

# SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • JULY 21, 2022 • VOL. 1 • NO. 14



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## SOUTHWEST SUMMER NIGHTS



"Nothing beats a warm summer night and live music at the bandshell," remarked local artist Robbin Burnham, also known as WACSO (Walking Around Checking Stuff Out). "It's nights like this that make Minneapolis one of the best cities anywhere." A show featuring his work is at Gallery 360 through Aug. 7. WACSO's artwork will be a regular item in issues of the *Southwest Connector*. (Illustration by WACSO)

### NEIGHBORS BAND TOGETHER FOR EQUITABLE CHANGE

Southwest Alliance for Equity (SWAE) encourages people to pay attention and build community

By **Chloe Peter**

The Southwest Alliance for Equity (SWAE) is a Southwest Minneapolis neighborhood alliance dedicated to addressing and changing racist policies. They are asking questions like: What kind of community do we want to be a part of – and what kind of community do we want to build? And how do we especially show up for those who are systematically excluded and marginalized?

SWAE works together collaboratively toward change. Members that contributed to responses to this piece are: Cecelia Caspram, Jessica DeWeerth, Sheila Dingels, Ryan Greenwood, Chris Henjum, Kristen Ingle, Ray Klahr, Bali Kumar, Elianna



Kristen Ingle (left), Ray Klahr, and Elliana Lippold-Johnson participate in a protest against racist policies in southwest Minneapolis. (Photo submitted)

Lippold-Johnson, Eric Magnuson, Maggie Rittenhouse, Todd Schuman, Heather Silsbee, and Bianca Zick.

More information about Southwest Alliance for Equity (SWAE) can be found at [swaempls.org](https://swaempls.org), and you can find them on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.



### PRIMARY WILL WHITTLE DOWN ATTORNEY, SCHOOL BOARD RACES

In primary races, candidates can win with just 20-30% of people voting

By **Cam Gordon**

Early voting in the Aug. 9, 2022, primary election is now underway. There is plenty to choose from on the ballot this year on the federal, state and more local levels.

Even if you are not interested in voting as part of one of the state's four major political parties to select their candidates for the general election, you can still vote and influence who appears on the November ballot in key local elections.

You can see your own sample ballot, and even print it out to bring to the polling place with you, at <https://myballotmn.sos.state.mn.us/>.

If you do, you will discover that this year there are two ballots-in-one.

#### THE STATE PARTISAN PRIMARY ELECTION

One, on the front page, is called the State Partisan Primary Ballot. This ballot is for those who wish to vote for the offices that are connected, by election law, to one of the major political parties. All political parties that qualify as a major party in Minnesota are required to participate in primary elections if more than one person files for a particular partisan office under their party's name. For these offices only one candidate from each party may run in the general election. Since 2018, we have had four major parties in our state: the Grassroots-Legalize Cannabis Party, the Legal Marijuana Now Party, the Republican Party of Minnesota and the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL).

Each major party will have one column on this partisan ballot, and, if voters vote at all on this ballot, they are required to limit all votes for only one of the four parties. If you vote for candidates from more than one political party your ballot is "spoiled" and will not be counted.

For the smaller of the two





**1 NEIGHBORS BAND**

**HOW WAS SWAE STARTED AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?**

SWAE: The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020, shook us to our core and sparked a global uprising for racial justice. Living here at that time drove us to look for ways to engage in the movement for change. By the summer of 2021, many of us neighbors in Southwest Minneapolis were moved to start SWAE.

Our group has focused on two things: 1) we have been holding gatherings to build community and talk with our neighbors about local political issues, and 2) we've taken actions together, to hold our elected leaders and our city enterprise accountable.

**CAN YOU TALK ABOUT WHY AN ORGANIZATION LIKE THIS IS NEEDED IN SW MINNEAPOLIS?**

SWAE: We know that power lies within our collective body of neighbors and citizens – not with elected officials. We think SWAE is needed because we have often isolated ourselves, not engaging much with the rest of the city, and we have often prioritized our own needs over the needs of the rest of the city.

As is typical in groups of White folks, many of us in Southwest may not have much practice reflecting on our racial identity. A big part of SWAE is creating a welcoming place where we can be open with and supportive of each other, as we learn to do better together.

Because of its White and wealthy roots, Southwest Minneapolis tends to cling to a core element of White culture: individualism. We want to cultivate belonging, love, compassion, and understanding between neighbors.

**HOW DO YOU HELP ADDRESS NON-EQUITABLE SITUATIONS?**

SWAE: We've mobilized our members to participate in protests, sign petitions, write letters to elected representatives, and so much more.

Most recently, SWAE was called to support BIPOC city staff in opposing the mayoral appointment of Heather Johnston as the permanent city coordinator, a controversial appointment due to her past performance in the job as interim coordinator. SWAE members wrote letters to elected officials, published opinion pieces, testified at City Hall, and hosted city staffers at a backyard event for neighbors to hear more troubling details regarding this issue. Ms. Johnston was ultimately confirmed and, unfortunately, there are already some signs of retaliation against



SWAE member Elliana Lippold-Johnson speaks at the community hearing for the consideration of Heather Johnston as city coordinator. (Photo submitted)



SWAE members organized alongside the group leading The Residents' Complaint. This grassroots coalition, with consent from Amir Locke's family, requested an ethics investigation into Mayor Frey for his failure to exercise proper judgement regarding no-knock warrant policies in Minneapolis, which led to Amir's murder by the MPD. Above: Kristen Ingle (at podium) and Raycurt Johnson (with violin). (Photo submitted)

staff who spoke up in opposition to her appointment.

**WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT PEOPLE D VOTE?**

SWAE: Local elections shape our daily experiences in this city. Southwest Minneapolis is predominantly White, relatively wealthy, and overwhelmingly consists of homeowners, despite being a part of a majority renter city.

Historically, we in Southwest Minneapolis have voted to keep it that way.

Southwest Minneapolis Ward 13, for example, had the most votes affirming the "Strong Mayor" amendment and rejecting the rent stabilization and public safety amendments – all of which run counter to creating greater equity in the city. For the safety and prosperity of our entire city, Southwest Minneapolis can no longer be a fortress of wealth and

SWAE: Whether it's redlined neighborhoods, racist exclusions in home deeds, inequitable school funding, or unjust public safety, we're all harmed by the legacy of White supremacy.

Ultimately, we are so motivated to do this work because we believe that it will bring us closer to our vision of a thriving city – one that is equitable, integrated, healthy, and safe for all, where everyone belongs, and opportunity and resources are shared.

**HOW CAN OTHERS HELP? HOW CAN WHITE PEOPLE HELP DISMANTLE THE SYSTEM THAT WAS LARGELY CREATED TO BENEFIT THEM?**

SWAE: We believe systems rooted in racism and White supremacy cause harm to us all. Even if a system or policy was created to benefit White people, the inequity it causes ends up costing all of us.

To dismantle the systems that were designed to create and maintain inequality, it's essential to confront the fact that this country was founded on racial exploitation. There are community education classes, books and online articles, podcasts, movies, virtual and in-person workshops. Do your own self-reflection and self-work to better understand whiteness. Much of this work can be done on a very local level. Think about joining SWAE and building community with us.

power that only seeks to sustain its own interests.

Our democracy will only work if we citizens are engaged. Being informed is our first step. Then, we have so many opportunities to pay attention and hold our elected officials accountable.

**WHITE SUPREMACY STEMS FAR AND WIDE. HOW DO YOU ADDRESS ALL OF THESE PROBLEMS?**

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**▶1 PRIMARY**

parties, the candidates on the ballots for southwest Minneapolis voters will only be in the races for Governor and Lieutenant Governor. For the Republicans, there are candidates to choose from at the federal level for U.S. Representative District 5, and at the state level for Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. The DFL has the most candidates and offices on the ballot. They have five candidates who filed for U. S. 5th District Representative, and two each for Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. For many southwest Minneapolis voters, the DFL also has primary races at the legislative district level.

Because more than one candidate has filed with the DFL for Senate Districts 62 and 63, as well as for House District 62A, those races will also be on the primary partisan side of the ballot in the DFL column. State Senator Omar Fateh is being challenged by union organizer Shaun Laden in 62, and State Senator Zaynab Mohamed is being challenged by Todd C. Scott. The current State Representative for 62A, Aisha Gomez, is being challenged in the primary by Osman Ahmed, who also ran unsuccessfully for the same seat in the primary in 2018.

**THE NONPARTISAN PRIMARY RUNOFF ELECTION**

Perhaps the most significant impact voters will have in the primary is on the second ballot, called the State and County Nonpartisan Primary Ballot. Turn the partisan ballot over and there it is.

Even if you have no interest in selecting any of the major party candidates who will appear on the general election ballot, you can use this ballot to participate in voting for who will go on to the general election for some critically important nonpartisan races in Hennepin County and for the Minneapolis Public Schools. Those include county sheriff, county attorney and two at-large school board members. The top two vote getters for county attorney and county sheriff will go on to the general election. For the two at-large school board member offices that will appear on the ballots of southwest Minneapolis voters, the four top voters will go to the general election and two at-large board members will be elected.

This year's election for sheriff and county attorney are especially significant because, no matter who wins, both will be new to the office and, based on historic trends, could end up for serving for years to come. The current county attorney, Mike Freeman, for example, is stepping down after serving 16 years, from 2006-2022. Prior to that he was county attorney from 1991-1999. While the current

sheriff, Dave Hutchinson (currently on a leave of absence) is leaving after only one term, former sheriffs have served longer, including Patrick McGowan, who served from 1995 to 2006, and Rich Stanek, who served from 2007 to 2019.

There are three people running for sheriff in the primary: Dawanna Witt, Jai Hansen and Joseph Banks. For county attorney there are seven: Martha Holton Dimick, Jarvis Jones, Tad Jude, Mary Moriarty, Paul Ostrow, Saraswati Singh, and Ryan Winkler.

The at-large school board candidates are Colin Beachy, Sonya Emerick, Kerry Jo Felder, Harley Meyer, Lisa Skjefte and Harley Meyer.

Voter turnout in primary elections is consistently much lower than in general elections. The highest it has been since 1950, according to the Secretary of State's Office, was in 1966 when 39.39% of eligible voters voted in the primary. It hasn't been over 30% since 1970. As a comparison, turnout in the 2020 general election was 79%, and it hasn't been lower than 50% since 1986.

In the primary many candidates are eliminated. This year five of the seven candidates will be eliminated in the county attorney race and two of six in the at-large school board race.

"While these elections tend to turn out fewer voters than the November gen-

eral election, they are in many cases more important than the November election as the candidate who wins the primary will go on to win in November for lack of serious competition from the other party," said Jeanne Massey, Kingfield resident and executive director at FairVote Minnesota. "In primary races across the country in races with several candidates, we are seeing candidates win with just 20% or 30% of the vote this year in small turnout elections. That is bad for democracy. It is imperative voters turn out Aug. 9 for the primary and make their vote count."

If you haven't voted yet, you still have time before the primary election day, Aug. 9. There is time to print your sample ballot, explore candidate websites, talk to friends and neighbors, reach out to candidates, and take advantage of this opportunity.

People can register and vote through Aug. 8 at the early-voting site at 980 E Hennepin Ave. Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. or, on election day, Aug. 9 at their polling place.

You can call Minneapolis voter services at 311 or 612-673-3000 (TTY: 612-673-2157) and find more information at [www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/); <https://vote.minneapolismn.gov/>; <https://www.vote411.org/>; and <https://lwvmpls.org/>.

# 2017-2022: Six Years of NPP20 accomplishments

Rooted in racial and economic equity, the 20-Year Neighborhood Park Plan (NPP20) is transforming parks across the city. This long-term initiative resulted from a historic agreement between the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and the city of Minneapolis to reverse years of underfunding for more than 150 neighborhood parks.

So far, NPP20 directed \$20 million to rehabilitation projects like roof and sidewalk replacements, HVAC upgrades, and lighting and accessibility improvements; and \$32.5 million to capital investment projects like playgrounds, athletic fields and pools.

**17 COMPLETED CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROJECTS**

NPP20 capital investment funds are allocated first to parks where they're most needed, based on park equity rankings that are updated annually.

**2017 - NPP20 YEAR 1**

Bossen Field Park: play area; basketball court; additional parking and paths; new and renovated athletic fields

Cedar Avenue Field Park: new play area surfacing, relocated amenities

Powderhorn Park: new wading pool; three renovated play areas (equipment, surfacing)

**2018 - NPP20 YEAR 2**

Northeast Recreation Center: new building

Phillips Aquatics Center / Phillips Community Center: pool renovation, building addition, new pool, parking lot, building rehabilitation and upgrades

**2019 - NPP20 YEAR 3**

Painter Recreation Center: build-



Tennis court improvements at Kenny Park.

ing-wide repairs, upgrades

Peavey Field Park: three-court basketball complex, play areas, multi-purpose field, central promenade, site grading, stormwater management, lighting

Central Gym Park: athletic field, basketball court, playground, paths, gathering space

North Commons Water Park: major equipment replacement (for re-use in upcoming rebuild)

**2020 - NPP20 YEAR 4**

Folwell Park: play area, renovated tennis courts, paths, athletic field and path lighting

Cleveland, Farview and Lovell Square parks: play areas, community garden space and other flexible-use spaces



The Perkins Hill Pump Track opened in July 2022.

**2021 - NPP20 YEAR 5**

Currie Park: basketball court, improved play area, splash pad, restroom building

Bassett's Creek Park: east side play area, picnic facilities, landscaping

Kenny Park: renovations to play areas/equipment, additional new play equipment

Stewart Park: 6,000 square-foot multi-use field, paths, fencing, drainage improvements

**2022 - NPP20 YEAR 6**

*Construction completed*

Perkins Hill Park: all-wheel pump track, natural-surface bike skills trail open this summer

Phelps Park: splash pad opens in June, following play area, landscaping, lighting, other improvements completed in 2020

*Construction begins*

Farwell Park: play area, other improvements

Hall Park: play area, bike skills course and more

Jordan Park: pool, restroom building

Painter Park: skate park, gathering spaces, paths, landscaping, sport courts

**8 ADDITIONAL PROJECTS \***

- 1) 28th Street Totlot

- 2) Cedar Avenue Field Park
  - 3) Corcoran Park
  - 4) North Commons Park: community center, water park, playground
  - 5) Powderhorn Park
  - 6) Summer Field Park
  - 7) Victory Park: splash pad, other improvements
  - 8) Whittier Park
- \* due to staffing constraints, not all funded projects have launched

**REPAIRS AND RENOVATIONS**

NPP20-funded rehabilitation projects are prioritized based on repair, restoration or replacement needs, along with park equity rankings and other factors. When possible, projects are combined for efficiency and cost savings.

- 9 roof/siding replacements at recreation centers, other park buildings: Brackett - roof, Farview - both, Logan - roof, Longfellow - roof, Luxton - both, Whittier - roof; Loring - maintenance roof, Cavell - restroom roof, Godfrey House - siding

- 11 recreation centers or park buildings with major repairs and updates: Audubon, Bossen Field, Bryant Square, Farview, Fuller, Kenwood, Logan, Lyndale Farmstead, Matthews, Painter, Phillips

- 13 parks with lighting replacements or repairs: Audubon, Bossen, Bryant Square, East Phillips, Elliott, Farview, Folwell, Fuller, Matthews, McRae, Lake Nokomis, Powderhorn, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- 20 recreation centers with HVAC replacements or interior electrical/lighting upgrades

- 26 parks with accessibility improvements at parking lots, pathways and entries to recreation centers

- 46 parks with new or renovated athletic fields or sport courts

- 56 parks with play equipment repaired or replaced

- 66 parks with concrete path repairs/replacements

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# YOU CAN LEARN A LOT FROM YOUTH SPORTS COACHING

Being a coach is about much more than just teaching kids how to play the games.

Sports have been around since the dawn of human civilization thousands of years ago. But organized community youth sports are a little younger. They got started in the mid-1800s and became an American institution about 100 years ago. Ever since then, youth sports have needed volunteer coaches.



By Eric Ortiz

I started coaching youth sports just after our oldest child was old enough to play soccer. That was in 2015. Seven years later, I have coached all three of our kids in soccer, softball, football, and baseball – girls and boys – from ages four to 12.

I used to think being a youth sports coach was all about me teaching kids how to play the games. That's definitely part of it. But I've learned that being a coach is actually much more than just being a teacher. It's being a student. And I have learned some valuable life lessons from the kids I have coached.

Step 1 is learning everyone's name. Everyone wants to be seen and heard, no matter their age. Shouting "Hey, you" is not in the Knute Rockne book of inspiring pep talks. "What's your name again?" doesn't exactly build up anyone's character. But saying "Good job, Joe" or "Way to go, Alice" is much more meaningful.



Coaching 6U boys flag football at Todd Park in Minneapolis. (Photo courtesy of Eric Ortiz)

It might seem unimportant, but a person's name is where their identity starts. And recognizing young people by their names helps them build confidence and positive self-esteem. When people feel good about themselves, they will respond better to directions and tend to do good things. The net result is positive behaviors and actions.

Once we know everyone's names, the team building continues. How do we make a roster of 13 individual 7-and-8-year-old kids who don't know each other into one cohesive group? Teach them the fundamentals with drills they can understand. Sharks and minnows on the soccer field. Check. Alien tag on the gridiron. Bingo. Forget all the X's and O's. Keep everything simple. We score in that goal. You run that way. Don't let them score in that goal. Keep your eye on the ball. Put the bat on the ball. Speak their language. To do that, you need to listen.

Kids know more than they get credit for. But because they are small humans,

they can get easily dismissed or overlooked. This kind of treatment comes from the school of children should be seen and not heard. I know that way of thinking. I used to think like that a little bit, too. Then, one day, I realized kids are smarter than we think. It's a good idea to take the time to engage with young kids. When you listen to them, they say the darndest things. And those things can be illuminating and enlightening.

Of course, listening takes patience. And while patience might be a virtue, it also can be in short supply when you have one kid wrapped around your leg, and five others running in five different directions, not listening to a word you're saying. In those moments, staying calm is not easy. But anger is the enemy of instruction. Once you learn to laugh at the absurdity of life, you will remember that the most important thing for early youth sports is to make sure everyone is having fun.

In the beginning, it's not always all about winning. Sometimes it's just about

having fun. When you're having fun, good things happen. There comes a time when participation trophies are not beneficial. But when you're five, and you get out there on a soccer field, football field, or baseball field, that is something to celebrate.

This is how kids and coaches get resilience. That ability to bounce back from difficult situations is the definition of toughness. And toughness is a quality that never goes out of style. Once a team gets that taste of toughness, teamwork makes the dream work, and they are unstoppable.

Now more than ever, we need resilience, toughness and teamwork in this world. We can start in our community. We're so besieged by anger and negativity in the news, on social media, and even in our daily interactions. It is therapeutic to escape that for a few hours every week and see kids running around and having fun.

Youth sports are where games are played at the purest level. It's where kids are kids. It's good to be a part of that as a coach, player or spectator. Adults are the ones who take the fun out of youth sports.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Life, as has been said before, is too important to be taken seriously. The sooner we realize it, and start working together as one big team, we can build community. And life will be better for everybody.

**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.

## A LOOK BACK AT OUR HISTORY-MAKING, 2021 RANKED-CHOICE ELECTION

The 2021 city elections in Minneapolis were historic. We had record-setting turnout, the highest for a municipal election in over 45 years, and elected a city council that has, for the first time in history, a majority of members who are people of color. The council elected Andrea Jenkins as council president, the first openly transgender, Black woman to take a critical leadership position.



By Jeanne Massey

With the rise in attacks on democracy, this success in Minneapolis is something to be celebrated. Our city's strong local democracy is not an accident. City residents made the decision 15 years ago to adopt Ranked Choice Voting, and while multiple factors contribute to our robust local democracy, RCV is a prominent factor in this success.

### TURNOUT WAS HISTORIC

I have worked on Minneapolis elections educating voters about RCV and as an election judge since 2009 when the system was used for the first time. I have witnessed the benefits of RCV, and last year's

election, despite the challenges of the pandemic, underscored its advantages more than ever. Turnout was up significantly, the elections ran extremely smoothly, winning candidates won with broad coalitions of support, and the city's elected officials are more reflective of our diverse communities.

The surge in Minneapolis turnout in 2021 was due in part to a diverse slate of candidates and robust, highly competitive campaigns. None of these competitive multi-candidates races, including the mayor's race, would be possible without RCV. Under the old primary system, all but the top two candidates would have been eliminated after the early August primary, while others may never have run in the first place, without the leveling opportunity that RCV allows.

More than 145,337 voters came out to cast a ballot in Minneapolis, a turnout of 54 percent, up from 43 percent in the last election cycle. Since Minneapolis began using RCV in 2009, the city has experienced a steady and significant increase in voter turnout.

While the public safety ballot measure certainly impacted turnout, the robust competition and wide array of candidate choices made possible by RCV, as well as elimination of the primary, helped

drive this surge in voter participation. Indeed, there were more votes for mayor than for the ballot measure.

### HISTORIC DIVERSITY

RCV fosters more inclusive and representative elections, and Minneapolis city leadership is more diverse than ever before. Women represent a majority of the council, and for the first time in history, people of color represent a majority on the council, as well. The second Somali-American elected to the council was re-elected, and the second Latino member and the first Pakistani member were elected in 2021. Women also represent seven of nine park board seats. Women and people of color ran competitively in nearly every race, and a woman or person of color won 76% of the seats up for election.

This diversity is not an accident. By eliminating low-turnout, unrepresentative local primaries, a source of structural inequity, RCV encourages a diverse spectrum of candidates to run and win. Under RCV, multiple candidates appealing to the same community or similar bases of voters can run without fear of splitting the vote.

### VOTERS LIKE RCV AND FIND IT EASY TO USE

Voters are proficient in using RCV: 73% of all voters ranked a second choice

in the mayoral race, and 88% of voters who chose someone other than the incumbent ranked their ballots. This demonstrates that voters understand the power of RCV, ranking when they believe that their favorite candidate may be eliminated in the runoff and that their second and third choices will matter.

Edison Research exit polling of Minneapolis voters shows that RCV is popular and well understood. An impressive 88 percent of Minneapolis voters – across all incomes, ethnic groups, and ages – said that RCV was simple to use, and overwhelming majorities of voters like RCV: 76% of all voters want to continue to use RCV in future municipal elections, and 69 percent would like to see it used for state elections.

As the numbers show, the 2021 ranked-choice elections in Minneapolis – one of the more than 30 cities using RCV across Minnesota and nationwide – were a resounding success. I will be working, along with thousands of RCV supporters across the state, to bring this promising reform to our elections statewide. Please join our movement for a stronger democracy at <https://fairvotemn.org/volunteer/>.

**Jeanne Massey** is the FairVote MN Executive Director, and a Kingfield resident.

## SOUTHWEST Connector

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# THE WORDS ARE EASY, THE WORK IS HARD

Law and policy are comprised of words, but it takes committed action to create change. As the new year began in 1863, President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect. However, it generally was enforced only as Union troops advanced deeper into Confederate territory. It would be more than two years after the proclamation was issued that the North was able to end the bondage of Americans in southern states.



By **Reva Chamblis**

Even after the Confederate Army surrendered at Appomattox in April 1865, it took two months for Black Americans in Texas to learn they were free – on June 19, 1865. And it wasn't until December of that year that the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, ensuring that slavery would be eliminated in all states forever.

Ninety-nine years later, it would finally become illegal to deny African Americans equal rights to education, voting, and public accommodations. The point I'm making is that real change is hard; it takes steadfast devotion to doing what is right to slowly bend the arc towards justice.

**A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND A HIGH LEVEL OF DISPARITIES**

We see that in the Twin Cities today. By every measure our region has one of the highest qualities of life. We have an economy that consistently outperforms the national economy. We have outstanding cultural venues and opportunities, a nationally renowned parks system, and clean water.

Conversely, by most measures our region is one of the most inequitable for people of color. We rank nearly dead last when it comes to people in our African American communities being employed, educated, owning homes, and accumulating wealth. The words and intentions are there, but the change is slow.

I'm serving on the Metropolitan Council because we're uniquely positioned to help create the change that makes a difference. As a planning entity for the seven-county metro region, we are facilitating discussions and leading to shape our future. It's imperative that we pursue our vision now because our region is changing.

Today, 27% of the population of the seven-county metro region is Black, Indigenous, and people of color. However, in the next 18 years that number will be close to 40%. As a region we simply cannot afford to deny opportunities for education, good housing, and an ability to succeed that is on par with others in our region. It is a colossal waste of human capital that we cannot afford when we're

competing in a global marketplace. It's also just plain wrong.

Equity has to be part of all of the work the Met Council does, from regional planning that sets a vision for housing, transportation, and economic development to operating parks, wastewater treatment, and our transit system. All the work we do must help contribute to building a region where everyone has access to opportunity and prosperity.

## ENSURING CURRENT RESIDENTS BENEFIT FROM BLUE LINE EXTENSION

I've been involved in the discussions of the Blue Line Extension that will connect Brooklyn Park and other cities to the regional rapid transit network of light rail and bus rapid transit. This newly revised route is going through Minneapolis' Northside neighborhoods, where people know what's happened in the past when big infrastructure projects wiped out African American communities, homes, businesses, and cultural assets in areas like Saint Paul's Rondo neighborhood.

The result has been people and businesses displaced in the name of progress. Their homes bought out from under them at less than fair market value, and other affordable housing and business spaces bought up. In other cases, the new investment brings involuntary gentrification that can price the original neighbors and local businesses out of the area.

We have to make sure that the Blue Line Extension benefits the neighborhoods it serves by connecting them to the wider region. That way, a college student who lives near the corridor can use transit to go to school, and later to intern, or work, at one of the Fortune 500 companies located close to our regional METRO system. Businesses along the Blue Line can access customers from across the region.

The Met Council can't do this work alone. We're partnering with the neighborhoods we serve, Hennepin County, municipalities, and the U of M's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs to ensure that we have a robust community discussion about how this major infrastructure investment should benefit everyone.

It's been 157 years since the first June-teenth, and 52 years since the passage of the Civil Rights Act. But it's not too late to do the work to build a more equitable region. Let's celebrate freedom and keep doing the work so necessary to guarantee it for everyone.



**Reva Chamblis** has served on the Metropolitan Council since 2019. She represents Council District 2 in northern

Hennepin and western Anoka counties. The 17-member council is the primary planning entity for the Twin Cities metro area; it also operates Metro Transit, the region's wastewater treatment system, and a regional housing agency. Chamblis has wide-ranging experience in planning, organizing, business consulting, and implementing community engagement projects.

## BRIEFS

### MAYOR'S COMMUNITY SAFETY WORK GROUP

Mayor Frey's Community Safety Work Group has presented their recommendations for improving public safety to the city council. They include creating a new leadership commissioner-level position to coordinate city public safety services, implementing a police recruitment and training program focused on future candidates who live in Minneapolis, improving police training, strengthening disciplinary and accountability systems, as well as expanding violence prevention programs and the city's behavioral crisis response strategy.

### NEW COMMISSIONER OF SAFETY

Following the City Council's approval of establishing the new position of the Community Safety Commissioner for the City of Minneapolis, Mayor Frey announced that he was nominating Cedric Alexander as his choice for the new position. If everything goes as planned,

the commissioner will oversee the mayor's proposed Office of Community Safety, which includes the fire and police departments, 911, the office of emergency management, and a new office of neighborhood safety that will replace the office of violence prevention now housed in the health department. Alexander is a former police chief, deputy mayor, and member of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. His nomination was formally referred to the council meeting on July 21 and will likely be voted on in August.

### KENILWORTH LAGOON CLOSED

In July, a month-long closure of the north end of Kenilworth Channel started. The channel, or lagoon, will be closed to boats and paddle boarders while the old pedestrian bridge over it is demolished. The channel may reopen on some weekends for recreational use "when conditions are safe," according to a statement from the Park Board. During the closure, people may use a portion of the lagoon which will remain open to Lake of the Isles.

### LYNDALE AVENUE PILOT

This month, Hennepin County will begin a lane conversion pilot project on Lyndale Avenue between Franklin Avenue and Lake Street. Following the work, the county plans to collect input from residents, businesses, neighborhood groups, and other key stakeholders. Feedback can be shared at <https://zan.mysocialpinpoint.com/lyndale-avenue-safety-improvements#/>.

### CONSENT DECREE LISTENING SESSIONS

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MNDHR) is working with the Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC) to gather ideas from the community on what should be included in a consent decree to addressing race-based policing in Minneapolis. The center intends to include ideas from the community in a report to MDHR that will inform any agreement made between MDHR and the City of Minneapolis. The first sessions were held on July 7, at the Longfellow Park Recreation Center, Multipurpose

Room, July 10 at Windom Northeast Recreation Center, and July 21, at the Bryant Square Recreation Center, 3101 Bryant Ave S. Additional sessions will be held at to be determined locations on July 24, from 3-5 p.m. and July 28, 6-8 p.m. More details can be found at <https://www.mnjrc.org/events>.

### INPUT ON 38TH & CHICAGO'S FUTURE WANTED

As the project to re-envision the intersection design at 38th and Chicago moves into the "community visioning" phase, the project team has announced that they will gather input on which infrastructure needs are most important to the community. People are invited to share their ideas through Community conversations during virtual office hours 2-4 p.m. Tuesdays and 10 a.m.-noon Thursdays, join a focus group, and invite staff team members to an event they are hosting.



**Briefs** compiled by Cam Gordon.

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Abby Simons and her American Eskimo, Bianca, enjoy neighborhood parks and trails. (Photos submitted)



# MEET STAR TRIBUNE REPORTER ABBY SIMONS

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

Harrison resident Abby Simons oversees the public safety team at the *Star Tribune*, and works to determine how the state's largest daily newspaper covers police, courts and prisons. The *Star Tribune* is read by over 1.4 million metro adults every week.

### WHAT DREW YOU TO THIS PART OF MINNEAPOLIS?

I live in the Harrison neighborhood, which is just north of Bryn Mawr. It's a nice quiet part of the city and yet has easy access to anywhere I want to go. I don't frequently drive, so being able to bike and bus anywhere from the neighborhood is so convenient. The parks and trails are also great places to spend time with my dog.

### WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE PLACES TO [FILL IN THE BLANKS] IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

Cuppa Java is a jewel, as is Bryn Mawr Market and Bryn Mawr Pizza. In Harrison, Wendy's House of Soul makes amazing authentic soul food.

### WHAT DREW YOU TO JOURNALISM?

I got into journalism by reporting for my high school newspaper in Iowa, and it stuck with me. I pursued it through college, and in jobs in Missouri, Iowa and now here in Minneapolis. It's a tough job at times, but it's never boring. Every day is different and I consider it important work.

### PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOUR WORK AT THE STAR TRIBUNE.

I joined the *Star Tribune* in 2008 as

a night police reporter. I then moved to suburban police, then Hennepin County courts, then covering politics at the state capitol before I became a team leader. I now run a team that covers public safety in the Twin Cities, including Minneapolis and St. Paul police, Hennepin County courts and most breaking public safety news.

### WHAT CHALLENGES DOES YOUR WORK AT THE STAR TRIBUNE CARRY? HOW DO YOU WORK THROUGH THOSE?

The past two years have been especially challenging following George Floyd's murder. Along with the constant news that came with it, we had to balance our own emotional well-being as well as taking into account how raw the citizens of Minneapolis felt in the wake of all this. We have at times taken a breather to reassess how we can better do our jobs in a constantly changing landscape.

### HOW HAVE YOU SHIFTED AND EVOLVED AS A PUBLIC SAFETY EDITOR SINCE GEORGE FLOYD WAS KILLED?

A key thing we learned is to not take a police narrative as gospel, after police said George Floyd died from a "medical incident," when we know that certainly was not the case. Thankfully we had a reporter working around the clock that night who un-

covered what really happened so we avoided falling into that trap, but it could have happened. I think our coverage has since been more empathetic and thoughtful, looking into the nature of why things happen rather than just reactive coverage. We've also reassessed how we use scanner audio, booking photos and moved away from less jargon-y terms like "suspect" or "discharged weapon."

### WHAT IS THE VALUE OF YOUR WORK?

Public safety news has always been a point of interest, but the topic and all facets of it has never been to the forefront more than in the past two years since George Floyd's murder. In addition to how the city addresses police accountability, we are also seeing upticks in crime with a department that is shorthanded and, as a state human rights report detailed, has a culture of widespread racial discrimination. Holding this department accountable and keeping

citizens informed is vital, in my opinion, and our team of reporters works hard to do so. I'm proud to work at the *Star Tribune*, which allows our staff the resources and support to properly do their jobs in an era where a lot of news outlets are struggling. I consider myself lucky to work for a local owner who believes in the power of local news.



Public safety news has always been a point of interest, but the topic and all facets of it has never been to the forefront more than in the past two years since George Floyd's murder.

**Abby Simons**

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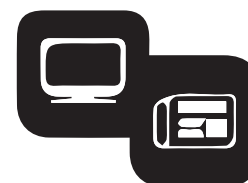
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# PART 2: CAN WE IMPROVE PARKING IN LINDEN HILLS VILLAGE?

## TEAMING UP FOR GOOD

In the last *Connector*, I wrote about the parking issues in Linden Hills, and while a big part of me wants to take a break from this topic and write about both “Dobbs V. Roe” and the Jan. 6 hearings, I’m going to resist and stay on this local topic today...



By **Larry LaVercombe**

We left off with the trolley right-of-way, the 50-foot-wide, publicly owned, partially blighted, not-really-an-alley that runs from the east corner of Settergren’s parking lot to Xerxes. I had been talking about how I believed it could be turned into a one-way “roadway” that could provide at least 80 angled parking spaces, a number that would go a long way toward reducing our parking problem. Plus it would also be wide enough to include a highly improved walking path.

Was I being realistic? How much would that cost? Who would pay for it? I met with 13th Ward Council Member Linea Palmisano to discuss. (Full disclosure: I’ve known and liked Linea for a long time, since we served together on the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council.)

She began our conversation by informing me that at current prices, it might cost \$800,000 or more to construct the solution I was suggesting. And then she said, straight out: “It is not city’s priority to build new parking for businesses.”

I knew this, but still... This is valuable land that belongs to the city, and to us. And it is being wasted. Linea agreed, and we then spent several minutes recollecting all the times that we and others had become involved to try to do something there. But every time, things just fizzled.

“I’ve wanted to do something with this area since I was first elected in 2014,” she said, adding:

“I think this thing could be much more than an alley. But we need a vision for it, a modern vision. And on top of that, we need someone to champion the cause and carry it through.”

I was immediately reminded of the famed Margaret Mead quote: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

And I also remembered a conversation I had with our previous Secretary of



Sidewalk and Alley Near 43rd Street West Cost Estimate - July 2015	
Option	Cost
Option #1 - Gate Opened; Alley and Sidewalk Built	\$229,140.94
Option #2 - Gate Closed; Sidewalk Built (No Alley)	\$110,389.39
Option #3 - Gate Closed; Sidewalk and Alley Built with Cul-de-sac	\$294,721
Option #4 - Gate Opened; Alley Built (No Sidewalk)	\$118,751
Option #5 - Build Cul-de-sac	The one they chose. <b>\$65,580</b>



Larry LaVercombe (left) meets with Ward 13 Council Member Linea Palmisano at the 50-foot, publicly owned right-of-way in Linden Hills.

State Mark Ritchie, about how important it is to have “champions.” It takes a village, but it often takes one person in the village to really make something happen. (Ritchie has been championing the idea of Minnesota holding a World’s Fair, lately.)

Linea asserted that she’s willing to be the champion on the government side, but it will likely require a regular citizen, or possibly a small committee at LHiNC, to get something off the ground. And dare I say it, LHiNC’s put a lot of effort into

this already over the years.

Linea also stressed another fact: that once something is done there, once it becomes “designated” as an alley, or a road, or park-like area, it won’t change again. It’s current non-designation leaves it open to possibility. And that cuts both ways. It’s sort of “nothing,” until it becomes “something,” and once it’s something, it can’t go back. We, as a community, might be able to decide what to make of it... Or someday, it might just get decided for us when a new development goes up on

44th street.

All this said – what about parking?

Clearly, there is one highly under-utilized parking lot right in the node, at St. Thomas Church. But it’s private property. Might the church be approached with a proposal that would benefit them while helping the community? It could be a revenue stream for them; they already rent a small swath of their land to Martina, for parking. Surely there would be a way to keep their playground safe while adding a helpful amount of parking to the community.

Again, we’d need a champion: someone to do the work of planning and pitching the idea.

It always comes down to this, doesn’t it? Who will do the work that you don’t get paid for?

My goal with these two columns has been to promote helpful change: What can we citizens do to affect this quintessentially local issue? My goal with many of my other columns is to promote change on grander scales. What can we do, to make the world more just? And more safe?

It’s easy to become overwhelmed. It takes strength, and humility, to focus on one thing. I recommend it.

**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.

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# GET OUTSIDE: IT'S GOOD FOR YOU!

## FROM YOUR CENTER WITHIN

Were you able to get outside over the Fourth of July long weekend? I was lucky enough to swim in a lake, listen to loons and enjoy a picnic with friends and family. We are so fortunate to have access to great outdoor spaces in our community. Our environment impacts our health, negatively or positively. What you are seeing, hearing, and experiencing moment to moment is changing not only your mood, but how your nervous, endocrine, and immune systems are working. Is interacting with nature a part of your self-care routine?



By Michele Rae

Although human beings have been urbanizing and moving indoors since the introduction of agriculture, social and technological changes in the past three decades have accelerated the human disconnect from the natural world. We live in a society where people are spending more and more time indoors and online.

Making the choice to get outdoors every day dramatically improves your health and wellbeing. Research tells us interacting in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature when you can't physically be outdoors can:

- reduce anger, fear, and stress
- help you cope with pain
- elicit a calm and balanced mood
- increase your attention span
- enhance your ability to learn
- build confidence
- augment your creativity and play-

fulness

One of the most intriguing findings in the research is nature's ability to connect us to each other and the larger world. This experience of connection may be explained by studies that used fMRI to measure brain activity. When participants viewed nature scenes, the parts of the brain associated with empathy and love lit up. When they viewed scenes with only urban concrete, asphalt and buildings, the parts of the brain associated with fear and anxiety were activated. It appears nature inspires feelings that connect us to each other and our environment.

This is particularly important in our children. Research has shown that children do better physically and emotionally when they are in green spaces, benefiting from the positive feelings, stress reduction, and attention restoration nature engenders. Playing in nature develops executive function which is a set of mental skills that include working memory, flexible thinking, and self-control. We use these skills every day to learn, work, and manage daily life. To read more about enhancing your executive functioning as it relates to personal and community health and wellbeing, check out my article "Have a Courageous Conversation" article in the March 17,22 *Southwest Connector*.

According to Richard Louv, author of "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder:"

*Nature-deficit disorder* "is not a medical diagnosis, but a term meant to describe what many of us believe are the human costs of alienation from nature: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses, a rising rate of myopia, child and adult obesity, Vitamin D deficiency, and other maladies.

These problems are linked more

broadly to what health care experts call the "epidemic of inactivity," and to a devaluing of independent play. The quality of the time in nature depends on how direct the experience with nature is. Are kids getting their hands wet and their feet muddy? Are they playing make believe building with sticks and stones? These types of activities can help kids learn to have confidence in themselves and power to make independent decisions.

Adults report regaining their own perception of wonder, as well. They feel a greater sense of work-life balance and freedom from frenzied family schedules. One strategy for making time in nature happen is planning and honoring a weekly "green hour" in the same way a family might commit to supporting a child's soccer schedule.

You are invited to get outside. Spend more time in your favorite place or discover new outdoor spaces in our urban community. You can:

- walk on our many trails
- swim, canoe, kayak, or paddle board in a lake
- ride your bike
- walk a labyrinth
- hang a hammock in the park
- sit under a tree
- enjoy a garden or pot with flowers, herbs, or vegetables
- lay on your back and enjoy a view of the sky and clouds

Invite your friends and family to join you.

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

## 'CLIMATE STORIES FOR JUSTICE' PART OF FRINGE FESTIVAL

Change Narrative, an organization bringing creative climate programming that balances science with art, empathy, and emotion led by Johtsna Harris, announces "Changing the Narrative: Climate Stories for Justice" – a multidisciplinary climate storytelling program presented Aug. 5-13 as part of the Minnesota Fringe Festival, bringing together live, spoken narratives by Twin Cities-based climate justice organizers interspersed with graphic illustration, music, and poetry.

An evocative experience of the senses intended to connect both the head and heart on climate change, and spur action on this critical issue of our time, the production, hosted by emcee Rasheed Harris, merges a dynamic group of climate champions. Featured storytellers include Whitney Terrill (Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light), Nicole Ektnitphong (Climate Advocacy Lab), and Leslee Gutiérrez Carrillo (COPAL). Visually summarizing the accounts is illustrator Lisa Troutman of Drawn Well, whose creations will hold space for key messages after each spoken set, with live music from songwriters/poets Strong Buffalo and Ben Weaver (known together as the musical duo Buffalo Weavers) performed in between.

Personal stories center humanity. When paired with science, they evolve into a broader, richer understanding of climate change and how the data is relevant to our daily lives. "Changing the Narrative: Climate Stories for Justice" will examine the need to repair harmful mainstream narratives, shed light on personal stories, and provide viewers with tangible steps to get involved in climate justice.

View the show at Bryant Lake Bowl & Theater on Aug. 5, 7, 8, 11, and 13. Tickets for all five shows are available at minnesotafestival.org.

### NEWSPAPERS OUTPERFORM FACEBOOK

Groundbreaking research by an Australian cooperative of publishers, ThinkNewsBrands, discovered that irrespective of Facebook ad type, ads in newspapers outperformed Facebook by up to four times. Findings from the group's benchmark series, The Social Chapter, was released in August 2021 and compared news with social sites and examined key indicators and ad metrics.

### NEWSPAPERS MATCH YOUTUBE

Newspaper ads do more than hold their own when compared to consumers' ability to recall what they've seen in print and on the social media darling YouTube. Research by an Australian cooperative of publishers, ThinkNewsBrands, found advertising carried by news publishers outperformed the shorter YouTube ads and were on par with the longer videos. That's an ROI for newspapers selling across media platforms.

**"Social media is simply no alternative to news. News has strong reach, superior trust, memorability and business impact."**

— ThinkNewsBrands

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH: Newspaper effectiveness is universal, so that's why we're sharing benchmark research from an Australian cooperative of publishers, ThinkNewsBrands, that also appeared as an EBP magazine article. Sources: AdTrust Wave 3 research, IPSOS November & ResearchWorld/Jamingo/Tapestry, 119w people by

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## INTRODUCING WIRTH ON THE WOODS

Wirth on the Woods is a collaboration between Lupe Development and Swervo Development Corporation to deliver 99 units of affordable senior housing in a six-story building (The Theodore) and 100 units of market-rate senior housing (The Eloise) in another six-story building. These properties will share amenities, including an outdoor courtyard, garden and greenhouse. The campus also includes a renovated commercial building. The park-like setting of the property will also feature a pond and walking trails.

A groundbreaking was held on July 14, 2022 at 2800 Wayzata Boulevard.

"With many creative and inspiring submissions from residents in the Bryn Mawr neighborhood, Lupe Development Partners is proud to announce a new name for our senior housing campus at 2800 Wayzata Boulevard: Wirth on the Woods. The individual buildings for our senior living communities will be named The Theodore (affordable) and The Eloise (market-rate), in an homage to the beautiful setting of Theodore Wirth Park and the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden," said representatives from Lupe. "Congratulations to Liana Linnerooth, Tami Galvin and Emma Butzer for inspiring the new name and bringing a greater sense of community to the development. Each winner will receive gift cards to two of our favorite area businesses – \$75 to Cuppa Java and \$175 to La Mesa. We can't wait to welcome our neighbors to Wirth on the Woods."

Lupe is also currently involved in the Flats at Malcolm Yards, and Cornelia View Apartments in Edina.

### LAKE STREET AND LYNDALE PROJECTS

The company is developing a mixed-income campus near the popular Lyndale Avenue and Lake Street intersection in Minneapolis. Amenities at the property include a fitness facility, a business center, community rooms, outdoor decks, a green roof, solar panels and a bike room with a repair station. The first phase, Lake Street Dwelling, is a 111-unit affordable building that opened in November 2020. Through a unique partnership with Hennepin County and the nearby Ballentine VFW Post 246, Lake Street Dwelling offers community-based programming and support for veterans experiencing homelessness.

The second phase, Lago, is a seven-story, market-rate building with 132 units and 1,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space that opened in April 2022. Lago contains studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units, as well as townhome units. Next up is Lake Street Dwelling II. It will offer 75 to 95 units of affordable family housing featuring mostly two and three-bedroom units.



Phases of the Lake Street and Lyndale development by Lupe Development Partners.



The two buildings at Wirth on the Woods in the Bryn Mawr neighborhood at 2800 Wayzata Boulevard will be named The Theodore and The Eloise. A groundbreaking was held on July 14, 2022.

## NEIGHBORHOOD BRIEFS

### LHENA NATIONAL NIGHT OUT AUG. 2

Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association will be meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 2 from 6-8 p.m. at Mueller Park (25th and Colfax) for live music and a potluck social. Neighborhood artists will perform at 6 p.m., followed by the Ryan Picone Quartet featuring European-style Django jazz at 6:30 p.m. Meet neighbors while sharing appetizers, entrees and desserts.

The LHENA Restaurant Club will visit Common Roots Cafe on Thursday, July 21. The cafe is celebrating its 15th anniversary.

### MINNESOTA RENTAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Following the end of the Minnesota Eviction Moratorium on June 1, 2022, the Conflict Resolution Center is providing assistance to renters who are at risk of losing their housing security, especially those who have applied for Minnesota's Rental Assistance Program but whose application is still pending. Mediation between renters and property owners/managers has been proven to help provide alternatives to eviction and housing insecurity. If you or someone you know is at risk of losing their housing, reach out to Zina Alston Fizer at CRC at zina@crcminnesota.org.

### WHITTIER HOUSING AND LAND USE

At the July 19 Whittier Housing and Land Use meeting, attendees:

- Reviewed a proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) project at 2524 Clinton Ave.;

- Learned about the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) staff process to redesign the 28th Street Tot Lot, one of our neighborhood parks;

- Discussed options for activating and improving MnDOT right of ways along the sound wall and near the Tot Lot with MnDOT staff;

- Checked in on Whittier Alliance's community development process at 2116 Nicollet Ave.;

- Overlooked the city's process for redeveloping the Kmart Site and reopening Nicollet Ave at Lake Street;

- Enjoyed refreshments from Provision Community Restaurant and learned about their pay-as-you-can meal model and revamped service hours.

### GREEN LINE TRAIL IMPACTS

Various trails within the Opus area are closed as crews advance many project elements. The Opus trails are anticipated to be open by 2023.

The Minnesota River Bluffs Trail between Shady Oak Road and 11th Avenue in Hopkins is anticipated to reopen in 2023.

The Minnesota River Bluffs Trails between 11th Avenue and 5th Avenue in Hopkins is scheduled to reopen in summer 2022.

The South Cedar Lake LRT Trail in Hopkins and St. Louis Park remains closed and is anticipated to reopen in 2024.

Temporary trails near Chowen Avenue and West Lake Street remain in place. For your safety and the safety of work crews, please follow signage for the temporary trail and stay clear of the work zone.

The Kenilworth Trail will remain closed until the completion of LRT tunnel construction in 2025.

The Luce Line Regional Trail bridge that crosses the BNSF rail corridor at Bryn Mawr Meadows Park is closed. A new bridge is being reconstructed to connect the new Bassett Creek Valley Station with the Park and is scheduled to reopen in 2025.

The North Cedar Lake Trail east of Van White Memorial Boulevard is anticipated to reopen in 2025.

## WORK AT BRYN MAWR MEADOWS PARK DELAYED

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), in coordination with the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission and the City of Minneapolis, recently advertised to receive bids from construction contractors for park and water quality pond improvements at Bryn Mawr Meadows Park (601 Morgan Ave. S).

After bids are received in late July, the MPRB will recommend a low, responsive bidder.

Originally scheduled for early spring, the bidding process was delayed due to longer-than-expected permitting and approvals processes. In response, the MPRB now anticipates a construction timeframe between mid-September 2022 and summer 2023.

The updated timeframe reduces the chances of MPRB receiving too few bids or more expensive construction bids during the summer, the busiest season for contractors. In that case, the project would be further delayed.

MPRB will send another update in late July or early August, as soon as results of the current bidding process are confirmed.

MPRB's planning, design and construction of park improvements at Bryn Mawr Meadows Park is based on the park's approved master plan and about \$3.7 million in available funds. The project also includes construction of a stormwater pond on the park's north side, in partnership with the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission and City of Minneapolis. The concept plan for park improvements includes the following features:

- Native landscape greenway
- Reconstructed athletic fields
- New trails
- Play area
- Picnic shelter
- Basketball court
- Broomball and open skate meadow
- Batting cages
- One-mile trail loop

- Parking lots
- Bike park skills area
- Open free field space

The first building constructed at Bryn Mawr was a combined toilet building and storage shed to serve the athletic fields in 1953. In addition, about 7,000 yards of clay were removed from the playing field areas and replaced with a good grade of back fill. A small part of Bryn Mawr was lost to freeway construction in 1966, but freeways ultimately resulted in the enlargement of the park. Seven athletic fields at The Parade were lost due to freeway expansion and the park board replaced some of that loss by expanding Bryn Mawr and building more playing fields there.

Important renovations were made to Bryn Mawr's playing fields in 1992. Bryn Mawr was connected to the Luce Line bicycle trail in 2005, which connected paths from Wirth Park with the Cedar Lake Trail and links to downtown Minneapolis.

## COMMUNITY POP-UP MARKET THIS SATURDAY, JULY 23 AT MUELLER PARK



Bread and LHENA are organizing and hosting four monthly Twin Cities Community Pop-Up Markets this summer at Mueller Park (2509 Colfax Ave. S.). The next one will be on Saturday, July 23 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

These outdoor pop-up markets bring together local business vendors, restorative practice leaders, wellness practitioners, community organizations, food trucks, musicians, artists, and community members for a vibrant marketplace of goods, ideas and services. The summer markets are free, accessible to all, and designed to build local connections, boost the local economy and empower the community.

The last two of the season will be on Aug. 20 and Sept. 17.

Sponsors include ArcStone, Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute, *Southwest Connector*, Erik's Bike Board Ski Shop, Sebastian Joe's, Urban Tails, Snapology, and Target Uptown.

Barb Koloshuk, the owner of Lake Seven Orchards, sells homemade pickled beets, pickled peppers, maple syrup and more at the first Twin Cities Community Pop-Up Market at Mueller Park on June 18.



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# DIVERSITY OF TWIN CITIES HIGHLIGHTED IN ANTHOLOGY

## Local writers reflect on pandemic and George Floyd's murder in 'We Are Meant to Rise: Voices of Justice from Minneapolis to the World'

By Jan Willms

Carolyn Holbrook loves to bring people together to discuss difficult issues. As an educator, author and advocate for the healing power of the arts, she has spent much of her life doing just that.

David Mura is an author, poet, novelist, playwright, critic and performance artist whose writings explore the themes of race, identity and history.

The two of them, who have worked together before, collaborated as editors of "We Are Meant to Rise: Voices of Justice from Minneapolis to the World," an anthology by Minnesota writers reflecting their thoughts and experiences in the wake of the pandemic and the George Floyd murder. Some of the authors also write about their cultural history.

Holbrook, who teaches at the Loft Literary Center and Hamline University, in 2015 created "More Than a Single Story," a group of BIPOC writers who presented panel conversations throughout the Twin Cities. She was inspired to do so when one of her African American women's writing groups was giving a presentation. A White member of the audience expressed surprise that they did not all sound alike or tell the same stories.

Holbrook set out to prove that a group of women who are of the same race can have many stories to share. She set up panel discussions hosted by the Loft in a series that first featured African American women, then women of Caribbean descent and finally, women of East African and West African backgrounds, all who lived in Minnesota. The series of conversations expanded, and Holbrook had Mura join her and moderate BIPOC men's panels discussing their experiences.

When the two started looking for stories for an anthology, they were hoping to get writers from "More Than a Single Story" to tell about some of the panel discussions they had held over the past several years.

"Then the pandemic hit, and we told them that if they preferred, they could write about how the pandemic had affected them. And then George Floyd was murdered, so we ended up with pieces about George Floyd, some about the pandemic and others about family and the environment, as well as other topics," Holbrook said.

Some of the writers selected were from "More Than a Single Story" discussions and others were asked because they were obvious choices, according to Mura. "We wanted to have a mix of writers who represented different communities," he said.

Holbrook added that it was difficult to select writers, because they could only have a certain number. "We wanted to have as many BIPOC communities represented as we could, and we wanted a mix of well-known and emerging writers. It was not an easy task to choose the authors."

"So many writers grew up in the neighborhood (where George Floyd was killed), or live or work there, and we got a very visceral response from people," Mura stated. He said Floyd's murder was traumatic and upsetting and indicative of "something horribly wrong with the justice system here. This was all confirmed by the recent government study, showing systemic racism in the Minneapolis Police



Writers and editors celebrate the launch of "We Are Meant To Rise: Voices of Justice from Minneapolis to the World." Left to right: Tess Montgomery, Samantha Sencer-Mura, Carolyn Holbrook, David Mura, Anika Fajardo, and Suleiman Adan. (Photo by Terry Faust)

Department."

Holbrook said, "Many of us who grew up here knew what happened behind closed doors, but people in government would not believe us, and not believe the police were as horrible as they were. With George Floyd's murder, so much has come to light."

Mura said that Black people have talked about police abuse since 1865, but have not been believed. "Technology has caught up with racism," he noted. "The event with George Floyd could have happened, and all the people who were there could have testified, but the public wouldn't believe it. So the video was the crucial proof." He was speaking of the video recorded by 17-year-old Darnella Frazier, who filmed the murder of George Floyd and received a special dedication in "We Are Meant to Rise."

### 'WE STICK TOGETHER, WE TALK TO EACH OTHER, AND WE HOLD ON'

The close connection of the Twin Cities is emphasized in the anthology, Mura explained. "We have these stories from Somali Americans, Native Americans, Korean Americans, and Black Americans. The authors are all commenting on the same event from their own particular vantage point and relationship to the neighborhood."

In light of the struggles Black people have endured over the years, Holbrook said, "We stick together, we talk to each other and we hold on. We've been holding on for how many hundreds of years. Historically, in the American Black experience, whenever we make gains, they come and knock it down. We get back up, and they come and knock it down again."

"We had eight years of peace and hope with Obama, and then they brought in Trump. It's not a new cycle or phenomenon, it's the American way."

Mura said the book features people writing about their communities and the historical experiences of their communities. "You see how entrenched systemic racism is, but I do have hope because of the brilliant voices that are part of this anthology," he said. "All these writers from different perspectives are bringing us their language, their input, their stories."

He cited one of the anthology's es-

says by Louise Erdrich, writing about her grandfather's fight against the government and describing the history of boarding schools. "When we see we have all been dealing with this, it makes us stronger. We are fighting in many ways the same anti-democratic, racist movement that is part of our country."

Mura spoke of the current debates about what is being taught in America's schools. "We will either get past this or fall apart as a country," he said, referring to the concern that bringing anything about the United States' racial history into the classroom will hurt White students.

"D. Kearney writes in the book about having to have a talk with his six-year-olds about the shooting of Philando Castile, and then talking to them when they are 10 about the murder of George Floyd," Mura stated. He said D. Kearney wrote that he will never forgive White Supremacy for putting him in a position that he has to have this conversation with his children.

Mura commented on White parents being afraid for their children to hear in the classroom about the story of Ruby Bridges, an eight-year-old Black girl who integrated school while adults spat upon her.

"Why couldn't they take courage and inspiration from that? I don't believe White kids are so fragile."

Kevin Yang, one of the essayists in the anthology, wrote about being in a school system where he felt bad about being Hmong, and how a teacher introduced him to the work of a Hmong poet. This changed his life.

"This is an argument for teaching a diverse range of history and literature," Mura said. "You begin to feel pride and understand these stories are important."

Holbrook noted some White kids do learn these stories, after hearing that they shouldn't. "They ask why they aren't being taught about this, and the censorship blows their minds."

### WHAT MAKES AMERICA GREAT

Both Holbrook and Mura have a long history of working in the Twin Cities as

activists, besides their other roles.

Mura said he came to the Twin Cities in 1974 to attend graduate school, and he never left. He resides in Minneapolis, just a few miles from where he lived when he first moved here. "I helped start the Asian American Renaissance, and I have worked with Carolyn on so many things," he said. "I stayed here because this is a great place to be an artist and raise a family." He said his children all attended South High, and he has a daughter who has been endorsed as a DFL candidate for District 63-A.

Holbrook said she grew up in Minneapolis down the street from what was Bryant Junior High School and is now Sabbathani.

She has two sons and three daughters. She said her youngest son and his wife have moved to LA to follow their dreams. "They got their kids through college, and now my daughter-in-law just graduated from architecture school. My son is creating sound tracks for films."

Holbrook said she hates to cook, and her children living in the area often bring her dishes.

The message Mura would like readers to take from the anthology he and Holbrook edited is to understand it is providing them with a portrait of the Twin Cities, of Minnesota and of America. "The testimony of these writers of different ethnicities and races is part of what makes America great," he said. "Our diversity is our strength."

Holbrook said she hopes the book inspires readers to learn and study more about who lives in Minnesota, and who its people are. "Each group has a lengthy history," she said. She cited some examples of Black residents. "Dr. Richard Green was politically active for a long, long time. We may know of slaves like Dred Scott, but not that he was imprisoned at Fort Snelling. And enslaved Eliza Winston gave testimony to the courts. I really hope this book also inspires enslaved people to learn more about what Minnesota is."

Mura said he and Holbrook have been writing and working as activists for a long time. "It gives me hope that these young talented writers will be coming after us, carrying the torch."



Our diversity is our strength."

David Mura