

# SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • DECEMBER 2, 2021 • VOL. 1 • NO. 1

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## WILL E LINE DERAILED LINDEN HILLS?



### Business owners worry about proposed removal of mature trees, parking and benches

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

Linden Hills businesses are concerned about a Metro Transit plan to reduce street parking and remove eight mature trees at 43rd and Upton for the E Line, which will run 13.3 miles between Southdale and the University of Minnesota.

"The business district is no more than a block and a half long in either direction, and the removal of these trees and parking

The Linden Hills business district will be altered on both the southwest and northeast sides of the Upton and West 43rd intersection, according to a Metro Transit plan for the E Line BRT. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

spaces to make way for large, raised concrete platforms with bus enclosures and steel features will fundamentally alter the sweet little business community here that helps make Linden Hills so special," remarked New Guild owner Jen Bellefleur. "These changes will also take up the vast majority of frontage on Upton itself in the business district."

One Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station will be located directly in front of New Guild (4300 Upton) and Heartfelt. Four trees, multiple park benches and four park-

ing spaces will be removed on the southwest side of the intersection there. Another four trees, four parking spaces and park benches will be removed on the northeast side of the street in front of Linden Hills Dentistry.

Forty business and property owners and Southwest Business Association President Matt Perry signed a letter to Metro Transit and Minneapolis Ward 13 Council Member Linea Palmisano expressing their concern about the E Line station plan for Linden Hills. ▶ 2

Who is behind the Southwest Connector?

## BEGINNING A NEWSPAPER

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

Welcome, readers of the new *Southwest Connector*. We're glad you've picked up a copy of our inaugural edition. It's an exciting time for neighborhood journalism. Thanks for coming along this journey with us.



You're probably wondering: Who are we?

*The Southwest Connector 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.*

That's the short of it, the mission that we will print each month on page four as a reminder to ourselves and a promise to our readers.

Like other "zebra" companies, we believe in cooperation versus competition, sharing versus hoarding, mutualism versus parasitism. We are striving to be sustainable businesses. Journalism is one of the valuable institutions, along with education, healthcare, government – or the 'third sector' of nonprofits and social enterprises – that our democracy rests upon. Zebra companies are often started by women and other underrepresented founders, and many are ▶ 6

## THEY TOOK HER CHILDREN AWAY

ACCUSED OF 'PARENTAL ALIENATION,' MOTHER SEPARATED FROM DAUGHTERS



VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

When Starr Jones\* tells her story, people can't believe this is happening in Minnesota.

They can't believe that the dad was investigated by child protection when their first daughter was an infant for harming her, but ended up with sole legal and physical custody. They can't believe the girls were taken away when Starr has never laid a hand on either girl, been in alcohol or drug treatment, or served time in jail.

They can't believe that the courts hav-

en't factored in the wishes of the girls, who are now teenagers. Their desire to live with their mom has been ignored despite multiple suicidal attempts by both girls, eating disorders, running away from their dad, and confinement to long-term mental treatment facilities alongside depression, anxiety and other signs of abuse and trauma.

They can't believe that dad would rather send the girls away than let them live with their mom, nor that a family court judge has done the same.

They can't believe a primary caregiver lost physical and legal custody of her daughters and could only see them during supervised visits.

They can't believe that dad blames

mom for what is happening, and has returned to court multiple times to punish her by restricting contact with her children.

They can't believe what is happening in family courtrooms, and want to believe that she must have done something wrong to deserve this.

Starr remembers being shocked, too. But now she's too traumatized to even cry when she tells the story of what happened to her family and how her ex-boyfriend's accusations of "parental alienation" led to this.

Instead, like many survivors, her voice is flat when she talks about the abuse during her relationship, and the post-separation abuse since. ▶ 10

TIME TO BUILD BRIDGES WITH THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

▶ 4



1 **E LINE**

“Please understand that we support improved public transportation, including the creation of BRT; it is the proposed route and the proposed placement of these stops to which we object,” they said in the letter.

Metro Transit representatives did not respond to a request for comment.

The METRO E Line will be the fifth arterial Bus Rapid Transit line in the region. It will substantially replace parts of Route 6. The E Line will run every 10 minutes for most of the day with about 31 stations located every one-third to one-half mile.

It will travel along 4th Street and University Avenue, through downtown and Uptown on Hennepin Avenue to Southdale Transit Center in Edina via 44th Street and France Avenue. Construction is planned for 2024-2025, and it will begin operating in 2025, one year later than initially projected.

The 12-mile Route 6 bus will be simplified to travel from downtown Minneapolis to Minnesota Drive and France Avenue primarily via Hennepin Avenue and Xerxes Avenue, running every 20 minutes most of the day.

According to Metro Transit, pre-pandemic, buses carried approximately 45% of people traveling by vehicle on Hennepin Ave., but made up just 3% of the motorized traffic. More than 8,000 rides were taken on Route 6 each weekday in 2019. Route 6 ridership has remained strong, even during the pandemic.

The goal of the E Line is to make service approximately 20% faster than current travel time by stopping less often, allowing customers to board faster, and stopping at fewer red lights. Similar travel time improvements have been achieved on the A line and C Line.

BRT station platforms are larger and feature shelters with lights and heaters, benches, ticket machines and fare card validators, and trash/recycling bins.

E Line buses don't have fareboxes, but instead customers purchase a ticket or tap a Go-To Card at the station, just like light rail.

The E Line will use 60-foot “articulated” buses with wider aisles, more seating capacity, and additional doors so more people can get on and off easily.

The line will serve an estimated 13,400 – 14,200 riders by 2040, according to a corridor study done by Kimley-Horn and Associates.

The Metropolitan Council approved the recommended E Line alignment in January 2020.



The preliminary estimated cost of the project is \$60 million, which will be paid through a mix of federal, state, and Metropolitan Council funds.

**ARE THERE BETTER LOCATIONS?**

Linden Hills business owners have suggested that the bus stops be placed on the edges of the main business area versus in the center.

“It is clear to all of us that these transit stations would be more appropriate outside of rather than in the center of this tiny, 100-year-old historic shopping district that defines this community,” they stated in their letter.

They also wonder if there is a better route between Southdale and downtown Minneapolis than through this Linden Hills business district.

“If the goal of the Metro BRT is to efficiently move riders from Uptown to more southerly locations on France Avenue, wouldn't it make more sense for the buses to drive west on 39th Street from Sheridan directly to France, and then turn left to

go south on France toward 44th Street and beyond? Using that route, these large buses would encounter fewer stop signs, fewer traffic lights, less congestion, and they would not be forced to navigate through the narrow pedestrian walkway at 44th and Beard; nor stopped at the light in front of the school at 44th and Vincent. The #6 bus is still scheduled to travel from Southdale down Xerxes to Upton and 44th, thus continuing to serve bus riders in the business node. Was this route for the BRT line ever considered? It seems sensible and worth investigating.”

**ALL BUSINESSES OPPOSED**

Here are additional comments from the letter 40 businesses signed:

*Linden Hills' small commercial corridor, centered at Upton Avenue and 43rd Street, was constructed along the Como-Harriet streetcar line in the 1920s and today remains home to many small and local shops, services, and restaurants. On Upton Avenue, from 43rd Street to 44th, the street is uniformly*

**WHAT IS THE E LINE?**

The METRO E Line is a planned bus rapid transit (BRT) line that will provide faster and more reliable transit service in the Route 6 corridor along University Avenue/4th Street, Hennepin Avenue, and France Avenue from the University of Minnesota to Southdale.

BRT is a package of transit enhancements that adds up to a faster trip and an improved experience on Metro Transit's busiest bus routes.

**WHO SIGNED THE LETTER?**

- Matt Perry, Southwest Business Association President
- Jan Bellefleur, New Gild Jewelers, Linden Hills Resident
- Kelsey Lee-Karol, New Gild Jewelers
- Jim Cone, Coffee & Tea Ltd
- Dr. Geoff Sudit, Mint Orthodontics
- Lisa MacMartin, Heartfelt
- Nancy Dadak, Heart of Tibet
- Dr. Liz Gingrey, Sunu Chiropractic
- Fernando Silva, Harriet Brasserie
- Jason Eurich, Linden Hills Jewelers
- Neil and Barb Nei, Zumbro Café
- Karen Lang, Grace & Co., Linden Hills Resident
- Chris and Julie Hansen, Owl Optical
- Brady Schmidt, Pinwheels and Play Toys
- Naviya Labarge, Naviya's Thai Brasserie
- Steve Arnold, Great Harvest Bakery
- Bailey Lee, Associated Skin Care
- Roger Weenig, Associated Skin Care
- Mikaela Harrod, Les Sol
- Steve Sechrest, Cococo
- Kimberly Hanson, Co-Pilot Dog Outfitters, Linden Hills resident
- Steven Brown, Tilia Restaurant
- Michael Pellizzer, Sebastian Joe's
- Timothy Pellizzer, Sebastian Joe's
- Tony Johannes, Martina Restaurant
- Danny DelPradoz, Martina Restaurant
- Dr. Kordie Reinhold, Linden Hills Dentistry, Linden Hills resident
- Dr. Peter Hinke, Linden Hills Dentistry, Linden Hills resident
- Mark Settergren, Settergren Hardware
- Felicity Britton, Wild Rumpus
- Suzie Marty, Everett & Charlie
- Kristin Tombers, Clancy's Meats
- Jeff Meyer, Jeff Meyer State Farm
- John Gross, Martina Restaurant
- Gaylord Ryg, commercial property owner
- Stephanie Hawkinson, commercial property owner
- Mark Dwyer, commercial property owner
- Dave Schwier, commercial property owner
- Mike Zwack, commercial property manager
- Larry LaVercombe, real estate agent, Linden Hills resident
- Diane Mach, Attorney, real estate agent, Linden Hills resident

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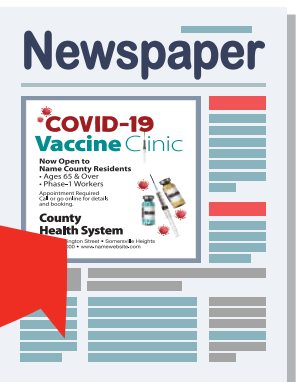


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# B LINE PLAN MOVES AHEAD

By Jane McClure

B Line bus rapid transit service is to start in 2024, providing a faster connection between St. Paul's Union Depot and Uptown Minneapolis.

The \$65 million project's final corridor and station plans won a unanimous Oct. 13, 2021 vote of support from Metropolitan Council. The B Line route will follow Minneapolis' Lake Street and Selby and Marshall avenues in St. Paul. It will largely replace Route 21, Metro Transit's second-highest ridership bus route.

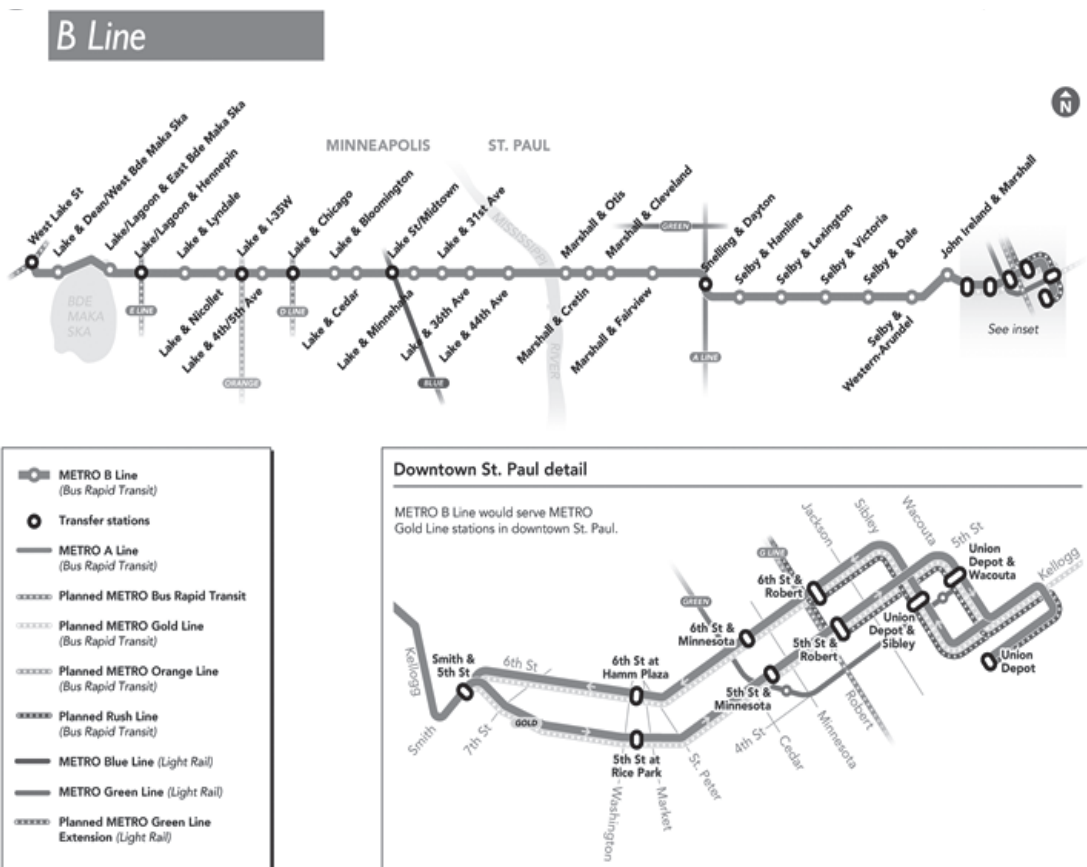
The B Line will provide connections to Green and Blue Line light rail, and five other current and future bus rapid transit routes. Engineering can get underway and continue until late 2022. Construction starts in 2023 and ends in 2024.

Bus rapid transit has fewer stops than regular route bus service. The B Line will have a total of 33 stops. Buses will run every 10 minutes. Stations or platforms have amenities including real-time schedule in-

formation, lighting, heat and emergency contact capability.

Metro Transit will replace some regular route bus service along Route 21 in Minneapolis, but with less frequency at buses every 30 minutes. A new Route 60 is planned to operate along Selby and provide access to Midway shopping destinations once the B Line starts operations.

Not everyone is on board the B Line, including a group of residents in Lexington-Hamline neighborhood. They question using Selby and not Marshall for the route between Hamline Avenue and Lexington Parkway, mounting an unsuccessful petition drive for a route change.



## ▶ 2 E LINE

lined on both sides with mature trees with brick-rimmed flower beds that create the charm and ambiance that define this neighborhood. These trees continue north on the east side of Upton Avenue, along with park benches and a charming brick "pocket park."

Ours is a very small business node, extending no more than one and one half blocks in any direction. If we lose the flower beds, benches, decorative light poles and eight or more mature trees, we will lose the attractive qualities that make this a vibrant business node. These trees that are slated for removal are also lit for the holidays; attracting customers to shop local requires that the business node looks appealing, and trees, both green in the summer and lit for the holidays, are a very big part of this node's aesthetic. Additionally, the benches slated for removal are used frequently by dentistry patients, especially amidst COVID, waiting their turn for appointments, and by neighborhood families who rely on these benches and shade to take a break, eat locally purchased lunch outside, etc.

The BRT stations themselves will take up sidewalk space that allows the casual, pedestrian shopping experience critical to the survival of our businesses. Plus, the village itself hosts several long-established events, like Woolstock and Reindeer Day, and Wine &



**THE INTERSECTION OF** Upton and 43rd will lose parking and trees under a Metro Transit plan for an E Line BRT station. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Stroll. All these events rely upon the charm and appeal of this district to survive, as well as the spaces on the street and sidewalk. Large transit stations will disrupt those existing activities.

Another major problem is that this plan will cost the business district eight or more parking spaces. Considering the size of this area, one block in each direction, eight parking spaces represents a substantial percentage of our total parking. Also, some of the

higher density dwellings that have been approved in the immediate area have had their parking requirements waived, which has further strained parking in our community.

The retailers and restaurants in this tiny district receive frequent and regular deliveries – the restaurants in particular. These delivery trucks will often be parked on Upton with the hazard lights on. Buses will need to wait for those trucks to leave. Cars also parallel park all day on this street into dwin-

dling spaces... that will delay the buses.

Every owner of commercial property and every proprietor in this business node is opposed to the placement of these BRT stations. We are unanimous in our opposition to this proposal (see below; more than 40 business owners and land owners have signed this letter). Property owners know that their commercial properties will suffer from reduced desirability; their "curb appeal" will be compromised, and their established rents will be hard to maintain. Likewise, if the locally-owned, "mom and pop" shops are driven out by this transformation, chain and big-box stores will move in and the uniqueness of Linden Hills will be erased, gone forever, and property values will diminish. Every real estate agent who sells in this community knows that few things contribute more to the property values here than this small yet vibrant commercial district. ...

We insist that Metro Transit consider other options for these stations now proposed at South Upton Avenue and West 43rd Street.

Email comments to [ELine@metrotransit.org](mailto:ELine@metrotransit.org). Learn more online at [www.metrotransit.org/e-line-project](http://www.metrotransit.org/e-line-project).

\* **Editor's note:** Everett & Charlie owner Suzie Marty, who signed the letter along with other business owners, is a sales representative for the Southwest Connector.

SOUTHWEST CONNECTOR DEADLINES		SPECIAL SECTIONS CALENDAR		QUARTERLY	
Publication typically 1st and 3rd Thursdays. * Some exceptions	Deadlines typically 2nd and 4th Mondays.	June 2	May 23	AGING WELL/LIVING 50+	
Publication date	Deadline date	June 16	June 6	March - Housing   June - Activities Sept. - Medical   Dec. - Money	
Dec. 2	Nov. 19 (Friday)	July 7	June 20	MONTHLY	
Break	Break	July 21	July 11	REBUILD REPAIR RECYCLE	
Jan. 6	Dec. 20	Aug. 4	July 25	MINDFUL CREATIVITY	
Feb. 3	Jan. 24	Sept. 1	Aug. 8	CONTACT	
Feb. 17	Feb. 7	Sept. 22	Sept. 12	ADS@	
March 3	Feb. 18 (Friday)	Oct. 6	Sept. 26	SWCONNECTOR.COM	
March 17	March 7	Oct. 20	Oct. 10	612-345-9998	
April 7	March 28	Nov. 3	Oct. 24	REACH CUSTOMER AT THEIR FRONT DOORSTEPS.	
April 21	April 11	Nov. 17	Nov. 7		
May 5	April 25	Dec. 1	Nov. 21		
May 19	May 9	Dec. 15	Dec. 5		
		Break	Break		

**JANUARY**  
Health & Wellness due Dec. 20  
School Guide due Dec. 20

**FEBRUARY**  
Summer Camp Guide due Jan. 24  
Wedding due Feb. 7

**MARCH**  
Home Improvement due Feb. 18  
CSA Guide due Mar 7

**APRIL**  
Home & Garden due Mar 28  
Drive & Ride due Apr 11

**MAY**  
Home & Garden due Apr 25  
Summer in the City due May 9

**JUNE**  
Summer in the City due May 23  
@ Lake & Hennepin due June 6

**JULY**  
Summer in the City due June 20  
Back to School due July 11

**AUGUST**  
Summer in the City due July 25

**SEPTEMBER**  
Back to School due Sept. 12  
- Health focus

**OCTOBER**  
Home Improvement due Sep. 26  
Domestic Violence due Oct. 10  
Awareness Month

**NOVEMBER**  
Food & Drink due Oct. 24  
Shop Small/Buy Local due Nov. 7

**DECEMBER**  
Shop Small/Buy Local due Nov. 21  
Paws and Claws due Dec. 5

**AGING WELL/LIVING 50+**  
March - Housing | June - Activities  
Sept. - Medical | Dec. - Money

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CONVERSING

TIME TO BUILD BRIDGES WITH THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Neighborhood associations are helping bring people together to create solutions for Minneapolis

Not every neighborhood issue makes headline news. But some community members in Minneapolis feel like serious concerns are being ignored by the media and their local leaders too.

They need to find someone who will listen. Neighborhood associations are that someone who can help find a point of unity and amplify collective neighbor voices.

We had a problem property in my neighborhood. For months, neighbors were reporting ongoing public safety issues multiple times via city channels (911, 311 and the Ward 10 office). The situation progressively escalated with no action being taken.

This has become a common refrain in Minneapolis. There aren't enough police to handle all the 911 calls. Crime has risen. Public confidence has fallen. And many people are feeling angry and powerless about public safety.

Enter neighborhood associations. Minneapolis has 70 neighborhood organizations, and many have stepped up their efforts to help their neighbors and connect residents to city services. The Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association, or LHENA, which represents the neighborhood where I live, coalesced all of the neighbor concerns about this problem property and contacted key people in the city who could help.



By Eric Ortiz

LHENA will apply pressure until the issue is all resolved.

LHENA has been helping neighbors and building community since it was founded in 1970.

When the pandemic shut down the world in 2020, LHENA neighbors provided mutual aid to neighbors in need, making grocery runs, pharmacy pickups, connections to resources or services, and check-in phone calls. Dozens of volunteers helped provide support and resources for dozens who needed help. This project has evolved into a volunteer network with a vast community of volunteers serving others through community connection and expanding to initiatives such as snow

shoveling, ridesharing, coat drives, community events, and more.

A LHENA Food Share program, created and run by neighbor-volunteers, ensures that no neighbor has to choose between paying rent and eating. The program offers free groceries twice a month to anyone who needs food in the Wedge neighborhood (bound by Lyndale, Hennepin and Lake). This means one bag of fresh fruit/vegetables and one bag of pantry items.

The numbers in 2020 alone were impressive — 120 households served (with 70 households receiving food each time), 75 volunteers, over \$10,000 raised (from 65-plus donations) to support the program through 2021. Scout Workshop (a coworking space on Lyndale) hosted the program in the summer/fall of 2020, using the site for assembly and pickups. ArcStone (a full-service digital agency on Lyndale) became the new home last winter. Both are local businesses, and the whole program, which is still going strong, shows what can be done when neighbors come together.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any neighborhood association, and giving back to the community is how we make our communities stronger. I have seen the value of giving back firsthand, serving in neighborhood volunteer roles as a LHENA board member (since August 2019) and current president (since May 2020). The goal is to build a community in which neighbors can live with each other, not just next to each other.

Crime and safety has been the number one issue in our neighborhood in recent weeks.

Serious issues in Uptown and elsewhere have prompted LHENA leadership to field neighbor concerns and advocate on their behalf with city council offices, regulatory services and the Minneapolis Police Department. LHENA staff and volunteers have become a conduit to proactively work toward finding solutions.

LHENA is just one neighborhood association in Minneapolis. Imagine what we could accomplish if neighborhood organizations worked together to find solutions to common community problems. Funding (as it sometimes is) has become a new challenge as neighborhood associations no longer receive as much annual money from the city and are looking for new revenue streams to maintain long-term sustainability.

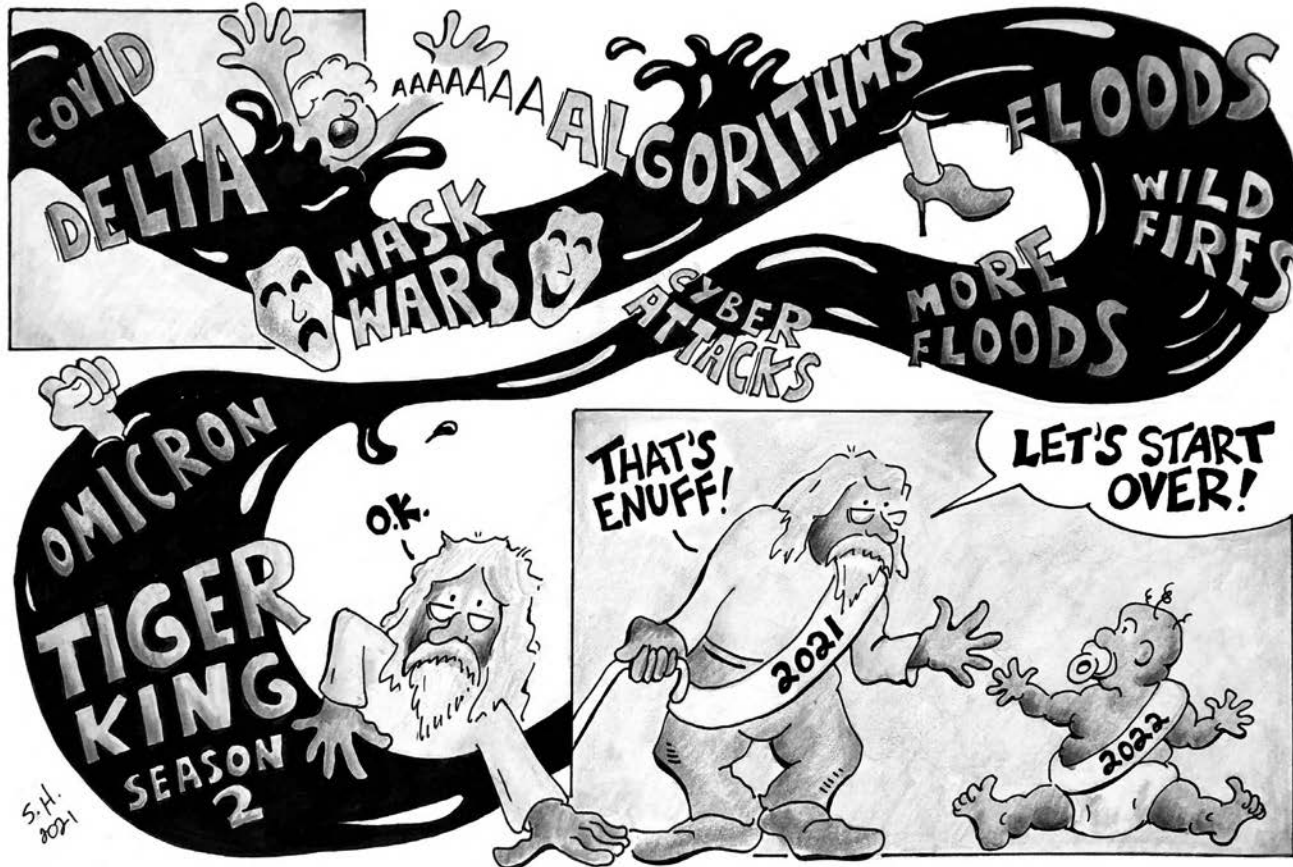
Now more than ever, Minneapolis needs connectors for our communities. Neighborhood associations can be leaders in connecting neighbors and helping the city meet the challenges of this moment. Whatever neighborhood you call home, we are all interconnected. That is why we all need to work together to help build bridges, restore trust and find solutions.

Our future depends on it.

Eric Ortiz is the president of the Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association. When he's not organizing community solutions, he's the director of media for Granite Media and writing bilingual children's books with his kids. Their first book was "How the Zookalex Saved the Village," available in English and Spanish on Amazon.

Anthropoidea

By Stewart Huntington



GOT AN OPINION? JOIN THE CONVERSATION.

What do you think about the E Line?

How can Minneapolis come together after the 2021 election?

What are you looking for from your neighborhood newspaper?

Let us know what you think. Letters should be under 200 words and can be emailed to news@SWconnector.com.

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## THINK TWICE ABOUT CONNEQT

STOP  
THINK  
FEEL

BY ABHA KARNICK



You may have spent hours researching homelessness, know the severity and the cycle of poverty inside and out, seen people standing on the side of the road with their signs, all of it. But beyond the stereotypes of homelessness lie the real issues and controversy people face within their situations.

As what happens everywhere in life, there are people who have been through more than others. Shelters were, and currently still are, homes for violence for queer youth. Every type of bullying occurs and a youth finds themselves “safer” on the streets than in the shelters. This, in itself, speaks to the systems that need repairing. It speaks to the need for new programs, new models,

new expectations. Slowly but surely, programs have popped up around the nation, being led in example by Avenues for Youth in Minneapolis.

Started in 1997, there was a community-based effort by the queer-trans community to house youth in their community who were experiencing homelessness. They called this program ConneQT, starting first at Youthlink and then moving to Avenues in 2007. Relying on the community, hosts homes were asked to provide food and shelter with Avenues providing wrap-around services within the program. Ryan Berg, the manager of the ConneQT Program, acts as the advocate for hosts and youth.

The difference with ConneQT compared to other youth homelessness programs is that it is set up as being 100% youth-determined. Youth get to read letters a host family writes during their application process. They get to choose which families they'd like to meet and go forward with. It's about matching (an agreement over placement) rather than being placed somewhere without consent, similar to the foster system many of them have come from. They gain real control and strength in making their own decisions and being asked what they want and what they think.

Relationships are at the core of healing, and Berg puts this into perspective beautifully, showing yet another reason why the ConneQT Program continues to take the lead in programs of its kind.

“There's no expectation of relationship building. We ask for care, consistency, and to leave room for the relationships,” he said.

Change happens at the rate of trust. Youth can live with families for up to 18 months, sometimes turning into family, while other times just remaining roommates. Whatever they need and want most because that's why Avenues does what they do.

The program aims to have 10 youth matched with a host home every year. Host homes can look and feel different from one to the next, but some top qualities Avenues staff look for includes people who are clear in their boundaries, flexible, and want to walk alongside a young person, not “save anyone.” Being able to honor a youth's decision-making and not do it for them or impose their own belief systems on them is huge. Host home is a form of mutual aid. Cultural competency on trans and queer youth, and their community and a total acceptance as an ally or a member themselves is an absolute necessity for hosts.

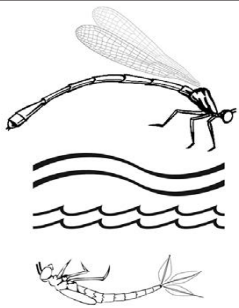
So, can you picture it?

Can you picture opening your home, letting a trans or queer youth stay with you? The opportunity this brings to you is bigger than anything you could ever give a youth. It's a way to partner with youth experiencing homelessness who hold trauma over their identity. A world around them who has chosen to say they're wrong for being themselves. It's nothing short of traumatic – and having families to host them and people to walk with them is the first step to helping them achieve their dreams and goals.

So think twice. Think twice about the empty bedroom you have, think twice about the groceries you get, think twice about the routine you love. Maybe it's time to disrupt that. Maybe it's time to step up. Maybe it's time to open your home.

More at <https://avenuesforyouth.org/hosting-a-youth/>.

Abha Karnick is a south Minneapolis resident with East Indian roots who graduated from Hamline University in 2019. Her passion lies in storytelling and finding moments to capture.



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▶1 BEGINNING

small, family-run businesses like TMC Publications CO, the parent company of the Southwest Connector.

Another hint about who we are is in our name.

We're here to be a connector. We will be striving to connect neighbors with each other, business owners with customers, and leaders with the people they're serving.

That is, after all, what it means to be a community newspaper.

It's what I love most about this work.

I appreciate how a neighborhood newspaper brings people together. Wondering what's going up at the corner? Looking for a way to get plugged into a great non-profit and make some new friends while giving back? Curious about how your neighborhood organization is striving for equality, diversity and inclusion? Questioning the best way forward for Minneapolis?

Most news stories start with a question. We follow that up by asking the deeper "why." And so, a conversation begins.

We hope you are part of that conversation. Send in letters and commentaries, give us story tips, and pass a copy of the paper along to a friend.

A BREAK FROM DIGITAL

We're starting with a once-a-month newspaper and will grow to a twice-a-month publication. We're working on pulling together all the pieces to make that happen.

The past few months have been full of projections, visioning, and conversations with community members, like students at Blake Upper School. I chatted with the school newspaper staff earlier this fall, and heard about the challenges and joys of putting out The Spectrum newspaper. We learned that we face a lot of the same issues. We're all covering a specific audience, and striving to make our coverage be as useful and pertinent as possible. We're working to address issues and highlight solutions, while balancing varying opinions and perspectives. We have differing opinions within the newsroom on how to cover things, and engage in thoughtful conversations about how to serve our readers the best.

Mostly, we believe in the future of print journalism, and we love the feel of a paper



BLAKE SCHOOL JOURNALISTS chat with Southwest Connector owner Tesha M. Christensen about their thoughts on journalism in October 2021. The class publishes the The Spectrum once a month on paper as well as online at www.blakespectrum.org (Photo by Oscar Walsh)

newspaper in our hands.

As publisher of two longtime newspapers, the Longfellow Nokomis Messenger and the Midway Como Frogtown Monitor, I love hearing from teenagers about how much they value the newspaper. And it tracks with national trends, too. A Vividata survey in the spring of 2020 found that Gen Z is more likely to read print only than digital only. I am hearing from more and more people of all ages that they need a break from devices and social media, and want to have a paper product to page through. They are tired of the echo chamber on Facebook. Plus, they're seeking out news about their neighborhood, and the only place to get that is via their community newspaper.

We did our first ever circulation audit through the nationally known Circulation Verification Council (CVC) this year, and learned a little bit more about the folks reading the Messenger and Monitor. A whopping 7 of 10 people who get the paper delivered to their front doors look at it each month. And 2.1 people touch each copy that we print. That means our readers are passing the paper along to others, and those two papers are reaching 92,000 people in South Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Six of 10 say they regularly purchase products or services they see from the ads.

We see folks from all ages and demographics reading our publications -and

that's exactly how we want it to be. We want to see everyone being informed and educated, and a part of this lovely and complicated place we call home.

RAMPING UP

Back to the specifics of this new newspaper, the Southwest Connector. We will be covering 27,000 households in the Southwest area, delivering to the front doors of people between France Ave. and 35W, 394 and Highway 62, plus Bryn Mawr. We will also have 5,000 papers available to pick up at local businesses. See the list of bulk drop locations on our website, www.swconnector.com. That means our readership will be 64,000 folks.

Right now we're in our ramping up phase. Our first publication won't be delivered to every home just yet. We're working to build our list of part-time carriers who value flexible hours and will make between \$11-15 an hour. Contact Bjorn if you're interested in this role (delivery@swconnector.com or 612-235-7197). Tammara Melloy is so excited to have a print newspaper in Southwest Minneapolis again that she offered to do additional delivery routes for these first few publications to get it out to folks. "I'm so glad you are taking up the gap left after the Southwest Journal," said Melloy. "We need connection in the neighborhoods now more than ever, so love the name, too."

If you see Melloy dropping papers in Kingfield, be sure to say, "hi" and "thanks." Our carriers are an important part of this community publication.

Our sales staff (get to know them on page 7) are talking to local businesses and organizations about how they can invest and market with us to grow and stay strong - something we know is vital after experiencing the stress of COVID-19. We're offering some pretty great discounts the first four months for those that sign one-year contracts.

We are building partnerships with neighborhood groups and local business associations. If you're part of a group we should talk to, reach out and let me know.

We want to hear from you.

As Mike Blinder from Editor & Publisher says: change accelerates growth. We're in a time of zig-zagging to better pinpoint what people want from their community newspaper and how to provide that. Some papers have shut down, some have consolidated, and others are starting fresh.

We have a rich and vibrant mosaic of news options in the Twin Cities, one that includes print, hybrid and online-only options, as well as radio and television. Those who shifted to online-only models include Southwest Voices, Sahan Journal, Minnesota Reformer, MinnPost and Mshale. The Southwest Connector falls in with those who are doubling down on print media - a trend we can see across the country as one generation passes the baton to another. We are eager to redefine what it means to be a community news source, and seeking to ensure our coverage is diverse and representative of those who live and work here.

We know that an online presence is part of that important recipe for success - and we offer that to advertisers and readers. You can read our newspaper at swconnector.com. Find tidbits and items of interest between our issues on Instagram (southwest\_connector) and Facebook (swconnector).

As Eric Ortiz points out on page 4, Minneapolis needs connectors for our communities. We are all interconnected.

We are in this together.

You can reach me by emailing tesha@swconnector.com or call 612-345-9998.

Reliable. Relevant. Informative.



You can count your community newspaper.

The stories and moments in the life of our community that matter to you can be found here each edition, delivered free of charge right to your home and at www.SWConnector.com.

We are launching a Voluntary Pay program

to help ensure that we not only continue to deliver the best local news and information, but to also continuously improve upon the service we offer our readers and business partners.

Delivered responsibly.



CONNECTOR VOLUNTARY PAY

Support your neighborhood newspaper. Not something you can do right now? That's ok. We'll still deliver to your door. You can also rest assured that we won't share your contact info with anyone. Mail 5139 34th Ave. S. #17097, Minneapolis, MN 55417.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Please write your check out to TMC Publications or donate online at www.SWconnector.com

\$24 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_\_\_ \$1000 \_\_\_\_\_

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- Health & Wellness
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- Kids Corner
- Finance & Money

# in Household: \_\_\_\_\_

Age/s:  0-19  20-99  30-44  45-64  65+

## MEET SUZIE



Suzie Marty believes in buying local and shopping local. She has held various positions over the years that promote local artists and tourism, including as an art buyer for Love from Minnesota Company, artisan manager at St. Croix Promotions and Retail, and docent at MIA. She is the owner of Everett & Charlie, a Linden Hills art gallery where art meets experience. It features only Minnesota artists. The gallery at 2720 W. 43rd Street is named for her grandsons, who were two and four the year she opened in 2018. In 2021, Everett & Charlie was voted "Minnesota's Best Art Gallery" by readers of *Star Tribune*. The gallery includes paintings, screen-printing, photography, pottery, glass, jewelry, textiles and leather, sculpture and woodwork, and it offers a calendar of openings, trunk shows, artists' talks and workshops, demonstrations and live music.

Marty has been known to proudly display a "sold to a forever home" sign on spoken-for pieces, demonstrating her thoughtful approach and pride in finding a good home for her "art babies." She said, "I can oftentimes predict which colors and forms people will be drawn to. I look for signals that connect people to their colors."

She earned her bachelor of science in art education at St. Cloud State University. She sold advertising for the *Southwest Journal*, and is a sales representative for the *Southwest Connector*. She will be writing a regular arts column. **Contact her at 612-345-9998 or ads@SWconnector.com.**

## MEET TESHA



When a letter that she wrote was published in her hometown newspaper when she was a kid, Tesha M. Christensen was hooked. "I had gotten my first glimpse into the power of the printed word. I wanted more," recalled Christensen. "I saw how newspapers could be used to generate change in their communities, and how they could inform and engage people."

She started her own paper and later wrote for her college newspaper, *The Clarion*. Shortly after earning her bachelor's degree in English from Bethel University, she got a full-time job at her hometown newspaper, *The STAR* in Cambridge, Minn. – the same newspaper that printed her letter to

the editor when she was a child. Christensen worked as the assistant editor and special sections editor of her hometown newspaper for 10 years, serving two counties and a circulation of 21,000 with a twice weekly newspaper. Over the years, Christensen covered a range of topics in Isanti and Chisago counties, from school board levies to new county parks to crime news. "I wrote about what new businesses were coming to town, local musicians, and rodeo shows, and a story about one local resident who saved the life of another," Christensen recalled. "I love the ever-changing nature of this business, and how I learn something new with each story I write."

In 2012, Tesha started writing for the *Longfellow Nokomis Messenger* and *Midway Como Frogtown Monitor* after moving to South Minneapolis. She purchased the newspapers in 2019 when the longtime owners (Cal deRuyter and Tim Nelson) retired, and started her own business, TMC Publications CO.

A lifelong learner, Christensen believes in the importance of the local newspaper to collect the stories of the neighborhood it serves. In the past she's written for Northstar Media, the Isanti County News, ECM Publishers/Adams Publishing Group, Twin Cities Daily Planet, RedCurrent and The Alley newspaper in the Phillips neighborhood of south Minneapolis.

She enjoys connecting with journalism students. "I love journalism, and I am passionate about sharing journalism with kids and young adults," stated Christensen. "They are the future, and it's so exciting to hear their ideas." She taught journalism classes at Anoka-Ramsey Community College from 2006 to 2012, and taught for one year at Planet Homeschool, a homeschool co-op in St. Anthony, where she helped launch a school newspaper written by the middle and high school students. At TMC Publications CO, she works to partner with local schools looking for internship opportunities.

Christensen appreciates connecting people through neighborhood news and seeks to make it relevant, trustworthy and local.

Christensen has served on a variety of committees and boards over the years, and is a co-founder of Team Yarn - Head Huggers (teamyarn.blogspot.com), a small non-profit dedicated to making and donating hats, shawls and lapghans to those battling cancer and other serious illnesses.

She lives with her two children and their two cats in a house with a big garden and a Little Free Library.

**Contact Tesha M. Christensen at 612-345-9998 or tesha@SWconnector.com.**

## MEET SANDRA



Sandra Mikulsky has worked at a variety of sales positions, including 15 years for the *Star Tribune*. She earned her bachelor of science from University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, and a certificate in French fluency from the Université du Québec à Montréal. She's been a long-time South Minneapolis resident, and has been involved in things like co-founding a glass arts studio and tutoring at Anishinabe Academy. She also worked for the Food Building at Mill City Farmers Market this year. Mikulsky appreciates the community building going on in South Minneapolis, and likes being part of it. **Contact her at 612-260-7967 or ads@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com.**

## MEET BJORN



Bjorn Willms joined on to be the circulation manager for the *Southwest Connector* in 2021 after years of working in the culinary industry. He still enjoys cooking good food and exploring the Twin Cities. When he is not working with the paper, Bjorn makes and sells handmade soaps, creates art and cares for two cats he recently adopted. Originally from Montana and now living in St. Paul, he likes hiking, fishing and camping, as well as good coffee and crossword puzzles.

**Contact him at 612-235-7197 or delivery@SWconnector.com**

## MEET DENIS



Denis Woulfe graduated from Hamline University in English and has taken additional courses from St. Thomas University in business communications and Century College in technical communications. While still at Hamline as a senior, he began working for what was the *Midway Como Monitor* as an intern, and loved the business so much that he never left. He has worked on both the editorial and advertising sides of the operation, and relishes the opportunity to work with area businesses on developing marketing plans and finding solutions to reaching their audience.

**Contact him at 612-345-9998 or Denis@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com**

## MEET CINDY



Cindy Hollister worked in IT Services for 40 years, and retired five years ago to spend more time traveling, wine-tasting, and gardening. She runs an occasional artisan boutique with her sister. She joined TMC Publications CO in 2021 to help with the expansion into Minneapolis' southwest neighborhood, and will work part-time handling billing and as an executive assistant. She's the friendly person behind the hello@SWconnector.com email address.

**Contact her at 612-235-4104 or billing@SWconnector.com**

# RETHINK UPCYCLES OLD CLOTHES WITH STYLE

By **Margie O'Loughlin**

Artist and business founder Kristen McCoy has been rethinking the future of fashion for years. Along with her staff at RETHINK Tailoring & Sewing Lounge (3449 Bloomington Ave. S.), she offers an alternative to the cheaply produced, poorly made clothing found abundantly in so many stores. The clothing for sale in her shop has all been upcycled from garments that might have otherwise been thrown away.

McCoy said, "At RETHINK, our mission is to keep as many textiles out of landfills and incinerators as possible. The average American adult throws away 80 pounds of clothing each year."

"To counter that, we tailor and upcycle used garments – and we empower others to repair and sew their own wardrobes through our classes and other gatherings at our Sewing Lounge."

## THE REAL COST OF FAST FASHION

According to McCoy, "Fast fashion is disposable fashion, and it's the second worst polluting industry in the world. Only the oil industry is more toxic to the environment. The fashion industry is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions. That's more than air travel and maritime shipping combined."

"As consumers, we need to rethink the actual cost of each garment – because the rise of fast fashion has created an environmental nightmare. Along with the cheap price tag comes a reliance on plastic fabrics, an enormous carbon footprint, and the increasing ill health of people who work in this industry. On average, a piece of clothing is worn only 4-7 times before it is discarded."

## A LONG THREAD

McCoy grew up on a Minnesota pig farm and started sewing when she was eight. She taught herself how to use her grandmother's old Singer sewing machine. Because the nearest fabric store was 20 miles away, she figured out how to repurpose her worn clothes into purses. She said, "I learned my work ethic growing up on the farm, and I learned how to make money stretch."

Eventually she enrolled in the Apparel Technologies Program at Minneapolis Community and Technical College where she studied garment construction, draping, pattern-making, alterations, and how to work with specialty fabrics.

In textiles classes, McCoy learned that polyester fabric has the same chemical make-up as plastic water bottles. She



**RETHINK OWNER KRISTEN** McCoy in an upcycled denim blazer. She explained, "To upcycle is to add value to something in the processing. We're able to take a worn garment and turn it into something new. We take jeans that are no longer wearable and cut them into denim squares. The result is a reversible blazer that still has a lot of wear. It's on sale at the shop, and is size fluid (small to large)." (Photos by Margie O'Loughlin)

thought, "We recycle plastic water bottles, why can't we find a way to recycle plastic fabrics?"

"The discarded clothes sit in landfills where they don't decompose for generations, or they are burned in incinerators. Many garments aren't made to last on purpose. The clothing industry has developed a disposable mentality because it pays."

McCoy made a decision early on in her training: moving forward, she would make all her clothes out of pre-used or deadstock fabrics.

## KEEP CALM AND SEW ON

In 2015, McCoy launched RETHINK Tailoring from her home with the goal of making recycled clothing a legitimate shopping option. After her daughter was born that year, Kristen took a pause from tailoring to develop a new concept: resizable baby clothing. A second child was born three years later and in 2019, McCoy began the buildout of her storefront at 3449



In a world of fast fashion, we offer a different option for shopping: mend your wardrobe, shop your closet, shop the consignment/vintage stores, don't give up on those family hand-me-downs, and build your wardrobe with pieces that will stand the test of time."

**Kristin McCoy**



RETHINK Tailoring & Sewing Lounge is located at 3449 Bloomington Ave. S.



## CLASSES ARE THE FOCUS

McCoy is reflective about the times. She said, "These last couple of years have been strange and challenging, but I feel hopeful. In this polarized world, there's value in having safe places to gather. Our shop is a place where people can get together and do something creative – we can all use a bit of that."

There are classes on Visible Mending, Invisible Mending, and Reweaving (where you learn to repair holes in t-shirts and other knit garments). There are Learn to Sew machine classes, and classes for more experienced sewists on alterations, design, and upcycling. Private lessons are available, as well as small group lessons. There are options to learn from home with virtual classes, Q&A sessions, tutorials, private lessons via Zoom, and more.

The regularly scheduled Feminist Stitch and Gab is a pay-what-you-can meet up. Anyone can come who is feminist-minded, as long as they wear a mask and practice social distancing. Email [info@rethinktailoring.com](mailto:info@rethinktailoring.com) with questions about any of the classes or gatherings. Holiday gift cards are also available for purchase. They can be applied toward class tuition, or upcycled clothing and jewelry for sale in the onsite Green Boutique. Visit the RETHINK website at [www.rethinktailoring.com](http://www.rethinktailoring.com) for more information.

McCoy concluded, "People can get overwhelmed by the challenges of being environmentally conscious. As far as clothing goes, I like to say that any change in the right direction is positive change. Go to clothing swaps, shop for used clothes, and repair what's already in your closet."

"A starting point is something to build from – you don't have to do everything at once."



**LAURA POEHLMAN TEACHES** the "Meet your Machine" class at RETHINK. She said, "I research your machine ahead of time and customize your session to make sure you cover what you want to learn." Poehlman is also a graduate of the Apparel Technologies Program at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, and has decades of sewing, design, and teaching experience. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



**SHOP THE GREEN BOUTIQUE** for upcycled clothing and jewelry by local artists, and secondhand-sourced sewing supplies. RETHINK Tailoring & Sewing Lounge is located at 3449 Bloomington Avenue S. Open for in-person shopping and online order pickups Monday-Friday from 3-6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Masks are required to enter. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



# THE PEOPLE'S CLOSET MAKES FASHION, POLITICAL STATEMENT

By **Jill Boogren**

Sometimes a revolutionary act is quiet, unseen. Sometimes it's loud and worn on a shirtsleeve. At The People's Closet at George Floyd Square, it's a little bit of both.

Born out of the 2020 Uprising, The People's Closet sprang from a need for clothing as well as a need to organize an outpour of donations. The closet grew organically, ultimately using resources that became available during a time of upheaval and transformation – bus shelters for a transit route on hiatus as people filled the streets to mourn, pray and stand in solidarity. Now, some 18 months after the murder that took place at this intersection shook the world, neighbors still stop by daily to see if there's something they can take to a friend or their own closet.

It is yet another example of mutual aid rising out of the movement for racial justice – and the staying power of giving as folks continue to wade through COVID-19 and economic disparities. Clothing is donated and taken freely, without obligation. There are no transactions, and it's always open.

"It's all about helping people. Clothes are a necessity," said Jennie Leenay, who is one of at least a dozen GFS community members who care for the clothing and space, tidying it up, making sure items are accessible – or covering them up when it rains. "The people in this neighborhood have been immensely helpful. They love this closet, and they prove it with how much they help to maintain it."

In addition to being a resource for neighbors, The People's Closet also works with certain encampment groups, ensuring they have the right gear for the weather. As winter approaches and cold temperatures roll in, keeping people warm and preventing hypothermia is a matter of public safety.

Needs aside, fashion is also a presentation of self. And to that end, the closet's caretakers follow what they call the "no dignity" rule, discarding items that are just too tattered to pass along.

"If I personally wouldn't feel comfortable wearing that out in society in public, I wouldn't put it here for somebody else to wear. This isn't about charity, it's about mutual aid," said Leenay. "It's about 'Hey, I have this cool jacket that I just don't wear any more, someone can have use of it,' and it doesn't have to be about selling it or trying to make a profit. Not everything has to be for profit or monetizing something. Sometimes it's just like, 'Hey, I saw you needed this. Here it is.'"

## A NATURAL FIT

For Leenay, a fashion designer with an associate degree in apparel technologies, caring for The People's Closet was a natural fit. Leenay lives near GFS, and like many, first came to 38th and Chicago to join protests after seeing the video of Minneapolis Police officers killing George Floyd.

"There was nowhere else in the world I really felt I should be," they said. They helped where they could – with the firekeepers, cleaning up, going to meetings, being in community, and "Bein' Black and takin' space." Among other donations, clothes kept coming in, and eventually community members decided to begin hanging stuff up so people could have it.

"It [was] also in the midst of a pandemic, a lot of people [were] out of work. The whole world was just turned on its head with the uprising and everything, and we all were just like 'How are we gonna come



If I personally wouldn't feel comfortable wearing that out in public, I wouldn't put it here for somebody else to wear. This isn't about charity, it's about mutual aid."

**Jennie Leenay**

## JENNIE LEENAY, GFS

community member and caretaker of The People's Closet, with their pup Joyoncé. It's important to Leenay that fashion reaches everyday people, and that people feel connected to themselves and their community. (Photo by Jill Boogren)



**THE PEOPLE'S CLOSET** at George Floyd Square is always open. They are now accepting winter donations of coats, hats, scarves, gloves, wool socks and boots. Follow [the\\_peoplescloset\\_](#) on Instagram. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

together and heal?" Leenay recalled. What eventually came to be known as The People's Closet was a way to provide, and as some community members got involved in other work, Leenay began taking the lead in its care.

"I was like, I have a fashion background, I'm a fashion student, I know how to handle clothes. I know what needs to be maintained, what can be washed out, what can't be washed out – and so I started helping out more when they were having big asks," they said. "As we say here, 'Bring your gift to the Square,' and this was the gift I had."

## FASHION AS POLITICAL STATEMENT

Leenay describes her personal design style as Afrofuturistic, inspired by the idea of taking Black culture and pushing it towards the future. Afrofuturism arose in the 1990s as a response, in part, to the exclusion of Black authors and Black stories in the science fiction world.

"[It gave the] impression that they don't really see Black people in the future," said Leenay. "We're all like... uh uh. No. We gonna be there. And our skin will be glowing." She wore one of her outfits at a fashion show held on Chicago Ave. in September.

With an eye to the future, Leenay is also honoring tradition. Her great-grandfather was a tailor, and her grandmother instilled in her the importance of maintaining clothes. In these days of "fast fashion" – mass producing the hot new trend then

moving on to the next thing – this has become a lost art.

"Fashion is something that should be passed down, and we notice that from a lot of our cultures is that's something the Black community kind of lost through the struggle, through the African slave trade," said Leenay, quickly correcting: "British slave trade, realistically speaking."

She wants her fashion to honor and uplift the Black community, especially Black women, in a very politically charged fashion.

## FASHION AS COMMUNAL ACT

It's also important to Leenay that fashion reaches everyday people – not just the rich and famous – and that people feel connected to themselves and their community. It was a community member who gave them the boots and jacket Leenay wears, and it's great to return the gesture – setting aside a shirt they know a specific someone will love.

"It becomes this very communal sense of understanding a person and understanding of how they wish to be seen and how they identify," said Leenay. They've received a lot of donations from people in transition, for example, who are trying to get rid of all these clothes that no longer fit with their gender identity, and Leenay is happy to help. Sometimes it's as simple as knowing someone's favorite color, like the yellow fabric sewn into another community mem-

ber's birthday dress.

"The people I've spent a year and a half getting to know, I live next to them, I talk to them pretty much every single day. And there's just something very... fashion should be communal. It's a communal act."

The People's Closet embodies all of the above – the political and the communal, the reason for its existence in full view. The shelters themselves wear it every day as body art – sentiments from the Uprising spray painted on their windowed walls: No justice No [peace symbol]; White Silence is Violence; Floyd Square; We Have Power. They are accessorized by the rods and hangers holding clothing, the cabinet with a drawer marked "undies," benches lined with shoes, a wooden pallet to lift cardboard boxes off the ground. A flyer affixed to an outside wall reads in faded ink, "This space matters. And the people who work here. And their families." Taped to an inside wall positioned just above a rack of children's clothes is another that reads, "Justice does not rain down from heaven. We must build it brick by brick. Let's get to work!"

These sentiments form the threads which bind the GFS community and continued calls for justice.

"This space was built out of pain and grief, and it has become something beautiful. But let's not forget that we're out here because a man was summarily executed by... police, and they wanted to brush it under the rug," said Leenay. "It's through the act of us coming together and protesting, not [letting up], bein' here for 18 months, is how we got the first ever [White] officer in the state convicted and actually sent to jail."

The work isn't done, added Leenay, who listed off other injustices: the three officers charged with aiding and abetting Derek Chauvin in George Floyd's murder; the murders of Winston Smith and Daunte Wright; the lack of investigation into Murphy Ranks' killer.

"We're here fighting for Black and Indigenous lives on stolen Indigenous land. We've done a lot, and it's amazing what we've done to join and heal together, but the work isn't done yet," they said, inviting people to stop by. "Come on through... we're here fighting just to say, 'Hey, my life matters. Black lives matter...'. Read the 24 demands. No Justice, No Streets. And we meant that."

## ACCEPTING WINTER DONATIONS

The People's Closet is now accepting winter donations – wool socks, hats, gloves, jackets, blankets and boots. Donors are asked to follow the "no dignity" rule – bring items that are freshly cleaned, have no stains and are in wearable condition. No donation is too much, but for large amounts they do appreciate a heads up so they can be sure someone is on hand to sort and display things properly. For an extra large haul, dropping off in installments is helpful. The People's Closet asks that any donations of food be brought to Calvary Lutheran Church, the Baha'i Center or Sabathani Community Center.

The People's Closet is located on 38th St., just west of Chicago Ave. Find the [\\_peoplescloset\\_](#) and [jeml\\_fashions\\_](#) on Instagram.

**CHILDREN BEING HARMED**

Over 58,500 children are court-ordered into the care of abusers and domestic violence perpetrators each year, according to The Leadership Council on Child Abuse and Interpersonal Violence.

809 children are have been murdered by a divorcing or seperating parent, according to the Center for Judicial Excellence. This includes:

- eight-year-old Autumn Hallow, who was killed by father and stepmother following a custody battle in Sherburne County in August 2020.
- Nelson and William Schladetzky, who were shot multiple times by father David, who also killed his ex-wife on a snowy morning in South Minneapolis on Sunday, Dec. 1, 2019. The divorce was finalized in June 2019.

Multiple studies have found that adults who have attempted suicide report child abuse, with one finding it affects approximately four in five adults with suicide attempts. There are no statistics yet compiled on how many children in the care of abusers commit suicide.

**WHAT IS POST SEPARATION ABUSE?**

For many, it is worse than the abuse (domestic violence) suffered during the relationship or marriage. Domestic violence is about power and control. That deep-seated need for power and control does not mysteriously vanish when the relationship ends. During the relationship, the victim often feels better equipped to protect the children. After the relationship ends, and the domestic violence victim is actually penalized for attempting to protect their young and often, accused of "alienation." While domestic violence often takes place behind closed doors, post separation abuse takes place in a new venue: the family court system. More at [www.onemom-sbattle.com/post-separation-abuse](http://www.onemom-sbattle.com/post-separation-abuse). See graphic on this page..

**ACES SHOW IMPACT**

Post-separation abuse does not just affect the victim, it has both immediate and long-lasting effects on children resulting in high adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACE's, a term used to describe any traumatic event during childhood such as divorce, violence, emotional abuse, neglect, substance abuse or even an environment that undermines a child's sense of bonding or stability.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente ACE Study, "The economic and social costs to families, communities, and society total hundreds of billions of dollars each year. As one example, the estimated annual U.S. population economic burden of child maltreatment alone, a major contributor of ACEs, was \$428 million."

**USING THE COURTS TO ABUSE**

What is 'vexatious litigation'? It is legal action brought solely to harrass or subdue an adversary. It may take the form of a primary frivolous lawsuit or may be the repetitive, burdensome, and unwarranted filing of meritless motions. "Vexatious litigation can be very distressing for the other party. Respondents observed a plethora of negative effects including serious psychological stress, increased legal costs, feelings of depression and oppression, hopelessness and despair, triggering of mental health episodes, and a loss of faith in the justice system," wrote Emaa Fitch and Patricia Eastale in "Vextatious litigation in family law and coercive control: Ways to improve legal remedies and better protect the victims."



**VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE**

▶ 1

**THEY TOOK HER CHILDREN**

**CPS HOLDS MOM RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLENT DAD**

Twenty-three-year-old Starr\* (whose name along with everyone else's in this article, as well as other details, have been changed for their protection) was pregnant with their second child and had left their six-month-old daughter Mia with her boyfriend, Todd, while she worked.

She got a phone call from Todd that chilled her to the bone.

"He said if I don't come home immediately, he was going to kill her," Starr recalled.

The baby looked ok when she arrived, and she told Todd that she was going to stay somewhere else that night. Once safely out of the apartment, she headed to the emergency room. CPS and the police were called, and Todd admitted to shaking the baby that day. He also said that three months earlier he had held a pillow over her face when he couldn't control her crying.

Starr made the decision to leave. But instead of life getting better in 2005, things got worse for Starr, her six-month-old daughter and her unborn baby.

"I was held accountable by Hennepin County for leaving my child with someone unsafe," explained Starr. "I had to quit my job because there were so many hoops to jump through."

They took the nursing infant away and placed her in foster care.

And they warned her that her parental rights might be terminated. If they were terminated, not only would she lose Mia, but she would lose her unborn child and any future children.

"What they did was far more damaging to my daughter and I than anything he had done," said Starr. "The county takes very flippantly the relationships and bonds between family members. They really don't take into account the damage that does."

Not once did a social worker suggest that she could get a restraining order against Todd, whose physical violence over the years had included blocking doorways, locking her out of the house in the dead of winter, yelling in her face, and strangling her. They ordered him to attend an anger management class, and Starr made sure he got there because she couldn't get Mia back until CPS decided Todd was safe - even though they were no longer living together. They required her to admit she had done something wrong by leaving her child with dad - even though she didn't know he would harm the baby until the day she left.

She finally got Mia back and refused to take Todd back, despite his pleading that they be a family again and that he had changed. Eighteen months after their second daughter, Caroline, was born, he had his third child, a son, with his new wife. Todd faded away for about six years, and only came by to see the girls when Starr reached out.



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**'IF YOU TAKE MY MONEY, I'LL TAKE YOUR KIDS'**

Then, because she was on medical assistance, the county went after Todd for \$50,000 in unpaid child support.

She begged them not to. "If you take my money, I'm taking your kids," she remembers him telling her.

His wife called her and "demanded to know why I felt entitled to take his money," said Starr.

"I couldn't prove any violence was happening now."

So family court awarded Todd every other weekend, and the girls started spending overnights with the father they hardly knew in a different house with new rules and two adults who didn't like their primary caregiver and let the girls know.

"I could do all my laundry and go to a movie in a single day," Starr recalled. "After putting myself through graduate school as a single mom, it was kinda a relief knowing I had another parent willing to do some of the parenting."

But then, the girls developed bedwetting issues. Caroline started losing weight because she was so anxious about spending the night away from home at her dad's house. She dropped from size six to two within three months.

When Starr brought things up to Todd, he insisted that Caroline was ok, and that she ate with him despite her obvious weight loss so the problem had to be with Starr. He refused to talk about ways to help Caroline eat at his house and manage her anxiety, and he told Starr to stop trying to control how he parented.

"That's when I started saying, 'What do I do?'" remarked Starr.

Her earlier experience with child protection had shown her that she would be held responsible for what happened at dad's house unless she prevented it, so she filed an order for protection (OFP) on behalf of her and the girls. "My goal was not to remove dad from their lives but to figure this out," explained Starr. She agreed to drop the OFP with the provision that they meet and address things.

Instead, he showed up expecting 50/50 parenting time and didn't engage in conversation to address their daughter's needs.

And then he took her to court.

In the meantime, Starr was focused on getting her daughter to eat enough to hit a healthy weight. The school wasn't set up to accommodate a child who needed to eat so many extra calories. In December, Starr pulled Caroline from public school to do a hybrid of some classes at school and the rest homeschool through the holidays to focus on eating. Todd refused to agree to the plan, but didn't offer a better one.

Despite her best efforts, Caroline ended up hospitalized because her heart was being affected by the extreme weight loss, anxiety and psychological abuse the eight-year-old had a hard time articulating.

And Todd filed an emergency order to get custody so he could make legal decisions by himself. In his filing, Todd accused Starr of interfering with the relationship with dad, and used Caroline's words about why she was anxious as evidence that mom was turning his daughter against him. He said it was a case of Munchhausen by proxy, and that Starr was acting as if their daughter was ill when she wasn't really sick. He wanted her back in public school immediately, despite her having just begun a two-week hospital stay.

Incredibly to Starr, their family court judge ignored the doctor's diagnosis and awarded Todd temporary sole custody, with a review by a Guardian Ad Litem.

The day they gave him primary care of the girls is a day burned into Starr's memory.

**'THEY MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE THE CRAZY ONE'**

"Todd is very good at trying to paint me as an immature and incompetent person," said Starr. "People don't question what he says. So many of the things Todd has accused me of he has done some version of himself. I assume that is how he comes up with them."

Todd said Starr didn't include him in medical decisions about Caroline, even though he was at the hospital during her stay and was part of meetings with hospital staff who ensured he was included.

He said Starr didn't make them do their homework and pointed to one weekend when they were

## ► 10 THEY TOOK HER CHILDREN

behind (neglecting to mention they were catching up from the week they had spent with him).

He said that Starr's anxiety was rubbing off on the girls, and that they were enmeshed. He accused Starr of being a gatekeeper and blocking his access to their daughters. He told medical professionals that they couldn't share information with her, misusing his legal custody authority.

It's hard to keep track of all the contradictory statements made that Starr heard from Todd, his attorney, the judge and the court-appointed Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), and it was tough to figure out how to address all the lies Todd told.

But one thing is clear to Starr. "The GAL was famous Minnesota con-man Denny Hecker's ex-girlfriend, and she loved Todd. Where does the court find someone like this?"

She questions whether the GAL had training in domestic violence so she could adequately identify common factors in abusive situations. She's not alone. These and other problems are highlighted in a 2018 Office of the State Auditor report on the Minnesota GAL program.

The techniques Todd used, that of denying, attacking and reversing who is victim and offender, is a common method known as DARVO, studied by various researchers in cases of domestic and sexual violence, but it isn't required in training to become a GAL. In fact, some-

one may become a GAL in Minnesota with only 40 hours of training, and is not required to have any training in child psychology, domestic violence, Cluster B personality disorders, or high conflict personalities. Likewise, judges, attorneys and custody evaluators receive very little training in domestic violence although researchers estimate that the majority of divorce cases that go before judges and aren't settled out of court involve domestic violence, according to the Leadership Council on Abuse and Interpersonal Violence.

"They make you feel like the crazy one because of the crazy things they're doing," observed Starr.

Caroline finally started gaining weight after her hospital stay and the doctor's recommendation that she needed 3,500 calories a day. Despite the fact that she was with mom for all but a few days of her recovery, Todd used it as evidence they were doing better with him, and legal and physical custody and majority of parenting time should stay with him.

It became permanent after the GAL's recommendation in favor of Todd. Judges are known to rarely go against the recommendation of a GAL or custody evaluator. A study by Georgetown University led by Joan Meiers found that when a mom raises concerns about physical or sexual abuse, and a dad counters with allegations of alienation, the courts side with him and mothers lose custody 43% of the time.

The theory of alienation is widely used in family court, but has been repeatedly debunked by scientists and psychologists, particularly those familiar with the dynamics of intimate partner violence and coercive control who see continued abuse versus "parental alienation" or "enmeshment."

"I was raising them without him and they were leading charmed healthy lives from orchestra to sports, to performing in school theatre, to family vacations and summer camps. Suddenly years later he gets to show up, make false claims and put me on supervised visits," said Starr. "You can't make this up. It's unbelievable."

### MISSION TO ERASE MOM

But the switch in houses didn't fix the girls' relationship with their dad, and the girls began exhibiting more signs of anxiety and depression as their lives continued to dramatically change. It is hard for Starr to recall all the incidents of the last few years, and how many times they've been in court.

Todd began his time as primary parent by moving the girls to the opposite side of the Twin Cities from where they grew up and changing school districts. He removed them from their long-time activities, dropped their music lessons, and enrolled them in martial arts (which he is a fan of).

"He seemed to be on a mission to erase everything about me and my parenting choices," said Starr.

Also known as "counter parenting," these tactics are outlined in the Post-Separation Abuse Wheel developed by Tina Swithin of One Mom's Battle. They are common ways people continue to abuse their former partners after separation as their access is limited to the children.

Todd's next wife, who was a competitive woman with no kids of her own, began introducing the girls as her children. She said she was their mom while at school functions and medical appointments. She supported his "fight" for parental rights and managed the daily care of the girls despite knowing their mom was capable and willing.

### CAUGHT IN A TRAP

At 12, Caroline's anxiety-induced weight loss shifted to anorexia, and she was placed in the residential treatment program. When she got out, her dad continued to make comments about her weight and that she "was going to get fat if she ate that."

Mia tried to commit suicide at school. The school released her with the explicit understanding that Todd would bring her directly to the emergency room. Instead, he took her out to dinner before making his way to the hospital. The University of Minnesota psychiatrist Mia saw wrote a letter to CPS stating that she needed to be removed from her father's care immediately because she identified him as the source of her distress, and he believed her when she said she was being abused by her dad.

Starr filed an ex parte motion based on the doctor's findings. But once again, she discovered she was caught in a trap. "Everything you say and do and the kids say or do is more evidence of parental alienation, and not dad's bad behavior," she pointed out.

Another time both girls showed up for a visit and admitted that, without knowing what the other was doing, they had both overdosed on pills the night before at their dad's. They needed immediate medical attention. Later, Starr learned Caroline's psychiatrist had called Todd the day before after an appointment with Caroline, and told him he needed to bring both girls to the ER immediately. She relayed that Caroline had a plan and intended to hurt herself. In her notes, she wrote that Todd agreed to bring them in. Instead, the next day he told Starr they were sick and it might be food poisoning.

There were many follow-up suicidal attempts by Caroline, who said if returning to her dad's house was the only option, suicide was the only way out.

"That period of time was really scary," said Starr.

Todd convinced the court that her daughters were compelled to hurt themselves to be loved by mom. "Why would my kids have to hurt themselves in order to prove their love to me?" Starr asked. She was astonished by the allegation, but has discovered that judges and referees in family court have broad discretion in their cases, which are shielded from public eye. With-

out pointing to evidence, they can rule that a witness is credible or not, and make their decision based on that. Sometimes contrary evidence has been presented disproving the allegations, but this effort by moms is seen as overly aggressive and the evidence gets ignored.

"Their exercise of discretion is so biased," she observed after more than a decade in the family court system, "and they don't have to weigh all the evidence like you do in criminal court. There is no sunlight on these cases."

She believes that a court bias against women is apparent, even in the language used. Todd "informs the court" while Starr "alleges and claims."

Few judges are held accountable in the state for misconduct. The Minnesota Board on Judicial Standards is staffed by fellow judges and attorneys, and has issued only four reprimands in the last five years. There are 289 judges in the state and many referees. The Board received 158 complaints in 2020 and issued only one public reprimand. In 2019, the board received 181 complaints and did not issue a single public reprimand.

Starr has by turns hired an attorney and represented herself, and has spent \$300,000 on a legal battle she calls "frivolous." It could have been resolved by Todd taking steps towards getting to know his children better, such as attending soccer games and recitals, and growing from there.

"When you deal with domestic violence and get away, you think that part is going to end," observed Starr. "But then they weaponize the court system to continue that abuse. And when it is psychological abuse and coercive control, the court is the perfect weapon for them."

### SUPERVISED LIKE A RAPIST

Starr remembers one day when she got a phone call from Mia. "She told me she was more scared than she had ever been in her life," recalled Starr, who felt helpless and shocked. "She begged me to come and get her. I told her I cannot come and get you. I have no legal right."

So, Mia called the police. When they arrived, Todd and his mother-in-law told officers that Mia was just being a difficult teenager.

And then they used it in court to say that Starr was even trying to alienate the girls from their grandmother and was responsible for the police visit. "I was not involved in this," pointed out Starr. "I had no idea where she was." But it didn't seem to matter. Again, if she did something, it was inappropriate. If dad did it, it was somehow her fault, too. "Court is his arena," observed Starr.

"The court kept getting the message that I was relentlessly doing behaviors that were unacceptable because Todd was relentlessly manufacturing accusations," Starr pointed out. And there was no proof. But the court got fed up with it, and issued a sua sponte order that no one had asked for.

The judge ordered supervised visits for her at the highest level available in Minnesota.

She was only allowed to see her daughters at a supervision site typically reserved for those who rape their children but get to see them after they've served their prison time.

She got to see her kids for one hour a week. They were so booked up, she couldn't see them at all for four months.

And she had to pay for all of the supervision costs.

"I don't want anyone to try to imagine how this feels because no parent should have to imagine it," said Starr.

Starr finds it confusing that the court

### WHAT IS DARVO? DENY, ATTACK, AND REVERSE VICTIM AND OFFENDER

It is a reaction perpetrators of wrong doing may display in response to being held accountable for their behavior.

The perpetrator or offender may Deny the behavior, Attack the individual doing the confronting, and Reverse the roles of Victim and Offender such that the perpetrator assumes the victim role and turns the true victim – or the whistleblower – into an alleged offender. This occurs, for instance, when an actually guilty perpetrator assumes the role of "falsely accused" and attacks the accuser's credibility and blames the accuser of being the perpetrator of a false accusation.

"I have observed that actual abusers threaten, bully and make a nightmare for anyone who asks them to change their behavior. This attack, intended to chill and terrify, typically includes threats of law suits, overt and covert attacks on the whistle-blower's credibility, and so-on. The attack will often take the form of focusing on ridiculing the person who attempts to make the offender accountable," said researcher Dr. Jennifer Freyd of the University of Oregon.

still thinks she is the problem parent. Todd has a poor co-parenting relationship with the mother of his third child. Meanwhile, Starr co-parents easily with the father of her third daughter although they are no longer a couple, and they haven't involved the court at all but collaborate on what's best for their children.

She had a psychological evaluation done, which showed little more than a hesitation to trust people. It ruled out Munchhausen by proxy. She was ordered to complete DBT therapy anyway, and she graduated out of it in half the typical timeframe. Meanwhile, Todd's results showed he's likely to blame Starr for his parenting challenges, and lacks attachment to meet the needs of the girls. He hasn't completed any therapy to address those issues.

"If a dad rapes a daughter during his parenting time with her, and she tells her mom what happened, what is mom supposed to do? If she does nothing she is neglecting her responsibilities as a parent, but if efforts to protect the child are made, the child is taken from her and given to the dad. When a divorced mom comes forward, she is accused of telling the daughter to say that to alienate her from dad," said Starr. "I'd like the court to tell us how to manage this."

### COUNTDOWN TO 18

Eventually, dad placed both teens in separate, long-term locked psych facilities although that level of care wasn't recommended by their psychiatrists. Todd refused to sign releases for Starr's involvement even though she was legally allowed to be included. Despite the lack of a court order supporting that, staff followed Todd's directions.

Starr believes that family court is a misogynist system that favors fathers. "Just do what the man wants when he wants it" is the message she's gotten, versus one that puts the safety and well-being of the children as priority.

The system has not given the children a voice, or listened when they're talked about their dad's physical aggression and the coercive control he's demonstrated. "They have sex-



# DID CITY MISLEAD, DOWNPLAY PUBLIC INPUT ON 38TH & CHICAGO SURVEY?

Analysis shows city disregarded comments and downplayed calls to keep intersection closed

By **Jill Boogren**

Since late 2020 Mayor Jacob Frey has made known his intent to reopen the intersection at 38th St. E and Chicago Ave. S. When interim design surveys were returned in spring 2021, he and city leaders were quick to announce public support for doing so. But a close analysis of the postcards shows the city's announcement and report misrepresented survey results and significantly downplayed calls to keep the intersection closed.

The survey, which was sent to 4,000 households in a half-mile radius of the intersection, asked residents to select between one of two options. One, to move the fist sculpture out of the intersection and onto Chicago Ave. Two, to create a roundabout around the fist at the center (as it now is). Each would reopen the intersection to two-way traffic, and no other option was given – a point that was roundly criticized.

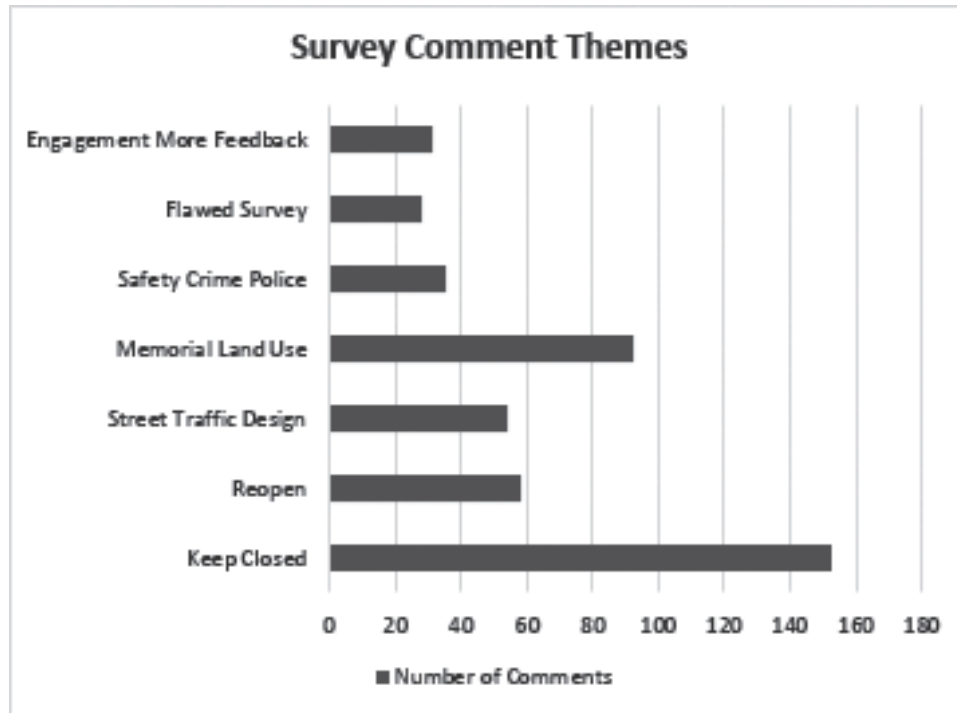
"I did not choose either of the design options, one or two, because neither of them gave the option to continue the street closures and to have any type of option for not allowing regular through traffic, which was a pretty big sticking point," said Katie Dillon, a resident of the 3800 block of Chicago.

Dillon was not alone; some 21% of respondents didn't select an option, with many calling it a false choice or creating and checking a box and calling it a third option.

The city's announcement was based on the total number of responses that had selected one of the two options – 81%, which the city declared as support. But according to Rossana Armson, senior project manager with the University of Minnesota's Office of Measurement Services, combining results in this way was a misrepresentation of the survey and indicative of bad questionnaire design.

"Because you didn't give them any options on the other side. And you're supposed to have balanced choices," said Armson, who was given only the survey structure and generic results, not specific details, for this conversation.

In other words, if the goal was to determine whether there was support for reopening the streets – the outcome announced by the city – then an alternative needed to have been presented. For Dillon, framing the question as they did was by design.



**PUBLIC WORKS GENERAL** Foreman Denny Thoreson (left) tells Resident Katie Dillon Sept. 14 that he is leafletting car windshields that warn vehicle owners that they will be issued citations within a few days if they don't resume parallel parking on Chicago Ave. Changes are being made at 38th and Chicago without getting input from residents. (Photos by Jill Boogren)

"They got responses back that they could interpret to align with their agenda, and that's the information that they published," said Dillon.

### AN OVERLOOKED OPTION 3

What the city failed to mention – and which is not reflected in their survey summary – is that nearly half (49%) of the postcards contained comments on the optional feedback lines. It shows either that choic-



es were not clear or that something else was on people's minds, according to Armson.

"Wow. HALF of them. That's really a lot," said Armson, who as a survey designer would not expect to have more than 10 or 15% of respondents offer extra feedback, and even that would be a pretty big number. "Once it gets up into the 30 to 50%... 50% is ridiculously high. Anything over 30 is really high."

And if those comments included a "write-in" Option 3 that was frequently volunteered?

"That's also an indication that something should have been included as a choice," said Armson. "Because if everybody had an opportunity to respond to that Option 3, who knows what the results might have been."

In this case, Option 3 was clear: comments that favored keeping the streets closed outnumbered those in favor of reopening them by more than two and a half times. Still, despite limitations with the survey, the city chose to combine two of two options and claim it as support.

"I would like to say I think the responses overall indicated a strong two options and good support in the area for reopening the intersection," said Interim Public Works Director Brette Hjelle at an Apr. 1 briefing. The original announced result, that "Eighty-one percent of respondents supported the city's proposed interim design options to reopen the intersection," is still posted on city's 38th & Chicago web page.

"I think it's really telling that they left out that other, that very different - and I would say very critical - piece of information," said Dillon.

### FRESH TALLY

Adjusted to include postcards that arrived after the initial two-week deadline, of 821 total surveys, the percentages of those that had selected Option 1 or Option 2 low-

## ▶ 10 THEY TOOK HER CHILDREN

ual rights in Minnesota, but they don't have the right to come home," said Starr.

Mia spent nine months in treatment and then returned to her dad's for a short time before leaving again. She spent nine days at a homeless shelter. She's now staying with her godparents as she completes her junior year.

She recently got an harassment restraining order against her dad (that he is fighting) because he kept reporting her missing and having police hunt her down. She also witnessed him abuse his teenage son and saw ongoing neglect of his now one-year-old baby, Grace. She's worried about how his inability to cope with a baby crying has continued.

Caroline was in treatment for over a year. Once she got out, her step-mom picked her up and dropped her off at a homeless shelter because she refused to return to her

**1 IN 15 CHILDREN**  
ARE EXPOSED TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE EACH YEAR  
(90% OF THESE ARE EYEWITNESSES)

dad's house. She moved from couch to couch, and landed with a grandparent who helped enroll her back in school where she's a sophomore now.

Both girls remain officially "homeless and highly mobile youth." They live in fear every day that he could cause more problems in court and try to force them back. They continue to deal with a lot of anxiety.

When interviewed separately Mia didn't feel ready to share her experience out of fear. "I just wish he hadn't ruined my childhood," she said.

They're all counting down the days until they turn 18 and can move back in with mom.

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## 12 DID CITY MISLEAD?

ered slightly but remained roughly even.

A key finding, though, is that 405 of 821 postcards contained additional feedback. Of these comments, 153 explicitly favored keeping the streets closed (even on some surveys with an Option 1 or Option 2 selected), while 58 favored reopening them.

The city's report, "Interim Design Survey Engagement Summary," contains a page of themes from the feedback provided by respondents, but none are sorted by frequency. The theme, "Do not implement any design changes until the 24 demands for justice are met," which appeared as a comment in some form more than 100 times, is given similar weight to "Integrate memorial planning efforts into the 38th Street Thrive, Cultural District Plan," which is not written on a single survey card.

Likewise, "Concerns of over-policing occurring in the area" appears alongside "Desire to see an increased police presence in the intersection." Yet of 22 specific references to police, 17 called for police accountability or less police presence while five wanted a greater police presence.

It is noteworthy that relatively few respondents mentioned crime as a reason to reopen the streets, despite repeated assertions by the mayor that the streets must reopen for safety reasons (the idea that crime was going up in George Floyd Square before the city doubled down on its calls to reopen the streets is not supported by MPD crime data, as was reported in the July 2021 *Longfellow Nokomis Messenger*).

"Restore vehicle access, especially for public transit and emergency response vehicles" is listed as a theme. There are eight total mentions of transit or buses and five mentions of safety vehicles. Fifty-four comments addressed street/traffic design, including the viability of a roundabout and pedestrian access to the fist sculpture. Ninety-two gave feedback on the memorial itself and offered suggestions for use of space, including using the church parking lot, the former Speedway (Peoples' Way) and nearby parks.

See "Summary" sidebar at right for the new tally of results. All comments are online at [SWConnector.com](http://SWConnector.com).

### A PATTERN OF EXCLUSION

If the survey comments indicate a hunger for participation, keeping them under wraps demonstrates the city's pattern of keeping residents of 38th and Chicago at bay.

In the April 1 media briefing, Hjelle said their next step is to refine both of the interim options and work "closely with community and city leaders to determine the best option moving forward." The survey summary states under Next Steps that "Public Works will utilize the feedback received to further the interim design."

But as of mid-November – eight months past the survey deadline and five months after the streets

were reopened – there has yet to be a single meeting with residents about how to design the space. This is extremely frustrating to Dillon, who has lived on the block for 10 years and has been asking for over a

“

I didn't choose either of the design options, one or two, because neither of them gave the option to continue the street closures and to have any type of option for not allowing regular through traffic."

Katie Dillon



**38TH AND CHICAGO** survey responses are stored in bundles at City Hall. Comments were offered on nearly half of the 38th & Chicago postcard surveys. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

year for a meeting.

"It's really disappointing. We know that the postcards are not at all indicative of comprehensive community engagement, we know that those fell short. If that's the only mechanism the city has used

to try to communicate with us, that's definitely lacking. It just feels like they've left us completely out in the cold," she said. "It just feels like no one is making it a point to listen to the folks that actually live here in the community, and are ready and willing to have a conversation."

Denny Thoreson, general foreman in the public works department who is frequently on site, said in September that meetings would take place by the end of that month. Now Sarah McKenzie, media relations coordinator responding on behalf of 38th and Chicago Project Contact Alexander Kado, said by email, "The city is planning on holding listening sessions with community stakeholders later this year. A full community engagement process will begin in early 2022." (Oddly, the Capitol Improvement Project PV177 page names Phillips but not Bryant as one of four affected neighborhoods; Bryant meets Bancroft, Powderhorn and Central at 38th and Chicago).

### CITY CONTINUES OPENING SQUARE

Meantime, with neither community input nor notice, work plows ahead at 38th and Chicago. The reopening took place in June without notifying the George Floyd Global Memorial, the board of which is co-chaired by family members of George Floyd. On Sept. 14, residents of the 3800 block of Chicago were suddenly given warnings via leaflets on vehicle windshields to begin parallel parking again or they would be issued citations (for the past year they had been parking at an angle to create space).

Asked why now, Thoreson said the traffic division wanted to get the road back to its original width. But whether that's what it should be hinges on plans for the road, which have yet to be shared or discussed with residents. As of 2016, Minneapolis follows a "complete streets" policy, which "prioritizes pedestrians first, followed by bicycling and transit use, and lastly, motor ve-

“

It just seems like no one is making it a point to listen to the folks that actually live here in the community, and are ready and willing to have a conversation."

Katie Dillon

hicle use" – which impacts street width and design. Though the policy is mentioned on the project page, no details are given as to how this might be implemented at 38th and Chicago.

Work continues incrementally, and – as evidenced by the two-way traffic in every direction – is seemingly designed to put cars first. Asked what directive he is operating under, Thoreson said, "Right now my directive is keep traffic flowin' through here in a safe manner." He said he's also trying to move pedestrians to the sidewalks and keep crosswalks clear.

### MURPHY RANKS MEMORIAL

On Oct. 28, city crews attempted to dismantle the on-street memorial for Dameon "Murphy Ranks" Chambers, who was killed there in June 2020 (calls for an investigation continue to go unmet). A video shared on the 38th and Chicago social media page shows Thoreson telling a resident that the family gave approval, as an audibly distraught person (described as the "family matriarch") is heard off camera saying "No, no I did not. I did not." And later, "LIES!"

The same video includes a clip of the mayor at an Oct. 16 "Mayor on your Block" gathering saying he had no plans to remove the memorial for Murphy Ranks. In another segment he tells the group he shouldn't dictate the look or the feel of the memorial.

"I think we very much should engage with community," said Frey. Yet Dillon said she doesn't feel informed or like she has any input.

"I feel like that's intentional. Because I feel like the city... [has] an idea of what they want to do, and they're going to do it... they'll just come in and do a thing or make a change or what have you," she said. "Even though... they've heard from us enough times, that we want to speak with them. It's incredibly frustrating. Decisions are being made on our behalf for things that affect us literally 24/7, because we literally live here."

Asked who authorized clearing the Murphy Ranks memorial and how the decision aligns with planning underway for the road project, McKenzie wrote: "The city continues to refine the interim design of the roadway facilitating access for the public, emergency vehicles, and transit. Preparing for winter is a priority and we will continue working with the community to respectfully maintain access and ensure snowplows can consistently clear the streets." A planter that was taken from the memorial has yet to be returned.

According to the 38th St. and Chicago

### SUMMARY

821 total surveys were returned, a 20.5% response rate. 405 (49.3%)

Of survey respondents submitted comments, key findings:

- 153 comments stated a clear preference for keeping the intersection closed.
- 116 of the 153 comments expressed No Justice, No Streets and/or Meet the 24 Demands.
- 26 included a link to the document: [bit.ly/georgefloydsquare-a](http://bit.ly/georgefloydsquare-a).

- 58 comments stated a clear preference for reopening the streets.
- 54 comments were street/traffic design considerations, including viability of the roundabout and pedestrian access.

- 92 comments were general remarks about the memorial and/or suggestions for use of space, e.g.:

- 29 suggested moving the memorial to Phelps Park, Powderhorn Park, Say Their Names Cemetery or other location.
- 15 suggested removing the gas station and/or using the church parking lot for the memorial.
- 16 suggested repurposing Cup Foods or closing it down.

- 35 comments mentioned community safety, crime and/or or police.
- Of 22 specific references to police, 17 called for accountability and/or less police presence; 5 wanted more.

- 8 comments mentioned public transit/buses/drivers. 5 mentioned EMS/safety vehicles.
- Of 14 mentions of businesses, 7 suggested reopening the intersection.
- 7 comments suggested waiting to reopen until after the Chauvin trial and/or all four trials.
- 28 commented on the survey as unacceptable or a false choice.
- 31 comments included calls to engage the community plus more feedback.

All survey comments can be found online at [www.SWconnector.com](http://www.SWconnector.com).

Ave. project page, "Public works anticipates preliminary design and public involvement to begin two years prior to the start of project construction." It also lists a project completion date of November 2023. So far, the survey constitutes the most complete gathering of information from neighbors. Yet as of Oct. 7, the postcards were sitting unscanned in paper clipped bundles in file folders inside City Hall.

"I recognize that none of this is easy. But my biggest point is, there's no way that we can go back to May 24, 2020. It's not possible. The city made that not possible when they allowed [Former Officer Derek Chauvin] to kill a person half a block from my house. We can't go back," said Dillon. "And it seems like the city wants to. They need to figure out a different way."

*Editor's note: Katie Dillon co-chairs the Bryant Neighborhood Organization Board, but she was not speaking in an official capacity for this article.*

>> See all the comments online at [www.SWconnector.com](http://www.SWconnector.com)

## LINDEN HILLS ARTIST, EDWARD BOCK

### THE ART OF...

BY SUZIE MARTY,  
ARTIST AND BUSINESS  
OWNER



ADS@SWCONNECTOR.COM



Mixed-media artist and photographer Edward Bock uses unexpected textures, colors and mediums to create abstract paintings and fine art photography. After earning a degree in mass communications from the University of Miami in 1968, he served in the U.S. Army as a motion picture photographer. Later, Bock worked for a private communications firm for one year before he launched his own multimedia and commercial photography business. In addition to his commercial work, he created original works melding painting with photography by experimenting with color palettes, exposure times and image layering.

Deciding to fulfill his lifelong longing to paint, Bock began working in additional mediums, creating rich, multi-layered, abstract pieces. His work focuses on exploring the relationships, interconnectedness and influences of the living world around us. Bock is driven by curiosity, ideas and exploration of

materials. His art is included in both private and corporate collections, and has been featured in many solo exhibitions.

Bock has always been fascinated by how seemingly independent elements of our surroundings and ecosystems are actually hyper-connected and interdependent - everything from known symbiotic relationships in the natural world to the less obvious influences that people and the physical world have on each other. It is a phenomenon that never fails to amaze and astonish. Through his artwork, he explores and reframes seemingly chaotic patterns, colors, and textures, presenting them in a way that peers deeper into unknown relationships that are all

around us.

During the creation process, Bock responds intuitively to what emerges from the unexpected combination of disparate materials. "I do not force the piece to conform to a final vision but adapt to artistic possibilities as they emerge," he said. The "in-flow" nature of Bock's artistic process helps him focus on going deeper and explore the relationships and connections of his subject matter more thoroughly. In each piece, Bock seeks to offer an overarching narrative of interconnectedness.

Some of Bock's signature pieces are walking figures inspired by pedestrian pathway signs. Walking along a public path Bock

became intrigued by the iconic walking figure shapes that were spray painted using a stencil, yet no two figures were alike. Hand carved (with a Dremel tool) from a single sheet of acrylic and painted with acrylic paint, these figures stand 1 inch off the wall, canvas or wood panel. Bock thinks of these human figures as an irregularly shaped canvas on which to explore ideas and abstract expression. As he works on his art, he thinks of how people influence one another and their environment - even by just walking past each other. "We breathe the same air, drink the same water and share unseen microorganisms. These are forms of communication and interaction. We are affected by each other and by the world around us. We live on a cellular level and a cosmic level: Inner Space and Outer Space."

The human or walking figures appear prominently in many of Bock's pieces, combined with color and texture to act as a metaphor for how we appear similar on the surface but harbor hidden individualities. Bock also often combines unexpected elements such as photographic images, metal, fabric, and multiple layers of paint, charcoal, or graphite.

Edward Bock lives and works in his custom art studio in Linden Hills. His work is available through his website and is also represented at the Everett & Charlie Gallery in Linden Hills.

Suzie Marty is an artist and curator at Everett & Charlie art gallery in Linden Hills. She is also an avid supporter of buying local, and a sales representative for the Southwest Connector.

## LIGHT IT UP, KINGFIELD!

### KINGFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

BY SARAH LINNES  
ROBINSON,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



KFNA@KINGFIELD.ORG

MONDAY EVENINGS IN DECEMBER (DEC. 6, 13, 20,  
& 27), 5-7 P.M.

This December, Kingfield neighbors are once again invited to illuminate the neighborhood and get outside to enjoy winter, fight the darkness, and increase community safety by building community!

Be part of the fun! Light up your front yard on Mondays in December from 5-7 p.m. and encourage your neighbors to do the same! Create a walk of wonder through our Kingfield Streets. Light a luminary, drag the fire pit to the front yard, string the holiday lights...the dark is here and together we will keep it at bay!

Build community! Consider making luminaries for your neighbors (or with your neighbors!) at one of our Luminary Workshops hosted at Butter Bakery. Then simply bundle up and invite your neighbors for a walk through the streets to enjoy the glow or

invite them over for a bonfire, hot cider, and marshmallow roasting in your front yard!

Gathering outside in front yards, connecting with neighbors, and enjoying the lights of the season are the perfect antidote to concerns many neighbors have right now about personal safety, the long winter, and the continuing pandemic. Let's get through this together by being present in our community, showing our support for one another, and lifting each other's spirits!

#### NEED SOME HELP? WE HAVE WORKSHOPS!

Luminary supplies, templates, and friendly assistants will be at Butter's Community Table, 3700 Nicollet on Thursday Dec. 2, 9, and 16 from 3-6 p.m. Come meet KFNA and craft with your community. We will also be working to fill Butter Bakery's

big storefront windows with hand-cut snowflakes, sent off into the world with your own special message of hope for the future!

Email [kfna@kingfield.org](mailto:kfna@kingfield.org) if you are planning something special in your yard or on your block and would like KFNA to help spread the word for other neighbors to come wander through your wonderland of lights! Last year Kingfield neighbors showed their creativity by hosting front yard taco and bonfire parties, delivering ice luminaries to everyone on the block, caroling at neighbor's homes that didn't want to come out and brave the cold. Let's continue the fun and community building in 2021!

Brought to you by the Kingfield Block Contacts, working to build community and connect neighbors. To join the Block Contact Group, contact [info@kingfield.org](mailto:info@kingfield.org).

## CLASSES, PLANNING AND REBATES

### LYNDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

BY ERIN CARY



ERIN@LYNDALE.ORG

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONVERSATION

Lyndale Neighborhood Association's Housing, Planning and Development Committee invites you to a Community & Developer Conversation about 3030 Nicollet (former Wells Fargo site) on Monday, Dec. 6, 7-8 p.m., on Zoom. Contact [director@lyndale.org](mailto:director@lyndale.org) to get the link.

Please join us for a conversation about

3030 Nicollet, a proposed development by Project for Pride in Living at the site of the former Wells Fargo that includes 110 units of affordable housing over a rebuilt Wells Fargo branch bank and commercial condos. We'll review detailed exterior and interior plans, potential community uses, sustainability features and more and answer your questions.

Questions should be directed to Project Manager Faith Cabel Kumon at [Faith.Kumon@ppl-inc.org](mailto:Faith.Kumon@ppl-inc.org). See you at the meeting!

#### CLIMATE AND COCKTAILS (CLIMA Y COCTELERÍA)

Tuesday, Dec. 7, 6:30-8 p.m.  
Pat's Tap (3510 Nicollet Ave)

Check out this event co-hosted by LNA, Central Neighborhood and Minneapolis Climate Action to raise awareness about climate change and solar gardens being installed in our areas! Free signature cocktails ("Southwest Toxins"), a raffle, spoken word, and educational materials/presentations will all be happening - come join us! Event info at: <https://bit.ly/3oNZ2bF>

#### FREE ENGLISH CLASSES

LNA's FREE English classes for adults are meeting IN PERSON - join our classroom community as a student or as a volunteer! COVID protocols enforced. We'll be taking a break for a few weeks, but classes start again on Tuesday, Jan. 18.

Classes are held at the Blaisdell YMCA (3335 Blaisdell Ave) - register in person for morning or evening classes! Mornings: Mondays-Thursdays, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Evenings: Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6-8 p.m.

Beginner through advanced-level learners welcome—more info at [www.education.lyndale.org](http://www.education.lyndale.org)

We're also in need of more classroom volunteers - most volunteers commit to one class per week. Professional teachers onsite to support and train you! Information and sign up at [www.education.lyndale.org](http://www.education.lyndale.org) or call 612.824.9402 x15. We'd love to welcome you to our classroom!

¡LNA está ofreciendo clases de inglés GRATIS para los adultos! Las clases se llevan a cabo en persona y hacemos cumplir

los protocolos de COVID. ¡Únete a nuestra clase como un estudiante o un voluntario!

Nos tomamos unas vacaciones por unas semanas, sin embargo, las clases empiezan de nuevo el martes 18 de enero.

Las clases están ubicadas en el gimnasio YMCA de Blaisdell (3335 Blaisdell Ave) - inscribirte en persona para las clases por las mañanas o las clases por las noches. Las clases por las mañanas: Lunes-jueves, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Las clases por las noches: Lunes, martes y jueves, 6-8 p.m.

Hay clases desde el nivel principiante hasta el nivel avanzado. Más información en el sitio web [www.education.lyndale.org](http://www.education.lyndale.org).

Además, necesitamos más voluntarios en el aula - los voluntarios generalmente se comprometen a una clase por semana. Hay maestros profesionales para apoyarte y enseñarte. Encuentre información e inscribirse en [www.education.lyndale.org](http://www.education.lyndale.org) o llame 612.824.9402 x15. ¡Nos encantaría darte la bienvenida en nuestras aulas!

Translation by Kenzie Imhoff

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# TIERRA ENCANTADA OWNER RELEASES CHRISTMAS BOOK

**'An Elf's Journey Home' is geared to helping other parents make holidays special for their kids**

By **Chloe Peter**

From starting her own childcare business to writing a children's book, Kristen Denzer's ideas have been inspired by the ups and downs of parenthood.

Denzer looked around for childcare for her kids in the Twin Cities area and felt disappointed in her options. Many were expensive and waitlists were long. She wanted something that taught her kids about different cultures and languages. Time after time, she came up empty handed. Denzer decided to start her own childcare company.

"There's nothing wrong with [the places I looked at], but if I was going to spend this money and time away from my kids, I wanted it to be something more," Denzer said.

Now, Denzer runs her own childcare company called Tierra Encantada, located at 5750 Wentworth Ave. The company has grown to 11 locations since opening in 2013, and has more locations coming soon in North Carolina, Alabama, and Texas. Denzer remarked that the focus of this Spanish immersion childcare is to serve both the parents and the students with a fully rounded education. While teaching their students a second language, Tierra Encantada staff members also aim to expose them to many different aspects of culture. Books with all different family types and toys of all different races are present in the classrooms. Denzer wants to make sure that all children feel represented.

"When you read these books to children, you expose them to the differences that make humanity special," Denzer said.

With a lot of pressure on parents from the media, Denzer wants parents to feel like they can spend quality time with their children after getting home from work without needing to worry about what their child learned or ate that day. Denzer stated that she even felt incredibly pressured as a parent when she saw a video online of a three-year-old helping do tasks in the kitchen like making her own scrambled eggs and cutting vegetables.

"I think there is a lot of guilt and pressure on parents these days and so I think we are doing our part to help relieve a lit-



**TIERRA ENCANTADA OWNER** Kristen Denzer has been inspired by the ups and downs of parenthood. (Photo submitted)



**"AN ELF'S JOURNEY Home"** by Kristen Denzer is read to a Tierra Encantada class. (Photo submitted)

tle bit of that." Denzer said, "We focus on creating a safe space for our families."

### 'An Elf's Journey Home'

Denzer describes herself as a person who goes all in on her projects and ideas. So when she wanted to find a way to

phase out her children's Elf on the Shelf (a Christmas tradition where a parent moves a stuffed elf around the house each night as though it went back to Santa and told him if the kids were being good) without ruining the magic for her children, she decided to write a book.



"Everything ties back to what I see I need," Denzer said. "I needed childcare... so I opened Tierra; this book [is also] just something that will relieve the pressure and make it easier for parents."



When you read books to children, you expose them to the differences that make humanity special."

**Kristen Denzer**

Because of her background in childcare ownership, she saw the gaps in the market for certain books and toys. She wanted a rhyming scheme that would also have advanced language and vocabulary. For months, Denzer crafted the general themes and characters for her book.

As a self-publishing author, she hired a copy editor, illustrator, and layout designer to help her go over the story over and over again.

"I was going to rush it out last Christmas, but that would've been last minute and I didn't want it to be poor quality, so I decided to do it right," Denzer said.

This Christmas season, Denzer's book, "An Elf's Journey Home," is available for purchase. It can be found through Barnes and Noble, Google Books, Amazon, and more.

Even though Denzer created this book around the Elf on the Shelf tradition, the book itself can be read independently. The brief about the book on Amazon states, "'An Elf's Journey Home' shares one elf's story about his love for his family and how all he really wants is to stay with his family forever. Get a rare glimpse inside the mind of an elf. Learn about his excitement as he waits to be promoted to scout, his feelings on being apart from his family most of the year, and how all he really wants for Christmas is to stay with them year-round."

"As a parent who wants the best for their kids, you can't help but judge yourself a bit from the pressures, but at the centers and through this book, it gives parents the experience that they want their children to have, but may not have the time or energy for," Denzer said.

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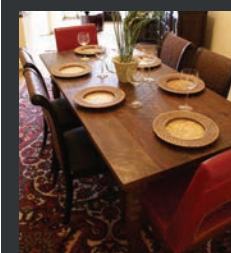
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