

SOUTHWEST Connector

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Teachers, Educational Support Professionals strike for 'safe and stable schools.' All classes canceled.

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

Minneapolis Public Schools has taken the position that the Minnesota Federation of Teachers and Educational Support Specialists Local 59 is asking for more than the district can afford.

The staff on strike since March 8,

Crystal Spring (theater teacher at Washburn and South High), at left, and Melissa Favero (fourth grade teacher at Barton School) picket at Nicollet and 46th St. on March 11. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

2022 don't see things the same way.

"I think it's a question of priorities," said special education teacher David Zekpa. "Where your priority is, you'll put money in."

"The money is there already," agreed Sharon Alton, a speech language pathologist at Justice Page Middle School and Washburn High School. "Historically, the district claims there is no money in contract years and - time and time again - a few months later they have a sudden pot of money. This has happened many con-

tract cycles."

This year, the state of Minnesota is projecting a \$9.25 million budget surplus. "We also need the support of the legislation," Alton added.

Right now, Minneapolis teachers can leave the district and make \$10,000-\$20,000 more in a neighboring district. The average pay in Minneapolis is \$71,000 compared to \$85,000 in St. Paul.

"I could be making \$20,000 more in Minnetonka," said Alton.



Minneapolis hockey team

PLAYERS SAW RESURGENCE COMING

By **Matthew Davis**

As a Minneapolis Storm youth hockey player, Zander Zoia realized he and his teammates had a chance to compete with the state's best someday. Zoia said his last youth team gained a lot from facing squads from hockey powerhouses in Edina, Maple Grove, and Wayzata.

"It was cool being able to play them, so we know what level we could play in the state," Zoia said.

Zoia and his Minneapolis high school varsity co-op hockey teammates brought Minneapolis hockey back to the high school state level this month. Minneapolis beat Delano 3-1 on March 2 to end a 28-year state hockey drought for public schools in the city.

"We knew it as soon as summer training started," Zoia said. "We knew we had the talent to do it."

The Minneapolis co-op formed in 2010 amid the city schools dropping hockey programs. This year's squad hopes this state tournament will grow hockey in the state's biggest city.

"I think representing the city is a huge part for us," junior forward Drew Pitts said. "If we do really well this week at the X, people will start to take notice and start to be like, 'Minneapolis hockey is back!'"

Minneapolis head coach Joe Dziedzic, who won Mr. Hockey with Edison High School in 1990, informed the players after the game how long it had been since a Minneapolis school reached state. Dziedzic played at the University of Minnesota and in the NHL before coaching the Minneapolis co-op.

"I think that's when we all kind of realized like 'gee, we just



CHALLENGING TIMES FOR INTERIM POLICE CHIEF



Southwest Minneapolis resident Amelia Huffman is the city's interim police chief. (Photo courtesy of Minneapolis)

Opinions vary on how longtime Southwest resident Amelia Huffman is managing role as interim police chief

By **Cam Gordon**

Since Jan. 15, 2022, when Amelia Huffman took over as head of the Minneapolis Police Department, she has faced what may be the biggest challenge of her career.

In the days following the police killing of Amir Locke, some have called for her resignation, others are hopeful that her experience and commitment to the city will help her be effective in her role of interim, and possibly permanent, police chief.

Huffman, a longtime Southwest Min-

neapolis resident, grew up in Springfield Ohio, graduated from Smith College, in Massachusetts, joined the Minneapolis Police Department in 1994, and has lived in the city ever since. Now residing in the Cedar-Isles Dean neighborhood, she has also lived in Stevens Square, Uptown and Kingfield.

In the Minneapolis Police Department, Huffman has worked as a patrol officer, as well as an investigator in the financial crimes, crimes against children and internal affairs units. She has served as the public information officer and commander of the homicide and licensing units. More recently, she worked in the southwest's 5th Precinct as a lieutenant, then as inspector, leading the precinct from 2019-2021. Following that, she has been deputy chief under former Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo.

"I look forward to continuing the work

to lead the Minneapolis Police Department toward building a better future in collaboration with our communities," Huffman said at the press conference in December when the mayor announced his decision to nominate her for interim chief. "I've lived in Minneapolis for 28 years and I love my city," she said.

"We have challenges to address to be sure - violent crime, hiring for the future, investing in training and stronger systems - but it is our duty to pick up the work done by chief Arradondo and carry it into the next chapter."

'SMARTEST COP I'VE EVER KNOWN'

She took over at the Fifth precinct when police community relations were tense following the death of Justine Ruszczyk Damond, who was shot and killed by a Fifth Precinct officer.





Educators Sharon Alton, left, and David Zekpa, second from left, chat with Justice Alan Page who stopped his vehicle to talk to those on strike outside the middle school named after him on Friday, March 11, 2022. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)



Washburn social studies teacher Cayla Baumann plays the bucket drum at Nicollet and 46th St. on March 11 on a bitterly cold day. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

2 ON STRIKE

When Alton started in Minneapolis 24 years ago, MPS was number one for salary. "It's dropped considerably," noted Alton, a south Minneapolis resident whose children graduated from South High.

"We've got a problem with declining enrollment. We've got a greater problem with declining enrollment than Saint Paul, but I think that's in large part related to the Comprehensive District Design (CDD). We need to put money in so we can attract students and improve things long run," stated Alton.

Zekpa is a special education teacher at Justice Page Middle School, where he has taught for 17 years. As a teacher of color, he has watched many other teachers of color leave the district for better paying jobs elsewhere and because of how they are treated in Minneapolis Public Schools.

At Justice Page, the majority of students are students of color, while 5 of 60 teachers are.

"The teaching staff does not represent the students at all," said Alton.

'YOU CAN DO BETTER AT MCDONALD'S'

"One of the reasons I value union membership is that we've got protection," said Alton. "We've got people who are looking out for everyone."

"When we are united, we are strong," remarked Zekpa. The last Minneapolis teacher strike was in 1970 and lasted for 14 days. All classes in Minneapolis were canceled beginning Tuesday, March 8,

and remained through the *Connector* press time.

As a teacher, Alton is making a living wage although it isn't competitive with other districts, she pointed out, but education support professionals (ESPs) are making only \$24,000 a year.

"That salary makes it hard to fill positions," said Alton. "There are hundreds of open positions in March. There are positions that have been open all year. That's hard on kids. That's hard on the people who are here. People are pushing to do the best by kids but there aren't enough people to do right by our kids."

Zekpa added, "You can do better at McDonald's."

He pointed out that due to the vacancies, "You end up doing the job of three people."

"ESPs pay the same health insurance premiums as principals," observed Alton. "So health insurance is a huge percentage of their gross pay relative to principals."

For teachers, not having enough ESPs means that they spend less time teaching and more time on discipline issues. They don't have enough help to complete required paperwork, make phone calls to parents, and give students individualized attention. ESPs also help with bilingual students.

The issues are compounded by staff shortages in every area of the school. For a couple weeks this winter, Justice Page had no deans for 1,100 students. The deans manage discipline issues at the school. They should have three, and now have one.

Mental health issues have gone up,

especially in the last two years as the world has dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic. In his special education classroom, Zekpa observed his students regress, demonstrate resistance, and refuse to do any work.

"There have always been students who had mental health needs, but the numbers have increased dramatically," said Alton.

The Minnesota Federation of Teachers and ESPs Local 59 is negotiating for increased mental health professionals in schools.

Justice Page has mental health staff, but it isn't enough to manage all the needs, according to Alton. "Their schedule is full in September. There are not enough spots for students who have needs."

She added, "Our social workers are filling in at the front office for lunch breaks. Our social workers are being pulled in a thousand directions, and that makes it so much harder to be responsive to student needs."

Teachers have to do more than just education basics, observed Zekpa. "Teach-



Washburn High School educators picket for smaller class sizes, living wages, mental health supports, and safe, stable schools on March 11. Another sign said: On strike for a school board that fights for students. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

ing is not just pumping learning into the head of a child. It's about having a holistic approach."

"Anxiety is more of a health need but it absolutely impacts education. We can't ignore it because students can't ignore it," said Alton.

They both hope to be back at work soon.

"The quality of schools make a huge difference in the quality of a city," said Alton. "We want better. We can do better for Minneapolis and our kids."

*** Find photo galleries and updates @ www.SWconnector.com**

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EXPLORING 'RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS'

Student art part of exhibit at Mia

By **Eric Erickson**

As an art teacher at St. Paul's Como Park High School, Sydney Willcox seeks to connect student creations with their own lived experiences.

A recent collaboration with local artists allowed that goal to flourish, both for her students and the larger community. Thirteen Como students enrolled in Sydney's painting classes produced pieces that became part of the "Racism as a Public Health Crisis" exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia).

The idea of addressing racism through art was presented to Sydney in early September of last year by Sheila McGuire, head of learning at Mia. McGuire suggested 7-10 student participants. Without yet knowing her students, nor who may be willing to put in the extra time commitments, Sydney presented the opportunity to all her painting classes.

The initiative included four virtual workshop sessions, three of which already aligned with Sydney's lesson plans. The willing and able students collaborated with professional artists in the areas of idea generation, materials/technique, individual artmaking, and group collaboration.

"All four teaching artists, Kprecia Amber, Akiko Ostlund, Juan Lucero, and Nancy Ariza have wonderful ideas and very different presentation styles," Sydney said. "Observing the similarity of goal and the difference in style is causing me to reflect upon both my teaching and my making practice. I am as enriched by the experience as our Como students."

Freshman Amaya Sanders expressed gratitude about the artistic journey. "It's nice to know we have a voice and that we can share our stories in different ways," Sanders said.

As for guiding her students through the project and the complex subject of "Racism as a Public Health Crisis," Sydney did not see herself as the teacher who needed to provide direct instruction.

"As a person of privilege, I felt I could not instruct how students express their experiences. Instruction in this case is to provide access, then get out of the way," Sydney said.

As for technique, the professional artist input was inspirational and empowering. It allowed student voice and individual ex-



Como students worked with professional artists to create screen prints as part of their exhibit in the Minneapolis Institute of Art. (Photo by Como art teacher Sydney Willcox)

pression to shine through the process and not be limited by specific art principles.

With an abundance of rich, colorful expressions being produced, the number of Como students chosen to share their work in the Mia exhibit was increased beyond the originally stated target. Similarly, art was emerging from students at two other selected high schools: Minneapolis North and the Minnesota Transitions Charter School.

By November, Mia was ready to open a new public art exhibition in their Community Commons Gallery featuring the student artwork. Sponsored by Blue Cross

“

It's nice to know we have a voice and we can share our stories in different ways.”

Amaya Sanders

and Blue Shield, the exhibit provided the local artists and high school students a chance to share their unique perspectives on how race relates to our public health. Through their own works, and through mentoring of the students, the local professional artists created an authentic community partnership. A Mia press release from McGuire said the exhibit created multi-generational "conversations about the impacts of systemic racism inside and outside of Mia."

In January, Mia hosted an in-person reception for the contributing artists.

In pre-pandemic times, field trips to an art institute might have happened for some fortunate high school art students. But for high school students enrolled in a beginning painting class... going to the Minneapolis Institute of Art to see your own art on display?

Como junior Fuad Abdi said, "That was pretty cool."

Asked to summarize how her students reacted, Sydney simply said, "Awe."

"Awe, at the museum. Awe, that they are part of the experience. There were so many people there and news cameras."

She added, "I'm grateful for the opportunity to bring students to Mia. Mia is this terrific community resource. I want our students to be able to know of it, enjoy it, see themselves, and their experiential expressions in the museum."

MINNEAPOLIS HOCKEY

did something huge," Pitts said.

Minneapolis went 19-6-1 and earned a No. 5 ranking in the Class A poll. The team also earned the No. 1 seed in the section for the first time in program history.

"We didn't get that because of a lucky game or a lucky stretch. We got that because we were pretty consistent throughout the season,"

“

We didn't get that because of a lucky game or a lucky stretch. We got that because we were pretty consistent throughout the season.”

Zander Zoia

Senior forward Jack Hanson led Minneapolis in scoring with 24 goals and 28 assists. Zoia, also a senior forward, netted 11 goals and a team-high 29 assists. Senior goalie Alex Lamont held teams to 2.18 goals per game and had an .899 save percentage.

The team lost 4-1 to Alexandria in the quarterfinals on March 9, and beat New Prague 5-2 in the consolation semifinal on March 10. Hermantown beat Warroad 3-2 to claim the Class A title in the Minnesota State High School Boys Hockey Tournament.

This year's Minneapolis program consists of players from South, Southwest, Washburn, and Edison high schools. Despite being spread across four of the seven public high schools, the players consider their team really tight.

"A lot of people think it's like this big divide when we get to high school, but we've been playing youth hockey since we were five or six with each other," Zoia said.

The team's success led to bigger crowds at Parade Ice Garden toward the end of the season, especially youth night where the team played in front of a packed house.

"It was electric," Lamont said.

Many of the players grew up cheering for the Minneapolis varsity team amid playing youth hockey in the Storm program.

"They might not know my name, but I know most of their names," Zoia said.

Minneapolis players hope the state will know their names and their city's renewed hockey tradition more now, too.

BRIEFS

AUDIT OF SOUTHWEST LRT LINE PASSES HOUSE

On a 129-1 vote, the Minnesota House of Representatives passed legislation that funds and requires the Office of the Legislative Auditor to conduct a review and evaluation of the Metropolitan Council's Southwest light rail project. The 14.5-mile passenger light rail that runs from downtown Minneapolis to Eden Prairie was expected to open in 2023 and cost about \$2 billion to build, but the opening has been pushed back until 2027 and is millions of dollars over budget. The author of the legislation of the legislation in the House is Representative Frank Hornstein, who said, "Minnesotans need answers to why this project is delayed and significantly over budget." The legislation next goes to the Senate where Senator Scott Dibble is the sponsor.

2022 OPEN STREETS

The city council has approved five Open Streets events for this year with the caveat that the events, like last year, could be canceled with at least eight weeks' notice ahead of time depending on the health risks related to the pandemic. The five events are as follows: Lyndale, from W. 22nd St. to W. 42nd St. will be held on

Sunday, June 5; Franklin from Portland Ave. S. to 26th Ave. S., Sunday, July 10; Lake Street from 2nd Ave. S. to 22nd Ave. S, Saturday, Aug. 13; West Broadway from Penn Ave. N. to N. Lyndale Ave., Saturday, Sept. 10; and Minnehaha from E. Lake St. to E. 46th St. on Saturday, Oct. 1. During the festive events, the streets are closed to motorized traffic and open for use by people walking, rolling, and bicycling. They are free and provide an opportunity for people to engage in physical activity, meet their neighbors, and discover new businesses in different neighborhoods around the city.

MUSEUM OF RUSSIAN ART SUPPORTS UKRAINE

The Museum of Russian Art (TMORA), located at the corner of Diamond Lake Road and 35W at 5500 Stevens Ave., is showing support for Ukraine with a blue and yellow display on its exterior. According to their website the museum is "North America's only museum devoted to exploring the art and culture of Muscovite Russia, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, its former republics, and post-Soviet Russia," and it "stands with the people of Ukraine and urges Russia to cease hostilities immediately and withdraw." On Thursday, March 10 from 7-8 p.m. TMORA co-hosted a webinar titled Ukraine: Genocide, Repression and War.

They also want people to know that the following organizations are all accepting donations to help the people of Ukraine: GlobalGiving, International Rescue Committee, Doctors Without Borders, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. For more about the museum see <https://tmora.org/>.

CITY HIRES DIRECTOR OF RACE & EQUITY

The city of Minneapolis has hired Tyeastia Green to be their new executive director of Race & Equity. Green will be leaving her job as director of Racial Equity, Inclusion & Belonging for the city of Burlington, Vt. and returning to her the state she grew up in, to take the position starting on March 28. Green will lead the Division of Race & Equity that works under the city coordinator and has been without a director since the departure of Joy Marsh Stephens in August of 2021. It is focused on dismantling systemic disparities and institutionalized racism in Minneapolis to improve the lives of residents. "Minneapolis is home to me," Green said in a statement issued by the city. "I'm looking forward to taking on this role and making sure that equity is built into the fabric of the city's operations. We need to ensure that race isn't a determining factor in any measurable outcome."

PARKS EXTEND HOURS DURING TEACHER STRIKE

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board extended hours and recreation activities for children in grades K-8 at 10 recreation centers during the Minneapolis Public School teachers strike. The 10 "hub site" recreation centers are open Monday-Friday, 12-9 p.m. From 12-3 p.m. sites offer free, fun, engaging and structured activities for up to 45 youth in grades K-8. Registration is required, which can be done in-person or online. Youth not registered for the 12-3 p.m. activities can drop in any time after 3 p.m. The 10 sites are: Bryant Square Recreation Center, 3101 Bryant Ave. S.; Creekview Recreation Center, 5001 Humboldt Ave. N.; East Phillips Park Cultural and Community Center, 2307 S 17th Ave.; Longfellow Recreation Center, 3435 36th Ave. S.; Luxton Recreation Center, 112 Williams Ave. SE; Lake Nokomis Community Center, 2401 E. Minnehaha Parkway; North Commons Recreation Center, 1801 James Ave. N.; Northeast Recreation Center, 1530 Johnson St. N.; Sibley Recreation Center, 1900 E. 40th St.; Whittier Recreation Center, 425 W. 26th St. The 37 other recreation centers will maintain normal hours of 3-9 p.m.



Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

STILL AN INTERN AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

I often tell people that I came into my current work in community newspapers as the "Intern Who Never Left." The statement usually draws a smile and perhaps a look of surprise since most employees today never make it past their two-year anniversary, as studies suggest, but in fact, my statement is not far from the truth.



By Denis Woulfe

As a senior at Hamline University in 1979, I had already edited the student run *Hamline Oracle* my junior year and thoroughly enjoyed my experience. I had a talented staff who were devoted to the *Oracle* and its mission of bringing high quality news to the Hamline community, but we were also a close group of friends and colleagues who enjoyed working together, often engaging in vigorous debates on a wide range of topics. We invariably knew what was happening at the University before anyone else given our role in the media and we enjoyed a network of acquaintances that spanned every academic and athletic department on campus. We even shared part of our newsroom with the staff of the Hamline Law School's newspaper, which was a section within the undergrad newspaper. It was my first experience, in a real sense, with community journalism.

Several of my staff members went into journalism as a profession. One of my assistant editors bought a newspaper of her own in a western suburb of the Twin Cities years later, becoming quite successful as a community newspaper publisher. Another assistant editor worked for a number of outstate dailies upon graduation, won numerous press awards, and eventually landed high profile jobs in Washington, D.C., working for a DFL congressman and later a well-known vice-presidential running mate who bragged that she could see

Russia from her home state.

But in the spring of 1979, upon my own graduation, I accepted the offer of full-time employment from deRuyter-Nelson Publications, and moved from my dorm at Hamline to a modest upper room in a home on the 1400 block of Van Buren in the Midway. *Monitor* headquarters at the time was located at Thomas and Fairview, so my commute each morning, as you can imagine, was a matter of minutes. It was my first full time job and my introduction into the work world.

While I started as editor back in 1979, my path in journalism has been a circuitous one. While I wrote and assigned stories for the *Monitor* and edited copy, I also did typesetting for the graphic arts division of our operation and eventually started selling advertising for the *Monitor* in addition to my editing responsibilities. One of our typesetting clients were the owners of the *Longfellow Messenger* (before it expanded into Nokomis), who approached us about buying out the *Messenger*.

As the company and its commitment to community journalism grew over the years, the decision was made to redirect my time exclusively to marketing and advertising. Today, with new owner TMC Publications, my work continues in 2022 selling print and digital advertising for the *Monitor*, the *Messenger* and our newest newspaper, the *Southwest Connector* in southwest Minneapolis. And our commitment to community journalism continues to grow.

And while we no longer have our headquarters in the Midway – for many years we officed out of Iris Park Place which now is the base for Sejong Academy – I have been fortunate to remain connected to the communities we serve in various ways. I sit on the Hamline University Annual Fund Board which helps to raise money for scholarships and financial aid for Hamline's best and brightest. I also sit on the board of the Longfellow Business

Association which has been working with other community organizations the past two years to help rebuild Longfellow after the tumult from COVID and the civil unrest.

But despite all the changes I've seen to the communities we serve and the incredible evolution of our newspaper industry as a result of the changes in technology over the years, I have remained steadfast in my belief that community journalism is important now more than ever before. As our nation has navigated the challenges of the pandemic and dealt with contrasting story lines about the virus and best practices, it does not escape notice that readers have needed the integrity of the Fourth Estate to help them navigate uncertain times and assist them in sorting out fact from fiction.

And I'm proud to be working in a profession which helps provide quality information to readers who are anxious to find out what is happening in their neighborhoods - to their neighbors, to the businesses down the street from where they live, to their elected officials, and to all the little things that make their community what it is, to their quality of life.

But beyond that, I'll just come out and say it: I still continue to see myself as an intern after all these years. I'm still a student constantly learning new things about our industry and about the clients that we serve. I've always been a believer in lifelong learning and the more I have learned the more I have realized that there was more I needed to learn. That's right: Keep reading, keep learning, and keep sharing what you learn with others in your community by supporting community journalism!

TMC Publications sales representative Denis Woulfe has worked on both the editorial and advertising sides of newspapers, and relishes the opportunity to work with area businesses on developing marketing plans and finding solutions to reaching their audience.

REINCARNATING WASTE



LETTERS

I'm a tree hugger/nature lover. Since I was five years old, I have been daydreaming about how to help. I believe I have figured out how I can make an impact.

I'm proud not ashamed to take materials from construction/ renovation dumpsters and make them into useful things. I see it first hand, there is an outrageous amount of good materials that are trucked to the landfill everyday from these dumpsters. Just within a mile radius of my house, it's ridiculous. The contractors I talk to don't like to do it, but they don't have time or immediate uses for the materials they toss in the dumpster. The "Reclaimed Lumber" industry focuses on barns and old factories where there is larger amounts of high quality wood in one place. This beautiful dumpster wood is trucked to the landfill in small, medium, sometimes large quantities everyday. I've built many things for our family with these materials that would have rotted in the landfill. They seem better than new things.

I'm starting a business. I won't be shipping anything. Shipping things across the country that are made of waste seems to kill the eco factor. Instead I hope to develop a profitable business model, products, best practices for safely and legally acquiring this material and a sales platform (an improved/more expensive version of the current website that I made) that will all be free to use/copy for others that share this passion. The dream is to help enable other handy people to find waste, build with it and sell it, measurably reducing the need for new lumber and steel. This would be flexible work that helps reduce waste which helps everything on this planet. Can you help me get this going!!!!? www.reincarnationcorporation.com.

Jeremy Marshik
Kingfield

We want to hear from you.

news@SWconnector.com

THE TOKEN POC

I glanced around the room, hoping something would be different this time. Entering yet another door into yet another room. The same kind of room I was just in, funny enough. Crowded, chatty, even a little bit welcoming. But still the same room with the same. Exact. People.



By Abha Karnick

"Oh, you know Abha, right?...Yep, she was adopted!"

"She's right over there! She's from India."

"I think she's the only one here."

Each sentence wraps vines around the cold reality that everywhere I went as a child, I was the token POC. The choice kid of color, the "adopted" kid, the "shortest," "smallest," or "darkest." I shivered with nervousness whenever we left the city, wishing with all my heart to avoid the

rural individuals' stares and double-takes.

Heads turned, whether they meant to or not. I couldn't change it, the looks, the stares, the color. I scrubbed soap into my skin, my six-year-old body begging to become white to blend in. To "look like my family."

I listened quietly as White people in my upbringing remained the center of conversations revolving around social justice, Black lives matter, and other movements. It felt backwards, but who was I to know?

I bit my tongue as White mommas asked me "when I came here" and if I "felt lucky to be in a loving family?" I strained my ears to overhear judgment and pity kissing pride and White saviorism.

"An expensive matter, adoption was," they'd say.

Opening doors years down the road looked the same, speaking volumes to how stalled a society is. I continue to sit as the token POC in my career. I exist as the only POC in my household, with my childhood friends, in the average White church. I'd go on, but I think you get the picture.

These rooms are disheartening and soon enough, I found myself avoiding entering them at all.

White-washed walls have an unpleasant glare.

Transracial adoption isn't easy or pretty or perfect. It's messy and painful and hard. But hold room for something unexpected and beautiful because amidst these shallow realities can live love and patience and boldness. Speak boldly for your children, listen carefully when they don't want to visit your friends again, think deeply when you bring them places where they're a minority. The world has much to offer. Don't shrink its size by taking away all the types of people in it for your children.

They need to see themselves in others. Implement that, even when it feels unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Let them grow up and confide in someone that looks like them, even when it feels painful. Model for them what a diverse society best looks like, what painting white walls and breaking glass ceilings looks like.

Let them explore their origins, their roots, their cultures and religions and

countries. Let them decide who they will be, who they want to be. This in itself is the most loved version of themselves you can give them.

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.

In Newspapers, We Trust

"When looking for general news and information, how much would you trust each type of source for general news and information?"

In the latest Edelman Trust Barometer, **61% answered traditional media.**

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BTW
Who finished last?
Social media

Source: www.edelman.com, where you can download the 2020 report.

SOUTHWEST Connector

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CAN WE HANDLE THE TRUTH?

It's time to face painful and violent history in an honest way so Minneapolis can move ahead

I was talking with my 80-something neighbor the other day while shoveling snow. He's a veteran who was an engineer in the United States Army and is a wise man. Having lived in Uptown for over five decades, he's had a front-row seat to our neighborhood history. We were talking about current events and all that's happening in the world and our city.



By Eric Ortiz

"Who even knows what the truth is anymore," he said.

It got me thinking about the truth. Everything starts with truth. Truth leads to trust, and trust leads to cooperation. With truth, anything is possible.

Without truth, no relationship of any kind can exist. There is nothing to build on. We can never get to trust. If you can't trust someone, how do you know they are telling the truth? And if we never get to trust, we can never get to collaboration. We can never work together toward a com-

mon good. Without truth, what do we have? Division. Suspicions. Prejudices.

Our reality today is filled with deep divisions and a lack of objective truth. There is no consensus. Not on a global scale or the local level. This lack of truth sows uncertainty and doubt. "We'll know our disinformation program is complete when everything the American public believes is false," CIA director William J. Casey said in 1981.

We may not be that far gone yet, but we are at a critical crossroads. According to the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer, government and media have fueled a cycle of distrust, with nearly 50 percent of respondents (36,000+) viewing them as divisive forces in society. Two-thirds (67 percent) of people globally believe journalists purposely try to mislead people. But it's not just about government and media. There's also a lack of trust in each other, which is even more troubling. We need a truth-telling process that is centered around restorative practices.

Circle processes, following in the Native American tradition, can help do this work. Circles are a versatile peacemaking and restorative practice. They can bring people together in a proactive way to build community or be used in a reactive way to address wrongdoing and conflicts. There are different kinds of circles, but they all provide people with an opportunity to see, speak and listen from the heart in a safe, respectful environment

that promotes equality and transformative growth. They are nothing like the stereotypes some critics project, where everyone holds hands and sings "Kumbaya."

I participated in my first circle process recently, completing 30 hours of Indigenous restorative practice circle training over four days with the Koinonia Leadership Academy. Led by Dr. Talaya Tolefree and Pastor Darrell Gillespie, our circle was a diverse mix of 15 people with all different backgrounds and lived experiences. Most of us didn't know each other when we started, but by the end of the week, after an outpouring of truth, we built trust and developed a strong kinship and connection. The circle process was a powerful experience that opened my eyes and heart to the power of circles and their potential uses in communities, schools and other places.

We plan to use the circle process in our community peacebuilding work through LHENA, but it can play an even bigger role in Minneapolis to heal old wounds and resolve longstanding conflicts. It's time to face painful, violent history in an honest way so the city can move ahead. With circles, we can confront local problems and come to terms with the city's history of racial terror and violence – police violence and community violence. A truth and reconciliation commission could help stop the violence, forge peace and chart a new path forward. Circles are not a cure-all, but they will be a start.

Fania Davis, a leading national voice on racial and restorative justice, provided a roadmap in her book, "The Little Book

of Race and Restorative Justice." We can look to other places that have used truth and reconciliation commissions to move forward, such as South Africa in 1994 after apartheid, Canada in 2008 to redress human rights violations against aboriginal children, Greensboro (North Carolina) in 2004 to address white supremacist violence and perceived police complicity, and Sierra Leone after their 11-year civil war ended in 2002.

We could adapt these models to create a truth and reconciliation commission that meets our needs in Minneapolis. The community would have ownership of the process and lead the commission, with support from the state, but maintain complete independence. This process would bring together multiple voices – influential community members, police, youth, crime victims, religious and political leaders – for public ceremonies of truth-telling and forgiveness between the parties causing and experiencing harm. It would be facilitated by experts in the restorative process.

A step toward ending the epidemic of violence and rehumanizing all people.

To learn more or get involved, visit bit.ly/mplspublicsafety.



Eric Ortiz lives in the Wedge with his family. When he's not community building, he's the director of media for Granite Media and writes bilingual children's books with his kids. Their first book was "How the Zookalex Saved the Village," available in English and Spanish on Amazon.

A NEW ERA OF NEIGHBORHOOD/CITY RELATIONS

STORIES & JOURNEYS

Imagine for a moment that you are a spiritual guide and poet. You share your Celtic heritage and love for your native landscape of west Ireland. Your name is John O'Donohue. Now back to reality. Into the river of life experience, you have joined me in taking the plunge, by reading Stories and Journeys. The following words from John O'Donohue, in his poem called "Fluent," captures for me (and I hope for you) the essence of this experience. Just as I do, he uses the river as a metaphor for the flow of life. He writes:



By Donald L. Hammen

*I would love to live
Like a river flows,
Carried by the surprise
Of its own unfolding.*

Unfolding for me in the river of life experience this time is a column, inspired largely, by an article written by Tesha M. Christensen, called "What does 'unbiased' really mean." Upon reading Tesha's commentary, I found my awareness raised. I was engaged to the point of underlining a lot of it and writing in the margins.

Typically I don't do this with newspaper articles. I even found myself engaged in conversation with Tesha, even though she was not in the room. Again, not typical! Getting my attention were the following words:

"Recently the city insisted that to access funding, Nokomis East Neighborhood Association had to agree that they won't hire a person who lives in the neighborhood as their executive director."

Back in the day, this elder served several terms, on the Longfellow Community Council (LCC) Board of Directors. During most of that time, if not all of it, Melanie Majors was executive director. Melanie did not live in Greater Longfellow. IT WAS THE CHOICE OF LCC THAT MELANIE MAJORS BE OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NOT THE INSISTENCE OF THE CITY. Melanie served us for 14 years.

For about five years of my life, I did what I could to be part of an effort called Save NRP (Neighborhood Revitalization Program). For about 20 years, thanks to NRP, the city had what I call empowered neighborhood organizations. Apparently, in the eyes of the city, too much empowerment. Now as NRP is allowed to go by the wayside, we have something that appears to be more like city engagement with neighborhood organizations. And what does city engagement get us? The

kind of scenario playing out in Nokomis East for one thing.

I am clear in my own view, that what is playing out where the city and its neighborhood organizations are concerned is about power and control. Who wins? Who loses? Who gets to decide? Power and control is THE CONTEXT where the city in relation to its neighborhood organizations plays out. It is a context with a story and a lengthy history. A context that created the need for NRP in the first place. And what enabled NRP to come into existence? It was not at the insistence of the city. Far from it! It was neighborhood leadership going to the state legislature that enabled NRP to come into being.

Today we appear to be entering into a new era of city/neighborhood relations. This is why I appreciated the article by Eric Ortiz in the Dec. 2, 2022 *Southwest Connector* called "Time to build bridges with the whole community: Neighborhood associations are helping bring people together to create solutions for Minneapolis." In this article, he writes: "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." (*Find columns mentioned on our websites.*) If we find ways to collaborate and as appropriate have each other backs, this might work.

There are three times when I have been featured in the *Messenger* in ways not likely in any other media outlet. Today I am learning and growing as a columnist writing Stories and Journeys. Community journalism in south Minneapolis has become an integral part of my life.

Where do you find yourself on this unfolding river of life experience called city/neighborhood relations are concerned? Tell yourself, share with others or tell me at news@longfellownokomisemessenger.com.

In gratitude. Stay tuned.

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Source: "Demand Generation," Feb 2021, Mindshare/MediaCom/Wavemaker/GroupM/Gain Theory. The payback series analyzed the ROI of 60 brands with annual turnover of \$23b, and \$450m in advertising. Data is based on 14 finance brands. Total News is primarily based on print and magazine data.

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE: HEALTH CLUB FOR AGING BRAIN

A conversation with the new director, Kate Schaefer

By **Susan Schaefer**
UNDER THE HOOD

It is widely known that aging is accompanied by varying rates and degrees of cognitive decline. However, neuroscience research has revealed that by keeping physically, socially, and mentally active and engaged, we are able to mitigate, and even reverse decline.

Here in the Twin Cities, we are fortunate to have a resource that offers highly participatory lifelong learning, and solid camaraderie and engagement. Best of all, accessing it is convenient from all corners of our metro area.

The University of Minnesota's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, better known as OLLI, is a respected and vital part of the University's College of Continuing and Professional Studies. Geared toward those over 55, anyone is welcome to join and participate.

Here's a little history:

In 1977, business executive and philanthropist, Bernard Osher, founded his self-named Bernard Osher Foundation to improve the quality of life through support for higher education and the arts, funding colleges and universities across the nation, with special attention to re-entry students. Investing significant funds through generous endowments, the foundation supports 125 lifelong learning programs on university and college campuses across the country, with at least one grantee in each of the 50 states and the District



of Columbia. Founded in 1995, UMN's OLLI has been recognized as an "exemplary lifelong learning program" by the foundation.

Despite the upheavals caused by the pandemic during the past years, OLLI has managed to pivot and cope. There have been a few changes. The main office recently moved from its former location in the McNamara Alumni Center on UMN's East Bank to its new home in Coffey Hall on the St. Paul Campus.

Also new is OLLI director, Dr. Kathleen (Kate) Schaefer, who brings a wealth of experience, leadership, vision, and passion to the role. We met virtually with Schaefer, who is a licensed psychologist, leadership coach, and educator, who has served as the AARP-MN Volunteer State President, and is a founding member of the Nexel Collaborative, a higher education consortium of institutions exploring ways to bring older adults back to campus. Schaefer graciously answered our questions:

OLLI has been referred to as a "health club for the aging brain," with much research dedicated to how intellectual and social enrichment help counteract cognitive decline. What are your thoughts about this as the new, incoming executive director?

Healthy aging is more than physical. It is about staying active and engaged, from a physical, mental, and social perspective. Staying curious, and being open to new learning opportunities, is good for our brains, but also for our well-being as we age.

OLLI offers opportunities to learn and stay mentally sharp, but it's much more than that. As a learning community, OLLI



During the pandemic outside OLLI classes continued to be popular, which included a drumming circle. (Photo courtesy of OLLI)

members develop deep connections with others who share a passion for learning. OLLI members actively participate in discussions, explore shared interests, volunteer their talents, and plan joint travel experiences. The bottom line: When we are part of learning activities that fully engage us, that invite us to actively participate and engage with others, we benefit on all levels.

What attracted you to taking the OLLI position? What do you bring to the table?

I am inspired by people in my life who approached their later years with a sense of curiosity, purpose, generosity, and joy. Every one of them embraced life as learners and teachers, mentors, and novices. They are my role models for living life fully at any age. I find kindred spirits with

in the OLLI community, and I am honored to play a role in helping this community thrive.

I have spent the last decade of my career focusing on ways to tap the talents of an aging population for the greater good. As an educator, program administrator, researcher, and writer, I centered my efforts on engaged aging, lifelong learning, and building community. Also, I am part of a network of people and organizations that see potential in our aging population.

How have the past years of pandemic and quarantine impacted our OLLI program?

Like everyone, OLLI had to pivot on a dime to convert our programming to virtual. We went



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6 LIFELONG LEARNING

from delivering 100% of our programming in person to delivering 100% online. With 60+ courses each term, this was no small task! We needed to train our instructors on how to teach this way, and help our members get comfortable with using Zoom.

We were all so isolated, especially in those early days of the pandemic. For our members, who were in a high-risk group, this was particularly true for them. We had to creatively explore new ways to connect our members. We are proud of how OLLI helped our members during these troubling and lonely times. We were a lifeline for our OLLI community.

During my time as an OLLI instructor there was much discussion that the membership fee, now up to \$300/year, is prohibitive for some Minnesota seniors. Is there anything being proposed to help defray the cost and/or to subsidize less well-off citizens?

I'm so glad you asked! OLLI offers scholarships to help defray the costs for people in need, through the Miriam B. Seltzer Scholarship Fund. We welcome applications for this scholarship and will help make OLLI accessible and affordable for all who want to join.

It is also important to look at what you get for that yearly membership fee. With four terms, and 60+ courses offered each term, members have access to a plethora of learning opportunities. Plus, members can join special interest groups and take advantage of other offerings. There is a lot of value that comes with an OLLI membership.

Please tell us a little about yourself: Childhood. School years. Education. Profession. Personal life.

I grew up in a tight knit community on the south side of Chicago. With seven



Dr. Kate Schaefer is OLLI's new director. (Photo by Jessica Mealey)

children and a disabled father unable to work, money was scarce. Yet despite those hardships, we thrived, due in large part to the support of our neighbors and community. That early life experience grounded me and taught me the value of being part of a community.

In college, I had two majors: mathematics (because I thought it was practical) and psychology (because I was fascinated with the field). On a whim, I applied to graduate school at the University of Minnesota, and by some miracle was accepted, so that is what brought me to Minnesota. I fell in love with Minnesota, and soon fell in love with my husband, so the rest is history. We have been married 34 years and raised our two daughters here.

I'm trained as a psychologist (my



Ph.D. is in counseling psychology), with much of my career in higher education: developing curriculum, launching programs, and coaching employees as they navigate leadership and career transitions. I have expertise in encore careers and the intergenerational workplace.

My career isn't a straight line, and I'm grateful for that. I have made career choices along the way that have taken me in directions I could not have anticipated earlier in my career. I followed my heart and instincts at times, and it opened a world of opportunities.

As OLLI enters its spring session, what would you like our readership to know that we haven't covered?

OLLI offers something for everyone – we have courses in the arts, science and technology, social sciences, and interdisciplinary fields. From Art of Ancient Greece to The Stories Hidden in Our Genes, we offer a range of options each term (you can find our full OLLI Course Guide on our website). Our courses are taught by an outstanding cadre of instructors who bring topics to life for OLLI learners.

The OLLI community is welcoming! We have special interest groups that allow members to connect around their

passions, like movie appreciation, sharing music or games, or even memoir writing. There are ample opportunities to meet people and develop new friendships through OLLI.

You can join OLLI at any time. We host four terms per year, with the spring 2022 term beginning on March 21. Our website is <https://ccaps.umn.edu/olli>

Author's Note: Classes and events always have been held throughout the metro area, but due to COVID-19 protocols most offerings are now online. With spring 2022 courses just beginning, there's no better time to feed our hungry brains. Happy learning!

Something under the hood is not immediately apparent or obvious. This column will uncover stories that span the neighborhoods covered by TMC Publications. Susan Schaefer is a widely published independent journalist, creative writer, and poet. Her articles appear in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, PBS' online magazine, Next Avenue, Next Tribe, and beyond. She was columnist and features writer for Minneapolis' Southwest Journal and Minnesota Good Age magazine.



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HAVE A COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION

FROM YOUR CENTER WITHIN

Healthy relationships and a sense of belonging and connection contribute to our well-being. How do we improve our relationships and expand our circles of belonging to enhance our own lives and our community?



By Michele Rae

One tool is engaging in courageous conversations. These conversations invite us to remain curious, open minded, listen deeply and ask genuine – even challenging – questions. In respectful conversations, everyone counts.

Courageous conversations are a stark contrast to polarizing or divisive messaging delivered with blame, defensiveness, fear, hostility, imposition. Yes, courageous conversations can be difficult or uncomfortable. They require intention, practice, tolerance, and kindness. They seek to understand and to look for common ground. Having trust in your ability to discuss essential topics directly and honestly is a key to healthy individuals, relationships, and communities.

I was touched by the article on “Long-time Valentines” in the Feb. 17 edition of this paper. In answer to the question, “What do you believe are the keys to the success of your lifelong relationship?” Herman Milligan answered, “Truly loving someone even when there are periods of disagreement about life situations that are major and/or not as important. Learning to take the other person’s point of view and feeling comfortable to raise an issue that should be discussed as opposed to internalizing it and not discussing it at all.”

As a health and wellness coach, client’s often request support increasing their

confidence in courageous conversations. They want to strengthen their ability to respond instead of overreacting in their personal and professional relationships. This keeps their prefrontal cortex and executive functioning active. Who doesn’t need full access to our executive skills: self-restraint, working memory, emotion control, focus, task initiation, planning/prioritization, organization, time management, defining and achieving goals, flexibility, observation, and stress tolerance?

Here is a summary from authentic communication cards I utilize in my practice founded in non-violent communication to assist in developing conversational intelligence.

When preparing for a conversation you anticipate being triggering or tender, consider these components of authentic speaking:

1. Name what you are experiencing without judgment.
2. Share what the impact is on you, including emotions.
3. Ask for what you need and want.
4. Use ‘I’ statements, not ‘you’ statements.

When it is your turn to authentically listen, consider these components of active listening:

1. Mirror back to the person speaking. What I am hearing you say is.... Is this right? Is there more?
2. When the speaker feels heard and understood, summarize the essence of their perspective including experience, feelings, impact, and request.
3. Validate their experience with statements such as “I can understand your perspective”.... or “It makes sense because”...
4. Validating does not mean you agree. It means you heard them, and they count.

“Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.” ~ David W. Augsburger,

How do we utilize courageous conversations to expand our circles of belonging to support healthier communities? Belonging is centered on gaining acceptance, attention, and support to and from members of a group. Connection is essential for optimal health and wellness.

We have, however, seen the damage, polarization, and divisiveness when we engage in othering. If we have the mindset of ‘us’ against ‘them,’ scarcity, hostility toward the unfamiliar or unknown, or to push back against those who are different, we all suffer. Othering is defined as a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across a full range of human differences based on group identities. Invite courageous conversations from ‘others’ who have a different point of view or experience from your own and expand your sense of belonging.

Challenge yourself to notice when you want to impose your opinion on another rather than have a conversation where you both respectfully count. Practice deep listening, seek first to understand then to be understood, expand your mindset, heal our divides. Your skill and willingness to engage in empowering courageous conversations is needed today more than ever. As Albert Einstein is often quoted as saying, “We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them.” It takes courage to co-create a future with the highest potential for all living beings in our communities.

Michele Rae, RPh, MA, NBC-HWC is the founder of The Center Within, LLC and author of “Living From the Center Within: Co-Creating Who You Are Becoming.” She provides holistic coaching designed to accelerate and support personal, professional, and organizational transformation.

PAINTER PARK UPGRADES

A skate park is being planned for Painter Park when the area is upgraded this year. A basketball court will be added, and the tennis/pickleball courts will be improved.

A boulder scramble and gathering area with picnic tables is planned for the south of the pickleball courts. The skate park at the corner of Lyndale and W. 33rd will be surrounded by a terraced seating area and native landscape to help with stormwater.

The 2.95-acre park at 620 W. 34th St. is part of the old Lyndale School site. It was acquired by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board in 1976 when playing fields, playgrounds, tennis courts and a recreation center were built. Playground and field improvements were completed in 2001, with final landscaping touches added in 2002. As with the other two sites, the park board paid for the land with money it had received from the state department of transportation for park land taken for freeways in the 1960s and 1970s. The park is named after Jonathan Painter, the first industrial arts teacher in the Minneapolis school system who created the industrial arts curriculum in city schools.

FREE PARK PROGRAMS THIS SUMMER

Registration fees have been eliminated for all youth programs, activities and sports leagues based at Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) parks, recreation centers and facilities located within census-designated areas of concentrated poverty (ACP). This new policy applies to any Minneapolis resident ages 17 and under signing up for any activity at one of 17 MPRB sites located within areas of concentrated poverty. It applies now for the recently opened summer youth program registration and will continue through at least the end of 2022. See minneapolisparcs.org/register to learn more.

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PREDICTIONS FOR THE LOCAL REAL ESTATE MARKET

TEAMING UP FOR GOOD

In the March 3 *Connector*, I talked about becoming a realtor, and I'd planned this week to offer predictions on what to expect in local real estate over the next weeks, months, and even years. I know it's a risk, but a "prediction" is so much more compelling than a "report," right? Or a "Real Estate Round-up?" (ugh.) A writer needs to grab the reader's attention, so why not go out on a limb and make a claim. ...



By Larry LaVercombe

And then the war broke out in Ukraine.

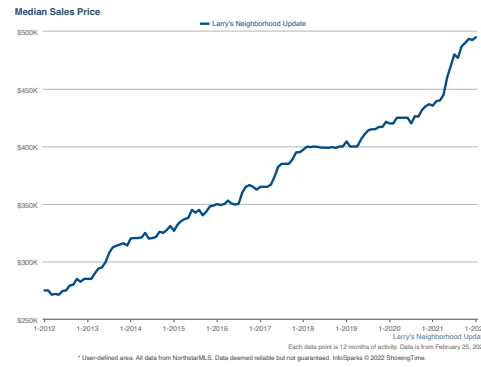
A sick feeling descended upon us, and it seems the only thing that's predictable now is that a lot of people are going to suffer and die, and that we're going to be witnessing trauma and tragedy for months to come....

We bow our heads. Some of us pray. Soon we'll be sending relief money to desperate and displaced families.

In the meantime, life will go on for us, protected as we are here in sunny Minneapolis. We'll feel the heaviness in our hearts, but our lives will go on, as they always do. People marry, people divorce, people are born, people die. We are always moving.

And so, here in our own little bubble.... If you are actually thinking about moving – what kind of market are you heading into? How will the war affect interest rates? Who knows? How will the sanctions affect housing? Who knows? But we know this – life doesn't stop. And so, this much I can say:

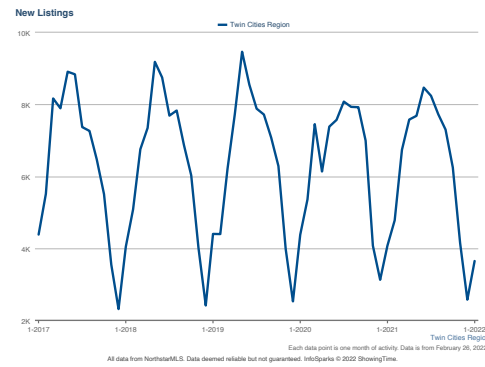
Prediction #1 – Single family home prices will continue to rise. The value of



Southwest Minneapolis 10-year median price appreciation versus days on market.

land, and for single family homes, is still increasing, and despite 10 years of significant appreciation, prices have not even come close to peaking in Minneapolis. Meanwhile, every year, Time-on-Market gets shorter and shorter.

With the 2040 plan, Minneapolis City has encouraged a lot of housing construction, but mostly this construction is taking the form of tall rental buildings. More people will move into the tall rentals, and eventually many of them will want a yard. Thus, demand will increase for single-family homes, and so will their price and value. Consider the last 10 years

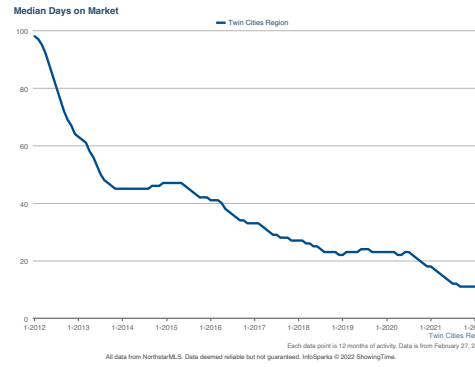


Southwest Minneapolis – Month-to-month new listings compared to homes for sale.

The next Community Advisory Committee is set for April 7, 6-8 p.m. The last 15 minutes are set aside for public comment. CAC members will discuss programming and parking topics that have been raised through community engagement.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has been working for several years on a new long-term plan for Cedar Lake, Lake of the Isles, Dean Parkway and the surrounding parkland and trails. Two draft initial park concepts, along with a plan vision and guiding principles, debuted for public comment in December.

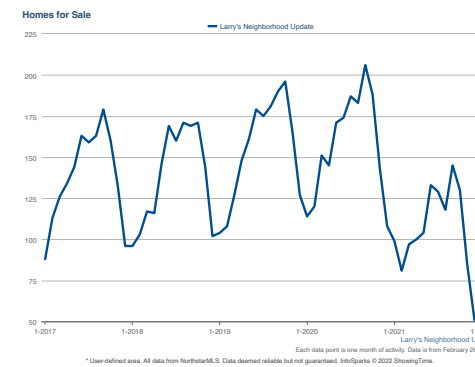
MPRB anticipates the design, engagement and CAC process will continue through late summer 2022, before a draft plan heads to MPRB Commissioners for a



of pricing history in the graphs above, and note these two forecasts for the next 30 years:

- The Twin Cities metro population will hit 4 million by 2050. The Twin Cities region will gain 818,000 residents between 2020 and 2050.*
- 96% of state population growth from 2016 to 2050 is projected to occur within the seven-county metropolitan area. Hennepin County is expected to lead the state in terms of total population growth, adding a projected 339,000 people by 2050*

There is no doubt – demand for Min-



neapolis single family homes is on the rise, and it will continue to rise for a long time.

Prediction #2 – Multiple offers will be the norm in Southwest from now until June. For the last five years, late winter and spring have been highly competitive, and by June, things were slowing down. This seasonality in the Twin Cities market is largely created by seller timing. Note in the graphs below that December has for five years in a row been the month with the lowest number of new listings, and consequently, January and February have been the months with the lowest number of homes on the market.

As this pattern repeats, we see demand far exceeding supply in the months from February to June, and after that, the supply catches up and the market slows. Note to sellers: It's far better to enter the market in May than in July.

Prediction #3 – Okay so, I'll say it here, in my opinion, those first two predictions are sure bets. Slam dunks. So here is something more risky: I predict a 9% increase in pricing this year. Southwest Minneapolis experienced a 9% increase in prices last year, and I predict this year's advance will be just as hefty. Why? Because we have record low inventory right now, as you can see in the graph above. And coming out of COVID-19, demand is going to be as high as ever. Prices are going up a lot this year... again.

Here's my commitment to you, readers. I'll revisit this column a year from now, and we'll see if I was right about any of these predictions. Thanks for reading, and good luck out there!

Larry LaVercombe is a writer, filmmaker, and activist, born in Detroit and arrived in Minneapolis in 1975. He lived in a treehouse in San Diego before getting an MFA from the USC Film School. He writes most days, and as Team Larry he has been selling residential real estate in Minneapolis for 26 years.

CEDAR-ISLES MASTER PLAN

Two meetings were held on the draft Cedar-Isles master plan in early March. An online survey closed on March. 4. This feedback will inform the next stage in the design process: creating one preferred park concept by summer 2022.

Since the release of the initial park concepts, hundreds of public comments have been received via an online survey, social media, emails, and public meetings and events. The online survey for this project phase is closed. All comments are being compiled and findings will be shared in April.

public hearing and vote on the final plan, likely in winter 2022-23.

Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles are part of Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Regional Park, connecting to Bde Maka Ska on the southern border and Brownie Lake and Theodore Wirth Regional Park to the north. Visitors enjoy a multitude of year-round activities that include walking, biking, swimming, fishing, canoe/kayaking, cross-country skiing, and ice skating. The other three lakes in the Chain have been previously master planned: Bde Maka Ska and Harriet in 2017 and Brownie in 2012.

The Regional Park as a whole sees more than 7 million annual visits. It is the most visited park site in the state. To help ensure the Cedar-Isles Master Plan

does not have Southwest Light Rail bias in decision-making, the MPRB did not invite the Met Council to sit on the Technical Advisory Committee and do not anticipate asking SWLRT project staff to play any review or recommending role.

The Cedar Lake/Lake of the Isles Master Plan will direct policy and design implementation for the park land around both lakes for the next 20+ years. The \$470,000 cost for the master plan is being paid through 2020 Parks and Trails Legacy Funds. The breakdown of costs is: Master Plan consultants (Ten x Ten) \$300,000, in-house administrative costs are \$43,908, and Topographic and ALTA survey (Stonbrooke Engineering, Inc.) \$126,092.

SOUTHWEST CONNECTOR DEADLINES

Publication typically 1st and 3rd Thursdays. * Some exceptions	Deadlines typically 2nd and 4th Mondays.		
Publication date	Deadline date		
Dec. 2	Nov. 19 (Friday)	June 2	May 23
Break	Break	June 16	June 6
Jan. 6	Dec. 20	July 7	June 20
Feb. 3	Jan. 24	July 21	July 11
Feb. 17	Feb. 7	Aug. 4	July 25
March 3	Feb. 18 (Friday)	Break	Break
March 17	March 7	Sept. 1	Aug. 8
April 7	March 28	Sept. 22	Sept. 12
April 21	April 11	Oct. 6	Sept. 26
May 5	April 25	Oct. 20	Oct. 10
May 19	May 9	Nov. 3	Oct. 24
		Nov. 17	Nov. 7
		Dec. 1	Nov. 21
		Dec. 15	Dec. 5
		Break	Break

SPECIAL SECTIONS CALENDAR

JANUARY Health & Wellness due Dec. 20 School Guide due Dec. 20	JULY Summer in the City due June 20 Back to School due July 11
FEBRUARY Summer Camp Guide due Jan. 24 Wedding due Feb. 7	AUGUST Summer in the City due July 25
MARCH Home Improvement due Feb. 18 CSA Guide due Mar 7	SEPTEMBER Back to School due Sept. 12 - Health focus
APRIL Home & Garden due Mar 28 Drive & Ride due Apr 11	OCTOBER Home Improvement due Sep. 26 Domestic Violence due Oct. 10 Awareness Month
MAY Home & Garden due Apr 25 Summer in the City due May 9	NOVEMBER Food & Drink due Oct. 24 Shop Small/Buy Local due Nov. 7
JUNE Summer in the City due May 23 @ Lake & Hennepin due June 6	DECEMBER Shop Small/Buy Local due Nov. 21 Paws and Claws due Dec. 5

QUARTERLY

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Sept. - Medical | Dec. - Money

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AUTHORS IN STEM



On Feb. 25, 2022, Stonebridge World School (4530 Lyndale Ave. S.) hosted its first-ever Authors in STEM event. The event connected Twin Cities Black authors and illustrators with hundreds of Stonebridge students in preschool through eighth grade for activities such as storytimes, question and answer sessions, and signed book giveaways. The event was organized through a partnership with the Fostering Opportunities and Relationships in STEM Education (FORSE) program through the Minnesota Academy of Science (MAS). Participating professionals included:



- Guy Brown, meteorologist for KARE 11 and author of *Look Up to See What the Weather Will Be* and the companion activity journal *My Weather Journal*. (TOP LEFT)
- Crown Shepherd, reading advocate and author of *Black Boy, Black Boy* (BOTTOM LEFT)
- Nadvia Davis, author of *Grant Practices Math with Manners* (TOP RIGHT)
- Eric Childs, literacy advocate, owner of Mind's Eye comics store, and graphic designer

NEIGHBORHOOD BRIEFS

STAFFING CHANGES AT UPTOWN ASSOCIATION

The Uptown Association Board of Directors have selected David Frank as their new executive director. Frank brings many years of experience in urban development and support of communities in times of transition. For several years, Frank led the department of Community Planning and Economic Development for the city of Minneapolis, where he oversaw the city's efforts on planning, economic development, affordable housing, and the approval and inspection of development projects, all with a focus on racial equity. Most recently, Frank has focused on planning and development consulting projects in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. "I look forward to working alongside the staff and board of the Uptown Association, property owners and businesses to support business growth and a thriving commercial district in the heart of Minneapolis," said Frank.



David Frank, new Uptown Association Executive Director.

Current executive director Jill Osiecki will focus on her new role as director of programming and Uptown Art Fair. "The Uptown Art Fair has been a staple in the community for 57 years," said Osiecki. "The devastation by not having the annual event the last two years has hit Uptown hard." The Uptown Association recognizes the importance and focus required for this event, and the need to create many more activations throughout the year.

Judy Hippe will continue in her role as program specialist, focusing on business memberships and along with Frank and Osiecki will serve the needs of businesses in the Uptown community.

'SAY NO TO U.S. WARS' PROTEST PLANNED

A planned anti-war protest, "Say NO to U.S. Wars - No War with Russia!" will start at 2880 Hennepin Ave. on Saturday, March 19, at 1 p.m. It is being organized by Minnesota Peace Action Coalition and Women Against Military Madness.

HOW TO RESTORE HOPE AND PUBLIC TRUST

The LHENA Talk on Wednesday, March 23 at 7 p.m. will focus on how to restore hope and public trust in Minneapolis through mental healthcare services and restorative practices. The speakers will be Dr. Remi Douah, executive director of 846s.org, and Cynthia Prosek, executive director of Restorative Justice Community Action.

COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOTS AVAILABLE

Lyndale Neighborhood Association has two community gardens located at:
 1) Corner Garden (3216 West 31st Street and 3042 Pleasant)
 2) Pleasant Garden (3518 Pleasant Ave.)

Neighbors buy a plot (prices range from \$30-\$175 based on size) to grow and cultivate food from April-October 2022. Interested neighbors can apply in-person/on paper with communication with organizer@lyndale.org. Application deadline is Wednesday, March 23. Plots are assigned on first come, first served basis and neighbors will be informed about plot assignment the week of March 28. Neighbors who live outside of the Lyndale Neighborhood can also apply but Lyndale residents will be given priority in plot assignment.

LNA gardens are also accepting donations for the 2022 season. Contribute to the mission of fostering community, food justice, and stewardship with the earth by send a check or cash to 3537 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

10 CHALLENGING TIMES

Council member Linea Palmisano has known Huffman since 2018, and recalls her leadership during challenging times at the Fifth Precinct. "Amelia was the inspector during the social unrest and has had to deal with very difficult situations," said Palmisano. "She is, in my experience, the smartest cop I've ever known. And she has the ability to explain the law that people appreciate and understand."

As inspector, Huffman made a point of attending neighborhood meetings. "Anytime she was asked to be at a neighborhood meeting she was there," said Palmisano, who noted her knowledge, accessibility and focus on building authentic relationships with people as some of Huffman's greatest strengths.

'SHE FELL SHORT'

Huffman only had a few weeks to start to build those relationship as interim chief before, on Feb. 2, she was forced to address the police killing of Amir Locke and the community outrage that followed. A press conference with the mayor on Feb. 3 became so heated that it ended with the mayor and chief's abrupt departure when it was interrupted by attendees, including Nekima Levy Armstrong, a co-chair of the mayor's recently formed public safety workgroup. The next day a small group of protestors, which included Levy Armstrong, gathered at city hall and joined those calling for her resignation. In the days that followed, protests continued, including an evening demonstration outside what demonstrators believed was Huffman's home in the Cedar-Isles Dean area.

Since then, and as the investigation into Locke's killing are ongoing, protests continue and lawmakers work to respond, Huffman has not resigned and appears to have the continued confidence of the mayor and at least some council members, including Palmisano.

Others have joined some community

members who are calling for her resignation. That includes Ward 5 Council Member Jeremiah Ellison, who said in an interview on Feb. 10, "I have lost confidence in the interim chief." He added, "We need leadership who is going to stand boldly and tell us the truth in these moments, and I think she fell short of that."

Ward 10 Council Member Aisha Chughtai agrees with Ellison. "I support the community and family of Amir Locke in asking for her resignation," she said of Huffman.

"I support the community and family of Amir Locke in asking for her resignation."

Aisha Chughtai

tee meetings this term as far as she knows.

The recent charter change may be partly to blame for that. Under the previous charter, even interim department head appointments went through a council committee and needed city council approval. According to the city attorney, because of the recent charter amendment approved last November that gave the mayor additional powers, the mayor did not need the council's approval to designate Huffman as the interim chief. Under the new charter language, however, the permanent replacement will require an affirmative vote by a majority of the council members.

Without any history working with Huffman, Chughtai bases her position on the community voices she is hearing and how the interim chief has managed things, including community engagement after Locke's death. "It's our job as elected officials to listen to and follow the community's lead," she said. "I think she [Huffman] handled the aftermath of the killing poorly." She said that the press conference

"went very badly." Chughtai said, "In moments of crisis like this, managing relationships is very important and working with the community is critical."

NATIONAL SEARCH BEGINS

Huffman has expressed interest in the permanent position and will likely be part of the national search process that is underway. In early March, the mayor announced that he is establishing a community advisory group to assist with the effort and that the city will hire the firm, Public Sector Search & Consulting Inc. (PSSC) to lead the process.

Palmisano is supportive of a national search, but is not ruling out Huffman as a possible candidate for the more permanent police chief position. "I think what Huffman brings to the table is something unique," she said, mentioning her in-depth knowledge, experience, relationships with the people of Minneapolis and her strong strategic management and problem-solving skills.

Chughtai, at this point, has no intention of supporting Huffman even if the search team and mayor recommend her for the position. "As the next police chief, I hope we will have someone who is willing to engage with the community and with the council," she said, adding, "and while she [Huffman] is the interim chief, I hope that she will engage with the council."

"She is, in my experience, the smartest cop I've known."

Linea Palmisano

search process projected to go until summer, it looks like there will be time for that to occur.

Send in events, press releases, letters and neighborhood news.
news@SWconnector.com

JOBS

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CSA Delivery Team Member: Seasonal position available Thursdays, May-December 2022. Help us deliver organic vegetables in the Twin Cities area through our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program! Seeking someone who is attentive to details, works well on a team and likes a physically active job. Compensation includes a box of vegetables with every delivery. Full details at www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com



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CSAs ENHANCE FARMER/EATER RELATIONSHIP

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

Just what is a CSA?

"A CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) is a direct partnership between consumers and local producers," explained Abby Rogosheske of Seward Co-op. "A consumer becomes a member of a CSA by purchasing a share in a farm's harvest, which helps cover that farm's yearly operating costs. In return for that investment, members receive fresh produce or other goods – delivered to specific drop sites in the Twin Cities (including Seward Co-op locations)."

Harmony Valley Farm in Viroqua, Wis. is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. "While CSA stands for 'Community Supported Agriculture,' it could also stand for 'Community Sustained Agriculture,'" observed Andrea Yoder of Harmony Valley Farm.

"It truly is a way for a farmer and an eater to form a mutually beneficial relationship in which both parties reap the benefits. Plus, learning to eat with the seasons, spending time preparing food and sharing it with others helps to feed not only the body but the soul, as well.

"It's simply a more meaningful way to eat."

In addition to providing food, some CSAs offer training programs and are incubators for small farmers, like Big River Farms in Marine on St. Croix. Through its Farmer Education Program, participants are exposed to the realities of running an independent farm; not just the work of producing food, but the details of running a successful business. It is a primary goal of the program to encourage farmers to think realistically about the feasibility of running and owning their own farm operation, and ultimately build the skills necessary to run successful small farm enterprises upon graduation, according to their website. These farmers contribute to the Big River Farms CSA program, offer their own CSAs, and sell produce at farmers markets.

Big River Farms focuses its land-based training program on supporting immigrant and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) farmers, populations that generally have difficulty accessing the resources needed to establish a successful farm business.

Big River Farms is a program of the Food Group, which hosts the annual Emerging Farmers Conference.

Q&A WITH A FARMER

Harmony Valley is a family farm run by co-owners Richard de Wilde, Andrea Yoder and Rafael Morales, along with a crew that varies with the seasons from 15-60 team members. The home farm consists of 200 acres of woods, pastures



"Having a CSA is a way to commit to eating fresh, locally produced vegetables (and other offerings) and to have the opportunity to know and support the farmers growing your food," remarked Josh Bryceson of Turnip Rock, which offers a 22-week session with the option of setting holds on deliveries for vacations. "Think about what's most important to you as an eater. Is it farming practices? Is it social and food justice concerns? Is it convenience? Check out the delivery day, drop site locations, share size options, prices, and see if the farm's offerings match your preferences for veggies. Most importantly, don't hesitate to ask questions of the farm before signing up! Most farmers want potential CSA members to find a good match and will be honest if they believe their farm won't be the best option for you." (Photo submitted)

and crop land lying along Spring Creek in Viroqua, Wis. They sell produce and meat through a 1,500-member CSA, a weekly stall at the Dane County Farmers Market, retail grocers and wholesale distributors.

Their CSA membership more than doubled in the spring of 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and their retention remained strong in 2021. Yoder isn't sure what 2022 will look like yet but know they remain committed to delicious, organic food.

WHY GET A CSA?

Yoder: The thing that varies with CSA versus buying your vegetables at a grocery store or food co-op is that you get more than just a box of vegetables. You also get connection to the place where your food is grown and the people who grow it. This type of connection allows for transparency and a more secure supply of food as there are no middle men or a long and complicated supply chain to get the food from its origin to your table. Eating from a CSA box is a great way to support regional/local producers and keep your food dollars in the local economy. Short of growing your own food, it's one of the best ways to get fresh, nutrient dense vegetables. Plus, it's a lot of fun to eat with the seasons and many of our customers tell us it's like Christmas every time they open a box!



Andrea Yoder

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A CSA?

Yoder: In addition to the points I mentioned above, many people find they eat more vegetables when they participate in CSA simply because they are in their refrigerator! Many of our customers also appreciate the wide diversity of vegetables they eat during the CSA season and find there are things they maybe wouldn't

select on their own but when they try it, they find out they really like it. We've had some of our customers tell us they consider their CSA box to be their health insurance policy. They'd rather invest in healthy vegetables and reap the health benefits of eating high quality, nutritious food than invest their money in healthcare when they get sick. CSA is also a great way to introduce children to the way real food tastes, expand their palates and allow them to experience a wide variety of flavors and textures while also connecting them to nature.

CSA is a way that each individual can be part of creating a sustainable local food supply chain. Every time we make a purchase, we're supporting something. When you choose to purchase a CSA your dollars stay in the local community, but your purchase also allows you to support practices that are in alignment with your personal beliefs and values. Some of these values may include supporting a food system where workers are respected and are paid a fair and living wage. Perhaps you want to support regenerative farming practices that contribute in positive ways to mitigating climate change or you want your food dollars to support farms that invest in providing habitat in their growing areas for pollinators.

WHAT SETS YOUR CSA APART?

Yoder: There are several things that set our CSA apart from others. First, we are experienced growers and 2022 will be our 30th year of growing for CSA. We have learned a lot over the years and are able to reliably grow a wide variety of vegetables over the course of a 30-week delivery season from May-December. We also provide our customers with a variety of resources with each delivery to help them find success with every box. These resources include a weekly newsletter that highlights new vegetables, offers storage and preparation information, and updates from the

Q&A WITH CSA FAIR ORGANIZER

For the past 21 years, Seward Co-op has hosted a CSA Fair in the spring. Attendees online and in person learn about a variety of different CSAs, which offer vegetables and fruit, meat, cheese, bread, mushrooms, herbs and more. Some farms also offer add-ons like honey, maple syrup, eggs and flowers. Others allow CSA shares to be customized with various options to fit your needs, including half shares, and weekly purchase options. This year's CSA Fair will be held Saturday, April 23, 2022, and include a celebration of the co-op's 50th anniversary.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A CSA?

Rogosheske: Some people choose to purchase a CSA because it's a great value for the amount of produce you receive. Others appreciate the direct relationship with a grower, the fun variety of produce or the chance to support our local food system.

HOW DO CSAS ADD TO LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM?

Rogosheske: Becoming a member of a CSA is a great way to support small, local growers because you are purchasing the harvest upfront. Many farmers share that this provides needed capital investment as the growing season starts. In other words, when you purchase a CSA, you're not just a consumer of local food – you are an investor in our local food system. In some ways, this is similar to becoming a member-owner of Seward Co-op – when you do this, you are investing in the co-op; you're an owner, not just a shopper.

WHAT TIPS DO YOU OFFER FOLKS?

Rogosheske: These last few years, we've added a virtual component to our annual CSA Fair (at first it was out of necessity, due to the pandemic, but it's been so popular that we are continuing the "virtual fair" even though we are also planning an in-person event). As part of this, we offer a really helpful guide that includes our full list of CSA Fair participants, with information on the type of CSA, drop-off locations, and price range. Farmers also share video introductions. This is a great way to "shop around" ahead of time – and then you'll have a chance to chat face-to-face with farmers at the in-person event on April 23!

farm. I am also a professional chef, and provide feature recipes every week that are simple and delicious. Additionally, we post a "Cooking With the Box" article on our blog every week that provides links to recipes from a wide variety of sources to help guide members/customers in finding ways to use their vegetables.

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