of the memorial, sweeping and picking up trash as needed. Flowers in plastic are unwrapped and returned to their place. Signs that have



Introduction to Resolution 001 - the community's 24 demands for justice before the streets are reopened. This has been submitted to the city, as well as a more recent update. View it only at bit.ly/georgefloydsquare-a. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

been blown off are reinforced or placed in a designated area to be taken to conservation.

"It's recognizing that the piece is too fragile to actually go without the piece being attended to," said Austin.

Pillsbury House Theatre has lent space for the memorial (though with more than 2,500 items, it is filling up quickly), and Midwest Art Conservation Center volunteers provide guidance for items brought indoors for conservation. This work is done assembly-line style, the biggest bulk of items being protest signs.

Volunteers first assess the status of the piece, whether it is wet, moldy, damaged or dirty. They then section it off for where it needs to go - onto blot paper for drying or to "damaged," "mold," "dirty" or "clean." Dirty gets clean (though not always, they recognize cleaning is irreversible), damaged gets reassessed for

how to get reassembled in a way that doesn't take away from its story.

There's also a station for complex items, such as a piece where a candle melted onto a different offering, where multiple stages of care may be taken. Items that were burned in a fire will reside in yet a different category, "burnt offerings."

A Global Memorial

About two months into caretaking, Austin reached out to George Floyd's family to ask how they wanted to move forward. This led to the formation of the George Floyd Global Memorial, a nonprofit organization that governs the pieces for the public. At its official launch on Oct. 14, George "Perry" Floyd's birthday, George Floyd's aunt, Angela Harrelson, and cousin, Paris Stevens, co-chairs for the organization, shared these words:

Seeking justice

As temperatures began to cool and the threat of snow loomed, caretakers of the George Floyd memorial put out a fundraising appeal to build a greenhouse that would protect planters and other items from the elements. With double the requested funding secured within 36 hours and a volunteer crew at the ready, the greenhouse was built.

This response speaks to the support of a broader community, for whom the memorial isn't about justice for George Floyd alone. The 168 names painted on the "Mourning Passage," which extends along Chicago Ave. north of 38th St., and the 100 names at the "Say Their Names" cemetery at 37th St. and Columbus Ave., speak to the urgency of the work that needs doing.

Community leaders and the city of Minneapolis have been in talks about what justice looks like at George Floyd Square. Residents there have endured layers of trauma, first with George Floyd's murder, then with the National Guard rolling through, among others. Using an analogy of breaking an arm and needing to reset the break before it can heal, the memorial's lead caretaker, Jeanelle Austin, said calls for healing are an empty call if they're not going to reset the break with justice.

"What responsibility does our city government have in actually providing restitution for the trauma they have caused?" asked Austin. If Daniel Michelson, who defaced a mural in August, is being held responsible and accountable for his graffiti action, it follows that the same expectation would apply to the city. "[Michelson] just defaced the image of George Floyd. How much more does the city have responsibility because they took the life of George Floyd?"

A gentleman walked up to the north barricade and asked why the street was closed, to which Austin replied, "Black liberation... 'til the city can figure out how to respond, to actually invest in the Black community, ain't no need for the streets to reopen. It was injustice that closed the streets. Justice is the only way the streets can reopen again."

Resolution 001, a list of 24 demands for justice the community submitted to the city in August, is available at bit.ly/georgefloydsquare-a. The community's latest response to city replies is at bit.ly/gfsresponsetocity-11-13-20. The city's letters are on its website.

"We would like to thank the community for the love and support you've shown Perry (George Floyd). It is clear that you are not only a community but family. The outpour of offerings that people leave at the memorial represent their condolences in the ongoing pursuit for justice. The offerings are genuine expressions of compassion, loyalty, and their commitment, which is priceless."

The memorial just began a "one million donors campaign," in which they're asking those interested to give one dollar (or more) to support and be a part of the memorial. Details are on their website at www.georgefloydglobalmemorial.org and on Facebook.

A place to come together: GEORGE FLOYD GLOBAL MEMORIAL



Offerings placed at the George Floyd memorial. Around the drawing in the middle reads "People of Color Deserve to Breathe." (Photo by Jill Boogren)

At right, offerings are pinned on a line across 38th St. this summer. Nothing gets thrown away that is placed at the memorial. The Pillsbury House Theater has lent space for memorial pieces, although with 2,500 items and counting, it is filling up fast. (Photo by Jill Boogren)



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Community Driven: *Delivering free food to those who need it most*

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Every Monday morning, Christopher Allison and Craig Drehmel meet at the Fresh Thyme grocery store parking lot in Southeast Minneapolis, where pallets of food are waiting to be loaded. Allison opens the back door of the van he drives, and they get to work. The two may have as many as nine other stops to make that morning, picking up surplus food from grocery stores and restaurants across the Twin Cities.

Minneapolis and St. Paul have a strong food rescue movement, led by big organizations like Second Harvest and North Country Food Alliance. A couple of years ago, a few friends came together from the local arts and food justice scenes. They started talking about a different kind of food share program, and came up with the idea for Community Driven.

The new non-profit organization has a holistic mission for healing injustice through food equality, educational opportunities, and access to the arts.

Allison has been the executive director of Community Driven since it started in May 2019. At first, their food share events were sporadic. But for the last six months, Allison, Drehmel, and others have rescued food and delivered it to food shelves and soup kitchens like clockwork – every Monday and Thursday.

Drehmel is the board chair for Community Driven, and has been an essential partner in growing the non-profit.

Allison said, "We tend to focus on smaller grocery stores and restaurants. We see this as our niche, because the larger food rescue organizations won't work with them."

Community Driven had one main revenue stream when they started: door-to-door canvassing.

Allison explained, "The accomplishments of our first year were possible because we talked to almost 7,000 people face-to-face. We raised donations, on average, of \$25 per household.



Board chair Craig Drehmel (above left and shown at right) and executive director Christopher Allison start their early morning food rescue rounds for Community Driven. (Photo above by Margie O'Loughlin, photo at right submitted)

"A monthly, sustaining donation to Community Driven can help divert food waste in the Twin Cities to food shelves and soup kitchens - and keep more people from going to bed hungry at night."

~ Christopher Allison

COVID-19 completely shut down our usual way of fundraising. I was afraid this year was going to be disastrous, but we have actually been able to distribute more healthy food each month than we did the month before. We moved about \$100,000 worth of food in our first fiscal year. We're on track to move about two and a half times that much in our second."

They aren't waiting for help – they're doing it themselves

Once food is collected from stores and restaurants, Commu-

nity Driven delivers it to their partner organizations which include Groveland Emergency Food Shelf at Plymouth Congregational Church, Keystone Community Services, Glendale Food Shelf, Merrick Family Services, and Loaves and Fishes.

The Twin Cities is experiencing the loss of many restaurants due to COVID-19. Allison said, "Of the restaurants we've been involved with, the closing of Muddy Waters in Uptown was the most memorable. So many of the people who worked there



were artists, and all of us at Community Driven are deeply involved in the local art scene. This was a restaurant that employed a lot of artists, and paid them well. The decision to close the restaurant was made very quickly.

"We spent two full days moving food out of there: bags of potatoes and onions, frozen meat and sauces, fresh fruit. We moved about \$15,000 worth of food.

"The incentive for businesses in this situation is that we're able to write them a receipt for tax purposes, and they know their food inventory hasn't gone

to waste."

Allison is quick to acknowledge that the scope of their food rescue work is dwarfed by the giants in the business. He said, "What makes us different is our long-term vision of building a more equitable society. We don't think food waste and food inequality exist in a vacuum. We believe that all issues of inequality are connected."

Making a difference

The long-term vision for Community Driven includes establishing an education fund that can provide grants and scholarships for college, trade school, arts training, and other non-traditional kinds of education.

Supporting community artists is another vital part of the Community Driven mission. Staff and board members recently collaborated with the Rogue Citizens Collective to paint murals on the Hook and Ladder music venue at Lake Street and Minnehaha Avenue.

Allison said, "We're also developing partnerships that would give access to rehearsal spaces, recording studios, booking and event promotion for musicians of all kinds. We're excited to launch new programs to advance and promote local artists. Funding for education and the arts is raised separately from our food rescue and food share programs."

Community Driven is currently rescuing and delivering food two days a week. They have enough contacts in the local food industry to go to three days a week, but not until their funding grows. To make a donation to the equity work of Community Driven, go to the donate tab at www.community-driven.org.

Allison concluded, "Wealth stratification is worse than it has ever been in this country. A monthly, sustaining donation to Community Driven can help divert food waste in the Twin Cities to food shelves and soup kitchens – and keep more people from going to bed hungry at night."

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New name for organization working to reverse wrongful convictions

GREAT NORTH INNOCENCE PROJECT

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

A bedrock principle of the American criminal justice system is that a person accused of a crime is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. According to Sara Jones, executive director of the Great North Innocence Project, "It doesn't always work out that way. Our American criminal justice system is far from perfect."

National statistics echo her thoughts. To exonerate means to reverse a conviction for a crime. Since 1989, more than 2,600 inmates of U.S. prisons have been exonerated. Between those inmates, nearly 24,000 years were lost while serving time in prison for crimes they did not commit.

In 1989, the first Innocence Project was started in New York City. That year marked a turning point when it became possible to use DNA testing as a tool for proving innocence. In the 31 years since, 69 other Innocence Projects have been established around the world.

The Minnesota Innocence Project was one of those. Established in 2001, this non-profit organization was recently renamed the Great North Innocence Project (GNIP). Its five staff members, along with law students from the University of Minnesota and Mitchell Hamline law schools, work to free the wrongfully convicted, and to prevent future wrongful convictions from happening. They represent inmates seeking exoneration who have been convicted of, or pled guilty to, crimes committed in Minnesota, South and North Dakota.

Sara Jones explained how the multifaceted work of GNIP is involved in building a better criminal justice system. She said, "Through school and community presentations, we inform the public about causes and consequences of wrongful convictions."

Justice Department grant received

The Great North Innocence Project received a two-year, \$300,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to create Minnesota's first-ever Conviction Review Unit (CRU). The CRU, which will operate as a partnership between the Minnesota Attorney General's Office and the Great North Innocence Project, will allow the state to review legal cases for people believed to be innocent. While there are dozens of CRUs across the country, Minnesota's will be just the fourth in the country that operates through an Attorney General's Office. To date, CRUs have helped initiate the exoneration of 444 people in the U.S.

"Prosecutors have a duty to ensure those convicted of crimes are, in fact, guilty of those crimes," said Attorney General Keith Ellison. "We strive for perfection, but we know our system is imperfect. This grant will allow us to make sure justice is served and, if not, to right those wrongs."

We provide attorneys, judges, and law enforcement officers with continuing education and expert information on wrongful convictions – and the best practices to prevent them. We teach law school courses on wrongful convictions, and offer experiential learning opportunities for the next generation of lawyers."

Shining light on injustices

She continued, "Each year, our team screens hundreds of requests for help. GNIP staff, law students, investigators, and volunteer attorneys spend thousands of hours analyzing cases. We litigate cases when newly discovered evidence is identifiable, and can provide clear, convincing proof of innocence."

GNIP will only take on cases when inmates have contacted them directly. Staff lawyers and legal directors make regular visits to prisons in the three-state area, leaving pamphlets, questionnaires, and posters to help spread the word about their organization. If an inmate meets the necessary

qualifications, GNIP legal services are provided free of charge.

At this time when the United States is deeply politically divided, Jones said, "We pride ourselves on being non-partisan at GNIP. Liberal and conservative individuals and organizations all have a stake in the work we do."

Advocates for change

Jones is a former staff attorney for the Minnesota Attorney General's office, a former president of Minnesota Women Lawyers, and a former lawyer in private practice. She grew up in a family steeped in talk of law and lawyering; her father helped create the public defender system in the state of Minnesota.

She said, "I feel like I've learned even more about the depth of systemic racism since the events of this summer. There is no question in my mind that systemic racism is embedded in our criminal justice system. When the criminal justice system makes big mistakes, the burden falls disproportionately on Peo-



Sara Jones, executive director of the recently renamed Great North Innocence Project. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

ple of Color. Everything I see in my work confirms this."

What can community members do to start addressing this wrong? Jones suggests leaning into the resource section on their website, for starters: www.great-northinnocenceproject.org.

Standouts include the following books:

- "Just Mercy" by Bryan Stevenson
- "Punching the Air" by Ili Zobo and Yusef Salaam (an exoneratee)

- "We are all Criminals" by Emily Baxter

- "The Sun does Shine" by Anthony Ray Hinton (an exoneratee)

For more information about speaking or teaching engagements, contact Sara Jones at sjones@gn-ip.org. The Great North Innocence Project is located at 229 19th Ave. S., in space donated by the University of Minnesota Law School.

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Together We Rise



Meena Natarajan, artistic and executive director at Pangea World Theater, speaks to creating a framework for re-development along E. Lake St. that has peace and justice in the center on Nov. 7. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

Demonstrators (at left) on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020 carry signs with raised fists calling for workers rights, fair wages and paid sick days. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

ON STREETS FOR DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE

>> from 1

In addition to demanding President Donald Trump honor the results of the election, demonstrators carried signs and cheered for workers' rights, living wages, affordable housing, rent control, climate solutions, an end to police violence, and justice for Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

Holding a sign featuring the Statue of Liberty that read "Count Every Vote," MN350 Vol-

unteer Joan Hughes said she was there for many reasons.

"Mainly that democracy counts, the voice of every person counts," said Hughes. "We really need to make some structural changes along racial, social, gender, climate lines. I want a chance to move forward on all that."

Speakers called for a seat at the table to chart a new course for the future.

"We don't want to go back to the normal that was before the pandemic of racism. What we re-

ally want is to build something different so that Indigenous people, African Americans, People of Color, immigrants can feel safe here," said Meena Natarajan, artist and executive director at Pangea World Theater. Natarajan is also part of Longfellow Rising, a collaboration of community groups and businesses impacted during the uprising who are part of developing the process of rebuilding the neighborhood immediately surrounding the site of the former Third Precinct

building. She called for creating a framework that could serve as a model for the country that has peace and justice and equity "at the very bones of what we build."

The People's Mandate

A few days prior on Nov. 4, the National Day of Protest took place in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, which ended in the largest mass arrest in Minnesota history.

The protest, organized a month in advance and co-host-

ed by an additional 34 labor, anti-war, racial and social justice organizations, called for every vote to be counted as well as for a people's mandate to address the triple pandemic of racism, COVID-19 and the recession.

Following a banner reading "All Power to the People: The Whole Damn System is Guilty as Hell," demonstrators chanted and marched up Cedar Ave. and onto I-94. As the group approached the next exit at Riverside, they were met by law enforcement officers in full tactical gear who – despite chants of "Let us through" – did not allow anyone to leave.

Instead, hundreds of officers closed in on the crowd from the back and sides, trapping them on the freeway, shutting down both directions of the interstate and

ON STREETS >> 9



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Community members from EMERGE wear vests that read Democracy Defender on Nov. 7. (Photo by Jill Boogren)



Masks, hand sanitizer, water and snacks are made available to attendees on Nov. 7. (Photo by Jill Boogren)



Gross of Communities United Against Police Brutality said people were demonstrating to demand democracy and a people's agenda - no matter who won the election. It was, she said, an opportunity for people to express their views.

"This is unacceptable in a democracy," said Gross, of the 646 people now facing charges. "We are not gonna tolerate this kind of police state conduct... People

were not rioting. They were not throwing anything. They were involved in just a peaceful disobedience."

According to a Nov. 6 social media post by State Rep. Aisha Gomez, many city and state representatives were on the scene or on the phone trying to get people released. Twenty-nine elected officials signed on to a letter sent to Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanna-



Left to right: Ulla Nilsen, director of MN350, Michele Bevis and Joan Hughes carry and distribute signs at the Together We Rise rally. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

gan that day expressing concern about the actions of the multi-jurisdictional operation under the leadership of the Minnesota State Patrol.

"The decisions made by your administration were the opposite of what we want in response to a protest: police and troopers escalated the situation rather than de-escalated it... these choices wasted public resources and added further strain to the fragile relationship between police and community members, especially in this part of South Minneapolis located just blocks from the 3rd Precinct."

Signees included all state representatives and senators in the area served by the *Messenger* as well as County Commissioner Angela Conley and Council Members Cam Gordon and Jeremy Schroeder. Council Member Andrew Johnson was unavailable the morning the letter was circulated but gave this comment

in a follow up conversation: "I agree with the sentiment of the letter and don't believe the law enforcement response was helpful or productive, but was instead unnecessarily punitive. They should have ordered protestors off the freeway, or better yet, blocked them from entering in the first place (as they've done before). I hope it's handled differently next time." His office had also participated in a call with others to Minnesota Department of Safety Commissioner John Harrington the previous morning, expressing their concerns.

In his Nov. 6 email newsletter to constituents, Council Member Schroeder wrote, "...Exercising our constitutional rights in these difficult times shouldn't be met by an over-reaction by law enforcement. Peaceful protesters should be given clear, repeated warnings to disperse before their detention. They should be given an exit path..."



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'We've been on our own' say local businesses

Neighborhood leaders meet with mayor and city staff about lack of communication and help

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

"We've been on our own trying to figure out two crises," Two Bettys owner Anna Tsantir told Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2020.

The first communication she got directly from the city was to instruct her to clean up the graffiti at the Two Bettys Refill Station, 4010 E. Lake St., or face a fine.

It's not the sort of communication she thought she'd get, or what she'd like to be receiving right now.

"People have had to take things into their own hands to keep functioning," stated Tsantir.

She's part of a group of businesses that have formed Longfellow Rising to figure out next steps.

"I just want to stress how lacking communications has been," Tsantir added.

Mayor Frey responded, "The confluence of these events has tested the city in ways never before. That's not an excuse, but the truth."

He added, "I hear the frustration."

The two were part of a video call between the mayor's office and representatives from neighborhood organizations including the Longfellow Community Council, Longfellow Business Association, Corcoran Neighborhood Association, Midtown Phillips Neighborhood Association, Seward Civic and Commerce Association, Standish Ericsson Neighborhood Association, and Longfellow Nokomis Messenger.

The organizations had sent

a letter to the city in August concerned about the lack of leadership, transparency and coordination by elected officials and government agencies, particularly at the city level (see September 2020 edition of the *Messenger*). Entities had initially expressed concern at a local meeting on July 23 (see August 2020 edition of the *Messenger*). It took until Nov. 17 to schedule the meeting with the mayor's office.

'It feels like we're on an island'

Longfellow Community Council Board Co-chair Marya Johnston-McIntosh asked city officials about coordination among elected officials. "It does not always appear that city elected officials are working openly or collaboratively with one another, which presents both challenges for making progress on key issues and makes it difficult for community organizations, residents and business to know what's happening - how can coordination among elected officials and communication to the public be improved? For example, we need to stay in touch with our city council members and mayor separately," she said.

"It feels like we're on an island," stated SENA resident Chris Romano, who works at Seward Redesign and serves on the board of the Latino Economic Development Center. "We're doing the heavy lifting by ourselves."

He asked how local groups and businesses can engage with the Minneapolis Forward Coal-

ition, including how to get more details on their work and how to channel resources to Southside communities.

"How can this city-wide effort work in a collaborative and complementary way with our more area-specific needs and efforts?" the group asked.

Shauen Pearce, the city's Economic Development and Inclusion Policy Director, said she would add members from the day's call to the Minneapolis Forward Coalition email list.

Romano has been part of local conversations about site acquisitions in downtown Longfellow where buildings were damaged and destroyed, such as maX it PAWN and Arby's. "We have a moment in time," he observed, to create affordable housing development and mixed-used developments that will benefit the neighborhood.

"There's great opportunity to acquire those sites and redevelop them that are more in line with the vision of our community," pointed out Romano. "What sort of resources can we expect to get from the city?"

He added, "We need resources to be able to step forward and acquire those properties. My concern is that if we don't act now, we're going to be looking at a return to how things were before, exactly some of the things that brought about the circumstances we are in."

Pearce remarked that funding for initiatives such as this is part of what the city asked the state for from day one.

Mayor Frey pointed out that the city's Commercial Property Development Fund could help with this, and it also could provide due-on-sale loans to businesses that need repair.

In mid-November, the city announced a Rebuild Resiliency Program to help those who are repairing and rebuilding to use sustainable and resilient options, such as LED light bulbs and solar power. It is anticipated that about 200 businesses will get grants of about \$40,000.

The city has invested \$2 million to help with rubble clean-up, Mayor Frey observed. "Why did we not allocate this in June or July? We wanted insurance companies to step up and do what I believe they are obligated to do."

What about Third Precinct?

Kim Jakus of the Longfellow Business Association asked about community engagement on future of policing and the Third Precinct. "We've seen the city launch its phased process for community engagement on the future of public safety - how will this engagement reach all communities, particularly those most impacted by the future of policing and those who do not trust a city-led process? What will the city process around the Third Precinct look like?"

Mayor Frey pointed out that the Third Precinct is currently housed at the convention center, and that is not a place they can be long-term, in part because of the cost of renting the site and

the "massive financial deficit" the city is facing right now. Nor is the convention center physically located in the third precinct. He stated that the city is working on a process around this, and the information will be disseminated once they know it themselves.

"It is not just a building anymore," observed Longfellow Community Council Executive Director Melanie Majors. She pointed out that the Third Precinct site is larger than the Longfellow neighborhood it sits in. "We can't take ownership of something that really belongs to everyone. It's a broader community issue," Majors said.

LBA Board member Dan Kennedy of Kennedy Law Group also stressed the importance of that central site at E. Lake St. and Minnehaha Ave., and he's been part of a group of stakeholders who have been talking about it. "These discussions are going forward because they are so important to us, Kennedy stated. "We can't wait a year."

Wayne Bugg of St. Vincent de Paul-Twin Cities (2939 12th Ave. S.), who serves on the Midtown Phillips board, noted that local organizations and businesses are coming together to manage the increased crime in the area. Previously, there were video feeds from local security cameras that went directly to the Third Precinct. He asked if those could be linked up again.

"Residents don't have the opportunity to sit on these groups and know what's going on," said Bugg. He suggested that the city have regular updates like the governor that are at the same time and same channel.

"I look forward to better communications in the future," said Tsantir. "Thank you all for your time!"



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Community Bulletin Board



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Rebuilding and Reopening

Welcome to the fifth edition of the ADX-Longfellow Business Association's **Community Bulletin Board**! With the financial support of Minneapolis-based tech and entertainment company ADX Labs, and the merchant community leadership of the Longfellow Business Association (LBA), the monthly **Community Bulletin Board** in the *Longfellow Nokomis Messenger* serves as a guide to local business and highlights the rebuilding and reopening efforts of our community.

Rebuild Longfellow:

A grassroots community guide to our neighborhood

REBUILD LONGFELLOW

Rebuild Longfellow is a grassroots team of Longfellow residents who partner with the Longfellow Business Association, Longfellow Community Council, and Seward Redesign to inform on practical ways to support local businesses.

Need assistance? Businesses can reach out to rebuildlongfellow@gmail.com to update their need requests.

What to help your community? Have a skill or a service to offer? Find a business to help at rebuildlongfellow.org.

Community Stories

1 Shifa Café & Eatery

Shifa Café is a family-run restaurant offering a special blend of Indian and Somali cuisine.

The ADX team met with Abdullahi Mohamed, co-owner of Shifa Café & Eatery, to learn more about their experience expanding their business amidst the pandemic.

ADX: Tell us about Shifa Café & Eatery. How did you get started?

Shifa: Before our current restaurant, Shifa Café & Eatery, this was coffee shop. But there weren't a lot of food options around, and people would come in looking for hot food. We recognized an opportunity, so we sought funding from family, friends, and the bank to open Shifa Café.

ADX: What were the major challenges you faced expanding your business during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Shifa: It took us more than eight months to open the business because of contractor and other delays. And just when we hoped open our doors, the pandemic hit with full force. At that point, we couldn't stop because we had already invested so much into this business.

ADX: Has business picked up?

Shifa: In the first few months, even with the pandemic, we were able to break even. But around the middle of August, people just stopped showing up. By then our community had other things to worry about. I think people were just afraid for their lives, truthfully.

ADX: How has the community helped?

Shifa: The Lake Street Council, where Shifa Café is located, introduced us to Kim and the LBA. Through them we were connected to other individuals and business that offered pro bono website design. Thanks to community support, we'll now have a new logo and color theme, a catchy slogan, and a user-friendly website where you can place online order. We'll be launching out new site and look soon! There are a lot of good people in this community.

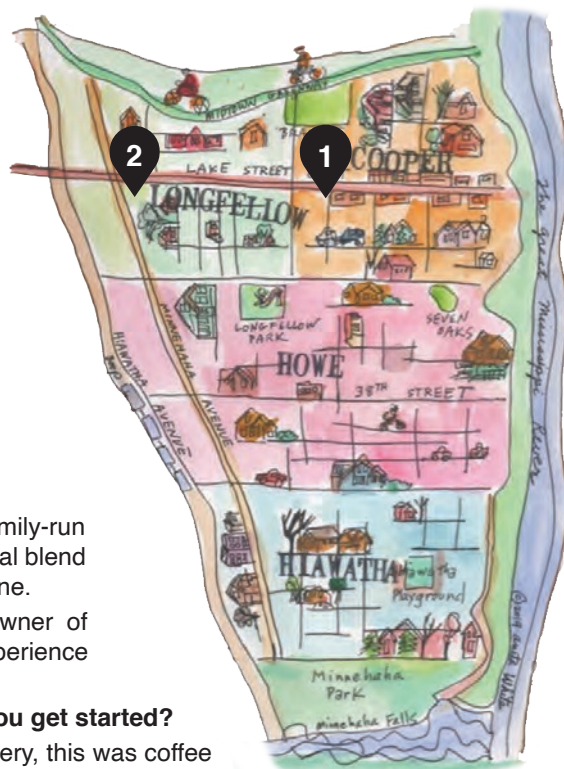
ADX: What is next for Shifa Café?

Shifa: We have some loyal customers who really like our food and keep coming back and we are so thankful for that. We need to grow, but we know everyone is struggling. We are trying to take it one step at a time and we are applying for grant and loans. We are trying everything we can.

ADX: Anything else you'd like the community to know about Shifa Café?

Shifa: At Shifa Café & Eatery, we provide a fusion of Indian and Somali entrées. Our dishes are healthy and delicious! Come check us out!

Please consider Shifa Café & Eatery the next time you want to try something unique and flavorful! <http://shifacafe.com/>



Anita White, Artist
<https://www.mnartists.org/anita-white>



Portraits from 6ft

Portraits from 6ft is a project of photographer Carina Lofgren that captures Minnesotans' everyday lives amid the COVID-19 crisis. During this time of uncertainty and social distance, this project brings people together by sharing unique stories from our community. The Longfellow Business Association and their partner organization Redesign are working with Carina to document Longfellow businesses impacted by the virus. Thanks to Redesign and the City of Minneapolis for funding this project through the Great Streets Neighborhood Business District Program.

See all the latest **Portraits from 6ft** at the LBA's website, www.longfellowbusinessassociation.org

2 The Lift

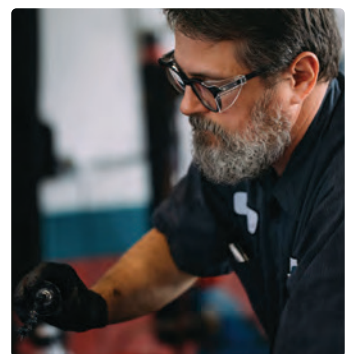
Cathy Heying runs the The Lift Garage, a nonprofit auto repair shop located at the Lake and Hiawatha intersection. The mission of The Lift is to move people out of poverty and homelessness by providing low-cost car repair. The demand is so great, that even before the Covid-19 pandemic, customers would often wait three months for an appointment.



Cathy Heying, Executive Director
of The Lift Garage

With the waiting room closed to the public, Cathy is the only office staff on site and in addition to her normal responsibilities as Executive Director, she serves as the go-between between techs and service writers who are working from home. With two technicians on leave of absence due to high-risk health concerns, she does the occasional repair as well.

Like many business owners these days, Cathy is overwhelmed and struggles to keep morale up, but focuses on the positive, stating, "I am so grateful for the team I have who are willing to come in and work hard every day under hard circumstances and risk. I'm so grateful we've found a way to keep people safe while also being here for our customers."



Want to support The Lift? Community support and donations help cover overhead costs and are needed more than ever. Visit <https://www.thelif Garage.org/> for more information or to make a donation today.

About ADX LABS

ADX Labs, Inc. (ADX) is a Minneapolis-headquartered global technology company focused on providing innovative products and services for individuals, home-based businesses, and the small to medium enterprise market. It is the core company in a global group of technology, entertainment and services brands and businesses. ADX independently funds the ADX Foundation, a registered non-profit philanthropic organization which has invested in children, communities, and social justice since 2013.

Tell Us About Your Local Business

Please contact LBA executive director Kim Jakus with your news, promotions, deals, operating hours or stories of recovery. We are seeking YOUR story for next month's Community Bulletin Board. Email kim@longfellowbusinessassociation.org

adx

TSA agent, Longfellow man dies of COVID-19

>> From 1

abusive relationships into the kind of relationship every woman deserves. He was honest, reliable, stable and steady. I never had to worry about a roof over our heads, food on the table, clothes, etc. He deeply loved our children, Amanda and Tony. And even more deeply our grandchildren.

"He was a teddybear of a man – he loved to hug, and he could hug the tired, the angry, the depressed, right out of you."

One of 9 TSA agents to die

When they first heard about COVID-19, they agreed that Terra would stop working as a PCA for her disabled sister because Terra has asthma and other co-morbidities. "Teddy was always so very healthy (rarely even caught a cold!)", so he decided to continue working," recalled Terra.

Teddy, age 67, had been working for the TSA at the Minneapolis/St. Paul airport since December 2007. He was part-time. Teddy was certified to conduct security screenings in the checkpoint areas at the airport, as well as TSA's checked baggage operation.

"At the beginning, they were not allowed to wear any PPE (personal protection equipment), but that changed pretty quickly," said Terra. "Also, at the beginning, he only worked one day every two weeks while the TSA was getting things figured out. Gradually they increased everyone's hours until they were



A Girard Christmas with parents Gerald "Teddy" and Terra, children Amanda and Tony (with his wife Lisa), and grandchildren Lorelei, 14, Greg, 16, Liam, 11, and Sonja, 8 (Photo submitted)

working their regular hours again.

"I believe Teddy got sick from his job at the airport. You can't social distance and still do your job. I am positive that people traveled even when infected. Some of them probably were asymptomatic and didn't know they were contagious," said Terra.

Teddy is one of nine TSA agents who have died. As of Nov. 20, 3,020 TSA employees have tested positive for COVID-19.

It started like a cold, got worse

At home, they wore masks, practiced socially distancing, washed their hands constantly, and sanitized surfaces with special attention to door knobs and counters.

But in September, during the week of Sept. 24, Teddy developed a cough and sore throat. Terra wasn't feeling well either,

but both assumed it was bronchitis, which she often gets, and thought he had a cold.

On Oct. 1, her symptoms worsened. She had a fever, headache and diarrhea (which lasted for eight days).

On Saturday, Oct. 3, his symptoms got worse. His fever rose to 101 degrees, he was achy all over, he had a headache and he suffered from diarrhea.

"That was when we started thinking it was probably COVID-19," said Terra. They scheduled a drive-through COVID-19 test for him on Tuesday, figuring if he tested positive she had it, too. "I again attempted to get him to go to the hospital, but he again refused. That night/early morning, he was severely sick. I insisted he go to the hospital. He wouldn't let me call 911, so I drove him to Abbott-Northwestern. They took him right back, and wouldn't let me stay, so I went home.

They did the quick COVID-19 test on him, and it was positive. So the next day, I went in for a COVID19 test, which was also positive."

She got calls from the hospital every 2-3 hours starting on Oct. 6. "They couldn't stabilize him," Terra remembered. They tried multiple ways of getting him more oxygen, including nose cannulas, C-pap, Bi-pap, and full face mask with forced 15 pounds pressure of oxygen.

"At that time, we were still able to communicate with him, but he had to leave the oxygen mask on," noted Terra. "He was in good spirits, making jokes. I realize now, that he was trying to not worry me. He must have been in pain, and lots of discomfort from coughing and being unable to catch a good breath. He worried about me the whole time. Every time the doctor or nurse called me, they asked me how I was doing, so they could tell him."

Then his organs started shutting down.

"I started getting pretty worried, but we both still believed he would recover," said Terra.

"He couldn't swallow, so they had to put in a feeding tube. His only kidney shut down, so



Gerald "Teddy" and Terra Girard on their wedding day and their 41st wedding anniversary on June 23, 2020.

they had him on continuous dialysis. His lungs were half full of fluid, which it couldn't clear. Then they put him on a ventilator, and had to put him into an induced coma (so that his body would tolerate the ventilator). From that time on, he was unable to communicate. This is when I started to get panicky. Then I got a call that during the switch onto the ventilator he had a heart attack. After a time on the ventilator, that was not working either, so they decided to put him on a machine called an ECMO. This machine would do the work of his heart, and of his lungs, so his body could fully rest.

"This is when the doctor first told me that he might not be able to recover."

Saying goodbye

As they put him on the ECMO, he had two heart attacks. They brought him back, but two days later Terra got the call she had been dreading. During the heart attacks, he had a series of brain strokes, which had destroyed most of his brain function. If Teddy did recover from COVID-19, he would remain in a vegetative state.

MAN DIES OF COVID-19 >> 15

OBITUARY

GERALD 'TEDDY' GIRARD

Gerald "Teddy" Girard, 67 died 9 days after being diagnosed with Covid-19 on Oct. 13, 2020 at Abbott-Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis, MN.

He was born August 31, 1953, the son of Isadore and Lena Girard.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded by a sister, Sharon.



He is survived by his wife, Terra; his daughter, Amanda and her daughter, Lorelei; son Tony (Moore) Girard and his wife, Lisa (Moore) Girard, and their three children, Greg, Liam and Sonja; his sisters Mary, Deb and Vicki, and his brother Don; several sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law, and many nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews. Teddy was beloved by all, and will be greatly missed.

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- 5) Offer to help with yard chores, or feed and exercise the pets.
- 6) Write notes of encouragement and support, and help with "thank you" notes.
- 7) Offer to drive or accompany him/her to the cemetery regularly.
- 8) Make a weekly run to the grocery store, laundry or cleaners.
- 9) Anticipate difficult periods such as birthday, anniversaries and holidays.
- 10) Always mention the deceased by name and encourage reminiscing.

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Man dies of COVID-19 >> 14

She was finally allowed to see him to say goodbye.

"I held his hand, stroked his arm and his head, and told him how much I loved him. I told him not to worry about me, that I would be okay," said Terra, who remains grateful they allowed her this rare "compassionate" visit. In a while, the doctor came in to talk to me. She said they couldn't do CPR on him again, due to his brain damage, and that it was time for me to make a decision about what to do. She was very compassionate - they all were - and gave me as much time as I needed. So they let me go into a conference room, where I was able to contact Teddy's siblings, our children and my sister. I told them each of what was happening, and they all agreed I should let him go.

"So I went back to the room and told them to let him go. Then the procedure was to have another doctor come and make sure his brain was not functioning before they took the ECMO off of him. I got to hold his hand and talk to him as this was all happening.

"That was probably the hardest thing I've ever had to do."

Depressed, lonely – and angry

"Life without the love of my life is kind of like existing in a tunnel," said Terra. "I know I have to get through the tunnel to get back home, but I'm extremely resistant because I know it will be incredibly painful and heart-breaking.

"Sometimes a random thought of Teddy will feel like a cannon ball just shot through my heart, and I can't breathe.

"I'm learning every day of all the ways he took such great care of me. Like putting gas in my car, taking out the garbage, paying the bills, etc. We had a very reciprocal relationship and took care of each other.

"I miss him every day."

She's depressed and lonely – and angry.

'Wear the mask'

"I feel strongly that our 'leadership' let us down, when it comes to COVID-19. I believe with all my heart that my husband did not have to catch it and die," said Terra.

She's been sharing her story to remind people why it is important to wear masks and stay home.

"I'm shocked and disgusted by how many people I still out and about not wearing masks. Why? Do they not read papers, watch TV or Google anything? COVID-19 is infecting and killing people all over the world, and especially in the U.S.

"Do you notice the old man standing within your sphere? How about the 25-year-old woman? Or the parents with their child? Any of those people could catch COVID-19 from you. And many others could get infected exponentially through you to others around you. Many will die. Many more will suffer permanent damage to their organs. Many will be asymptomatic and spread it to their family and/or friends.

"Maybe you think it's not worth the hassle to wear a mask, because it's not 100% effective. But think of it this way: Like condoms, masks are not 100% effective. But you use them anyway, for protection.

"Wear the mask."



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What categories should the newspaper add? Let us know.

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Hiawatha Golf Course master plan heading to board of commissioners for approval after public comments

The Hiawatha Golf Course master plan is heading to the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board of Commissioners for review and a public hearing in January 2021.

The comment period for the draft master plan closed on Sept. 15, and staff is reviewing submitted comments and preparing for a public hearing and presentation to the planning committee.

The Draft Hiawatha Golf Course Area Master Plan is a written and graphic document intended to guide capital improvements in the area over the next 20-30 years. The master plan document is a direct reflection of the input provided by the appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which met 7 times between March 2018 and July 2019, and additional community engagement.

According to MPRB:

The plan pushes toward a balance of golf and other activities set in a landscape guided by water management. It necessarily bends toward ecology in its aspirations, recognizing that restoration of natural processes – which were significantly altered by Wirth's dredging of Rice Lake – are a goal greater than those supporting human activities on the site. With ecology as the yardstick, choices are made that err on preservation, conservation, and restoration rather than expanded disturbance and new development. While many uses are described, its restoration of sustainable water patterns and recreation balanced in a new ecologi-



The master plan for the Hiawatha Golf Course changes it to a 9-hole course to allow for a different way of managing water at the site. (Archive photo)

cally-driven landscape that forms the higher order goals inherent in the plan.

With the vision and guiding principles, the CAC's prioritized design element recommendation, focus-session input, community survey input, and input from our collaborating partners, the recommended Hiawatha Golf Course Area Master Plan includes:

- Relocating an improved and reduced pumping strategy at the site to protect nearby low basements from groundwater intrusion to the same degree they are protected today.
- Re-utilizing pumped water for a variety of potential uses (e.g. irrigation, snow making, facility heating/cooling).
- Improving water management at the site while providing opportunities to address flooding in the watershed to the north.
- Improving water quality in Lake Hiawatha and Minnehaha Creek.
- Creating a destination golf facility focused on learning the sport and increasing opportunities for new players, including a

9-hole golf course, driving range, and practice facilities.

- Celebrating the history of Black golfers at the course and supporting and providing an introduction to golf for people of color.

- Expanding access to the site with bicycle and pedestrian trails, a re-envisioned clubhouse area that welcomes the larger community, and other new community gathering spaces.

- Restoring ecological function through the creation of wetlands, riparian and shoreline restorations, upland prairie restoration, and protecting existing wildlife habitat.

- Creating a south Minneapolis winter recreation destination complementary to north Minneapolis's Theodore Wirth Regional Park.

- Developing nine experiences that tell the cultural and natural history through permanent elements and infrastructure, as well as through art, performance, community events, and ephemeral experiences. Experiences include:

- Stormwater Terrace
- Pumping as a Resource
- All are Welcome
- A Place to Learn
- Island Respite
- Telling our Story
- A Connection to Water
- Urban Nature
- Celebrating Minnehaha Creek

View the plan at the Hiawatha Golf Course Property Master Plan project page on the MPRB web site.

Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan approved

The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan has been approved by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) of Commissioners.

The Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan is a written and graphic document intended to guide capital improvements in the regional trail area over the next 20-30 years.

The master plan document is a direct reflection of the recommendations of an appointed Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which met 12 times between June 2018 and February 2020. It was created collaboratively by the MPRB, the

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and the city of Minneapolis, and will align work done in the corridor by all three agencies.

The Board of Commissioners made one modification to the final plan, to include protected bikeways on Minnehaha Parkway from near the Nokomis Recreation Center to Minnehaha Regional Park. A portion of this area has temporary bike lanes today as part of a trail detour. The master plan would make these permanent and extend them farther west.

Moving forward, the plan will be sent to Met Council for its approval, then the plan will be

used to determine park improvements and management near Minnehaha Creek in Minneapolis over the next 20-30 years.

Within months, the MPRB will begin to reengage with the community to determine the first projects implemented in the plan. Approximately \$1.25 million is available now for improvements in the corridor. Project selection and design will involve the community.

Visit the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan project page and enter your email into the "Subscribe to Email Updates" box to stay updated.

Draft of new MPRB 'Parks for All' opens for public comment

Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) published a draft of Parks for All, the MPRB 2021 Comprehensive Plan that was fashioned during a two-year process.

Parks for All is a new comprehensive plan will set MPRB priorities and policy direction for the next decade. Minneapolis community members, park users, MPRB staff and partners are encouraged to review the plan and send feedback during a 70-day public comment period that ends Monday, Jan. 18, 2021.

"The MPRB thanks everyone who worked so hard to develop these policy ideas for the next 10 years of Minneapolis park

and recreation system, including workgroup members and forum participants, the Youth Design Team, MPRB commissioners and staff, and the Parks for All Community Advisory Committee," said MPRB representatives.

Following the public comment period, the draft plan will be revised based on public input and presented to MPRB Commissioners for review and approval.

The plan will provide guidance in developing policy, establishing or changing programs and services, setting the annual MPRB budget and creating park improvements over the next decade.

It is a tool for communicat-

ing to MPRB staff, commissioners and the general public about what the MPRB does and it values.

It will build on what works now while identifying gaps in programs, services and strategies that need to be filled in the next decade. Parks for All focuses on the park system as a whole, not specific recommendations for individual parks.

It will build from master plans, other policies and activity plans, strategic directions and the community input gained during the last two years of engagement across the system, all of which incorporate more specific recommendations.

MARKETPLACE

Want ads must be received by the Messenger by Dec. 11 for the Dec. 29 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@longfellownokomisemessenger.com; or call 651-917-4183.

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Free food Dec. 16 at 5734 Sander Dr.

Please join NENA on Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2020, for the final free food and supply distribution. We offer a wide selection of fresh produce, dairy, meat, staples, clean supplies, and personal care items. The site is located at 5734 Sander Dr. from 2:30-3:30 p.m. We also need volunteers for pre-packing and at the event. All are welcome!

NENA is now offering limited office drop-in times for food and supply pick-up. Please call or text Karla Arredondo, NENA community organizer at (612) 293-9683 to schedule a pick-up

time. Please wear a mask and practice social distancing.

Since July, NENA has served over 1,500 people and distributed more than 200,000 pounds of food! NENA hopes to continue this critical community program in 2021 dependent on COVID-19 grants available after the first year.

The Minnehaha Food Shelf is an additional resource open on Tuesdays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, located at 3701 E. 50th Street. More info at www.minnehaha.org/foodshelf

Nokomis East Neighborhood Association

By BECKY TIMM,
Executive Director
becky.timm@nokomiseast.org



member businesses are hosting this first annual event featuring a scavenger hunt, hidden medallion, and the #shopNokomis hashtag to promote your favorite area businesses and initiatives on Instagram!

There are three ways to win more than \$500 in prizes from your favorite area businesses! Get the details on our website and stay tuned for updates by visiting www.nokomiseastba.com/nokomis-treasures

Nokomis Treasures

It may be cold outside, but things are heating up in Nokomis East!

The Nokomis East Business Association (NEBA) and its

Thank You for Your Generosity

2020 has been a challenging year and Nokomis East has demonstrated its generous spirit time and again! Thank you for

supporting NENA's fundraising campaigns for the Minnehaha Food Shelf, \$5,000 for families, and now NENA's Nokomis East Solidarity Fund. Thank you to all of the volunteers for our Nokomis East Food Distributions. And thank you for the unrecognized but appreciated support for your neighbors by running errands, clearing snow, and smiles through masks.

As we look forward to a new year, please consider donating to NENA at www.nokomiseast.org/donate/ to help us to continue to help our community,

Sign up for NENA News

Your guide to news, events, and resources! Get your neighborhood news delivered to your inbox every other Thursday. Sign up today at www.nokomiseast.org. Once you sign up, you'll receive updates on news and happenings for your neighborhood.

Upcoming meetings and events:

12/1/20: NENA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee at 6:30 p.m., Via Zoom

12/16/20: NENA Pop-Up Food Distribution at 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

12/17/20: NENA Green Initiatives Committee at 6:30 p.m., Via Zoom

12/23/2020: NENA Board of Directors Meeting at 6:30 p.m., Via Zoom

Phone: (612) 293-9683

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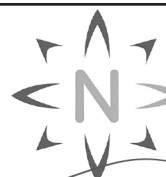
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In Brief

NAMI honors

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) presented Intermediate District 287 Superintendent Sandy Lewandowski with its Educator of the Year Award at its Annual Conference, held online on Nov. 14. The award recognizes an educator who supports children with mental illnesses to succeed in school, and includes families at the table.

Intermediate District 287 serves students with the highest needs for 11 member school districts in Hennepin County. All the students require special education and alternative learning programs; many have experienced trauma and a large percentage struggle with their mental health. Many have been unsuccessful in school and in danger of becoming part of what is called the school to prison pipeline.

NAMI Minnesota's executive director Sue Abderholden remarked, "Sandy has testified at the legislature for specialized funding to provide a mental health professional in the classroom. She led her district to use alternatives to school resource officers by developing strong, trusting relationships with students and their families and by hiring staff who specialize in mental health, de-escalation, restorative justice and safe physical interventions. In the pilot school, arrests went from 65 to 12 in the first year. Now, across all four of its school buildings, the district averages just five arrests per year."

Correction

In the November Messenger story about 612 MASH, Kia Bible was incorrectly titled a medic. Bible is a cofounder of 612 MASH.

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Letting go to live blissfully

Is it essential? Do you love it?

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Helping people let go of things to focus on a new season of life is what Blissworks is all about.

Wendy Wolff launched Blissworks, Beautiful Living in Simplified Spaces, in 2019. The company merges the 15 years she spent working as a Minneapolis Public School counselor with her personal transition into a minimalist.

"Most of my clients are age 55+ who are moving from a single family home where maybe they raised kids and are ready to live in a smaller space where they hope to retire and/or reduce their responsibilities of maintaining a home," observed Wolff, who lived in South Minneapolis for 20 years and recently moved to Northeast Minneapolis. "Some of my clients are busy professionals who are moving due to a work shift or promotion and do not have time to organize their new space, but most of my clients are just looking for a smaller space that allows them to focus their energy on a new season of life."

What exactly do you do for your clients?

What I do is help people who are in the midst of a move – particularly those who are downsizing into a smaller living space – decide what they want to take with them into their new space and what they want to let go of to create a living space that is "simply beautiful."

Realtors will tell you sellers will need to remove about 60% of the furniture and decor in their home to stage it effectively to sell quickly. I help my clients "stage" their home only with what they want to move with them.

We create the simplified and beautiful space they want in their new home as we stage the home they are selling.

By the time the moving trucks arrive, the decisions have been made and nothing goes into the new home unless it was intentionally invited.

My background in counseling has been particularly useful

as many of my clients have emotional attachments to things that no longer serve them. Things they used to do that they no longer can do. Things that were connected to raising children or managing a family home. Things connected to a deceased partner. Lots of emotion, loss, grief and sometimes even anger that life did not play out the way they had expected or imagined.

For instance, one of my clients used to love sewing. She sewed clothes for her children and her grandchildren. She had five sewing machines. But she no longer sewed due to arthritis. Every time she looked at her sewing machines, she grieved. She was angry. She became bitter that this gift she used to have was no longer accessible to her because of the way her body had aged.

It was time to let go of the sewing machines, and find another way to create beautiful things for the people she loved.

I walk with my clients through these decisions, I ask hard questions, I imagine their new space with them, and I take care of the logistics of donating, gifting and throwing things that no longer serve a purpose.

I love hearing my clients' stories and learning about their past and present as we envision their future.

How do you help downsize and declutter?

I truly believe our living space impacts our mental and emotional wellbeing. I help my clients design their space with intention. The most significant way I help my clients who are downsizing, moving or just decluttering their space is by asking the right questions.

What do you love? What do you need? What do you want your space to communicate to others? What are your favorite spaces in your current home? How can we create more of that in your new home? What do you need more of? What do you want less of? What is MOST important to you as you move into this new season of life? What things seem



When Wendy Wolff and her family returned from a year working at the Holden retreat center, she found herself helping friends and family move. "People wanted to hear about why we left, what it was like, and how we changed," recalled Wolff. "They listened as I told them that the most significant shift we made as a result of our time at Holden was thinking more intentionally about what we brought into our home and what we let go of by donating, gifting or purging anything we did not love or need." She quit her job working for Minneapolis Public Schools as a therapist, and Blissworks was born. (Photo submitted)

to keep you stuck in old patterns?

How does your work help people as they move through different phases of life?

I believe that consumerism in our society has led many of us to focus more on quantity of what we have versus quality and meaning and function. Some of the things we hold in our space actually keep us from being the people we want to be in the present. Helping people make these critical decisions with compassion and asking the right questions to help them let go of what is no longer necessary or life giving is what motivates me to do the work I love.

What tips do you offer folks?

The tips I offer folks really vary according to the needs of my client. The two questions I ask as we go through their spaces are: Is it essential? Do you love it?

Some of my clients are reducing their square footage by 70% and they just need to get rid of things. Others just desire a change so it's as easy as rearranging furniture to utilize their space

more efficiently and accentuate the natural beauty of their home.

How do you help folks who need to clean out a parent's home?

Many of my clients are helping their aging parents move. I serve as a mediator, helping families make the hard decisions that are often involved in a move, particularly when people are downsizing.

Sometimes family members disagree about what is essential or necessary so I facilitate healthy conversations to move them through their decision making process. I listen to the opinions of everyone involved, and create a plan that respects and honors everyone. As my clients wrestle with these questions, we create a moving plan that allows them to design a living space they love.

The greatest reward is when my client simplifies and beautifies their home to sell quickly, and keeps just the right things to create a new home they love with the things that bring them joy in their current season of life.

A personal shift

Each Saturday morning when she was a kid, Wendy Wolff's mom would direct her daughters to clean their rooms. Her mom stressed that everything had its own place.

Fast forward 30 years. Wendy is a busy wife and mom of three adopted children with two dogs who found herself encouraging her kids to clean their rooms. "I believe that making your bed does improve our mental well being," she remarked.

Four years ago, Wendy and her husband realized they were both burnt out. They decided to take a sabbatical year and work at retreat center in the Cascade Mountains of central Washington. Before they left, they prepared their own house for renters. They had to decide what to bring with, what to store and what to purge.

"This was an incredibly overwhelming process, but in hindsight, one of the most healing and clarifying things we have ever done," observed Wolff. "We came home to less. We came home to only what we needed. We came home to what we valued and what was functional. We had purged everything we did not want or need."

While at the retreat center, part of Wolff's job was to clean out spaces. They all began doing things differently. They drove less. They did less. They pledged to reduce their carbon footprint as they sorted through their garbage, recycled and composted. They lived in community.

"I began to notice we were calmer, and our mental and emotional wellness was improving. I came home a year later as a minimalist," said Wolff.

In 2019, Wolff enrolled in the 18-week Small Business Essential program offered by WomenVenture Small Business Development Center. The teachers and classmates inspired her to launch her business and identify a target market.

"They took my passion and helped me create an action plan," said Wolff.

She is currently earning a certificate in staging and home redesign through the Real Estate Staging Association (RESA) to further hone her skills.

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