

SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • JUNE 2, 2022 • VOL. 1 • NO. 11

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LSC: What's behind and what's ahead

Lake Street Council helps businesses and nonprofits restore Lake Street

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

Despite initial fears that outside investors would scoop up properties along E. Lake Street after the 2020 Uprising, not a single one has been sold to outside interests, reported Lake Street Council Executive Director Alison Sharkey.

During the LSC annual meeting on May 18, 2022, Sharkey said one of the things she is most proud of is helping over 20 entrepreneurs begin the process of rebuilding from the ground up with an investment of \$1.4 million through grants and forgivable loans. This includes Midori's Floating World Cafe, Uncle Hugo's and Uncle Edgar's bookstores, El Rey Car Audio, MIGIZI and Gandhi Mahal.

"In 2020, when the pandemic hit and especially after George Floyd was murdered in front of all of our eyes launching a nationwide call to action, everyone in this room was affected," said Sharkey. "Each of us was called to not only help rebuild our community, but also to help address the deep-seeded inequities that got us here."

LSC supports small businesses with capital and advising. It promotes Lake Street by telling its stories and shaping its reputation. LSC is "an advocate to make sure our community has a seat at the table and we push for policy and investment that supports our neighborhood," said Sharkey.

The Lake Street Council has provided \$1.8 million in grants and forgivable loans to 51 businesses and nonprofits on Lake Street corridor.



Lake Street Council Executive Director Alison Sharkey said, "Each of us was called to not only help rebuild our community, but also to help address the deep-seated inequities that got us here." (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Four young Black entrepreneurs open high-end sneaker shop



Abdulkarim Abdulle, Yassir Mohamed, Sir Curtis Kirby, and Arif Mohamed stand in their first storefront building in Uptown. (Photo by Kevin Finley)

HYPE OPENS IN UPTOWN

By **Kevin Finley**

HYPE is a new, high-end sneaker store in Uptown at 2835 Hennepin Ave. S. It offers a mix of high-end, hard-to-find kicks such as Air Jordans, Yeezy's and Dunks, as well as clothing from local designers.

Owned by Arif Mohamed, Abdulkarim "AK" Abdulle, Sir Curtis Kirby, and Yassir Mohamed, the store's name isn't your standard definition of hype: intensely promoting a product or idea and often exaggerating its importance. Instead, these social entrepreneurs put a fresh spin on the word with the acronym Help Your People Eat, a meaning that is about more than buying, selling and trading sneakers.

"One of our goals is to help other local/Black-owned businesses grow," said Abdulle.

All the owners have dabbled in reselling sneakers and share a love of fashion. The business started with them pooling together \$6,000 to buy 18 pairs of sneakers at a swap meet in Bloomington, renting a small storage unit and selling shoes online. Continuing to collect more sneakers, they needed a larger storage unit.

They heard from sellers that they'd rather sell to the owners of HYPE because transacting with a personal contact brings a sense of safety as the face-to-face interaction establishes a relationship. With this

positive reaction and having a few successful pop-up events, they decided to open a physical store.

"We pride ourselves on connecting with customers. It's about more than selling sneakers," commented A. Mohamed.

Aspiring to make an impact in the community, Abdulle said, "It's about paying it forward."

"We plan to give back to people in the community, and part of this is being a safe place where people can hang out. Kids can come here and play video games," Kirby remarked. A gaming console is tucked into the corner of the store and is accompanied by comfortable chairs. He added, "This can help keep them away from gangs and drugs."

The store is the length of half a basketball court. Sneakers line both walls. Running down the middle of the store are two racks of clothing.

"I've always been into fashion," commented Y. Mohamed.

The other owners talked about their love of fashion, as well. Knowing several local clothing designers and having gone through ups and downs when it came to securing a brick-and-mortar space, they know getting a physical store can be tough for any entrepreneur.

With their desire to give back to the community and help other



24/7 bus lanes?

Hennepin Ave. project disagreement centers on whether to have phased-in or all day bus-only lanes

By **Cam Gordon**

After a city council committee meeting that revealed deep differences of opinion over the operations of dedicated bus lanes, on May 26, the Minneapolis City Council voted unanimously to postpone the decision on the proposed Hennepin Avenue new street design in the East Isles, Lowry Hill and Lowry Hill East neighborhoods.

It will be taken up again at the public works and infrastructure committee on June 9 and the full council on June 16, where a final decision on the design and use of lanes is expected to be made.

This project is expected to be completed in 2026 and will fully reconstruct 1.4 miles of Hennepin Ave. S. between Douglas Ave. and West Lake St. The approved design includes a two-way sidewalk level bikeway on the east side, two dedicated bus priority lanes, two vehicle lanes with left turn lanes at key intersections, additional vehicle lanes provided at end points where capacity is needed, as well as parking and loading bays in some locations.

According to the staff report, "The project is an opportunity to transform the right-of-way to align the policy visions and goals articulated in Minneapolis 2040 Plan, the city's Transportation Action Plan, Complete Streets Policy, Climate Action Plan, Vision Zero Action Plan and the 20-Year Streets Funding Plan."

Prior to coming up for discussion at the May 19 Public Works and Infrastructure (PWI) committee, it was clear that the biggest controversy around the project centered on operations and not design, and on if the bus priority lanes would be exclusively reserved for buses.



24/7 bus lanes are the single largest tool for racial and economic justice in this reconstruction project."

Aisha Chughtai



Before the meeting Ward 10 Council Member Aisha Chughtai wrote, "While the physical layout of the reconstruction project is the exact same as what was released by the public works department last year, which includes dedicated bus lanes and



1 HYPE OPENS

Black-owned businesses, Kirby said, "It had us thinking, what can we do to bring the community together? We decided to bring in clothing brands from local designers."

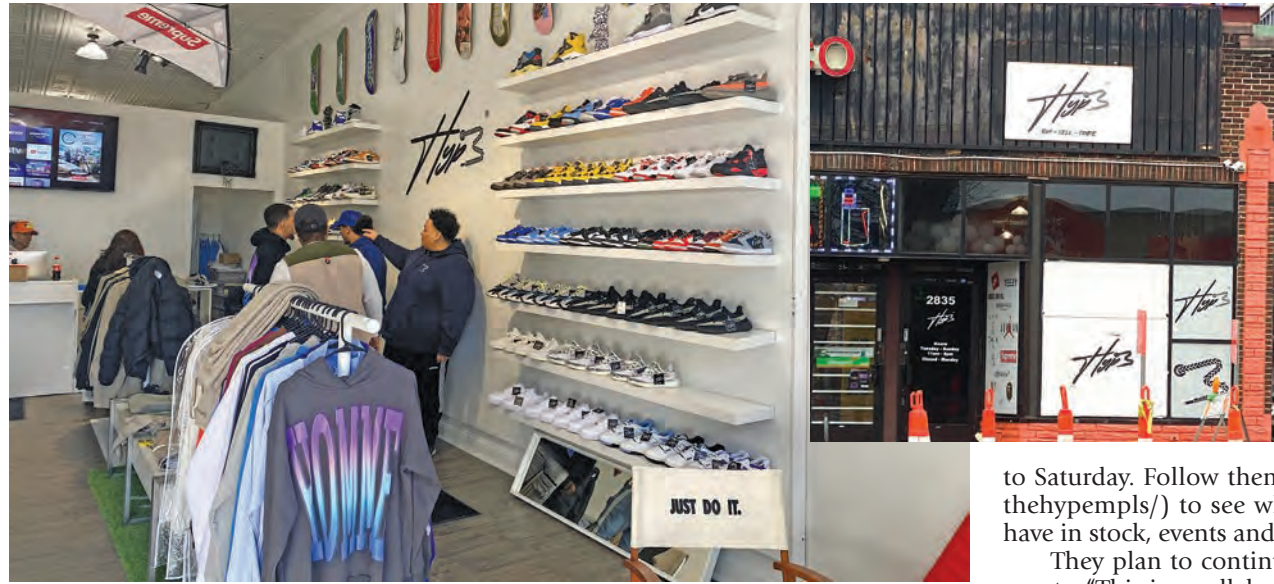
Y. Mohamed explained, "It brings in a larger variety of customers so it's more exposure for us and them."

Kirby commented, "People just need to give others a shot so we give local clothing designers the space for free."

"We all came from humble beginnings, so we know the importance of helping people who are on the come up," said A. Mohamed. "We've all been there. We've all been at the bottom, and we know what it feels like."

"We also want to show kids this is possible," Kirby chimed in.

Another part of their mission is a shelf that's lined with the same type of hard-to-find sneakers you'd see on both walls with one key difference. This space is designated for kicks they're selling at lower a price-point than one can find on third party websites. It exists because giving more people the opportunity to purchase a cool pair of kicks has value to these owners that goes beyond bottom



Hype, a high-end sneaker store, is open at 2835 Hennepin Ave. The shop is owned by Abdulkarim Abdulle, Yassir Mohamed, Sir Curtis Kirby, and Arif Mohamed. (Photos by Kevin Finley)

lines.

A. Mohamed said, "We pride ourselves on connecting with customers. It's about more than making money off shoes."

The four owners view themselves in the same light as a modern basketball team who have roles, but can also play cohesive, position-less basketball by being able to easily step in and handle any role without missing a beat.

They are excited to have opened HYPE in the neighborhood and want to help revitalize the once thriving area.

"Prior to the commotion, it was a statement to have a space here. We always wanted to be in Uptown," said Y. Mohamed

"Seeing our store is a reminder that the heart of Minneapolis is never going to die," stated Kirby.

HYPE is open 11 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday

to Saturday. Follow them on Instagram (/thehypempls/) to see what sneakers they have in stock, events and more.

They plan to continue hosting popup events. "This is a collaboration," remarked Kirby, to "help one another get our businesses off the ground."

At these events, they'll be have a rotation of different food trucks, music, and clothes from various designers. There may be free haircuts from local barber Melly P. And, as their acronym states, they'll literally be helping people eat with free food from Nashville Coop.

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▶1 LAKE STREET COUNCIL

“This funding isn’t nearly enough to help all Lake Street businesses really thrive, but we’re proud to be able to contribute to the recovery process in this way,” said LSC Senior Creative Operations Manager Theresa Swaney.

It will cost an estimated \$250 million to restore Lake Street. The majority of that, \$225 million, is needed for acquisition, pre-development and gap funding.

LSC helped secure \$46 million from the city of Minneapolis and the state to aid businesses damaged along the Lake Street Corridor and other places in the city.

“The success of Lake Street depends on addressing our city’s racial disparities,” said Swaney. LSC is partnering with Black Women’s Wealth Alliance to offer coaching to Black-owned businesses on Lake St., and has launched Be Well Lake Street to give businesses free and confidential counseling.

The Lake Street Reimagined Placemaking grants supported 26 artists and organizations to create public art and host events along the corridor, including recent window-cling murals in the vacant restaurant space at W. Lake and Hennepin.

“We are seeing a difference,” said Earlsworth ‘Baba’ Letang of the Neighborhood Development Center, who is the Lake Street Council Board Vice President.

The organization itself has grown and changed. Its three staff members (Sharkey, Swaney and ZoeAna Martinez) have been joined by seven more: Matt Kazinka, Ruth Howell, Oscar Carrol, Yusra Mohamud, Marie Campos, Russ Adams and Alex Tsatsoulis. LSC lost its location in the Uprising, and moved to the Midtown Exchange building at 2925 Chicago Ave. #190.

What’s next for the LSC? A survey of businesses and nonprofits along the corridor identified these top five needs: 1) Crime prevention, safety and livability, 2) Attracting customers to the corridor, 3) Hiring qualified employees, 4) Racial equity, and 5) Developing a shared vision for the future.

REWRITING THE NARRATIVE

Facilitated by Yusra Mohamud of the Lake Street Council, two people shared with luncheon attendees what they’re doing in the community.

Panelist David Jenkins of First Independence Bank grew up in Phillips. He announced that the state’s first Black-owned



Yusra Mohamud of the Lake Street Council facilitates a discussion between David Jenkins of First Independence Bank (center) and local real estate developer PJ Hill. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

bank will be opening its second location at E. Lake St. and Hiawatha Ave. in July inside the Hennepin County services building. (Read article on expansion online at www.swConnector.com) “How do we together make a difference?” Jenkins asked. “This is a time to really rewrite the narrative.”

PJ Hill grew up near Little Earth at 26th and Cedar, and played professional basketball. He’s a financial adviser, Minneapolis NAACP Minneapolis Vice President, and a local real estate developer.

He wants real estate to reflect the community. “How do I liberate the community economically?” he asks himself. Hill is working to “change the narrative and create generational wealth.”

‘WE BELIEVE IN YOU’

“We’ve got to use these crises as a chance to do things better and differently, not getting back just to the old normal but blowing by the old normal and pushing a true transformation on Lake Street,” said Mayor Frey during the meeting.

The Lake Street Council raised over \$12 billion from over 70,000 donors to help fund recovery.

The city stepped up too, said Mayor Frey, designating \$4.5 million to help over 40 businesses remove rubble. The city put \$7.65 million into a commercial development fund that enables entrepreneurs that have owned their own business to own not just the business but the underlying property. “The goal here, of course, is when things come back the values rise, and the people and business owners don’t

get the boot but rather realize the gain in the value themselves,” said Mayor Frey. “This is something we need so desperately. The \$7.65 million is just the beginning.”

Mayor Frey pointed out that he has also heard from people that a big piece of recovery is safety. “Safety and recovery, they have to work hand in hand,” said Mayor Frey.

The new LEAD (Let Everyone Advance With Dignity) program will launch in the coming months. This will put social workers on Lake St. to work with those who have experienced some form of trauma, such as addiction and homelessness, in an effort to reduce police interactions for low-level offenses. (See sidebar for more information.)

As the city has experienced attrition in the police department, it is working to recruit a new chief and officers. This is happening at a time of a nationwide shortage. Minneapolis has signed two joint powers agreements. The state of Minnesota will provide patrol officers to work two shifts on East Lake and West Broadway for four hours on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The other agreement is with Bureau of Criminal Apprehension for 13 additional investigators, who will be embedded with city officers to crack down on serious crime. “You will see more of a presence,” said Mayor Frey.

He pointed out that the city has set aside \$1 million for cameras and lighting.

Office of Violence Prevention efforts are ongoing and will be working with local organizations and businesses.

LEAD LAUNCHES ON LAKE STREET

The GreenLight Fund Twin Cities (GLFTC) has committed to a \$1.4 million multi-year investment in Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD). Alongside a coalition of funders and a commitment from Minneapolis leaders, LEAD will use a community-involved approach to reduce police interactions for low-level offenses in the Lake Street corridor.

LEAD, a project of Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, is a public health approach to community safety that diverts individuals cycling in and out of the legal system into a long-term case management model of care. Utilizing a harm reduction platform to improve outcomes, LEAD’s unique, collaborative implementation structure brings a cross section of community leaders and neighborhood residents and business owners together in partnership with case managers. Their common goal is to decrease recidivism and improve stability for residents facing challenges with non-violent behaviors often criminalized. They are working with over 70 cities nationwide.

GreenLight Twin Cities brought together a coalition of partners and funders, who will support the implementation of LEAD. Serving up to 50 participants in its first year and scaling to additional neighborhoods across the Twin Cities, goals include reaching 200+ participants, lowering recidivism by 50%, increasing social supports by 35% and improving relationships with residents, law enforcement, and business owners over the next four years.

“This has to be a partnership where we’re locking arms and attacking some of the most difficult issues hand in hand,” said Mayor Frey.

“We believe in you. We know that Lake Street will rebound. We know that you all have the strength and resilience – due to everything you’ve been through over the last couple of years – to come back. You’re here right now. You have stayed on Lake Street. You have stayed in this city because you want to make it a better place and you believe in our collective strength.”

He added, “We are going to be an example that others can follow.”

BRIEFS

LONG-TERM CLOSURE OF CEDAR LAKE PARKWAY

A portion of Cedar Lake Parkway closed to motor vehicles on May 23 for the continued construction of the Kenilworth tunnel extension under Cedar Lake Parkway. It road is not expected to open again until the spring of 2023. While the road is closed, pedestrians and bicyclists will have access across the tunnel construction area, but vehicle traffic will be detoured from Cedar Lake Road to France Avenue to West Lake Street.

SUPPLEMENTAL CITY BUDGET APPROVED

The council has amended and approved the 2022 mayor’s recommended American Rescue Plan proposals. Amendments included one by council members Payne and Koski to move \$160,000 of the \$1,000,000 in spending from the police department to the city coordinator’s office for two additional Behavioral Crisis Response Team vans. Another amendment, proposed by council members Jenkins, Chavez, Wonsley Worlobah, Ellison, and Chughtai, was approved that moves \$700,000 from Convention Center Meet Minneapolis funding to the Business and Technical Assistance (BTAP) program to

provide outreach and support to small businesses in the city’s four cultural districts in Cedar Riverside, East Lake, West Broadway, and 38th & Chicago.

7 POINTS MALL

The city planning staff and commission are recommending approval of the 7 Points Mall redevelopment project planned for 3001 and 3003 Hennepin Ave. and 1301 and 1419 W Lake St. This will include the construction of a new seven-story addition with 10,950 square feet of ground-level commercial space and 272 apartment units, an expansion of the parking ramp and changes to the surrounding

outdoor areas. More at <https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/board/agenda/CPC/3240>.

MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE

The HomeHelpMN program is accepting applications for assistance until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 17. Eligible homeowners may receive up to \$35,000 in assistance for past-due expenses. Funds for the program are limited, and need is expected to be high. For more information about the program, including who is eligible to apply and what expenses are eligible, visit HomeHelpMN.org or call 1-800-388-3226.

▶ Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.



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Everyone deserves an opportunity to reach their full potential. But not everyone gets that opportunity today. Due to a never-ending cycle of violence, dreams are being snatched daily.



By Eric Ortiz

Violence is the real pandemic in our world. Community violence. Domestic violence. Police violence. Local terrorism. All of this violence leads to traumatized communities. We live in a culture of violence that has become desensitized to destruction.

Another day, another mass shooting. Another day, another drive-by. After people (including children) get gunned down at a school or supermarket or bus stop or in their car in broad daylight, do we see any action toward stricter gun legislation? Do we hear any talk about gun reforms or smarter regulation? Is there any actual change? All we get are more heartbreaking memorials, more thoughts and prayers. More of the same inhumanity.

Thoughts and prayers are killing us. They have become a cruel euphemism for inaction. Senseless violence has become normalized. Now we are on the verge of World War 3, and we have armchair generals talking about the limited use of nuclear weapons with no fear of the consequences.

We have met the enemy, and they are

us. Common sense is an endangered species. As a result, our world is moving closer to extinction.

The United States has over 400 million guns between police, the military and American civilians. That's the most in the world by far (No. 2 is India with 71 million). And over 393 million (98 percent) of America's guns are in civilian hands, or 1.2 firearms for every citizen, with over 45,000 gun-related deaths in the U.S. every year.

The U.S. has 335 million citizens and spends more on weapons than education. The U.S. defense budget is \$778 billion in 2022 and could soar over \$800 billion in 2023. Federal, state, and local governments budget \$584.9 billion to fund K-12 education.

Worst of all, there are approximately 13,080 nuclear warheads in the world. That's fewer than peak-Cold War numbers, yet more countries are armed with nukes than ever before. It's one reason why the Doomsday Clock remains at 100 seconds to midnight, the closest we've ever been to the apocalypse.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists created the clock in 1947 after the Manhattan Project to determine how much metaphorical time we have to avoid civilization-ending catastrophe for humanity and the planet, such as climate change and nuclear annihilation. We are at a dangerous moment for humanity and the planet. And we're moving in the wrong direction.

Every single form of violence has to be dealt with. Unless we begin to address the deadly issues we're facing, we're going to cease to exist. But in spite of challenges,



Our future is at stake. But we still have a chance to do the right thing. (Zaur Ibrahimov/Unsplash)

we can solve this.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s six pillars of nonviolent resistance would be a good place to start.

1. Do not mistake nonviolence for passivity or cowardice.
2. Do not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding.
3. Remember that those who perpetrate violence are often victims themselves.
4. Accept suffering, if necessary, without retaliation, because unearned suffering is redemptive and can educate and transform.
5. Meet hate with love – not the sentimental kind, but an active love, of understanding and kindness, what the Greeks called agape – that restores community.
6. Know that the universe is on the side of justice.

If this doesn't work, remember these words from King: Love your enemies.

"Certainly these are great words,

words lifted to cosmic proportions. And over the centuries, many persons have argued that this is an extremely difficult command. Many would go so far as to say that it just isn't possible to move out into the actual practice of this glorious command. ... Far from being the pious injunction of a utopian dreamer, this command is an absolute necessity for the survival of our civilization. Yes, it is love that will save our world and our civilization, love even for enemies."

This starts at home. If the enemy is us, then we need to start loving ourselves and our neighbors. The state of violence in our world is not normal. We need to stop accepting it. We need to value life and give all people reasons to value life. Peace is possible. We need to stand up for peace and take actions that create peace.

We don't need to complicate things. Peacebuilding doesn't need to be complicated. The DNA or structure of peace is the human connection and human communication. That's the foundation of peace work. We need to go back to the basics.

Without peace, there will be no future. The minute we begin to love ourselves, and we get a taste or a sense of that healing, we can all dream again.

Want to help build peace and economic opportunity this summer in Minneapolis? Be a part of Twin Cities Pop-Up Markets. Learn more at the Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association.



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.

IMAGINE ALONG WITH ME

STORIES & JOURNEYS

Imagine all the people living in peace! Wait! Not just yet!

Imagine us walking exploring the yard surrounding my house. It's spring but feels like summer. We see tulips, dandelions, violets displaying bright colors. There's one of four double high raised garden beds. The neighbors cat is using it for a litter box. Green grass is starting to grow. Spring emerging from winter. I never know who or what is going to appear. It's about being at ease without knowing. It's about letting new life come to me. My curiosity is aroused.



By Donald L. Hammen

Imagine! We are in my house. We see a wall calendar. It tells us May Day, the half way point between spring and summer, which is also International Labor Day. The start of Ramadan has come and gone. International Labor Day arouses my attention. I'm a union retiree.

We walk to my bedroom closet. We

see my winter coat now in storage. We see my shorts now out of storage.

Imagine! My daily walk around the block. I have resumed walking outside triggered by warmer weather. You are still with me. I have adopted a new practice if see a *Messenger* newspaper. If I see it's not placed at the front door of every house, I pick it up. I place it at the front door. Imagine the newspaper saying, here I am right outside your front door! Pick me up! Read me!

Imagine! Metro Transit bus #23. We are on it. The bus takes us on the Ford Parkway bridge over the Mississippi River. We are seeing/experiencing it. Our senses are taking in its calm peaceful appearance. Yet it continues to flow. Calm, peaceful and flowing is my inner experience as I allow the river into my awareness.

If you have read this far you have likely taken the plunge! You have joined me in the river of life experiences by reading *Stories and Journeys*. Welcome! Let's keep the energy flowing as we leave what I call *Longfellow Nokomis Messenger* territory and make our way to *Southwest Connector* territory in Uptown.

Imagine! We are on city bus #6. The driver per our request lets us off at 22nd and Hennepin Ave. A destination location for me. First thing I do is say hello and hug my friend the oak tree in the front yard of the Uptown Natural Care Center.

Next we cross the street and go into Tao Organics. Keep in mind I have just

declared that, for me, 2022 is the Year of the Woman. We make our way through the cafe toward the doorway that leads to what is officially called the Herbery. As I go through the entry way, I look to my left. There is a book out on display as if it's saying, buy me! So, I did! Have you ever imagined that a book or a newspaper was saying to you, pick me up, buy me, bring me into your awareness, read me? Tell yourself, tell others or tell me at news@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com

Name on the book is "Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing" by Christiane Northrup, M.D. Out of sheer curiosity, I like to check out the inside and outside covers of books. I want to know who is endorsing the book and what they are saying about it. On the back cover are names familiar to me, but one in particular stands out for me.

The words of Deepak Chopra grab my attention. He states, "I recommend 'Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom' to all women and also all men who want to understand and nourish the women in their lives." I'm thinking now, what man doesn't want to understand and nourish the women in their lives? I'm all in! After all, I just declared 2022 as the Year of the Woman for me! I may have just found my primary resource along with "Reclaiming Our Health: Exploding the Medical Myth and Embracing the Source of True Heal-

ing" by John Robbins. Probably wouldn't hurt me to converse with some real life women as part of my Year of the Woman journey.

Imagine! It's time to bring this edition of *Stories and Journeys* to an end. Become aware of your breathing. Relax into to your breathing as you imagine all people, women and men, living in peace!

In gratitude! Stay tuned! Until next time! I am Ukraine!



Donald L. Hammen is a longtime south Minneapolis resident, and serves on the All Elders United for Justice steering committee.

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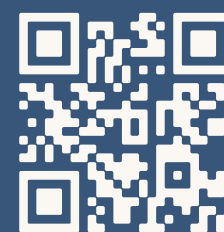
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ART-A-WHIRL AND THE CREATIVE CLASS: *The Twin Cities arts and culture legacy*

By **Susan Schaefer**
UNDER THE HOOD



Art-A-Whirl spans neighborhoods and disciplines

Whatever corner of the Twin Cities you live in, chances are you or someone close to you has participated as an artist or a guest in what Anna Becker, executive director of the Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association (NEMAA) calls our "rite of spring" – Art-A-Whirl.

The three-day happening has been heralded as the biggest open studio tour in the United States with tens of thousands of visitors attending past events.

Shuttered for the past two years due to the pandemic, this year's event took place on May 20-22, 2022, and the artists were primed and ready to throw out the welcome mats. Even with COVID-19 variations continuing to mutate and spike, many of NEMAA's more than 1,000 members, housed in over 60 locations in a defined geographic area, were cautiously optimistic about this year's turn out.

Past NEMAA president, Carmen Gutierrez-Bolger, who shares her studio in the Casket Arts Building with two fellow artists, said the artists she spoke to were enthusiastic about returning to an in-person event. "To be honest," she stated, "almost everyone has had COVID. This year many are cautious about not serving food, but many, including my studio, are not masking."

Art-A-Whirl's origins

In 1995, a group of determined art-



Former NEMAA president, Carmen Gutierrez-Bolger, readies her Casket Art studio for Art-A-Whirl 2022. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

ists set up studios in Northeast Minneapolis' neglected factory buildings. These art pioneers then decided it would be good for the public to see (excuse the Hamilton pun) "the room where it happens," so they organized the first open studio tour. A few years later, the growing group formed NEMAA as a non-profit entity. Through diligent collaboration and savvy marketing, Art-A-Whirl, now marking its 27th year, grew in popularity, becoming a nationally recognized art phenomenon.

By 2002, under the leadership of then-president Gutierrez-Bolger, members of NEMAA joined together with the city of

Minneapolis, the McKnight Foundation, and local businesses to establish the formal geographical area now known as the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District. In fact, those efforts have been a model for many other Twin Cities' neighborhood branding efforts, including those served by our community papers. Colorful flags on light posts now demark many communities.

Astonishing economic impact of arts

In the early 1990s, even before NEMAA formed, as chair of the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce's



Susan Schaefer's Engineered to a Higher Standard collage.

respected Leadership Minneapolis Program™, I established the creative class sub-committee of the chamber's public affairs group. We invited author Richard Florida as a guest speaker to discuss his groundbreaking book, "The Rise of the Creative Class." Along with colleagues from the newly dubbed creative industries including architecture, public relations, advertising, design and landscaping, our sub-committee hosted guest speakers and special events, providing new perspectives and data about how significantly creativity impacted local economy. We understood how important it was to engage business leaders around the arts.

Our efforts can be linked to the adoption almost two dozen years later by the city of Minneapolis of the Creative Vitality Index (CVI), an economic measure developed by a Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF), used to weigh in on the ever-increasing contribution of arts and culture to our population.

Minneapolis even developed



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▶ 6 ART-A-WHIRL

a sort of "Culture Czar," Gülgün Kayim, who is Director of Arts, Culture & the Creative Economy, and whose small but mighty staff helps to develop arts and culture policy, and to research the economics of the creative sector.

Pre-pandemic, the economic impact of the creative arts in Minneapolis astonished. The 2018 CVI estimated that the arts contributed \$5 billion in sales, or 9.2 times that of Minneapolis' sports sector, earning our region a lofty place as a national creative mecca. Post-pandemic, the news is grim. Statistics from the Minneapolis Creates website state: "A 2020 study by Americans for the Arts showed that 62% of artists and creative workers were fully unemployed, while 95% reported income losses. Also in 2020, the Minnesota Council for Nonprofits projected that up to 60% of the state's nonprofits, many of them arts and cultural organizations, would close by the end of the year."

Thankfully, culture, art and artists are resilient, and Art-A-Whirl bravely reopening its doors this year serves as a notable link to our region's robust art and culture legacy.

The Legacy Amendment: guaranteeing 10,000 lakes and studios

What are the other factors for Minnesota and the metro area's rarified arts and culture environment? Meet the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, aka the Legacy Amendment, passed in 2008 by Minnesota voters and enshrined in the Minnesota Constitution.

The full amendment concerns overall quality of life in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, protecting drinking water sources, wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat, lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater, supporting parks and trails, and preserving arts and cultural heritage. Yes, there was quite a lobby in place to get



Crowds flock the two-story Grain Belt Warehouse during Art-A-Whirl 2016. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

that included in the long list of natural habitat initiatives.

One leader of this arts lobby is Minnesota Citizens for the Arts, a super smart 901 (C) (4) umbrella lobbying organization that represents with verve, vim and vigor the highest interests of: 695 performing arts, 262 multipurpose arts, 232 history and historical preservation, 156 visual arts and architecture, 49 media and communications, 30 literary, 10 humanities, and 167 miscellaneous arts organizations that represent Minnesota's 1601 recognized creative entities! They continue the good fight to ensure arts and culture has a "lifebuoy" amidst all that water.

The Legacy Amendment increased the state sales tax by 3/8 of 1% beginning July 1, 2009, continuing until 2034. The additional revenue is distributed into four funds: 33% to the clean water fund; 33% to the outdoor heritage fund; 19.75% to

the arts and cultural heritage fund; and 14.25% to the parks and trails fund.

Based on current sales tax revenue, this means Minnesotans will invest more than \$1.2 billion in arts and cultural heritage fund projects and programs over the 25-year life of the tax with a portion made available through grant programs.

What does it all mean?

As a practicing artist, I have participated in diverse aspects of Minnesota's arts and culture largesse. For example, in 2016, as a NEMAA member, I hosted a highly successful Art-A-Whirl photography exhibit in the Grain Belt Brewery Annex, interacting with hundreds of visitors over the three days of the event.

That year I was also accepted into the prestigious St. Catherine University Women's Art Institute (WAI) Summer Studio Intensive. Like many arts programs, the WAI

benefits from Minnesota's support of the arts. Happily, my 10-panel collage, "Recollection: My Lost Yiddish Civilization," incorporating archival family documents and photographs, ink drawings on fine art paper, and newsprint earned a nice spot on a wall in the University of Minnesota's Regis Center for Art's Quarter Gallery where our group show was held. UMN also benefits from the state's arts funding.

More recently, working from a light-filled studio in the Thorpe Building, I produced my collage titled, "Engineered to a Higher Standard," in response to the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Each of these activities has a lifeline directly connected to Minnesota's commitment to the arts.

But I am more than a practicing visual artist. I am also a journalist dedicated to shining a light on how creativity contributes to human wellbeing.

It is worthwhile to remember that behind Minnesota's economic arts' statistics toil humans whose creativity and innovation fuel this so-called creative class. Frequently laboring for the sheer love of their craft, many visual and performing artists, directors, inventors and innovators produce from an inner creative core more likely fueled by passion than personal gain. These makers are marked by an almost holy drive to create – and when their artistry and intent collide, it often yields something extraordinary in its wake.



Something under the hood is not immediately apparent or obvious. This column uncovers 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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ART ON THE EDGE: where art meets metaphysical

THE ART OF...

Collaborating and connecting for community, consciousness, and the curious. That's how the conversation began between Kelly Wagner, owner of *The Edge* magazine and myself, Suzie Marty, owner of the Everett & Charlie Art Gallery.



By Suzie Marty

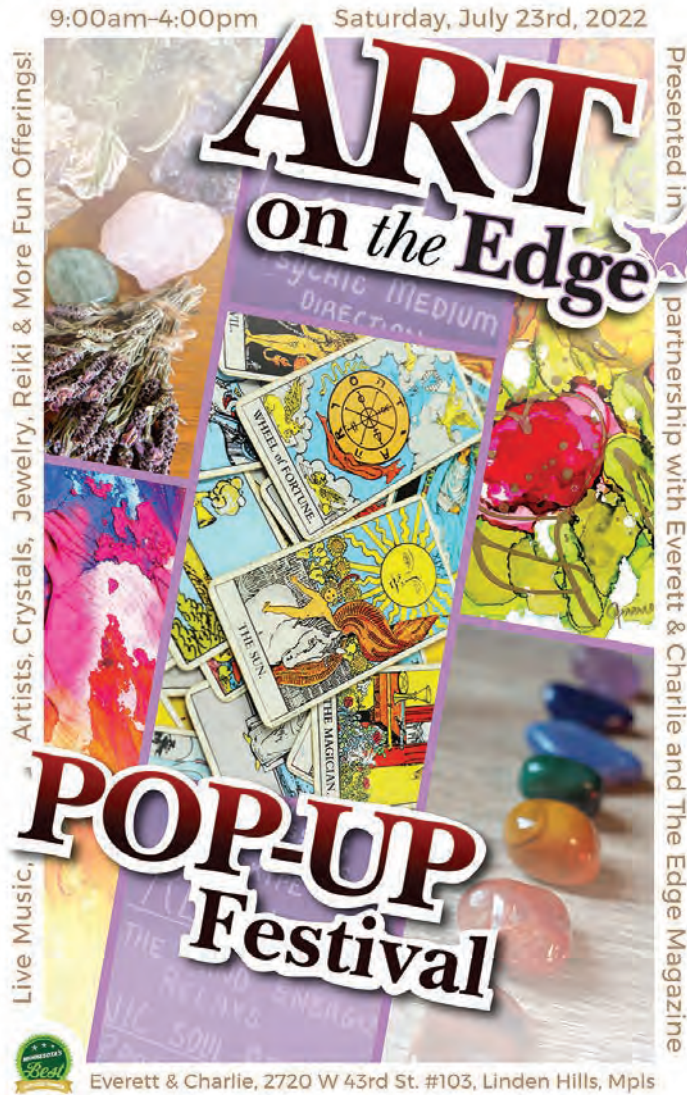
As soon as we met (again), Kelly and I knew instantly that we would be working together, bringing our passions and strengths to share information and create something new. It didn't take long before we came up with the idea of an event combining art and metaphysical.

With that, "Art on The Edge" was created.

Not your typical art fair, Art on The Edge is a festival dedicated to visual artists and holistic vendors. In the fall of 2020, we introduced the festival as a pop-up outside the Everett & Charlie Gallery in Linden Hills. It was hugely successful, so this year the festival will take over 43rd Street east of Upton on Saturday, July 23, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. There will be over 50+ vendors ranging from artists, authors, mystics, tarot readers, jewelers, psychics, and more. Be curious. Be there!

THE EDGE:

Kelly and her husband, Steve Wagner, purchased *The Edge* magazine which was founded in 1992 to promote the holistic community and explore the evolution of consciousness. A bi-monthly and digital publication, *The Edge* is the leading events and media resource dedicated to



all aspects of holistic living, health and wellness, and the mysteries beyond. Kelly and Steve are committed to businesses,

locations throughout the Twin Cities, out-

organizations and individuals who support our collective journey to wholeness and balance. In addition, *The Edge* is devoted to promoting organizations, businesses, and individuals who support our collective journey to wholeness and balance.

More than 20,000 people read *The Edge* printed publication monthly in the Twin Cities... and around the world. Most of *The Edge* readers have researched or use complementary or alternative healing modalities, purchase self-improvement products, buy nutritional supplements and place a high importance on the sustainability of our planet.

The Edge magazine is available in print at more than 500

state Minnesota and Upper Midwest, including Everett and Charlie Gallery.

EVERETT & CHARLIE:

I opened Everett & Charlie gallery in 2018, and it features only Minnesota artists. The gallery is grand salon-style, featuring a large variety of art which includes paintings, screen-printing, photography, pottery, glass, jewelry, textiles, sculpture, woodwork, and more. The artwork changes frequently and offers a calendar of openings, trunk shows, artists' talks and workshops, demonstrations and live music.

I believe energy is what makes original art special. The space is welcoming, full of color and energy.

Art has been touched by human hands and is meant to be enjoyed. It's my absolute calling to connect people with original art that speaks to them, and to the Minnesota artists whose stories resonate. I believe in exposing art to everyday life and find joy when a piece finds a forever home.

Everett & Charlie is named after my two grandsons (and future artists) who were four and one when I opened. In 2021, Everett & Charlie was voted "Minnesota's Best Art Gallery" by readers of the *Star Tribune* and has been nominated in 2022.

For more information about the event, go to www.edgemagazine.net or www.everettandcharlie.com

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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*. Contact her at ads@swconnector.com.



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TEAMING UP FOR GOOD

Among my favorite things to read are the *New York Times*' featured obituaries. Every Saturday, there is an obit about a renowned person that I've probably never heard of who did something extraordinary in their life. Often these are individuals who contributed to our culture in a palpable and particular way.



By **Larry LaVercombe**

Last Saturday, this headline caught my attention: "Suzi Gablik, Art Critic Who Took Modernism to Task, Dies at 87." Ms. Gablik was an avant-garde artist and theorist, a friend to Rene Magritte, Jasper Johns, and Robert Rauschenberg, among others. She actually introduced Rauschenberg to Johns, a relationship that has been called "one of the greatest love stories in modern art."

Quoting from the *Times* article, at a certain point Suzi "began to feel that modernism - her religion - had reached its limits. Its provocations were no longer transgressive but silly, elitist and even venal..." She responded to that with her "salvo of a book, 'Has Modernism Failed?'"

The premise that most struck me from the obit was this one:

"She turned against the prevailing art-for-art's-sake aesthetic of the 20th century... which absolved artists of any social responsibility. She wanted art to be a force for social betterment... Her powerful critiques of the art world" presaged a movement toward "ethical and political concerns that are at (art's) forefront today."



Gabby Giffords and husband, Mark Kelly, a senator and astronaut.

Three cheers for that. And yes, most of the artists I revere attempt to affect culture with their work, inspiring us or revealing things to us that we might not have seen or known before.

Film is an especially powerful medium in this regard, and just last week, at our own Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival, I saw an artful documentary made by two women who have been teaming up for good for many years now.

Directors Julie Cohen and Betsy West had previously made the Oscar-nominated film "RBG" about Ruth Bader Ginsberg. This time they have teamed up to make "Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down," a heart-wrenching yet inspiring portrait of the Arizona Congressional Representative who was shot in the head in an assassination attempt/mass shooting during an event in a Tucson supermarket parking lot in 2011.

Her injuries were so severe that she was initially reported dead. She lived, of

course, but her aphasia was so severe that for a long time it was unclear as to whether she would ever be able to talk again. The story of her recovery and rehabilitation, aided in large part by her deep connection to music and to singing (she was able to sing long before she was

able to talk again) is one of the stories that powers the film. But there is also a parallel story, that of her marriage with astronaut Mark Kelly, who tirelessly cares for her as she recovers her speech and mobility, and who then goes into politics himself to help carry on her good work.

One quote from the filmmakers: "Gabby Giffords is the hardworking, drag-on-slaying, 80s hits-singing, recumbent bike-riding hero we all need right now. We can't wait for audiences to fall in love with her as much as we have."

During the question-and-answer period, Director Betsy West told of how Barack Obama had declined to be interviewed for their RBG film, but that he easily agreed to speak on camera for this film. Perhaps he saw a different and greater value in this particular opportunity, for while the RBG was a portrait and celebration of Ginsberg life and achievements, the Gabby Giffords film exists in part to continue to fight the good fight

of gun reform. Obama's anger is palpable when he speaks of his inability to overcome the Republican filibuster that stopped Congress from expanding background checks on firearms after the Sandy Hook massacre of 2012.

Other democrats, notably Jim Clyburn and Kirsten Gillibrand, appear in the film, too. And Giffords is back in politics now, not as an elected official, but as a gun reform advocate. Her desire to "do good" is unchanged, even while her ability to speak in public is a far cry from what she was capable of before the shooting. Which brings me back to my real subject here: The deep-seated desire to Do Good.

We all have the capacity for it, though true enough, not everyone has the desire. But you do, I suspect. If you've been following my columns, you are probably a do-gooder yourself. Right? You are. And here's the thing: We need each other. We inspire each other. Except when we are bringing each other down with naysaying and fear. Don't fall into that. Keep the faith. Be positive.

If you see this film (and yes, you'll have a chance to see it in wide release this summer), you will see how one person responded to adversity. She never gave up. These filmmakers, they are not giving up. They are now making another film about another good person whose story will inspire you.

Allow yourself to be inspired. Go out and do good. Don't be cynical; cynicism is for the weak. Be strong. We can do it.

Editor's note: This column was submitted before the latest shooting in Uvalde.

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.

▶ 1 24/7 BUS LANES?

bike lanes and increased walkability, staff is proposing changes regarding the bus lanes. They intend to shift from 24/7 (or all day) lanes to dynamic (or phased in) lanes. I oppose this change and am working to solve for this."

A few days before the vote the entire Minneapolis legislative delegation sent a letter to the city council supporting full-time dedicated bus-only lanes from the first day the new road opens.

In the letter, they reminded council members about the \$40 million that was allocated to complete the E Line which will replace the current number 6 line that runs down Hennepin. "We must maximize this significant E Line investment by ensuring that rapid buses can move efficiently and unimpeded through congested areas," wrote the 15 legislators (Agbaje, Davnie, Greenman, Gomez, Hassan, Hornstein, Jordan, Lee, Long, Noor, Champion, Dibble, Dziedzic, Fateh, and Torres Ray). "We support the inclusion of an all-day dedicated lane for the E Line along this stretch of Hennepin Ave. as part of the Hennepin Avenue Redesign

project." They also referenced the Metro Transit Aug. 4 letter sent to the interim public works director at the time, Brette Hjelle. It said, "All-day bus lanes are critical to the success of both the Hennepin Avenue reconstruction project and the METRO E Line."

A parking review by staff found that in addition to the parking allowed on Hennepin now, there are currently over 3,000 additional spaces in the general area, including nearby streets, parking lots and parking ramps.

"A huge point of contention has been how much parking is being removed and how many parking bays are not being put back," said Minneapolis Senior Transportation Planner Becca Hughes. "There are currently about 311 spaces on the corridor today, and we have space for about 20 parking and loading bays that we have distributed in locations where they are most desired and frankly where they fit given the constraints in the amount of right-of-way we are dealing with."

Following the staff report it was clear that no one objected to the design but there was a clear divide between council members Chughtai, Payne and Wonsley

Worlobah, who favored dedicated bus lanes, and public works staff, who favored keeping the bus lanes flexible so they could be used for parking during some times of the day.

There has been a historic divide between the two council members (Ward 7 and Ward 10) who represent the area and that has continued into this term. In an interview with *Southwest Voices* last year 7th Ward Council Member Lisa Goodman is quoted as saying, "I am not yet convinced that it's an either-or, and that you have to have transit-dedicated lanes 24/7. I prefer that we start with transit during rush hour and see how it goes, then use those curbside uses for other things."

At the public works committee that Chughtai, but not Goodman, serves on, the 10th ward council member successfully tabled the parking restriction resolution that was authored by the committee's chair, council member Andrew Johnson. Neither Johnson, nor the engineer who helped draft the resolutions, were present to explain the resolution which appeared to only restrict parking at bus stops and not the full length of the bus lanes.

Chughtai was also able to pass a staff direction motion that would keep

the 24/7 bus lanes as presented by public works staff in 2021 as dedicated, 24/7 lanes when the street opens following construction. She said, "I've offered this because 24/7 bus lanes are the single largest tool for racial and economic justice in this reconstruction project; 55% of bus riders are people of color and 64% have an annual household income of less than \$35,000 per year."

The staff direction also calls for the establishment of an Area Parking Management Task Force to bring stakeholders together to identify parking solutions prior to the start of construction. It passed 3-2, with council members Emily Koski and Latrisha Vetaw opposed.

At the council meeting on May 26, however, on a motion made by Chughtai and supported by the committee's chair, Andrew Johnson, the council unanimously voted to send the item back to committee and postpone a council vote until June 16. Chughtai said that the extra time would allow her and Johnson to work with the city attorney's office and others to ensure that the bus priority lanes will be dedicated full time for exclusive use of buses.

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LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS

Chelsea Rowles talks about the guides and tips this non-profit offers to help people discuss race, politics, and more

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

How can people have hard conversations that will bring them together versus driving them apart?

In a city that is engaged in tough conversations about policing, race and more, Chelsea Rowles suggests people consider Living Room Conversations.

The South High School graduate and lifelong south Minneapolis resident got involved in the nonprofit through an internship four years ago after earning her master of arts in psychology at the University of Minnesota. She is now a managing partner.

INTRODUCE US TO LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS.

Rowles: Living Room Conversations works to heal society by connecting people across divides – politics, age, gender, race, nationality, and more – through guided conversations proven to build understanding and transform communities. We are an essential first step in bridging divides in society. Our focus for this year is Belonging and Mental Health.

Something that often gets missed in favor of direct action is just listening to others and suspending judgment, even if just for the conversation at hand. Everyone has different experiences, viewpoints, and opinions. Living Room Conversations offers over 150 conversation guides, complete with our six conversation agreements, that walk you, step by step, through topics like politics, race and ethnicity, hope, faith, and even food and fiber arts!

WHY WAS LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS STARTED?

Rowles: In late 2010, Living Room Conversations was created to create a structured, intimate conversation format that would allow people to discuss important issues with friends of differing political affiliations and backgrounds. The hope was to empower participants to

begin to reweave the fabric of our society by demonstrating that respectful conversation can enrich our lives and enable us to create better solutions to the challenges we face together.

I became involved with Living Room Conversations through a recommendation from a friend. Living Room Conversations was hiring interns about four years ago, I got involved and have been here ever since!

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF A CONVERSATION?

Rowles: I think that is best told by our participants. Common descriptions of experiences are “empowering,” “timely,” “a place I know I won’t be judged,” “validating,” and allowing them to feel “less alone.” It’s funny, in a way, one of our offerings is conversations that people can watch. We have had these conversations with people that we know have very different views. At the end of the conversation viewers will say that they wished the participants had shown greater differences. Our guides really draw out connection and foster respect and understanding even amongst the most differing viewpoints. Not every conversation can go quite so smooth but, with the conversation agreements in place you can be assured that, as long as people follow them, the conversation will be respectful.

Here are a few quotes I pulled:
“I was bullied for being conservative-minded in liberal circles. I see projects like this [Living Room Conversations] as very hopeful. It’s a place where I know I won’t be judged.”

“This conversation made me realize that I need to manage my own emotions before I can start any bridge building work. If I’m not coming in hot, I can actually engage in a conversation and not get defensive. I have to work on myself first.”

“We have seen folks who might not normally engage with one another come together to learn with and from each other. There’s validation in being able to share your experience and hear about the experiences of others.”

“I learned something about myself. I need to work on my own anger and disappointment so I can engage in a more meaningful conversations on race, politics and equality.”

HOW CAN A CONVERSATION HELP “LOWER THE TEMPERATURE” OF AN ISSUE AND HELP BUILD CONNECTION AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

Rowles: When we are able to see past



“We are committed to helping communities build connections through conversation and we will do our best to help however we are able,” said Chelsea Rowles.

the issue at hand and focus on understanding others, it helps us to build empathy and come to a place that we can listen to others openly. Living Room Conversations gets us started on finding the places we do connect.

An example I often use is that people from all different backgrounds can agree that we want safe communities to live in, the problem is how we keep those communities safe. Some people want more police, some want no police, etc. What we don’t often consider in our viewpoints is what we DO agree on, in this example, community safety. When we can find what we agree on it is easier to see where others’ experiences and viewpoints connect with our own and that builds feelings of belonging and community.

HOW CAN PEOPLE GET INVOLVED?

Rowles: Our 150+ guides and Host Toolkit are available freely, and open-source, on our website. Each guide has all the tools you need to walk you through having a conversation. We also have three training sessions offered each month: An Introduction to Living Room Conversations session, a How to Host and Organize Your own Living Room Conversations session, and a How to Host a Conversation About Race session. We have paid services for people, businesses, and organizations that need custom guides created, custom trainings, and more. People can also email me at chelsea@livingroomconversations.org about any support they need for get-

ting Living Room Conversations started in their community.

We are committed to helping communities build connections through conversation and we will do our best to help however we are able.

WHAT ARE SOME TIPS YOU CAN OFFER FOLKS ON HOW TO HOST A CONVERSATION ABOUT RACE?

Rowles: We actually have an entire resource page all about having conversations on race in addition to our monthly How to Host a Conversation About Race. Be mindful of who you are inviting into your conversation and what your goals are. Many people want really diverse groups and fail to recognize that many people, particularly people of color, are burnt out about talking about race. We even offer guides that are for groups of people that are all one race (Being White in the Anti-Racism Movement, Being a Person of Color in the Racial Justice Movement, and Being Asian American are specific examples).

People have different experiences and we cannot take the word of one participant, no matter their race, as a truth for all people of that race. Goals can also be tricky. People really want to take action, but sometimes we need a conversation that is just that. A conversation. Lower the barriers of entry for people who are less willing to, or more stubborn about, talking race and what race means in the U.S. so that we can get the conversations going. Building trust and creating spaces without judgment give people confidence to open up and examine themselves and the world around them more clearly.

WE’VE GOT A LOT OF BIG ISSUES IN MINNEAPOLIS, RELATED TO RACE, WAGES, POLICE, CRIME, CLIMATE, AND MORE. WHAT DO YOU THINK OUR PATH FORWARD INCLUDES?

Rowles: Clearly, one of my hopes is that we have more conversations. Let’s talk about these issues without trying to convince others about what needs to be done about them. I would love to see non-debate conversations, like Living Room Conversations, being used before communities make large decisions. Everyone has a voice that should be heard and that should help inform decisions.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

Rowles: Give it a try! The stakes are low and the reward is high. Living Room Conversations are for everyone! More at livingroomconversations.org.

NEIGHBORHOOD BRIEFS

SUMMER SIDEWALK MUSIC SERIES

The Summer Sidewalk Music Series has returned to downtown Linden Hills. Hosted by Everett and Charlie Gallery and Harriet Brasserie, the sidewalk series features outdoor music at 2720 W. 43rd St. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings 5:30–7:30 p.m. and Sunday mornings 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

BUILDING AT 44TH AND VINCENT

Last month, LHiNC collected community feedback about the 30 to 40 unit apartment building proposed for 44th Street West and Vincent. The developers, Good Neighbor Homes and Streetfront Development attended LHiNC’s Zoning and Housing Committee meeting in May to present the project and answer residents’ questions. Seventy-five people took part in the survey. Results showed that 46% of respondents are opposed to the project, 25% are undecided and 29% support it. Parking was the top concern of respondents, followed by increased population density and affordability. If any community members wish to share additional feedback, they should email info@lindhills.org. LHiNC will also be sharing the survey results with the developers

CONSTRUCTION ON NEW BDE MAKA SKA CONCESSIONS PAVILION AREA BEGINS



Construction on a new concessions pavilion area at Bde Maka Ska began on May 23, 2022. The project will create two new buildings, including new, all-gender accessible restrooms and ample outdoor public seating to replace the building that burned down in 2019. The new buildings are scheduled to open next summer. The Bde Maka Ska boat launch will be closed June 6–Sept. 16. Trailered boats will not be allowed on or off the lake while the boat launch is closed. The Minneapolis Sailing Center and Wheel Fun Rentals will continue to operate at northeast Bde Maka Ska this season. Occasional trail closures will be necessary to maintain a safe work area. Road closures may also be necessary. The former Bde Maka Ska concessions pavilion, also called a “refectory,” was built in 1930 and was operated seasonally until it burned down in 2019. The site was paved over to provide a temporary gathering space at the popular northeastern corner of the lake, and utilities were repaired to allow vendors to continue operating.

and will invite the developers back to a future LHiNC Zoning and Housing Committee meeting to provide updates.

INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL

With help from the Friends of Roberts Bird Sanctuary, volunteers worked in May to dig out many hundreds of Siberian Squill bulbs in William Berry Woods. Volunteers are needed to help with this effort and there will be opportunities later this month and into June to pull Garlic Mustard and Dame’s Rocket. Interested? Email enviro@lindhills.org.

FINAL WORK AT LORING PARK

Final construction is underway on the Loring Park playground and tennis court improvements. Crews will first work to pour a concrete foundation. After the concrete has cured, they will return to add a layer of resilient rubber surfacing. After court paving is complete, final fence fabric and concrete work, along with color coating and striping, will take place in June and early July. Tennis courts are planned to open for play in July.

CUBAN FILM FESTIVAL

The 13th Minnesota Cuban Film Festival runs Thursdays, May 26–June 30, 2022 at the MSP Film in The Main (115 SE Main St., Minneapolis). For complete films lineup visit: <https://mspfilm.org/minnesota-cuban-film-festival/>

MINNEAPOLIS-SAINT PAUL SHIP

The new USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (LCS 21) was commissioned May 21 in Duluth. Its homeport will be Naval Station Mayport, Fla.



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By Penny Fuller

GUARDIANS OF OUR FRESHWATER

Minnesota Water Stewards connect over clean water

What thoughts or images come to mind when you hear "freshwater"? Do you see a sparkling lake, hear water lapping against the shoreline, feel it tickling your toes? Is it a gurgling creek winding through woods and meadows to an unseen destination?

The darker picture: Freshwater faces continual threat.

One huge threat comes from storm-water run-off. Salt laden roads and walkways increase the salinity of water more each year. Per the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency: "Chloride from de-icing salt and water softener salt gets into lakes, streams and groundwater that supplies drinking water. One teaspoon of salt permanently pollutes five gallons of water. Fifty lakes and streams have chloride levels too high to meet the standards designed to protect fish and other aquatic life; 75 more are nearing that level."

So, is there a bright side?

What thoughts or images emerge when you hear the term Minnesota Water Stewards? Oft an unseen force, they are growing network of neighbors in the community. But who are they and what do they do?

In 2013 Freshwater, a non-profit organization dedicated to protection, conservation and restoration of all freshwater, created a program called Minnesota Water Stewards (formerly Master Water Stewards) in partnership with Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) to train citizen volunteers to be leaders in their community. The goal: protecting freshwater. Water Stewards act as leaders, educating on ways to prevent water pollution and showing community members ways to conserve and protect waterways. Freshwater Society Education and Program Coordinator Alex Van Loh reported they are 470 strong, and growing.

As part of her daily work with landscape clients, Standish resident Roxanne Stuhr said she is painfully aware of how natural resources, particularly water, are routinely compromised by human activities. Keen to make a difference in her community, she considered the Water Steward program as an opportunity. Stuhr was among the first group certified by the program. Stuhr said, "One of my biggest rewards comes from guiding people through



Standish-Ericsson resident Roxanne Stuhr said, "One of my biggest rewards comes from guiding people through the process of creating their own individual take on an effective system and seeing them be proud and excited of their contribution." (Photo by Penny Fuller)

the process of creating their own individual take on an effective system and seeing them be proud and excited of their contribution."

Former Freshwater Director of Programs, Peggy Knappb, explained the underlying program concept. "It starts with an assumption that everyone cares about clean water. Everything at every moment of every day depends on it, but most people don't know how to act on that idea. We wanted to teach people behaviors, actions they could apply individually. People are more apt to trust information from someone they know, like a neighbor, rather than

an expert who's a stranger. So, the idea was to educate a core group who would teach their neighbor. And then it spreads neighbor to neighbor, building relationships into a locally-based leadership."

Sue Nissen, of Edina, recounted growing up in the midwest with fond memories of summers spent at the lake. "The water is both energizing and calming," she said. "It's just part of me, and we are all made of water." Nissen became a Minnesota Water Steward. "The training itself was really great," she said, "not just knowledge, but the forming of relationships with others...many permanent

friendships."

Nissen completed a collaborative capstone project at Union Congregational Church in St Louis Park in 2015. "It was really a great experience and a wonderful success," she said. "It's funny," she added, "as a water steward I thought I'd just be digging holes, working on little projects, but it's become about educating and reaching out to others to help them understand how vital clean water is and how ridiculous it is to contaminate our fresh water." Nissen is also a founding member of StopOverSalting (SOS) in Minnesota, working to support legislation aimed at reducing oversalting practices within the private sector.

A Minnesota Water Steward's work is ongoing. They commit minimally 25 hours annually of outreach and educating their community about clean water practices. A steward represents just the tip of an iceberg, each connecting to many people in their own community, with effects far reaching. Knappb summarized: "From one small change you create over what you can control (like keeping storm water on your property) you see yourself differently, as a person who does things to protect water, and you feel inspired to take more steps...to want to share and it grows from there."

Van Loh described the program's ongoing focus: empowerment and engagement of the community to address local water pollution and increase public awareness, education and action on water quality issues. He explained that the program is evolving including a new branch called Water Conservation Advisor (WCA). And there is Art for Water, another way to reach the community. Following coursework completion, a public art installation furthers outreach and inspires yet more individuals to care for Minnesota's water.

You don't have to be certified as a water steward to make a difference. There are many ways that you can choose to be the difference, from simple to complex. Examples: keeping yard and pet waste off the street and out of storm drains, directing gutters to the yard instead of the street or adding a rain garden. Also, reduction or elimination of fertilizer and pesticides and switching from lead to non-toxic tackle. Their website provides a starting point to learning and considering your options. <https://minnesotawaterstewards.org>

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