

SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • JULY 7, 2022 • VOL. 1 • NO. 13



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GAMES BRIDGE THE GAP

LHENA resident helps start educational video game company to teach kids math and social studies skills

By **Chloe Peter**

The last 20 years has provided a technological revolution, but educational outcomes have remained largely unchanged. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Minnesota has some of the largest education gaps in the nation when it comes to race and socioeconomic status. This equity gap continues to widen. Racial and income gaps in standardized testing and college readiness have continued to increase over time. It was from the uneasiness of these facts that 7 Generation Games, an educational video game company merging social studies and math, was created.



LHENA resident Maria Burns Ortiz cofounded 7 Generation Games.

At 7 Generation Games, based in the Lowry Hills East neighborhood, they make educational video games and the tools to create them. Through enabling the development of low-cost, highly accessible teaching apps, 7 Generation provides a way for all communities to have the tools and resources they need to foster strong connections to their culture and improve educational outcomes. Maria Burns Ortiz, cofounder and CEO of 7 Generation Games, believes that not enough educational



AN ALTERNATIVE TO POLICE



Crisis Responders Amy Brueckner (left) and Dean Zoller pose on one of the two BCR vans. The vans do not use bright lights or sirens. Responders wear navy blue shirts or jackets with "Behavioral Crisis Response" printed on the back. Responders are not armed, and seek to calm the situation. They maintain kindness and respect. They help the person in crisis and provide resources for further support. (Photo by Terry Faust)

It's the nation's first 911-based mental health first responder program

By **Jan Willms**

It has been a little more than six months since Minneapolis Office of Performance and Innovation launched the Behavioral Crisis Response (BCR) team's pilot project, Canopy Roots. It is the nation's first 911-based mental health first responder program.

BCR was started to provide crisis intervention, counseling and connection to support services as an alternative to police responders.

A report on the success and challenges of the project was presented to the city's Public Safety Committee in late April, highlighting the responses that have occurred in the first quarter of operation. The city has a \$6 million, two-year contract with the Black-owned Canopy Mental Health & Consulting based in Richfield. It diverted some of its police funds into the pilot program.

BCR uses two vans, initially serving daytime shifts and now operating 24-7

weekdays. "There are two unarmed, highly trained mental health practitioners on each van," said Gina Obiri, program manager for the performance and innovation office. She said that situations involving weapons, physical assault or medical emergencies are not directed to BCR.

100 CALLS A WEEK

Taylor Crouch-Dodson, another program manager, said the Canopy Roots BCR program has averaged 100 calls per week in its first quarter of existence. "There have been 1,650 calls, and BCR has been called to every neighborhood and precinct



NO NEW STRUCTURES ON CEDAR OR LAKE OF THE ISLES

Planners take a 'lighter touch' to preferred concept for Lake of the Isles/Cedar Lake

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

There are no new permanent structures in the revised master plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles.

That means no picnic pavilions. No

new bathroom facilities. No rental kiosks.

These items were included in the initial draft concepts published in December 2021, but most people who commented were not in favor of adding them. The majority of the people who responded to the optional demographic questions lived in the adjacent neighborhoods or one neighborhood over.

"Generally what we heard from folks was they wanted a little bit more of a lighter touch," said Minneapolis Recreation and Park Board planner Emma R.

Pachuta.

"We hope that people feel like we really responded to the feedback we heard."

The idea of closing the parkways is not in this version of the plan. However, the section on the northwest side of Cedar Lake will be narrowed from 24.5 feet to 22 feet in order to widen the trail there. "It's not a perfect solution but we think it's the best," said Pachuta.

In the new preferred concept, Lake of the Isles (at right) remains more natural.



SENATE D. 62 PRIMARY: FATEH AND LADEN FACE OFF

By **Cam Gordon**

The Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) Senate District 62 primary race between first-term incumbent Omar Fateh and union leader Shaun Laden is heating up as Fateh is facing questions about past campaign practices.

The election will take place with Fateh under scrutiny from voters, reporters, legislators, and the courts related to campaign and ethics complaints. He is under investigation for two possible ethics violations, initiated on May 22 by seven members of the Minnesota Senate Republican Caucus. Their complaint asks the ethics committee to "examine the report that Senator Fateh received an in-kind contribution of a campaign advertisement from a commercial entity, and then in response carried legislation that would have benefited that commercial entity. Also, it looks at "the extent of Senator Fateh's involvement" "in a case of election fraud" that involved Muse Mohamed, his brother-in-law, who was recently found guilty of lying to a federal grand jury during the testimony he gave in October 2021 related to his work as a Fateh campaign volunteer.

The first two senate subcommittee hearings into the complaints were held June 8 and 15. Fateh has a lawyer representing him at the hearings and has denied violating senate ethical standards. Testifying before the subcommittee about election impropriety, Fateh said, "I did not directly or indirectly encourage anybody

to act improperly at any point whether its voting or absentee ballots or any part of the election process." After the hearing, the subcommittee voted to continue the investigation and announced plans to subpoena two witnesses and to reconvene on July 7. There they hope to take testimony from Siyad Salah, president of the Somali TV, and Dawson Kimyon, Fateh's former legislative aide and 2020 campaign manager.

Fateh (who did not respond to requests for an interview) was first elected to the senate in 2020 after defeating the incumbent, Jeff Hayden, in the DFL primary. In the senate, he sits on the Human Services Reform, Human Services Licensing, State Government & Elections, and Technology & Reform Committees. He is also a member of the Council of Minnesotans of African Heritage.

He is noted on the legislative website as the first Somali American and the first Muslim to serve in the Minnesota Senate. He was an unsuccessful candidate for District 62A of the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2018 and for Fairfax County School Board (Virginia) in 2015. He was born in Washington, D.C. and attended George Mason University where he earned a master's degree in public administration. Since moving to Minnesota he has worked for the city of Minneapolis as a community specialist, Minnesota Department of Transportation and Minnesota Department of Revenue. Since his 2018 run, Fateh has worked for the University of Minnesota as a business analyst. Fateh



Omar Fateh



Shaun Laden

and his wife Kaltum currently rent an apartment in the Ventura Village neighborhood.

Laden has been a Minneapolis renter for over 20 years. He lives in Whittier with his wife, Cecilia, who is a teacher at Whittier School. Before living in Whittier, he lived in Logan Park, Stevens Square, and Marcy Holmes.

As the president of the education support professionals' chapter of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers Union, Laden co-led the recent strike that improved hourly school workers'

pay, protections for educators of color, and support for students. After that campaign, he said, "I decided to run for Senate to fully fund our public schools and improve the lives of working class neighbors like I did as president of our majority women and people of color MFT ESP union."

Laden has worked on many campaigns, including for Paul Wellstone (2002), Keith Ellison (2006 and 2008), Karen Clark (2014 and 2016), the Minneapolis Ranked Choice Voting ballot initiative, and the Minneapolis Public School Levy Referendums (2016 and 2018).

His community experience includes

work starting a community garden, opening and running the Uptown Farmer's Market, and winning improved labor standards for a group of workers at the University of Minnesota.

"As a Campus Camp Wellstone trainer," he said, "I taught college students around the country about organizing for change and a people-centered politics." He is most proud of "leading our Education Support Professionals (ESP) union from one where fewer than half of ESP were union members, to today where over 80% are and we have achieved what one ESP called 'life-changing financial improvements for hourly workers.'"

According to Fateh's campaign website, "In his first legislative session, Fateh has made a name for himself as one of the most active and vocal members of the Senate minority caucus... Fateh has demonstrated leadership emblematic of our courageous community of Southsiders, and, in the process, he is sure to have ruffled the feathers of some very powerful opposition."

It is hard to know how the ethics probe and criticism of Fateh will impact the primary. Some prominent DFLers, including Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, are still supporting him. "As long as I've known Senator Fateh, he has been a tireless public servant and absolutely dedicated to his constituent," she said in a public statement endorsing him. "We need more people like Omar Fateh at the State Capitol."

Laden has also been endorsed by local DFL elected officials including Minneapolis School Board Member Kimberly Caprini and State Representative Sydney Jordan.



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►1 NO NEW STRUCTURES

There will be some reconfigurations of the parkways, particularly where E. Bde Maka Ska Parkway meets W. Lake of the Isles Parkway, paired with trail reconfigurations, to improve safety. "By realigning these areas, it will hopefully work better for everyone involved," said Pachuta.

People can comment on the plan during two upcoming open houses: Thursday, July 14, 4:30-6:30 p.m. at Cedar Lake South Beach, and Saturday, July 16, 9-11 a.m. at Lake of the Isles Parkway and Euclid Place. People can also comment online via a survey.

PARK EXPANSION?

MPRB is considering a park expansion on the northeast corner of Cedar Lake on land that is currently owned by the Hennepin County Railroad Authority. The railroad authority intends to transition ownership at some point, observed Pachuta. "This could be a great opportunity to enter into that conversation."

The preferred park concept also includes the possible acquisition of a small parcel on the north side of the Kenilworth channel to facilitate movement between Cedar Lake Trail and the water.

Portable restrooms, seating areas, bike racks, gardens and water fountains will be added in various areas throughout the park. At East Cedar Beach, a formalized event area and concert area will be created using natural materials. A storage area is proposed near S. Upton Ave.

Two sections of the walking path around Lake of the Isles are proposed to transition to a slightly wider two-way bike path to improve connections, one on the north side of Lake of the Isles and one on the south side. Another shorter two-way section will be added along Kenilworth Trail, paired with a bike boulevard on Kenilworth Place. A new soft surface trail is proposed from the Midtown Greenway to the lake at the dog park. In other places, soft surface paths using either mulch or gravel will be installed where people have already created a path. There are no plans to add more paved trails.



East Cedar Lake beach will remain natural. A formalized event area and a concert area with natural materials is proposed, and some new soft surface trails will be added. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Some of the informal access points on the lakes will be removed and restored to minimize erosion, and additional access areas will be formalized where there is currently heavy use. A dock will be added on each lake, including at South Cedar Beach and on the east side of Lake of the Isles.

All of the existing winter amenities will be retained, and an ice skating ribbon will extend north of the existing ice rink. There will be an upgraded temporary warming house nearby.

MPRB would like to move one welcome kiosk a few feet on the north side of Lake of the Isles to make better use of it, following feedback that it wasn't serving its purpose where it is, according to Pachuta. There will be other enhanced entry points throughout the area to build upon existing signage and new way-finding signs added.

WATER QUALITY UPDATES

There is no cost yet associated with the master plan. A cost estimate will be done once the plan is finalized.

The CAC can make recommendations regarding what they'd like to see as priorities. "My assumption is that it might be some of the water quality updates because there has been such a strong emphasis on water quality," said Pachuta. CAC members include: Aaron Shaffer, Adam Braun, Alice Lehman, Anna Eleria, Ben Surma, Constance Pepin, Craig Wilson, Drew McGovern, Eric Gangl, Jim Romlin, Joshua Christianson, Laura Kinkead, Lilia Theisen, Linda Mack, Michaela A. West, Nan Dreher, Win Rockwell (chair), Will Stensrud, and James Reid. Stormwater runoff from impervious trails will be treated by the shoreline buffers and expanded littoral edge. Other methods will be used to manage stormwater runoff from hard surfaces. A tree trench will help hold and treat water along the parkway. There are also several proposed underground treatment areas along the parkway, including two on Cedar Lake and five on Lake of the Isles. The preferred park concept also aims to treat runoff coming from the larger watershed through six outfall pipes by retrofitting existing treatment facilities and marsh restoration. Managing trash from the runoff is more a watershed conversation than an issue MPRB can solve, according to Pachuta.

As an educator who has worked in the Minneapolis Public Schools for 11

years my top priority would be fully funding our schools," said Laden. "I will also prioritize police accountability and transforming public safety, building more public housing, and unrestricting Minnesota to ensure safe and accessible abortion care to all Minnesotans who seek it."

Fateh lists "fully funded public schools," as his first priority on his website, followed by housing, livable wages and worker dignity, climate change and environmental justice, civil rights, public safety and policing, and healthcare. "This primary is a choice. Who do you want fighting for us in Saint Paul?" said Laden. "I am someone who has created real change to materially improve the

both the Republican and Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) parties will have primaries in the 5th congressional district race. There will also be primary elections in the nonpartisan Hennepin County Attorney and Sheriff races that will determine which two candidates will be on the ballot in the November general elections, as well as for the Minneapolis School Board Member at-large and District 5 races. Because more than one candidate has filed with the DFL for Senate Districts 62 and 63 as well as for House District 62A, there will be DFL primary elections held for those southside races as well. On Aug. 9, State Senator Omar Fateh is being challenged by union organizer Shaun Laden in 62. State Representative Aisha Gomez is being challenged in the primary by Osman Ahmed, who also ran unsuccessfully for the same seat in the primary in 2018. State Senator Zaynab Mohamed is being challenged by Todd C. Scott. You can vote early June 24-Aug. 8. Find more information at www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/

water quality," said Pachuta.

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The Cedar Lake-Lake of the Isles Master Plan (Cedar-Isles) will create a 20-30-

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"This primary is a choice. Who do you want fighting for us in Saint Paul?" said Laden. "I am someone who has created real change to materially improve the

lives of thousands of working class union members like paraprofessionals and food service workers, the majority of whom are women and people of color. I will be a tireless champion for working people in our district, and will take my experience creating real change in working people's lives to St. Paul to get things done for our neighborhood."

The primary election that will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 9 will determine which of the two candidates will be on the ballot in the November general election. Early voting in the primary goes from Friday, June 24 through Monday, Aug. 8.

met for this first time and received a presentation from the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and their investigation that found that the city of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Police Department has engaged in a pattern and practices of race discrimination in violation of the Minnesota Human Rights Act. The presentation said, "Without fundamental organizational cultural change, reforming MPD's policies, procedures, and trainings will be meaningless." It called for a consent decree that lays out specific changes the city and MPD will be required to make, is issued by a judge, is a legally binding agreement that the parties are required by law to follow with timelines for prioritization and accountability, uses an independent oversight team to hold the parties accountable, and lives on regardless of election cycles.

CITY UPDATING CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The city of Minneapolis, through its Sustainability Office, launched a community engagement process to inform an update to its Climate Action Plan that was approved in 2013. That plan set goals and identified strategies to eliminate carbon emissions, reduce pollution and improve the environment. The update will likely include significant changes for a renamed plan, that is currently being called the Climate Equity Plan. Engagement will include tabling at events this summer, convening listening sessions, and establishing a steering committee and work groups. You can learn more and take a survey by visiting <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/programs-initiatives/climate-equity/>

HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATION SUBCOMMITTEE

The city council has established a new Pattern & Practice Investigations Subcommittee to review and engage in the Minnesota Department of Human Rights investigation into the city. On June 14, they

WATER QUALITY GOALS

- Lake of the Isles should be an ecologically healthy, shallow lake where phosphorus levels are below <40ug/L, diverse native aquatic plants dominate, and the aquatic food web is maintained.
- Manage Cedar Lake as an ecologically healthy, deep lake where phosphorus levels are below <25 ug/L, diverse native aquatic plants dominate, and the aquatic food web is maintained.
- Reduce phosphorus, chloride, trash, and sediment from entering the lake from areas within the project area.
- Address run-off from hard surfaces on park land.
- Maintain and stabilize shoreline with native vegetation in all areas except for formal access points and historic viewsheds.
- Maximize and restore habitat (terrestrial and aquatic) to improve health of the lake and have spaces for wildlife.

year vision for Cedar Lake, a section of Cedar Lake Trail, Lake of the Isles and Dean Parkway. The process began in fall 2019.

Given the challenge of the pandemic, MPRB looked for new ways to get feedback.

MPRB enlisted the help of community collaborators for this project. Request for proposals went out in 2020 and these various collaborators (some individuals and some nonprofits) helped kickstart the conversation.

They also used social media, had multiple online surveys, and solicited feedback at the lakes.

"We are still taking community feedback this summer. We will share feedback with the CAC to finalize their recommendation," said Pachuta.

A draft plan will be created by the end of 2022, and then go out for a 45-day comment period before it goes before the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board of Commissioners for approval. The Cedar-Isles area is the only part of the Minneapolis park system that does not have an updated plan.

BRIEFS

COUNTY CONVERTING AQUA MOTEL TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Hennepin County Board has approved purchasing and rehabilitating the Aqua Motel at 5719 Lyndale Avenue South to provide permanent single room occupancy (or rooming house) housing using federal COVID relief funds. After necessary repairs are completed, the county will contract another agency to lease, operate and manage the property as low-income housing. The former motel will provide 36 units of housing, most likely for single adults. This is part of the largest investment in affordable housing the county has likely ever made. On June 2, the board approved spending more than \$27 million help preserve or build 1,900 affordable housing units.

AUG. 9 PRIMARY ELECTION

On Aug. 9, there will be a primary election in Minnesota. At the city level

► Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

NEW FELLOWSHIP TO HELP YOUTH FIND THEIR PURPOSE

This program will provide young adults with mentors, life skills training and workforce development

I heard a terrible story the other day from my friend. The story started with a young man arguing with his mom on a hot morning in Minneapolis. It ended with his death. After the argument, he shot and killed himself. He was 18.

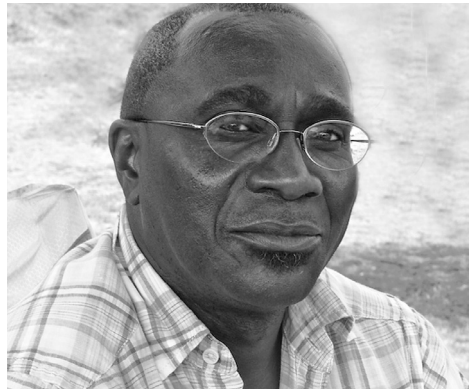


By Eric Ortiz

This tragic outcome has become too common. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds in the United States. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, nearly 20 percent of high school students have serious thoughts of suicide, while 9 percent make an attempt to take their lives. There has been a modest decline in the overall U.S. suicide rate in the past few years, but suicide remains a major public concern, especially with young people.

So what compels someone to take their life? Suicide is the result of many complex factors in a person's life. It is not one particular event or discussion. It is not always because of depression. Young people are particularly vulnerable because they are still developing, mentally and socially. They are still finding their identity and way in life.

Once a person knows their life pur-



Dr. Remi Douah

pose, they can live and lead from it to give their life meaning. A moment of inspiration can put their life purpose into focus. Once they have clarity and can see their life purpose, they can turn that purpose into power.

Dr. Remi Douah is helping young people in Minneapolis find their purpose. Remi, 60, is the founder and executive director of 846s, a nonprofit organization that helps Black communities overcome historical barriers by accessing mental healthcare.

Remi came to the U.S. from the Ivory Coast of Africa in the 1980s to study at American colleges. He met his wife, Thorunn Bjarnadottir, who's originally from Iceland, at the University of Minnesota. They had a son, Isak, in 1998, and soon learned that raising Isak in America would be different compared to their home countries.

"You don't come and say, 'I'm going to raise a Black child,'" Remi told PBS NewsHour in a 2021 report on the reform efforts in Minneapolis after George Floyd's

murder by former policeman Derek Chauvin. "You say, 'I'm going to raise a child, a human being.' And you do your best to raise that child to function in society. It's society that forces you to see your child as Black and white."

The concept for 846s started after George Floyd's murder, when Isak, who grew up just miles from where Floyd was killed, was filled with rage after the killing of another Black man by Minneapolis police. Isak had participated in street protests after two other police killings of Black men, Jamar Clark in 2015 and Philando Castile in 2016. This time, Isak and his friends had violent thoughts and wanted to exact revenge. He asked his father three questions:

- Why are they killing us?
- What did we do wrong?
- What can we do to prevent it?

Remi and Thorunn suggested Isak speak to a therapist. Their son agreed and went to therapy. "A month later, he came back and said, 'Dad, it's working for me, and I think I have an answer to the third question I asked you,'" Remi recounted. "I want all my friends to have access to mental therapies."

Isak has been an evangelist for youth mental health ever since, and Remi has been on the frontlines in the community as an active listening presence and advocate for change. They have a vision (led by Isak and his friends) of creating a youth wellness center in south Minneapolis for marginalized youth with wraparound, holistic services that cover all areas of their lives.

Today, Remi is working with a core group of 10 dedicated young adults (ages

18-24) to teach them how to identify and act in response to trauma. As part of this work, Remi is developing a fellowship program with these young adults and the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation, a nonprofit focused on building stronger communities through education, youth development and healthy lifestyles.

I am the board chair of the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation, and with Remi, we will lead the Restorative Community Building Fellowship, a six-month earn and learn program. We will provide fellows with restorative practices instruction, life skills training and local paid internships to develop their natural talents and give them the tools, experience and support they need to thrive and become community leaders.

Our community partners will provide employment, training and resources for the youth we are mentoring. Partners include 7 Generation Games, Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute, Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association and the Southwest Connector. Our goal is to provide pathways to careers where young adults can not only make a living. They can make a life.

If you are interested in supporting our Restorative Community Building Fellowship program or learning more, visit bit.ly/communityfellowship.



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

CAN WE IMPROVE PARKING IN LINDEN HILLS VILLAGE?

TEAMING UP FOR GOOD

The Linden Hills Village at 43rd and Upton is one of the most vibrant neighborhood business nodes in all of Minnesota. We have award winning restaurants (and chefs!), wonderful coffee shops, a toy shop and a children's bookstore, an art gallery, jewelry, a pet supply store, hardware store, a Tibet store (!) – and MORE! So many cool shops and eateries – but – we do not have nearly enough parking to handle all the potential customers.

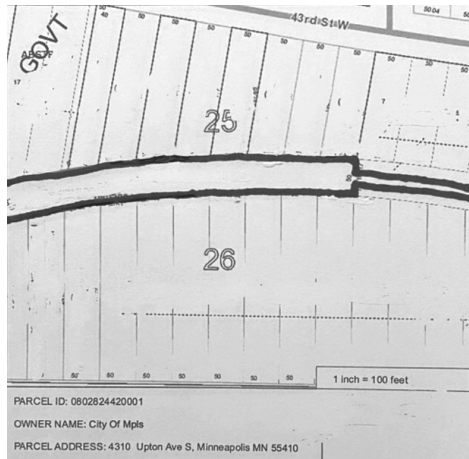


By Larry LaVercombe

Consequently, the businesses suffer, and so do we, the customers, when we want to stop in for a purchase or an experience.

The Linden Hills Neighborhood Council has been examining this problem off and on for all 20 of the years I've been involved. And, in that time, we have lost, not gained, about 10 parking spaces. With the new bus line coming in, we are about to lose eight more.

What's to be done?



Here's an idea: Let's use the Linden Hills Trolley right-of-way area to add at least 80 parking spaces. It's 50 feet wide from the point of Settergren's western boundary to Xerxes.

According to many people I've talked to, the Minneapolis City Council is very interested in promoting bicycles and buses, and is meanwhile actively pursuing REDUCTIONS in parking in neighborhood business nodes. According to one longtime volunteer and activist in Linden Hills, "City doesn't want cars, and they want to push business parking into the

residential neighborhood streets."

Look, I'm all for buses, and I'm all for bikes. But I'm not alone in saying that I'm not going to take a bus for three-quarters of a mile, nor am I going to ride my bike in the winter.

For years, I have been promoting the opening of the Linden Hills Trolley right-of-way that goes from Upton to Xerxes. Currently, drivers pull into this right-of-way and park on the left, next to the Great Harvest Bakery building and along the St. Thomas Church retaining wall. But in order to leave this area, drivers must turn around and head back out the way they came, on a "roadway" that is only 12 feet wide. DANGER, WILL ROBINSON. That area is narrow, icy in the winter, and full of pedestrians.

Several years ago, the city put a turnaround at the end of the business node (Settergren's parking lot's western boundary). Many of us spoke against this idea when it proposed, for several reasons, but it was hastily installed anyway.

The main reason was this: That right-of-way seems to be a perfect and easy place to create at least 80 parking spaces.

Fact: This right of way is 50 feet wide from the point of Settergren's western boundary to Xerxes.

Fact: This right-of-way is currently used as two-way parking access by the owners of the adjacent single-family properties, who enter and exit the right-of-way off Xerxes.

Fact: The trolley right of way is owned by the city of Minneapolis – not by the individual residents.

QUESTION: Why could we not remove the chain that stops cars from continuing west on the publicly owned "road/alley/right-of-way," and in doing so create 80 angled parking spaces on a one-way through-way?

We could make it safe, with speed bumps and speed limits. We could prohibit trucks. We could make the right-of-way far more attractive and pedestrian friendly, because right now – it is blighted. Seriously, walk down that right-of-way sometime. It's full of garbage, weeds, and broken asphalt.

When I posed this question to a city official at a special parking meeting called by the Linden Hills Council, my question was avoided. When I asked it again, it was avoided again. When I asked it a third time, I was told that "the businesses would have to find some compromise with the residents who have been using the right of way, and so far they haven't." When I pressed by saying, "Why is that, since city, not those residents who have been using it for free all these years, owns the



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VOTE RYAN WINKLER



I support Ryan Winkler for Hennepin County Attorney because I want a leader in the county attorney's office who will hold accountable the people we've trusted to protect us. From my time working with Ryan, I know that he is a strong leader, willing to listen before he speaks and before making decisions on behalf of communities in Hennepin County. He is a student as much as he is a consensus builder, and right now, we need both. He is a tireless advocate for the strongest possible outcomes for our community.

Now more than ever, we need a sensible leader who can put his head down and work on strategies for reform with community members and local agencies. That is who Ryan is, and that is why I will be voting for him in the upcoming primary and the general election.

Molly Richardson
West Maka Ska

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news@SWconnector.com

▶ 4 CAN WE IMPROVE

right-of-way" – my question again went unanswered.

I will add that the one other idea that was proposed at this LHiNC meeting was that we initiate paid parking meters, to discourage people from parking all day in the few spots we have. Do we like that idea? How about a parking ramp?

This parking problem isn't going away, unless something is done. And in my opinion, we all suffer from the lack of parking, not just the businesses.

Next week, I'll follow up with more ways to work on this, and with comments from our city council person, Linea Palmisano.

See you then.

▶▶ 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.

MEET CHALK MANDALA ARTIST SANDY FORSETH

THE ART OF...

Sandy Forseth will be creating a chalk mandala for "Art on the Edge" in Linden Hills on Saturday, July 23. Learn more about her.



By **Suzie Marty**

TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT WHO SANDY IS...

I am a creative force to be reckoned with, an innovative and energetic leader who thrives on creating interactive environments where children of all ages and abilities are welcome. Natural leader who collaborates and connects with teams to create and deliver playful spaces and events that are inclusive and vital to the community. I am part of two global families: Operation Smile medical missions and the Chalk family.

I grew up in the northwest suburb of New Hope in the Twin Cities. My favorite past time growing up was recycle art. My first mural was painted on the laundry room wall!

WHAT IS YOUR CAREER AND ART BACKGROUND?

I am a Certified Child Life Specialist, by trade. An expert at working with pediatric patients, siblings and families in the hospital setting. I have helped thousands of children learn about and cope well with surgery, new diagnoses, lab draws, procedures, etc. I utilized mindfulness with children and learned they soak it in like sponges.

HOW DOES WHERE YOU ARE FROM INFLUENCE YOUR WORK?

My grandparents were instrumental in imparting the importance of music, theatre, art and dance in our lives. My grandfather, Theodore Ptashne, was a professional violinist and "The House of Note" string instrument store was in my family heritage for 60 years. The business is located on Minnetonka Boulevard, owner is Jeff Anderson.

WAS THERE A DEFINING MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU KNEW YOU WANTED TO BE A CHALK ARTIST?

The moment when I was amused by the mystery of the mandala, was in Wahpeton, N.D. Unintended shapes were appearing and the last circles added to the outside edge of the mandala. The title became "Doily Dala," because it resembled one.



Sandy Forseth creates opportunities for the community to make chalk mandalas. She will be at Art on the Edge in Linden Hills on Saturday, July 23.

SHARE MORE ABOUT THE CHALK STREET ARTISTS...

The Chalk Street Artists are a global chalk family.

The Madonari street art form started in the 16th century. These traveling artists would move through provinces or towns according to the festival calendar to join in the festivities and make a living from observers who would throw coins if they approved of the artist's work. The origins of pavement artists were found all over the United Kingdom.

In America, you often hear, how do we preserve the art? However, impermanence is part of the story and life. Like when you attend a concert and leave with your heart full from the experience. Street chalk art is the same way, except now we have all have cell phones that preserve the memory of the art.

EXPLAIN YOUR TECHNIQUE/CREATIVE PROCESS... WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO CREATE ?

I love working with my hands, tools and math. I also sew/create keepsake t-shirt quilts and pillows from the clothing of those who have passed on. The fabrics of our life tell a story! This also keeps fabric out of the landfills and reuses them.

HOW IS YOUR ART IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITY?

Now more than ever, community art is necessary as it brings UNITY (oneness), hope and joy, when so much in our life divides us . . . COMMUNITY art brings us together! Furthermore, it creates a visual story in our minds/experience, that one

does not easily forget.

EXPLAIN YOUR INSPIRATION OR IDEA BEHIND EACH MANDALA?

My mind sees in patterns and shapes. From the time of the first conversation to scheduling, shapes or a theme drop into my consciousness for a specific mandala. Then I incorporate them as it seems fit.

DO YOU EVER HAVE CREATIVE BLOCKS AND HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THEM ?

Stillness and shower thoughts help with creative blocks! Some of my best thoughts are born in the shower! In 2018, when I was seeking what to be when I grew up, the shower thought was "interactive events!"

WHO ARE SOME ARTISTS YOU ADMIRE, FOLLOW, OR HAVE BEEN INSPIRATION ?

I admire Shawn McCann and his vast ability to create from illustrating children's books to massive murals globally. He created an opportunity for me based on my extensive experience with children and families and it was a perfect fit. Amazing what natural creativity, grief and a lot of bravery can create together! Thumbs up!

Lisa Gidlow Moriarity, owner of Paths of Peace in Stillwater. She is a labyrinth creator worldwide. That was where I first learned about a pivot and the magic/mystery of a creation. We were creating a labyrinth on a sheet, for me to bring to an Operation Smile mission. Each creation has "a story" that shows up during the process. In this case, there were symmetrical pieces that resembled clefts – like cleft lip and palate, the very mission I was headed to. This has happened time and time again with mandalas, as well.

Day Schildkret, author of "Morning Altars, A 7 - Step Practice to Nourish Your Spirit through Nature, Art, & Ritual" and "Hello, Goodbye - 75 Rituals for Times of Loss, Celebration, and Change" by Reginald Charles Adams, artist out of Dallas, Texas. It combines sound healing and yoga at beach mandala and labyrinth installations called "FLOW." On my bucket list!

▶▶ 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 marketing specialist for the *Southwest Connector*. Contact her at ads@swconnector.com.

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By **Susan Schaefer**
UNDER THE HOOD



A TOWERING TRIBUTE

Minnesota's Prince gets long-awaited honor

A bodacious birthday bash draws far-flung fans. What took so long?

To create something entirely new, never seen, touched or heard before – something that resonates deeply with the beholder – is a hallmark of genius. Many such virtuosos are often misunderstood or unrecognized in their own time or homeland. Yet, native Minnesotan, Prince Rogers Nelson, known as Prince, was wildly acknowledged and adored by ardent fans around the world.

Why then, did it take our community so long to recognize its own prodigy?

The Prince Mural Project

Back in 2015, well before his death on April 21, 2016, Prince's former marketing manager, Sharon Smith-Akinsanya, was busy seeking a public tribute for Prince, even as the eye-popping, five-story Bob Dylan wall mural on the corner of 5th and Hennepin was getting finishing touches by world-renowned Brazilian artist Eduardo Kobra.

With Prince's consent, Smith-Akinsanya had quietly approached Betsy Hodges, then-mayor of the Minneapolis, who enthusiastically supported the idea. However, critical additional official support was lacking.

Shockingly, even Prince's untimely death did not generate the political will needed from the authorities to commit the necessary resources to honor him with a public art project. Determined, Smith-Akinsanya continued full steam to move the Prince Mural Project from planning to center stage, testifying before state



legislators and arm-wrangling other civic and private sector leaders.

Add Joan Vorderbruggen – the magic sauce

Eventually, Smith-Akinsanya met and landed the consummate ally, Joan Vorderbruggen, and new blood began to flow.

Possessing the will-power of an army of municipal leaders, Vorderbruggen, then-Director of the Hennepin Theater Trust, in fact, had purple running in her veins. Having spearheaded the Bob Dylan mural project, Vorderbruggen has too many accolades to list, but she is credited for her seminal role in multiple creative projects that revitalized the beleaguered Hennepin Theatre District.

Vorderbruggen is a founding member of the Placemaking Leadership Council and is nationally recognized as a placemaking and public art expert. Legendary for her "Made Here" twice-yearly window displays that transformed downtown storefronts into mini public art galleries, Vorderbruggen is affectionately considered an authentic civic booster and people-connector with a heart as large as the murals we've come to know her for.

Yet, even with her dogged involvement, it still took a confluence of events to move the Prince Mural forward. Happily, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and city of Minneapolis cooperated to offer Parking Ramp A's towering façade, and tragically, the murder of George Floyd revealed the power of art as a form of community healing. Finally, the Prince

The newly unveiled Prince mural is at 8th Street and 1st Avenue on Parking Ramp A. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

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EVENT INFO

▶ 6 TOWERING TRIBUTE

Mural Project garnered the support it needed.

A Hero for a Prince

Prince ranks among a short list of luminaries known by one name. So, it is entirely fitting that internationally known muralist, Hiero Veiga, who goes by the solo moniker Hiero, was selected from a field of 60 original artists to design and render the long-overdue tribute.

Evolving a hyperrealist style for the past 21 years, this self-taught artist's work, which began with graffiti writing, has advanced to impressive worldwide commissions such as the exterior of Miami's Museum of Graffiti.

In the months before his death, close confidants attested to Prince's newly ignited spirit. At the time of his death, global luminaries sang his praises: Mic Jagger stated, "His talent was limitless." Oprah Winfrey proclaimed, "The doves are really crying now." And then President Barack Obama (uncharacteristically commenting on a celebrity) pronounced that Prince "was one of the most gifted and prolific musicians of our time, ... a virtuoso instrumentalist, a brilliant bandleader, and an electrifying performer... Today the world lost a creative icon."

The task set before the artist was monumental. Hiero's bold 90-foot captures the colorful phases of Prince's well-documented life.

And so it was that at the beginning of June 2022, several "Crown our Prince" celebrations marked an early 64th birthday bash to unveil this towering tribute.

I chose Prince's actual birthday on June 7 to capture the images for this column and serendipitously got to meet both the cultural impresario, Vorderbruggen, and the muralist, Hiero, who was putting finishing touches on the masterpiece.



Civic leader Joan Vorderbruggen was a driving force behind the Prince Mural Project. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)



Muralist Hiero applies finishing touches to his masterwork. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

But it was two fans decked head-to-toe in Princely regalia who symbolized the impact of Prince's life and death on a far-flung audience. New Yorkers, Dorothy Billis and Twila Perry, have been making a yearly pilgrimage to the Twin Cities since Prince's death.

Endearingly, the two did not know each other in New York but met here the year following Prince's death. Since then, they have become fast friends and are committed annual travel partners for the yearly festivities.

"We actually discovered Prince after his death," confessed Billis. "We're from a different generation and never knew his music." "But once we heard his music, we

were hooked," added Perry. How did this year's mural unveiling compare? Responding almost in unison, they declared that it was the best party yet.

Postscript

Prince rewrote life's rules – he was never constrained by them. He broke free of the bonds of socioeconomic, race and gender, as well as those of the tightly controlled entertainment world. His lyrics, compositions, and instrumentality defied genre; his groundbreaking, risk-taking break with the recording industry's star making prison unshackled him to not only explore new musical worlds but to plant his gender-blended glyph in the

stratosphere. Now it literally soars on a wall across from his beloved First Avenue for all the world to see and pay homage.



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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COMMUNITY SAFETY INITIATIVE:

National nonprofit GreenLight to empower Lake Street residents to reduce police interactions

By **Chloe Peter**

In fifth grade, Simone Hardeman-Jones was asked to identify a social problem and identify a solution. She chose to have her classmates and community help her in writing letters to a company that sold baby formula in developing countries. The formula needed clean water to be safe for the babies, but that was difficult for mothers living in poverty to access. She felt that, in sending letters and making her voice heard, she could have a powerful impact on the world.

Hardeman-Jones said that this led to her career in community activism. When she was offered the position of executive director at GreenLight Fund Twin Cities, she accepted.

GreenLight Fund is a national nonprofit with a local focus that partners with communities to create opportunities for inclusive prosperity. Each year, the fund is focused on identifying one critical, unmet community need, and begins to

take specific action against that to make real change.



“We seek to elevate our community’s knowledge and lived experience through our community-driven process which centers on elevating persistent local needs not being met by existing services, programs, or organizations,” Hardeman-Jones said.

In fall of 2020, GreenLight Fund Twin Cities began engaging in its annual community engagement process by connecting with local leaders and residents to understand the prevalent issues of today and gaps in services that exist. They created a local Selection Advisory Council (SAC) to guide how and where GreenLight will focus energy and resources. In partnership with the SAC, and through many conversations with community leaders and residents, GreenLight chose community safety as a focus area for the year. This began the investment in Let Everyone Advance with Dignity Minneapolis (LEAD).

“The collective goal is to decrease recidivism and improve stability and outcomes for those facing behavioral health challenges often criminalized in our cur-

rent systems,” Hardeman-Jones said.

LEAD Minneapolis is a public health approach to community safety that works with individuals cycling in and out of the legal system and gives the option of working with a case manager on a long-term basis. Case managers utilize a harm reduction, trauma-informed approach in building relationships with LEAD participants to support them in their individually identified goals.

Whether it is a need for support getting one’s birth certificate so that they can apply for a job or a need for a hot meal one night, case managers are there with participants every step of the way for as long as they need support. This initiative is held by community with its collaborative implementation structure bringing a cross section of community leaders, neighborhood residents, business owners and government officials together in partnership with case managers.

“As we connected with leaders in the Lake Street Corridor, we heard loud and clear that now is the time to de-center law enforcement and center the community in our efforts to reshape public safety,” Hardeman-Jones said.

LEAD Minneapolis will focus on the Lake Street Corridor. With the relationships built with their case managers, LEAD participants will have a higher chance of finding mental health services, substance abuse support, housing, and employment than they would trying to navigate the system on their own. With over 50 participants in LEAD Minneapolis by midsummer 2023 growing to 200+ in the Twin Cities over the next four years, this program will lower recidivism by 50%, increase social support by 35% and improve relationships with residents, law enforcement, business owners, and many more.

“We know that business owners and community members along Lake Street are in daily contact with potential LEAD participants and know that these individuals often just need support denied to them in



Simone Hardeman-Jones, executive director of GreenLight Fund Twin Cities and a former Obama Administration staffer, knows the Lake Street corridor well. She grew up near there and said, “It’s a hub of entrepreneurship and culture built and sustained by Black, Indigenous, Latinx and immigrant communities.” (Photo submitted)

a system that focuses on punishment rather than support,” Hardeman-Jones said.

LEAD is rooted in a harm reduction approach, allowing people to receive support that they are ready for and also allowing people to take their course of healing with the understanding that progress isn’t linear. Individuals will never graduate from the LEAD program. If someone feels like they are doing well enough to stop seeing their case manager after three months and then find themselves in a crisis six months later, they are always able to call their case manager and receive support. More information on how to help LEAD and GreenLight Twin Cities can be found at <https://greenlightfund.org/sites/twin-cities/>.

“Through understanding some of the root causes of why people are struggling rather than tying them to a legal system that wasn’t designed to meet people where they are, see their humanity and get to the root of any issues they may be struggling to overcome,” Hardeman-Jones said.



*Old homes! old hearts! Upon my soul forever
Their peace and gladness lie like tears and laughter;
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The dreamy patience that is theirs forever.*

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▶1 AN ALTERNATIVE

in the city," he said.

The 911 operators are trained to dispatch the calls to the appropriate resource, whether it be BCR or the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) or another agency. The calls are directed based on Problem Nature Codes (PNCs) and there are over 130 different PNCs. Calls for the BCR are divided into priority 1, a behavioral crisis response, or priority 2, a behavioral crisis response welfare check. Another call code is Person in Crisis (PIC).

"A PNC code can change throughout the nature of the call," Crouch-Dodson explained. "A call may start as one thing and end up being another." Overall, 88 percent of MPD calls have been diverted to BCR calls.

Regarding the fact that mental health crises are not limited to just weekdays, Crouch-Dodson emphasized that the project is hoping for full coverage on weekends as well, and more vans are needed.

"This is a pilot program," he said. "Canopy Roots being able to staff so quickly is great."

Minneapolis Office of Performance and Innovation Director Bryan Smith said that time is required to get the job descriptions out for the mental health professionals and to train them and the 911 operators. "We are serious about getting the right people to do this," he said.

POLICE POSITIVE ABOUT BCR

In his report to the committee, MPD Deputy Chief Eric Fors said that anybody who has worked with the public recognizes the crises out there. "Law enforcement wants that deeper level of understanding," he said. "The feedback from the rank and file has been very positive. They have generally asked when BCR will be expanding."

He noted, "Because of the dangerousness of a call, it may require a police response. But when we arrive we may call BCR. It's sometimes not clear until we get there that it's a mental health call." He said repetitive calls for help are often sent to embedded social workers. "There is a facility at 1800 Chicago Avenue that is staffed by county social workers, and it is a place where we can voluntarily bring people."

Joni Hodne, assistant director for 911, said her agency was able to build the training program when the pilot project began and help the BCR team figure out the best training for them. "We went slowly because we had to teach how the first responder system works, talking on the radio and how to keep the public safe and our responders safe."

She said the 911 call takers are highly trained and received additional training through the Mental Health Foundation to strengthen their ability to take a call and determine who is best to send. "It's a job

they do every day," she said. "They decide what is suitable and safe for the BCR team to go into." She said there are often more calls than they have vans or people to respond to from the BCR team, but the public needs a response. "So, we have to take calls and turn over to the MPD," she said.

"As the program continues to grow and people request BCR specifically, it is going to be more difficult," she continued. "We can't say we cannot provide service. We work very closely with Canopy and its team, with their training program to get out on the street and with mental health."

CALLS FOR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

Hodne said repeat callers are treated as first-time callers. "We do not want to put any past judgment on them, so we treat them with the same care and dispatch BCR every time."

Crouch-Dodson inserted that the vast majority of BCR calls are for advice or assistance; the second-most number of calls are regarding individuals who are gone by the time the van arrives. The third highest number of calls, according to him, are for individuals seeking voluntary transportation to places that will help them remain stable.

"Embedded social workers are being used as follow-up," said Candace Hanson, program director of BCR. "They have instructed us to call them after a crisis has been resolved, should additional help be needed. We consult as a team and strategize about what is available."

Hanson said the goals of the response may be to treat in place and to provide the least intrusive intervention. "Those goals may be at odds with each other, and we may need to lead the individual to a different safe location," she said.

A BCR call may be resolved in different ways, according to Hanson. "It can be emotional de-escalation, where we reduce the intensity of the situation. We can recycle education, giving community members information about mental health, connecting them to services and resources. We can make appointments, asking them where they might have gone before. Or we can guide folks, using their natural supports that are already intact. We can guide them through a panic attack."

The great success in working with the MPD was something BCR had not expected, but Hansen said their relationship has been very positive. "It's been very professional, and we have resolved (any issues) through conversation and collaboration," she said. "Working with 911 dispatch has also been a big success for the program." Hansen added that the Canopy BCR pilot program has gotten a very warm reception from the community. She said another positive is how much the BCR staff really love their work.

She admitted there are still challenges, with gaps remaining in the mental health



Behavioral crisis responders arrive in vans with the Canopy Roots and City of Minneapolis logos printed on the sides. (Photo by Terry Faust)

system. But BCR is a work in progress. "Gathering information and data is particularly challenging," she noted. "When someone is in crisis, that individual is not always the best historian."

The BCR team is also hoping for a better relationship with Hennepin County.

"In building this, Hennepin County and Hennepin Emergency Medical Services (EMS) were at the table the whole time, about two years," director Smith said. "It goes back to a misconception that if we came into existence, they would be replaced. But there's enough work for everybody."

He said, "EMS takes exception that we have designed a model that does not require police, and they have not been able to shed that as part of their policy. They could help us by having those conversations at a higher level more consistently so everyone understands what BCR is."

'BEST JOB I COULD ASK FOR'

Hansen said the BCR is looking for participants who are flexible, safety-minded but not fearful, and have a passion for working with the community. They are trained in de-escalation, CPR, detoxification, communication with each other, safety measures in the field and how to work with radios and computers.

"We ask them how Canopy can help them find their own journey to wellness," Hanson said. "We set time aside after every shift to debrief. We give them opportunities to sit down with a supervisor after a tough call. And after a really tough call, we don't have them jump into another one."

Two responders gave their own feelings about the Canopy Roots project.

"Being able to come to the scene and have a recipient not trust who we are, but slowly see the wall start to fall is the highlight of being a responder," one worker said.

"I had been waiting for something like this," said another. "It's the best job I could ever ask for. Every day is a good day to go to work."

TAKEAWAYS

311: There has been an increase in the volume of police reports and parking complaints being filed online

Traffic control:

The overnight parking team is responding to complaints city wide

911: All 911 staff are certified in Emergency Mental Health Dispatching (EMHD)

BCR:

- The BCR has diverted over 1,400 911 calls from MPD. Collaboration with MPD is going well.
- They have provided service to every neighborhood, ward, and precinct.
- Community members appreciate BCR's work and responders feel they are having a meaningful impact.
- Challenges include limited BCR capacity, limited options for connection to ongoing services, difficulty gathering feedback after BCR interactions.

NEXT STEPS

311: Continue offering unarmed reporting options to community

Traffic control:

Further evaluation of the pilot to include interviews with traffic agents, 911 staff, etc.

911: Evaluate EMHD training and determine best options for future trainings

BCR:

- Staff up BCR weekend shifts
- Continue working with IT and 911 to pull more nuance from available CAD data
- Evaluating additional pathways to get community members connected to ongoing services
- Create cost estimates to help determine what investment would be needed to expand BCR

WHAT TO EXPECT

Behavioral crisis responders arrive in vans with the Canopy Roots and City of Minneapolis logos printed on the side. The vans do not use bright lights or sirens. Responders wear navy blue shirts or jackets with "Behavioral Crisis Response" printed on the back.

Responders must meet state requirements for mental health professionals or practitioners. They are:

- Culturally responsive
- Trained to de-escalate
- Experienced in helping people with trauma
- Respectful to race and gender identity

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1. Seems to be a behavioral or mental health crisis
2. No weapon involved
3. No physical violence has occurred/is occurring
4. No medical emergency
5. Drugs/alcohol are not escalating the situation
6. Police request (must still meet criteria 1)

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JUDSON CHURCH SHINES ON

By **Beth Waterhouse**

Hope comes in many sizes and colors these days. And although it is a four-letter word, it can also be spelled in five letters: SOLAR. It's not every church in south Minneapolis that invested in solar energy right as the pandemic hit, and the presence of our solar panels has not only given us hope but has actually encouraged a few new members.

There are several ways that a community can step out on the climate justice issue and work to get itself off the grid, so to speak. Judson Church on 41st and Harriet Avenue has chosen to install 140 solar panels, which are now starting to make a difference. As we gain a little history with the panels fully installed and connected to Xcel Energy, we begin to learn about our energy savings. Here are some statistics and lessons covering a 60-day period from mid-February to mid-April of this year:

- Snow on the flat panels makes a huge difference, and although winters can be bright, leafless times, intermittent snowfalls make a negative difference, of course.

- During the summers, we expect to generate 8000 or 9000 kilowatt hours monthly. In the snowy winter month of February/March, that figure was only 3986 kilowatt hours of energy.

- The church uses about 21,000 kilowatt hours of electricity during a compar-



ative 60-day period. We hope to generate about one-third of that with the solar panels, or better.

- We also receive a dollar-credit for the energy that the panels put back on the main grid during any given period. For this 60-day timeframe, that credit was \$1,034.

- We will soon have live-display software that can teach anyone in the Judson foyer about the solar panels and the day-by-day impact of our system.

- As of June 1, 2022, we will surpass 70,000 kWh generated by this system – that is a lot of carbon saved!

Judson Church has a small working committee that calls itself the "Environmental/Climate Justice Team." We are also a designated "climate justice congregation" with Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light. Through the climate justice team, we attempt to educate ourselves and any

in the congregation ready to learn more about climate and to encourage action steps that are personal or organizational. The solar panels were a definite step in that direction in 2020.

But there is a history of environmental awareness at Judson. Back in 2019, the church was awarded a grant to develop an organics recycling program now in place for our congregation's use and for the Judson Preschool well known in our community. Other environmental actions include a beautiful rain garden (created in previous years) to lessen the amount of rainwater that goes into the city system, bike racks installed along the boulevards near our building, speakers and other educational offerings for church members, and ways to connect to the neighborhood such as through the "Open Streets" on Lyndale that was held in June.

NEIGHBORHOOD BRIEFS

LYNLAKE STREET ART SERIES

The 2022 LynLake Street Art Series is back for its fifth year July 16-17, and is looking for volunteers. Over 50 artists will visit LynLake and Uptown to paint over 30 walls. There will be food trucks, vendors and spray paint demos.

GOT IDEAS FOR A VACANT LOT?

The Whittier Alliance purchased a vacant lot at 21st and Nicollet last year, and is in the process of drafting a request for proposals to select a community developer to help them build a new project there that ideally meets some neighborhood needs in a creative way. To inform those priorities, Whittier Alliance is seeking community input through a survey. It's available in English, Spanish, and Somali on their website.

TANGLETOWN, CREEK WALKING TOUR

Take a local walking tour through Preserve Minneapolis led by Tangletown resident and neighborhood historian Tom Balcom on Tuesday, July 19 from 6-8 p.m. Explore the winding streets and creek environment of the neighborhood originally known as Washburn Park. Learn about landmark sites such as the Washburn Water Tower, the Harry Wild Jones House, Washburn Memorial Orphan Asylum (where Justice Alan Page Middle School now stands), and the Minnehaha Creek, parkway, bridges, woods, and trails.

UNITY CONFERENCE DRAWS NATIVE YOUTH

More than 1,600 Native youth from across the country are anticipated to attend the United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY) National Conference in Minneapolis, Minn., July 8-12 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Attendees will hear from a variety of expert panelists and speakers, and have access to more than 50 workshops covering issues that are timely and relevant to today's Native youth. The conference keynote addresses will be delivered by Chef Stephanie "Pyet" DeSpain (Prairie Band Potawatomi), the first-ever winner of Gordon Ramsay's "Next Level Chef" and James Anderson (Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Ojibwe), trainer, speaker, author, and co-founder of the Lifeskills Center for Leadership.

FRANCE AVENUE RESURFACING AND BIKE LANES

Hennepin County is proposing to resurface France Ave S. from Excelsior Blvd. to W. 49th St. and is considering the addition of bike lanes to the new surface. Feedback is important in this process. Comment about the proposed restriping work, removing on-street parking and adding bike lanes in residential areas. Submit a written comment or attend the upcoming event in the Fulton neighborhood; date to be determined.

SERVE ON BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Minneapolis Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) works toward biking improvements, and involves people interested in city biking issues. The BAC is an advisory committee to the Mayor and City Council as well as the Park Board. It serves as a liaison to bicyclists, businesses, neighborhoods, and other communities and agencies. The Ward 13 BAC seat is vacant.

YARD WASTE PICKUP CHANGES

As of June 20, yard waste pickup has changed from weekly to every other week for some parts of south, southwest and northeast Minneapolis to adjust for a staff shortage. Minneapolis Solid Waste & Recycling customers in Ward 13 whose collection will change to every other week live south of Minnehaha Creek. Collection will be every other week on regular pickup day, but for the most efficient routes it might not align with your recycling week.

MASTER GARDENERS OF LYNDALE (OFFICIAL AND NOT)

LYNDALE

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

BY KENZIE IMHOFF



It's gardening season and if you're like me, you're frantically reading books like "Gardening for Dummies" while incessantly checking your garden to see if those seeds you planted two weeks ago have finally germinated. Let's face it, not all of us are pro-gardeners. Some of us are more apt at drying out and killing seedlings.

But fear not! Silently working on the streets of Pillsbury and 31st in the Lyndale Neighborhood lies a group of Master Gardeners. What makes them Master Gardeners? They have completed a five-month course with the University of Minnesota Extension's Master Gardening program to learn horticultural practices before completing 50 hours of community garden work and education.

Gardeners Scott Merth, Larry Cain, Ramaa Bhasin, Jenn Hudson, and Tricia Sletten are just some of these Master Gardeners, and they have directed their efforts to the Lyndale Pillsbury Farm at 3110 Pillsbury Avenue this summer. Unlike the Lyndale Neighborhood Association's (LNA's) other two community gardens where over 70 neighbors pay for a plot to grow their own food, Pillsbury Farm was once collectively managed by Youth Farm, a local

youth gardening organization. Because Youth Farm worked on a collective gardening model, it was pretty easy for LNA to turn this piece of land over to the Master Gardeners for the summer to once again make it a collectively maintained garden.

With neighbor volunteer help, the Master Gardeners will tend to the land all summer, and all cultivated produce will be donated to local food shelves. Their leadership and gardening knowledge is commendable, especially because it is all volunteer!

While the Master Gardeners have already made a tremendous impact at Pillsbury Farm, they aren't the only expert gardeners at Pillsbury Farm. Several neighbors, although not having taken the official Master Gardening course, are phenomenal gardeners themselves.

Two Lyndale gardeners and neighbors, for instance, have rented plots in Pillsbury Farm for years. Employing traditional Mexican agricultural practices and irrigation techniques, they grow hundreds

of hot peppers a summer, many of which they donate to other gardeners and community members. They have transformed collective garden spaces into flowering gardens and regularly aid the Master Gardeners. Their efforts epitomize the wealth of gardening experience and long cultivated expertise amongst many gardeners at Pillsbury Farm.

Mixed together, the Master Gardeners at Pillsbury Farm, both official and not, have created a rich community of gardeners who are enthusiastic to share their gardening knowledge with the greater community. They want you to come learn from and with them at Pillsbury Farm this summer.

Whether neighbors live in Lyndale or not, all are welcome to help with the collective tending of Pillsbury Farm during or outside of scheduled workdays. Workdays occur at Pillsbury Farm the second Saturday of each month and on each Tuesday that follows that second Saturday (for July, they will be Saturday, July 9 and Tuesday, July 12). For neighbors who can't make these work days, neighbors can still get involved by emailing pillsbury22@lyndale.org to figure out times to help and tasks that need to be done in the garden.

Maybe I'll forever be killing basil on my windowsill, but I, for one, am excited to learn from the Master Gardeners at Pillsbury Farm, officially designated as such or not.

Kenzie Imhoff is the Lyndale Neighborhood Association Equity and Justice Organizer.

4-H'ERS PRESENTED THEIR BEST AT COUNTY FAIR

Hennepin County Fair results are in. Forty-one 4-H youth from the county participated in the 4-H project judging at the Hennepin County Fair June 16-19, held at Corcoran Lions Park. In total over 80 projects were entered and judged by Minnesota makers and educators. Results can be found here: z.umn.edu/HC4Hresults

4-H'ers demonstrated their skills and

knowledge in photography, STEM, fine arts, agronomy, animal science, family consumer science, citizenship, leadership, and more. Twenty-six youth will represent Hennepin County 4-H at the Minnesota State Fair.

Summer 4-H Events leading up to the Minnesota State Fair:

- July 16 - 4-H Animal Science Day

at the Ramsey County Fair Rabbit breed, poultry fun show, animal science projects

- July 30 - Hennepin County 4-H Horse Show

- July 30-31 - Hennepin County 4-H Dog Show

- Aug. 10 - State Horse Show & State Dog Show registration deadline

To learn more about 4-H in Hennepin County, call Alyssa Woodard at 612-405-9035 or visit the website.

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believes in buying local and shopping local. She has held various positions over the years that promote local artists and tourism, including as an art buyer for Love from Minnesota Company, artisan manager at St. Croix Promotions and Retail, and docent at MIA. She is the owner of Everett & Charlie, a Linden Hills art gallery where art meets experience. It features only Minnesota artists. She is a TMC Publications marketing specialist, and can help you develop a comprehensive marketing plan that fits your budget and needs.

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▶ 1 GAMES BRIDGE GAP

technology is being developed to focus on serving the specific needs of students from Native American, Latino, and under-served or rural communities. The video game company has had a success rate of 300 percent improvement of math skills in the control group.



We are firm believers that math is best learned when it's presented in context - and when you look at social studies through the lens of how math was used, you see that not only has there always been math, but math is everywhere."

Maria Burns Ortiz

"For many kids from the communities reflected in our games, our games are the first time they have seen kids and communities like theirs in any kind of video game or even often in their curriculum," said Ortiz.

"There is something incredibly powerful and empowering about seeing yourself and your reality reflected in what you're learning and for far too many children that doesn't happen."

To the employees of 7 Generation Games, math, and social studies "go together like peanut butter and jelly." They use examples such as the Dakota knowing how many buffalo to hunt so they would have the food needed to get through the winter here in the plains. The Mayans are also an example being one of the first societies to develop a concept of zero in mathematics and Indigenous tribes - long predating colonization - traded. Their video games cover math concepts such as division, multiplication,



7 Generation Games envisions an educational system where all communities have the tools and resources needed to foster strong connections to their heritage while creating new opportunities for their future. Their mission is to break down the barriers to education and life-long success that underserved students face. (Photo submitted)

fractions, and statistics.

"We are firm believers that math is best learned when it's presented in context - and when you look at social studies through the lens of how math was used, you see that not only has there always been math, but math is everywhere," Burns Ortiz said.

Burns Ortiz mentioned that one of the most powerful parts for kids of using games to learn is that it takes the fear out of failing. She believes that the education system does not do enough to encourage the approach that failing is not always bad in the classroom. 7 Generation Games designed the educational parts of their

games to be modeled after effective teachers, with built in hints and additional explanation when kids need more help.

"We knew that that we could not fix everything when it comes to education, but that we could use our backgrounds in education, narrative and technology to create something that might help make a difference," Burns Ortiz said.

7 Generation Games pays attention to historical accuracy so that everyone may learn about cultures including cultures that differ from their own. From game design workshops with community youth to developing curriculum with cultural experts, such as elders who are from and in

GAMES FROM 7 GENERATION:

- AzTech: The Story Begins
- AzTech: Meet the Maya
- AzTech: Empiric Empire
- Disaster Deduction Detectives
- Fish Lake
- Forgotten Trail
- Making Camp Ojibwe
- Making Camp Bilingual
- Making Camp Lakota
- Making Camp Premium
- Making Camp Dakota - Past and Present
- Making Camp Navajo
- Spirit Lake
- Spirit Lake Beginnings - Lakota
- Math the Universal Language
- Math the Universal Language Dakota
- Math the Universal Language Lakota



those communities, every element of culture in the games has come from and been vetted by the communities depicted.

"Our company is 90% Black, Indigenous or Latino and we're 55% women," Burns Ortiz said. "We believe that not only is it important to create diverse curriculum, but that diversity and equity can't just be something you talk and teach about, but it has to be something you embody."

They are currently raising money to expand and grow 7 Generation Games, especially around their new product - 7 Gen Blocks - which is a game development platform they have created to make it easier to develop educational games. 7 Generation is raising that money via a community round, which allows anyone to invest for as little as \$100. Anyone interested in investing in their community round or even just learning more about what they do can go to www.7generationgames/.

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