

SOUTHWEST Connector

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BUY NOTHING GROUPS ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BUY LESS, SHARE MORE

With a desire to live more sustainably, members look to their neighbors first for what they need

By Allie Johnson

They say one person's trash is another person's treasure. That's one of the leading philosophies behind a movement taking off in southwest Minneapolis.

The "Buy Nothing" project started in the U.S. several years ago, and has since gained popularity worldwide. The mission is to connect neighbors through hyper-local groups – typically hosted on Facebook – to give and receive, share and lend items amongst each other to encourage people to buy less and share more.

Many people view these Buy Nothing groups as a way to live a more sustainable lifestyle by looking to their neighbors for any item they want or need – from moving boxes to craft-making supplies to the next book for their book club – before buying new.

The sustainability aspect is what initially prompted Kingfield resident Heather Fisch to join her local Buy Nothing group, which also includes the East Harriet and Tangletown neighborhoods. She said she's used the group to avoid buying items she may only use once. This past fall, she put together her son's He-Man Halloween costume with pieces gifted by members of her Buy Nothing group.

Members also say it's a great way to get rid of things in your home you no longer need or want without throwing them away or donating them to a thrift store, where they may end up in a landfill anyways.

"That's been a big thing, just feeling like I'm able to let go of stuff I have and knowing that it's not just being thrown out, but it's going to someone who is going to repurpose it or reuse it," Fisch said.

Anna V. Ostenso Moore, a member of the "Buy Nothing" group that encompasses the Linden Hills and Fulton as well as Edina's Morningside neighborhood, has found the gift economy aspect of the project has changed the way she approaches needs for her family. She joined her local group in 2020 when her son was just a baby, giving away clothing he's grown out of and asking for the next size up.

She particularly loves looking to the group for items her son only needs for one season. This winter, she's borrowing winter gear from another family with children above and below her son in age. She'll return it in the spring so they can use it for



Heather Fisch's son wears the He-Man Halloween costume that was created with items obtained from her Buy Nothing group. (Photo submitted)



A SWEET JOURNEY



Twin Cities chocolatier Mary Leonard of Chocolat Céleste puts together a box of freshly-made truffles. Leonard battled breast cancer in 2020, but didn't miss a day of work. She had chocolates to create, after all. Each chocolate is hand made with fresh whipping cream, small batch butter and the finest fair trade cocoas. The company that she started at age 46 was named after her beloved Bichon Frise. **Story on page 9.** (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

24 STRATEGIES, 64 ACTIONS

City considers groundbreaking racial equity framework to guide transportation planning

By Cam Gordon

The city council is set to vote early this year on a groundbreaking racial equity framework that could guide city transportation planning and investment decisions for years to come.

The draft Racial Equity Framework for Transportation (REF) plan was released with a presentation to the council on Dec. 1, followed by a virtual open house on Jan. 11 and a public comment period that ends Jan. 20.

The framework is intended to help improve racial equity outcomes in the city by making wiser investments in transportation and "uplifting voices historically excluded from the decision-making processes," said the press release announcing the draft's release.



I think the two things I am most proud of are the strategies and actions because they paved the way for action and for the dashboard that brings to life the history."

Kathleen Mayell



While it's customary to make resolutions at this time of year, it's also a fine time to reflect on the gifts of the present

By **Susan Schaefer**
UNDER THE HOOD



HYGGE

Certainly, the long, cold, dark Minnesota winters can spark a melancholia for some. Yet frigid temperatures and spare daytime hours can also create the mood to hibernate, as other creatures of nature do. One way to take advantage of wintertime is to retreat inside to our snug spaces.

The Danish concept of hygge refers to finding comfort, pleasure, and warmth in simple, soothing things such as a cozy atmosphere or the feeling of friends. It is a time to gather around the hearth to spend more intimate time with loved ones but also an opportunity to make time to nurture ourselves. As a writer, I revel in the fact that northern wintertime brings more hours for reading. Books, magazines and newspapers pile up around my reading nook.

GETTING SOME INK ON OUR FINGERS

In fact, the Twin Cities are a haven for local print news, boasting two dailies, 11 specialty, and over 15 local/neighborhood/community newspapers/newsletters. Your local news heralds – the Messenger, Monitor and Connector are the Harry, Ron and Hermione of the pack – a dynamic trio bringing news and a bit of magic to each community served. From Midway, Como and Frogtown on the St. Paul side of the river to Longfellow, Nokomis, Southwest and many neighborhoods in between, the print editions have proven to be much anticipated by our readership.

I'm grateful to be a part of these independent papers assembled by our hardworking publisher, Tesha M. Christensen, who like Dumbledore, holds the entirety of TMC Publications' "Hogwarts School" together. She's assembled an equally hardworking team under her leadership who are grateful to the readers and advertisers for helping to keep local news alive and well.

Along the same lines, the metro is a major hub for literary arts, blessed with a vital print publishing industry. Our literary forest is populated with numerous book branches, so to speak.

GIFTS OF SEASON GIVE REASON TO REFLECT



Under the Hood columnist, Susan Schaefer, shares her spectacular view of the Mississippi River. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)



Victoria Ford, proprietor of the new Comma Bookshop in Linden Hills, consults with a customer. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

One such publisher, founded in 1859, is Minnesota Historical Press with three imprints, Minnesota Historical Society Press, Borealis Books and MNHS Express, and sister publication, Minnesota History Magazine, which each abound with stories about local culture, history, Native American and Scandinavian Studies, and more.

Another, approaching its 100th anniversary, is the University of Minnesota Press, a venerable pillar of the state's publishing industry. Topping the list of other local presses are Graywolf Press and Milkweed Editions, both lionesses in our publishing den. These organizations put wind under the wings of our copious crop of homegrown writers and authors, many of whom grace national and international booklists, as well.

Our area is rich in resources for readers and writers. According to a recent Christian Science Monitor survey, Minneapolis comes in fourth, behind Seattle, San Francisco, and Cincinnati, based on sheer number of bookstores. From the unique Open Book building that hosts a trifecta of literary gems – the Loft Liter-



The soaring Bob Dylan mural attracts international visitors to downtown Minneapolis. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

ary Center, a haven for readers and writers, Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and Milkweed Bookstore – to dozens of other booksellers dotted throughout TMC's readership areas like the Red Balloon, Midway Used & Rare Books, Next Chapter, Magers & Quinn, Birchbark, Wild Rum-pus and newcomer, Comma, to name a few. These literary temples often provide meeting space for community gatherings and host live author readings, fostering an array of cultural activities, serving as much more than solely brick and mortar structures.

So, when cold winds blow and we do have snow, there are many choices to curl up with a favorite beverage and get some ink on our fingers.

OR GO FORTH INTO NATURE

Strange as it seems, I am also grateful to live in an area that experiences such robust and true seasons. Over the past year, my column has described how to embrace all that the metro area and beyond have to offer throughout the year. My January column took readers on a self-guided outdoor winter art tour available for free on the East and West Banks of the University of Minnesota, providing both exercise and culture.

Speaking of art and culture, our area features a dazzling array of free outdoor art, from the amazing Prince and Bob Dylan murals in downtown Minneapolis to Mears, Kellogg Mall Park and Western Sculpture Parks in St. Paul. Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall our communities burst with seasonal art crawls, and almost every night of the week our galleries and museums have exhibitions that are free and open to the public.

We are blessed with an urban environment nestled in nature. A recent survey by The Trust for Public Land ranked St. Paul second, for the second year in a row, and Minneapolis fifth as the best park systems in the United States. The Minneapolis Chain of Lakes – Cedar Lake, Lake of Isles, Bde Maka Ska, Harriet and St. Paul's Como, Phalen, White Bear and Carver Lakes are minutes from all urban hubs,

allowing for wintertime skiing and skating or warm weather kayaking, sailing, swimming, biking, running and walking.

The World Health Organization reports that green areas are essential for ecosystems and the mental health of urban denizens. The Trust for Public Land also named Minneapolis America's Best City for Parkland and Green Spaces, citing that "Minneapolis reserves 14.9% of city area for parkland and the 95% of residents live within a ten-minute walk of a park!"

I am eternally grateful to live atop Bohemian Bluffs, directly overlooking the majestic Mississippi River that runs right through Minneapolis and St. Paul. Our nationally protected 72-mile waterway exists entirely within our urban areas! I surely have one of the best views in the world, overlooking the University of Minnesota's West and East Banks, with Frank Gehry's fanciful Weisman Museum directly outside my window. This location means I can walk or bike along the ribbons of pedestrian only trails that seem to run forever.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

U.S. News and World Report has again ranked the Twin Cities together in the top 30 of its list of best places to live. Our plentiful parks, lakes and rivers, trails and green spaces, affordability (I know hard to believe with current inflation, but it is worse elsewhere), clean air, robust job market, excellent infrastructure and higher education systems, and cultural richness define our area as one of abundance.

At this time of year, I take the time to acknowledge such priceless riches. I wish you and yours light in the darkness and gratitude in your heart.



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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►1 STRATEGIES, ACTIONS

“This is furthering an entire body of policy and works hand in hand with all the pieces,” said Kathleen Mayell, a city transportation planning manager who has been leading the effort. “There are other cities who are working on this, like Seattle, Denver and Oakland,” said Mayell, “but we are cutting new ground for sure.”

The framework was called for in the Transportation Action Plan that was approved in 2020 and builds on policies approved by past councils, including the city’s Strategic and Racial Equity Action Plan, the Minneapolis 2040 comprehensive plan, and the 20-Year Street Funding Plan from 2016.

“I am really excited about the Racial Equity Framework for Transportation,” said Ward 8 council member and council president, Andrea Jenkins. “As the chair of the Racial Equity Sub-committee and lead author of the ordinance declaring racism a public health crisis, I am thrilled that the framework acknowledges and addresses past harms. It looks at inequities in housing, economic development, environmental impacts and public safety. It’s a comprehensive framework, developed with key community stakeholders, with measurable outcomes and systems in place for residents to track its progress.”

City staff partnered with the Cultural Wellness Center to create a community equity workgroup to help develop the framework.

A PAST OF EXCLUSION

Mayell identified three parts of the 84-

page report that she considers the most important for people to be aware of: the historical context, a new way to identify priority areas, and a set of strategies and actions.

First, the framework acknowledges and demonstrates that the transportation system and past government decisions “underserved, excluded, harmed and overburdened some communities, namely Black and Indigenous communities, other communities of color, and people with disabilities,” and that “past decisions have denied these communities the full participation of transportation benefits, which has led to disproportionate burdens.”

The framework lays out how past policies and decisions have negatively impacted the people of Minneapolis. These include practices such as the use of racial covenants in deeds to prevent Black, Indigenous and other people of color from owning homes and redlining that resulted in segregated neighborhoods and stigmatized areas with high populations of immigrants. It shows how the location and construction of interstate highways through the city displaced thousands of residents and destroyed neighborhoods. It reports that “formerly redlined areas make up 17% of Minneapolis land but include 48% of the total miles of freeway,” that “interstate construction in the Twin Cities displaced an estimated 30,000 people from neighborhoods that were home to 80% of the region’s Black population.” Formerly “redlined areas in Minneapolis are over 10 degrees hotter than non-redlined areas.”

‘TRANSPORTATION EQUITY PRIORITY (TEP)’

Second, the framework presents a refined way that the city can, and potentially will, prioritize areas based on a set of key variables that go beyond only looking at population, ethnicity and wealth measures.

A new formula is proposed to identify “transportation equity priority (TEP)” areas using measures of race and income, along with data about vehicle availability, commute times and land temperature. According to the framework, this TEP score is “a tool to identify geographic-based equity priority areas that can be used to help shape investments, infrastructure, operations, maintenance or other transportation work and decisions citywide.” According to Mayell, following the framework’s approval by the council, “The 20-year street funding plan will be updated in the near term, and this new formula will be used there.” Thirdly, the plan outlines a set of 24 strategies and 64 actions to drive the work of the department over the next several years. There are based on four goals that are intended to guide the work of department staff. The goals are to build organizational empathy; to lead with a racial equity approach; to build trust, cultivate partnerships and share power with communities of color; and, to hold ourselves accountable to data-driven reporting and adjustments.

“The strategies and actions are the building blocks,” said Mayell.

A sampling of “actions” reveals some of the potential changes to city processes and programs that could be coming:

- Hire and maintain staff at all levels of the organization to better reflect the communities we serve.

- Disseminate information internally on racial inequities related to transportation to build shared understanding.

- Support the inclusion of anti-displacement work when major investments occur led by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Hennepin County and/or and Metro Transit.

- Continue to develop new and support existing ways of increasing access to the Shared Bike and Scooter Program and the Evie Carshare Program for low-income individuals.

- Use the REF to analyze, and adjust if warranted, procedures and policies related to street operations and maintenance.

- Establish streamlined process guide for hiring neighborhood and community organizations for small contracts.

- Report on metrics developed in the framework every two years.

“I think the two things I am most proud of are the strategies and actions because they pave the way for action and for the dashboard that brings to life the history,” said Mayell.

VIEW WEB-BASED DASHBOARD

The web-based transportation equity dashboard shares the history and impacts of past decisions and presents information from the framework in a way that lets people explore the data related to transportation, organized by census tract, and includes an interactive map of the transportation equity priority areas.

Find the dashboard and complete framework at <https://www2.minneapolis.gov/government/departments/public-works/tpp/racial-equity-framework/>.

►1 BUY NOTHING

their youngest.

“It’s actually been really freeing to think, ‘I don’t own this item.’ I can share it. I can use it. I can love it. I can be really appreciative of it, and then I can give it back,” Ostenso Moore said. “We don’t need to own everything we need to use.”

Some Buy Nothing groups have started bins for specific uses that travel from member to member, from a box of clothing in a specific size that people can try to a box of items to use while traveling with kids. Ostenso Moore used her group’s box of party decorations like candles, streamers, and balloons to celebrate her husband’s birthday – saving her from having to purchase anything new.

“I don’t want to buy all these decorations and then have to store them,” Ostenso Moore said. “That’s the other part of a shared economy that’s great. We’re not in a large home. It’s like, where would this go once we’re done with it?”

From her neighbors, Ostenso Moore said she’s discovered local nonprofits that will take specific items she otherwise wouldn’t have known what to do with besides throw them out.

“I would never have the time to drive to [an animal rescue] with a couple old



Members of the Linden Hills/Morningside/Fulton Buy Nothing group host a puzzle exchange. (Submitted by Anna V. Ostenso Moore)

towels or old baby blankets,” she said. “But, there is a member who volunteers there every week and she will gladly collect them or take them for me, and to drive a few blocks or walk a few blocks is much more accessible than doing all of the little runs.”

Buy Nothing groups can also prevent a lot of waste and overconsumption during the holidays. Both Ostenso Moore and Fisch said they found many of their holiday gifts through their respective groups. Ostenso Moore said she’s trying to avoid buying new plastic, so she attended a stocking stuffer exchange hosted by her group to find items – some pre-loved, some brand new – that members were gifting to fill her family’s stockings.

Often, the items posted in a Buy Nothing group will be something you wouldn’t even imagine someone else would want. One of the more unusual requests Fisch has seen in her group was a neighbor asking specifically for cracked plates. He planned to use them for a class he was taking on Kintsugi – the Japanese technique of repairing broken pottery by filling the cracks with lacquer dusted with gold, silver, or platinum.

Fisch also responded to an ask from a woman collecting fabric scraps. Old pillowcases, ripped clothing – she would take it all. She used them to make tote bags, which she later gave away through the Buy Nothing group. Fisch nabbed two, stopping over to her house to pick them out and getting to know one of her neighbors in the process.

“It’s just this idea that I might be walking around this neighborhood with that bag and someone might see it and say, ‘Hey that’s that sheet that I gave away five months ago or that was my kids’ blanket and now it’s on a bag that you’re carrying around,’” Fisch said.

Ostenso Moore found a neighbor through the group who was looking to compost, but didn’t have access to a curbside bin. That person now stops by every week to drop her food scraps off in Ostenso Moore’s backyard compost bin. It’s a

win-win for both parties.

That kind of community connection is another reason why many are drawn to their local Buy Nothing group. Since they’re formed based on where you live, it’s a great way to meet and get to know your neighbors. Ostenso Moore said by exchanging things for her toddler, she learned which parents in her area had kids around the same age as her son.

“I’ve made friends from the group,” said Ostenso Moore. “I didn’t go in assuming I would make friends, but I’ve gotten to know neighbors of different ages and different places. There’s not a lot of spaces where you get to know people who don’t share a common interest or aren’t your age or aren’t your demographic.”

Fisch added she’s seen people connect with others who share the same obscure hobby, and can share their knowledge. “There’s a lot of magic that happens in Buy Nothing groups,” she said.

Interested in joining a Buy Nothing group? Type “Buy Nothing” and the name of your neighborhood into Facebook or try searching on the Buy Nothing Project’s website. Nearly every neighborhood in south Minneapolis and northeast is covered, and helpful administrators like herself will gladly point you in the direction of the right group.

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'BOYS IN BLUE' SHOWS HOW TO TURN PAIN INTO POWER

The documentary series spotlights the humanity of North Minneapolis, the North High School football team and their coaches, who are Minneapolis police officers.

The world is not black and white. But sometimes, it gets reduced to that.

All cops are bad. All criminals are bad.

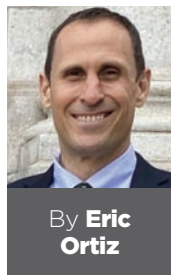
All [insert any group] are bad.

Those kinds of blanket statements are not helpful. People can do bad things. There can be bad systems. That does not mean they are all bad people. One bad apple doesn't ruin the whole bunch. But this type of binary thinking – you're either good or bad – has become far too common today.

Could 2023 be the year we change this way of thinking and being?

Violent crime declined in Minneapolis in 2022, but rates are still above normal. Even though the numbers suggest the city is moving in the right direction, there is still uneasiness and lingering tensions between pro- and anti-police factions.

A new documentary series called "Boys in Blue" by award-winning filmmaker Peter Berg ("Friday Night Night Lights," "Very Bad Things," "Lone Survivor," "The Kingdom") examines this tension with a spotlight on North Minneapolis and the North High School Polars football team during



By **Eric Ortiz**



North High School assistant football coach and MPD officer Ricky Plunkett, right, talks with quarterback Deshaun Hill during the 2021 season.

the 2021 season.

The North team is coached by Minneapolis police officers, who don't just teach X's and O's but also serve as mentors and father figures.

"It's kind of weird, but I'm building bonds with police," said one of the young players on the North team.

The team is a bright spot in a community that faces many challenges. The coaches understand those challenges.

"Before you judge anything about me, get to know me," says Ricky Plunkett, a North assistant coach and a Minneapolis police officer.

Berg wanted to follow the team and coaches after the killing of George Floyd and tell their story. Those plans changed when Deshaun Hill, North's sophomore starting quarterback, an honor roll student, and one of the main stars in the series, was killed in February 2022 in a senseless shooting while walking on a sidewalk by Golden Valley Road. Hill was 15. His assailant, caught on surveillance video, allegedly was a 29-year-old man named Cody

Fohrenkam, who claimed he was looking for someone who had stolen his cellphone.

"To see this young man brutally murdered, for absolutely no reason, was like getting hit by a freight train, and that became the dominant experience of the series," Berg said in an interview with Kare 11. "It's really unprecedented. You know I've been making films for a long time, and I've never experienced anything like this. This was the most emotional and profound experience of my career. Early on in the season, we were at the Hill house with Tuesday, his mother, and Deshaun, Sr., his dad, and straight up unprompted, Tuesday was talking about her greatest fear – is that her son Deshaun was gonna get killed. Leaving school, walking to the bus, and he smiled and laughed and said, 'You worry too much mom,' and that's exactly what happened."

Despite the "absolute horror" of Deshaun Hill's death, Berg finished the film and showed the final product to the Hill family. The director said the series was not making a statement on anything, but perhaps it could "capture this beautiful young man and save his memory" and help the audience reflect.

"Maybe have an opportunity to increase their empathy and their thought process on everything from poverty, to football, to policing, to gun violence, to family."

The trial for the man accused of killing Deshaun Hill is expected to start on Jan. 23. Court records show Fohrenkam has a lengthy rap sheet, with 10 separate incidents on file from 2010 to 2018, including convictions for assault, robbery, illegal possession of a firearm and arson.

Philosophers have debated whether humans are good or bad for thousands of years. The consensus is that humans are

naturally good and get corrupted by society. Science confirms as much. A few years ago, a study at Yale University with babies found that even the youngest humans have a sense of right and wrong and an instinct to prefer good over evil.

The most enlightened among us understand the potential greatness of all humans. Everyone is better than the worst thing they've ever done and greater than the worst mistake they've ever made. Still, it's not always easy to forgive or see the worth of all people.

But healing begins with forgiveness. It also requires hope, then action to make things better. As Rosemary Wahtola Trommer writes in "Hope," the first poem in a book called "How to Love the World: Poems of Gratitude and Hope":

*Hope has holes
in its pockets.
It leaves little
crumb trails
so that we,
when anxious,
can follow it.
Hope's secret:
it doesn't know
the destination –
it only knows
that all roads
begin with one
foot in front
of the other.*

We have work to do.

You can watch "Boys in Blue" on Showtime, and the first episode is available for free on YouTube.



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.

DOGS DON'T NEED COSMETIC SURGERY

I've had three family dogs that I can remember in my lifetime. Hunter was a yellow Labrador, Hercules an Olde English Bulldogge, and now, Smokey, our German Shepherd mix. When I was growing up, I thought Hercules naturally had a shorter tail for his breed. It wasn't

until in my teens when I found out that it was the breeders who cut off his tail at a young age. Yes, I am now a supporter of adopting not shopping, but these animals are still going through what the American Veterinary Medical Association deems as unnecessary and risky procedures to make sure it fits into "human aesthetics."

My family loved having Hercules and wanted to support a breed of Bulldog that was not bred to have the aesthetics of a squished nose so that he'd be able to breathe properly. But he was still subjected to a painful cosmetic surgery at only a few days old. When necessary, this procedure is performed by a practiced veterinarian for injury prevention. But for appearance reasons, it is often done by the breeder them-



By **Chloe Peter**



Hercules, an Olde English Bulldogge, had his tail cut off by a breeder at a young age before he joined the Peter family.

selves. Tail docking is often done without anesthesia and is incredibly painful due to cutting through muscle, nerves, and skin.

This is justified by saying they can't remember it, but I would encourage those looking into tail docking to ask themselves if it is worth it.

The UK has banned ear cropping altogether while tail docking is restricted to veterinarians doing so with a medical reason. The Kennel Club, the British show dog circuit, has also banned dogs with docked tails from appearing at shows. While, in the U.S., ear cropping, and tail docking are unregulated and allowed completely. This means that anyone can perform a tail docking procedure without proper knowledge and create complications such as infection. The American Kennel Club goes so far as to say that pet alterations such as ear cropping, tail docking, and declawing are "acceptable practices integral to defining and preserving a breed character and/or enhancing good health."

I strongly disagree that "preserving a breed" is worth the complications and struggles. Studies show that tails are a large part of communication in dogs. Dogs without their tails may have a hard time communicating things like play, fear, or aggression to other dogs. This means it could lead to miscommunication between dogs and possible fights.

Docking can also affect the dogs' balance and ability to swim. Dogs use their tails for balance when going over uneven surfaces like walking along trails. They also use tails to balance when running in different directions. As a dog owner, I can tell you that dogs often play by running around and changing directions quickly whether they are playing with other dogs or have a case of the zoomies. Working dogs also have trouble without tails. Herding dogs use their tails to help corral sheep. A dog that spends a lot of time retrieving in water needs a tail to stay steady as it acts like a rudder.

I believe that this takes away a key part of what it is to be a dog. As a pet owner, I wanted to see my dogs thrive and play as well as do tasks they were trained to do. While I have never had the desire to show dogs, so I may not understand the desire for pet modifications, I also do not understand why we must change animals to our liking at the expense of their well-being.

Do we really long for control so much that we will drive them all to demise? If we want family companions around for the long haul, this needs to stop.



Chloe Peter is a writer and local news enthusiast. She is an advocate for creativity and learning with a sense of wonder.

SOUTHWEST Connector

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BRIDGING COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

By **Jessica Torres Estrada**



Refugee and immigrant children in the U.S. often face trauma and systemic barriers including a lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate services, affordability, and stigma. These compounding factors decrease the likelihood of seeking services. The CIRCLE Project aims to change that by providing support to East African and Latinx children and their families.

To learn more about the CIRCLE Project, we spoke to Dr. Saida Abdi, PhD, MSW, LICSW, Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work.

Dr. Saida Abdi, originally from Somalia and a refugee, is the CIRCLE project director. She has worked for many years developing interventions for refugee/immigrant children across the world.

This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: WHAT IS THE CIRCLE PROJECT?

SA: The CIRCLE (Collaborative for Immigrant & Refugee Children Leadership & Excellence) Project is based on an intervention we developed at Boston's Children's Hospital (BCH). We were looking at what refugee and immigrant children need. If you are coming through our borders, we know you are experiencing trauma. This means, given their experiences, immigrants need support, safety, language, and cultural access.

So we asked the [immigrant] communities, if your child needed help – where would you go? The only outside system that they identified was schools because, as they said, "I'm already sending my kids there." So, we have to be in a school.

The CIRCLE Project uses a tiered model. Tier 1 is community engagement. We focus on community outreach – a Cultural Broker might be out in the community talking to families. Tier 2 is group work [in schools]. We bring groups of children together and we do fun activities. A Cultural Broker joins those groups. Groups give kids access to support fast so many kids don't need to come back for one-to-one

therapy because they have connected in the groups. And we're seeing evidence that the groups are helpful. Tier 3 is traditional, clinical services. Children can receive individual therapy with [school-based] clinicians. Tier 4 is acculturation and home-based services. A Cultural Broker and clinician work together and go into homes.

Q: WHAT IS A CULTURAL BROKER?

SA: We realized you cannot do this work if you do not have a cultural bridge to the communities we're working with. The Cultural Broker is a bridge between service systems and communities. The Cultural Broker is someone who not only translates what the patient said but provides context. Specifically around mental health, we want clinicians to have a bigger contextual understanding of not only what the mental health symptoms are, but also how people make meaning of those symptoms. Whenever we train Cultural Brokers and clinicians, we say "Come as a learner before you become a helper." Their job is to expand how we think about services and to provide the lens of the community into the services we're providing.

Q: WHY MINNEAPOLIS?

SA: We came to Minneapolis for this reason: the large number of Somali and East African immigrant and refugee kids here. The model is built on this idea of not coming into communities and making them do things. It's building on what already exists. It was important for us to partner with community agencies that are already embedded in those communities.



Dr. Saida Abdi, assistant professor at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work is the CIRCLE project director. (Photo submitted)

And we already had some relationships with Minneapolis agencies.

Q: WHO ARE THE PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT?

SA: BCH is a model development site, so they do the training for us in our project. Through the BCH work, Watercourse Counseling Center and I had a long-existing relationship. We were fortunate to find CLUES (Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio) as a partner and also SAPA (Somali American Parent Association). SAPA does a lot of outreach, Cultural Brokering, and work with Somali and East African families and parents, and have been in the schools for years. And CLUES – one of the biggest mental health providers in the Twin Cities to Latinx, families, and communities – contributed a Cultural Broker to the project.

This model is an intentional partner-

A conversation with Dr. Saida Abdi about the CIRCLE Project in Minneapolis

ship with the community. We're building capacity, ensuring that if we leave - it's going to stay with the communities. It's such a great opportunity because we also have a partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and the University of Minnesota.

Q: HOW WILL THIS PROJECT ENGAGE FAMILIES LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY?

SA: This project's motto is that you cannot just teach a child. It's fundamental that we train the parents and the schools so that everyone who is in the child's social environment can support the child.

We found that if the family is struggling, then we engage the whole community in services to help the child. We teach them how to communicate across cultures. We work in the community with families and in systems. Social ecology doesn't demand a child to do better. It asks everyone around the child to be better and, if you do, then the child will do better.



Q: WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR THIS TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

SA: The grant is community-based. It's by bringing clinicians and Cultural Brokers together that we do a good job of taking care of families and children. I need the grace of being supported by each other, working together – never taking our eyes off the goal of taking care of kids and families.

And finally, that we all become ambassadors and champions of children and families. This is not a one-person, one-company, one-organization job. It has to be done in partnership with families, communities, schools, and providers. We are here to support and partner with you, to work with you, and to do whatever is needed to get this done.

The CIRCLE Project is a community-based program that is intentionally partnering with local organizations and schools in our community.

A special thank you to Dr. Saida Abdi for answering our questions, for being a systems change-maker and for continuing to advocate for community, family, and individual resiliency for refugee and immigrant communities.

This column is sponsored by Watercourse Counseling Center, a nonprofit that strengthens our community by supporting people in the journey toward emotional well-being. We are a diverse, multilingual team of clinicians that provide mental health services and manage school-based clinics at 16 schools in Minneapolis. Watercourse is located at 3548 Bryant Ave. S. This project is supported by the Minneapolis Health Department with Statewide Health Improvement Partnership funding, the Minnesota Department of Health. Read more in this series at watercoursecounseling.org.

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RETURN TO SENDER

STORIES & JOURNEYS

One day as I am writing a draft of this column, I become aware that the U.S. mail has arrived at my house. I bring in the mail. An envelope jumps out at me with the words RETURN TO SENDER. Sad! Those words are encircled with red. For a brief moment the color red reminds of my Root Chakra, the source of earth energy. The words appear to be written in blue underlined with two lines.

The envelope is addressed to Everspring Health, the clinic in the Lowry Hill neighborhood of Uptown where I used to be a client. The sender is me. The RETURN TO SENDER printing I recognize as being that of a staff member I once trusted implicitly down to the core of my being. And then one day that trust was betrayed. Boundaries can sometimes betray us and be misunderstood. Failures to communicate.

I open the stamped envelope and pull



By **Donald L. Hammen**

out a check made out by me to Everspring Health for Giving Tuesday Donation. I had put in a note stating my donation intention along with the check. I tear up the check. I put it in the trash along with the note. For some reason I save the envelope with the words RETURN TO SENDER. I attach it to my computer desk drawer.

I get a new envelope, and write a new check. I make it out to TMC Publications as part of the Messenger voluntary pay program. The Connector will happen later. I put the check in the envelope. I put a stamp on the envelope. I set it aside to go out with the next mail pick up. I doubt that this envelope will get returned to me with the words RETURN TO SENDER. So, dear reader, if you can consider making a voluntary payment to the Longfellow Nokomis Messenger or the Southwest Connector for any amount you can afford, do it! If you can't do it, that's OK. You'll still get the paper.

IMAGINARY CELEBRATION

Stories and Journeys is one year old. I'm 78 now. I am celebrating with imaginary streamers and balloons. I will make some tea. I will light one candle.

If you have read this far, you are joining me in this celebration. And you are taking the plunge along with me into the river (flow) of life experiences which is Stories

and Journeys. Will you continue to join me as I write about what I am thinking, learning and experiencing in my life as an elder? Tell me, tell others or tell me at news@longfellownokomismessenger.com.

IMAGINARY BUSINESS CARD

I have been thinking about dropping in at Minute Man Press in Uptown. Their ads say that they print everything. I want to find out if they can print my imaginary business card. While I am there I might ask them if they can print my imaginary t-shirt. On it would be the words, "I'm a writer. Anything you say or do might end up in a story." The card would include the following three things that I am trying to be as an elder:

- 1) Stories and Journeys Columnist
- 2) Holistic Health (Spirituality and Healing) Practitioner
- 3) Proclaimer and Celebrator of Being Real

This last one comes from my copy of "The Velveteen Rabbit." I inherited this book from my mother. It's a bit tattered and torn having followed me around for decades. In case you have forgotten or never knew here are some of the words from page 17:

"You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges,

or have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all. Because once you are real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

Oh yes! To be real means to be understood and not refused like an envelope with the words RETURN TO SENDER.

OWNING UP TO A PREVIOUS LIFE

I rarely write or talk about my previous life as a seminary student (1967 to 1971) and ordained pastor (1968 to 1971). I once did to that Everspring Health clinic staff person who I trusted implicitly down to the core of my being. More than once I likely preached on the topic of unconditional love from the divine source of all life. Reminds me of my Crown Chakra, the color purple. The divine source of love within each of us that will never refuse us like an envelope with the words RETURN TO SENDER. Love that makes us real and not ugly.

In gratitude. Stay tuned.



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

TIPS TO HELP KIDS LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Bilingualism benefits children in myriad ways. For example, a 2014 study published in the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* found that bilingual children have a higher vocabulary range than monolingual kids. In addition, a 2010 review published in the *Review of Educational Research* found that bilingual students typically have stronger working memories and attention spans than their monolingual counterparts.

The benefits of bilingualism are undeniable, but learning a foreign language can be challenging. However, that challenge could be less significant for youngsters. Though there are different theories regarding why children seem to learn languages more readily than adults, Dr. Eleonore Smalle of Tilburg University in the Netherlands indicates that adults tend to translate from their first language when trying to learn a new language. In an interview with the *United Nations in Western Europe*, Dr. Smalle said that adults' attempts to adopt language rules they already know results in a "less stable consolidation of the new language into memory." Children, on the other hand, unconsciously implement the new language rules and even use newly acquired words in everyday life. That, Dr. Smalle says, benefits long-term memory consolidation.



The benefits of bilingualism are significant. Parents can try various strategies to ensure foreign language lessons learned in the classroom are reinforced at home. (Photo submitted)

It's important to note that researchers, including Dr. Smalle, feel that children may find it easier to learn a foreign language up to adolescence, at which time

their conscious memory begins to develop more strongly. So, parents who want to help their children learn a foreign language have a relatively long window of

time to get that ball rolling before kids could find it more challenging. Parents also can try some additional strategies to help kids learn a foreign language.

BRING LESSONS HOME FROM THE CLASSROOM.

Children learning a foreign language in school or via a private tutor can be encouraged to bring those lessons home and continue to develop those skills in a fun way. Play games in a foreign language at home on family game night. Young children just beginning foreign language lessons can be encouraged to count to 10 when playing hide-and-seek at home.

SHOP FOR GROCERIES IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.

When grocery shopping with children in tow, parents can point to foods around the store and ask kids to say each item in the foreign language they're learning. Make a list before going to the store and reward kids who name all of the items on the list with a special treat at checkout.

READ BOOKS IN THE LANGUAGE THE CHILD IS LEARNING.

This could be tricky if parents are not bilingual. However, in that scenario, reading books to children in a foreign language provides a great way to reverse roles and let children teach their parents everything they've learned from their teachers or tutors. Keep stories simple and even seek recommendations from teachers or tutors.



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TIPS TO HELP KIDS STRUGGLING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a big part of young people's lives. It has its benefits, and being able to keep in touch with friends and family remotely was one of the saving graces in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when people were isolating in their homes. But there's a dark side to social media, as well. Recently leaked documents from Meta, suggest the company has known for several years that its Instagram app is contributing to body image issues and other mental health problems for teens, particularly females. Social media platforms use algorithms to enhance users' engagement. Feeds may be driven toward polarizing topics or those that have the most shock value, further leading teens down a negative path.

Children may not be developmentally ready for the immediate gratification that social media provides nor the constant onslaught of content. As a result, teens increasingly are becoming more irritable, having trouble sleeping and are spending more time alone as a result of phone usage. The Harvard Graduate School of Education says recent studies have noted a significant uptick in depression and suicidal thoughts over the past several years for teens, especially those

who spend multiple hours a day using screens.

There are steps parents can take to help tweens and teens who may be struggling and need assistance managing social media.

1 Set real limits. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health suggests that until meaningful government oversight is in place to police social media platforms, parents will have to set their own parameters for use. Putting phones down at meal times, turning off alerts close to bedtime, and making certain days "a rest from technology" can help.

2 Block upsetting content. It's a parent's job to be a parent, not a best friend. Giving in to requests to engage with certain social platforms, even when they do not align with one's beliefs or values, can be harmful. Set limits on which platforms children are allowed to use.

3 Regularly monitor kids' usage. Parents should look through their kids' phones and accounts on a regular basis to see which sites are being visited and how kids are engaging with others. If social media is affecting a child's mental health, have him or her take a break or delete the account.

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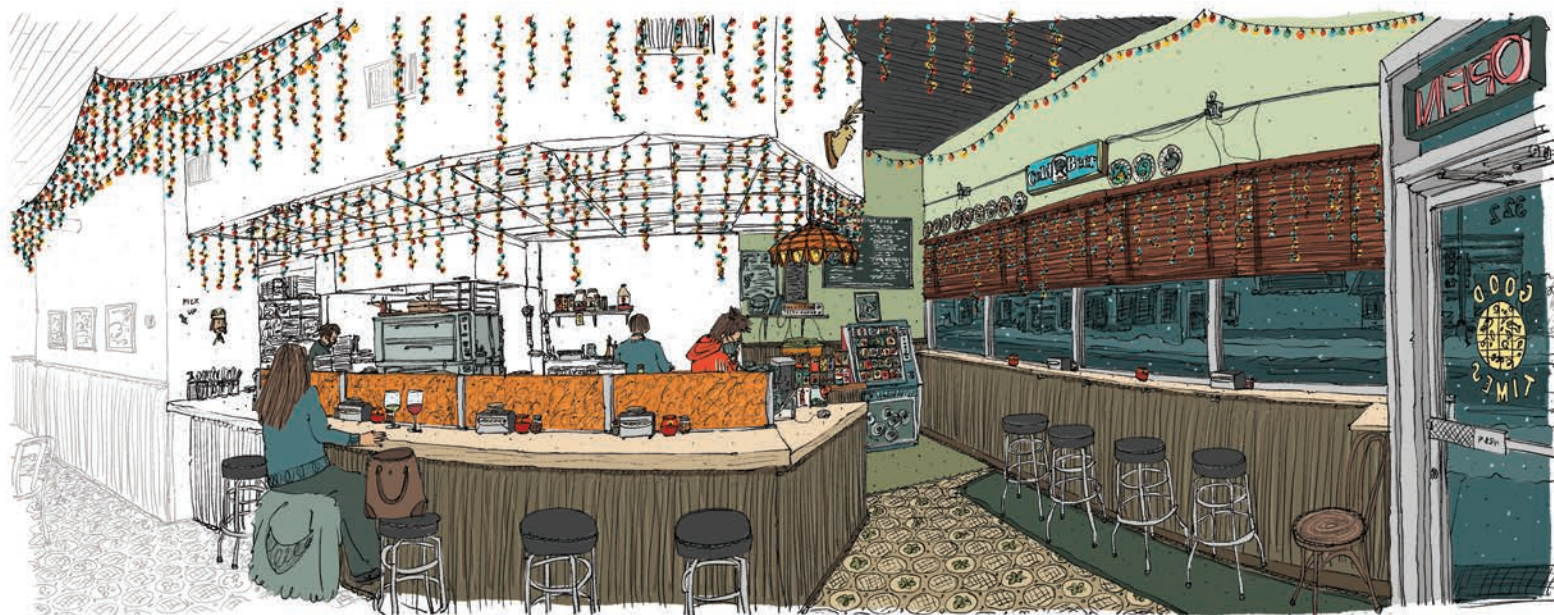
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TENANTS WIN WITH NEW SET OF AGREEMENTS

After over two years of tenants organizing together, the Minneapolis City Council passed a comprehensive list of agreements entered into by Progress Residential, the manager for Front Yard Residential and previously known as Haven-Brook Homes LLC. The agreements speak to the requests that tenants have made.

They include but are not limited to timely repairs, clear and consistent communication, a yard maintenance plan, and no retaliation. The agreements will set the stage for other cities to respond to out-of-state private equity corporate rental companies like Progress Residential, the largest single-family rental company in the U.S.

At a press conference on Jan. 12, 2023, Sunnie Mills, a Progress Residential tenant, shared, "I had water damages, mold, being told to put up plastic around

my windows because it was so cold. They brought a little bitty space heater, so we had to stay in certain rooms to stay warm. We had to start using the stove."

"We have worked so hard calling 311. We also worked with city inspectors coming to our homes. So many of us have been through these hard and rigorous processes. We've even put our rent into rent escrow and had many press conferences like this," said Shanika Henderson, a Progress Residential tenant.

Samantha Pree-Stinson read the testimony of Margaret Little, a Progress Residential tenant. Said Ms. Little, "That is why we are continuing to show up so Progress Residential and Front Yard Residential make sure that all of the items in the agreements are followed very closely." Added Sunnie Mills, "I just ask that they be held accountable for not only the city of Minneapolis but for all of their rental properties across the portfolio."

LUMINARIES LIT ON KING'S HIGHWAY FOR DAP



This year marked the 24th annual Dupont (King's Highway) luminary lighting on Christmas Eve. The six blocks between 42nd and 47th Street participated, as well as 46th Street down to Lake Harriet and adjoining houses on the Parkway. Money collected goes to the Domestic Abuse Project, a national pioneer and leader in domestic violence services, providing therapy services to every member of the family. To date, almost \$50,000 has been raised. (Photo submitted)

WANT TO BE A TROLLEY DRIVER IN LINDEN HILLS?

Have you ever wanted to do something totally unique? How about operating a trolley car? The Minnesota Streetcar Museum, one of the few "living history" museums in the Twin Cities, needs volunteers to operate the historic Minnesota streetcars at its two streetcar lines. The Excelsior Streetcar Line is located in downtown Excelsior. The Como-Harriet Streetcar Line is in the Linden Hills neighborhood near the Lake Harriet Band shell in Minneapolis.

In addition to operators, they are also looking for volunteers to become station agents, and recruiting people interested in maintaining the fleet of streetcars and the track.

There will be informational meetings in late March. Operator training starts in early April. Operator trainees need to be at least 18 years old and must be physically capable of operating a streetcar for



at least three hours a minimum of once per month and have a valid driver's license. During training, which is scheduled on a flexible basis, you'll learn how to operate the streetcar as well as a little history about Twin City's streetcars. For more information, visit the Museum's website, www.TrolleyRide.org or contact Pat Cosgrove at volunteer@trolleyride.org or 952-953-6559. Operator applications are due March 31st. Station Agent and maintenance crew applications are welcome at any time.

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EXPLORING PURPOSE FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

FROM YOUR CENTER WITHIN

Did you know that living with a clear purpose can improve your resilience, health, and relationships? The beginning of 2023 may be a perfect time to reflect on what gives you direction, why you get up in the morning.

It has been an inspiring topic during my coaching sessions this month.

Research shows purpose and meaning in life are linked with your overall well-being and happiness. Re-thinking purpose is a valuable process that occurs throughout your lifetime. As your circumstances change, your purpose may benefit from refinement or adjustment.

What is your intention for accomplishing something that is meaningful to you and leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond self?

Our community benefits from your contributions while living in alignment with your purpose. Intentionally choosing



By **Michele Rae**

behaviors congruent with purpose creates an empowered personal and professional life. As mentioned, it increases your resilience as you navigate the ups and downs of life. Purpose can also positively affect pain management, enhance sleep quality, decrease the likelihood of stroke and heart attacks, improve mental health, and reduce the risk of dementia. When you have a high sense of meaning in your life, you spend more time and attention on your loved ones and communities. Your relationships are stronger and mutually beneficial.

What are the components of purpose? You can consider your values, passions, and gifts.

Values are a set of beliefs or opinions you choose as important that influence how you live your life. They play an important role in shaping how you respond to situations and how you set goals. What are your personal values? Examples include but are not limited to courage, balance, creativity, curiosity, success, honesty, independence, personal growth, power, relationship, self-understanding, social concerns, spirituality, and wealth. Also consider:

- What qualities do you admire in

others?

- During challenging experiences, what is most important to you?
- Who have you been when you've been at your best?

Passions are strong feelings, fondness, enthusiasm, or desire for something. Your passion may inform your hobby, work, or volunteer organizations. Passion is what motivates you and makes you feel good. Think of passion as your what, and purpose as your why. Passions are inwardly focused whereas purpose is outwardly focused on the greater impact you have on others and on your surroundings. What are you passionate about? Consider:

- What do I care about the most in the world?
- Who do I want to help the most?
- When do I feel most engaged with what I am doing?

Natural inner gifts are innate resources within each of us. When you give these gifts to meet a meaningful need in the world, you live with greater wellness, joy, and a deep sense of meaning and purpose. Each of us is born with the seeds of these gifts within us and blossom when we recognize and utilize them. What are your gifts? Consider:

- What am I good at?
- What do others tell me about my gifts and talents?
- What do I love to do?
- What are your superpowers?

Leaning into the energy of the new year, I reflected in my blog:

As we begin 2023, we are supported by a unique flow of energy as we shift our focus from the nonphysical realms of planning, incubating, and imagining into physical expression of our dreams in the world.

Feel the flow of your highest vision becoming your lived experience. Make choices in alignment with your deepest self, the part that is courageous and authentic. Reflecting with your inner wisdom about your purpose, values, gifts and passions, your fulfillment becomes an inside job. When you take time for what truly matters in your heart for you, what brings you joy and peace, all those you interact with benefit as well.



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.

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

The Twin Cities' beloved chocolatier Mary Leonard of Chocolat Céleste didn't take a day off work when she was being treated for breast cancer. Not even when she was dealing with severe radiation burns.

It was her busy holiday season, after all.

On Christmas Day 2019, her sister called her twice. The second time, Kate told her why she had called. She had just been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Breast cancer had always been on Leonard's radar. Her grandfather died from breast cancer in the 1930s, and an aunt also battled it. Leonard started having regular mammograms in her 30s.

After hearing the news from her sister, who is two years older, Leonard called to make an appointment. They tried to put her off, she recalled, and she asked when their next opening was. It was the next morning. That first appointment on Thursday showed lumps in both breasts. When they suggested a second appointment two weeks later, Leonard again asked when their next opening was. She went the next morning, and then again on Monday. The diagnosis was stage one breast cancer, ductal carcinoma. Her sister had both ductal and lobular, and opted for a double mastectomy and reconstruction.

Leonard's path involved a lumpectomy – which she scheduled for right after the Valentine's Day rush. Because of the physicality of her job, she didn't get a mastectomy.

She learned she carried the BRCA2 gene, which is fueled by estrogen. Chemotherapy started the second week of March 2020 at Methodist Hospital's Frauenthuh Cancer Center. She went every Thursday for the infusion and had a full head of hair through Aug. 1. Then she switched to a medication known as "The Red Devil." She had lost all her hair by Sept. 1.

"I was very lucky because I was not sick at all after chemo," stated Leonard.

"Radiation was different. I still came to work everyday, but I had pretty severe burns. I'm pretty fair skinned. That was pretty intense."

It was Christmas by that time. "You can't miss Christmas," she said.

Throughout the uncertain months, Leonard found joy in making fine chocolates and sharing them with others. "Fine chocolate actually affects the brain chemistry, changing your dopamine and serotonin levels," said Leonard, which affects your sense of well-being. "Chocolate can

A SWEET JOURNEY



Chocolat Céleste owner Mary Leonard adds a layer of chocolate to truffles at her facility in the Midway area of St. Paul. "There aren't any chocolates like mine at Lunds and Byerlys or a department store because they're fresh," she said. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

have a calming effect."

She fashioned a box of chocolates for the Firefly Sisterhood, an organization that gave her support during her journey through cancer. Each piece of chocolate featured the group's signature firefly. Twenty percent of every Firefly Sisterhood Collection purchase supported the organization's mission: to ensure that women in the community do not face breast cancer alone. She also created a box to benefit the Hope Chest for Breast Cancer Foundation.

The Breast Cancer Collection continues to be sold at Chocolat Céleste, made with Valrhona chocolate, cream, and butter.

A CACAO LOVE STORY

Leonard has always worked hard – past employers said she did the work of five employees.

Now 68, Leonard grew up around female entrepreneurs. Her mother owned a salon. "We counted money on Saturday night," recalled Leonard.

She began to dream about running her own business. Even as a teen, she loved to bake and make chocolates. "I was visually inspired to create visually appealing foods," said Leonard.

She earned a bachelor's degree in liberal arts in 1976 and a bachelor's degree in business and food science in 1978 from the University of Minnesota. She began working in the kitchen and dietary department of a 150-hospital system. She wrote 3,000 recipes and learned how to manage a kitchen. Then she shifted in 1989 to manage a project with the state of Minnesota and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University to introduce

artificial intelligence and expert systems to state agencies. They partnered with IBM. Next she was tasked with managing the merger of the state of Minnesota's voice and data networks. Along the way, she earned her software development and design certificate from the University of St. Thomas, as well as a mini masters in marketing and telecommunications for the non-engineer. Plus, she took cabinetmaking classes at Minnesota Technical College.

When she encountered sexism in the workplace, she went to work for one of their vendors. At MCI Telecommunications, she served as the marketing and sales manager of a four-state region serving state governments and universities and managing a multi-million dollar piece of business.

MCI was her last employer.

When it was purchased, she took a package and didn't work for three years. She was in her mid-40s and checked off items on her bucket list.

While on a bicycle tour of France, she forwent the wine tours and checked out the patisseries and chocolatiers instead. "At 46 years old, I made the decision it was time to take the leap," she recalled. "I needed to do what I had intended to."

THE FINER THINGS OF LIFE

She attended various Chocolate and Sugar Technology courses through the University of California, Davis, and took a chocolate course from Jean Marie Auboigne. In 2008, she earned a Fast Track for the Lean Organization mini masters from the University of St. Thomas.

"I taught myself what I needed to

know," said Leonard.

She tested some boxes of chocolates at a local grocery store to see how they would sell. She doesn't partner with stores now to carry Chocolat Céleste products. "They aren't any chocolates like mine at Lunds and Byerlys or a department store because they're fresh," she explained.

Leonard leveraged the connections she had made over the years to network with universities and corporations looking for gifts to give their clients and donors. She also caters to individuals who want to come in and personally build their own box of chocolates.

Leonard imports the Valrhona brand of luxury chocolates made purely from cocoa beans, and uses that to fashion the signature Chocolat Céleste truffles. Valrhona, based in the small village of Tain L'Hermitage, France is a certified B Corporation. She uses Organic Valley cream, and handcrafted butter from the family-run Hope Creamery in Hope, Minn. Her selections change slightly according to the season. There are no preservatives and no gluten.

"Sharing the finer things has always been a joyful and deeply memorable experience for me. I see eyes light up as friends and colleagues sample and discover my chocolate notes and nuances. For me the world of fine food is about discovery," said Leonard.

A SENSORY CELEBRATION

Leonard has seven seasonal staff – and many of them also work at various State Fair booths in August, such as Jan Halter who works at Sweet Martha's Cookies. Stephanie Drake also works at the fair – and has known Leonard since their high school chemistry class. She appreciates flexible hours and likes being busy. When asked what her favorite chocolate is, Drake responded, "Vanilla peries. Or, creme caramel."

For Leonard, it is the Franglico, which was called the Celestial Sweetie for 10 years (until Celestial Seasonings threatened a trademark infringement).

Tangletown resident Jessica Kelley said, "If you're looking for the perfect sweet treat gift, I highly recommend Chocolat Céleste, a local women-owned Chocolatier. These scrumptious chocolates are handmade using sustainable and fair-trade ingredients. A delicious and responsible way to support your local economy."

Costs have gone up on chocolate, cream and butter. Someone else might consider finding cheaper alternatives and downgrading the ingredients. But Leonard doesn't plan to take that route.

She knows what makes her chocolates taste so good.

ART SHANTY PROJECTS INITIATES PLAN BEACH DUE TO POOR ICE CONDITIONS



Due to rapidly deteriorating ice on Bdé Umān / Lake Harriet, Art Shanty Projects' annual program will be presented as "Plan Beach" this year instead of "On-Ice." Operations Director Kerri Jamison states, "We started off the new year celebrating 13 inches of good, clear ice. Unfortunately the recent snowstorm created a warm cozy blanket over the whole lake, acting as insulation. That, paired with the warming temperatures, caused a deep slush to form on top, and the clear ice has been reduced to 6 inches at the site where our village should be. While 4 inches of ice is needed for walking on the lake, we need 10 inches to operate safely with crowds and structures." The organization acknowledges that while the situation presents disappointment, moving to Plan Beach was an easy decision to make. Artistic Director Erin Lavelle says, "We take safety seriously and the conditions and forecast are not promising. We cannot control these circumstances, so we respond to them creatively!"

The program opens to the public Jan. 21 as planned, but on land throughout the Lake Harriet Bandshell park. The festival will be open to the public Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., from Jan. 21 through Feb. 12 with no change in dates or hours.

This is not the first time Art Shanty Projects has had to adapt to melting lakes and unsafe ice conditions. Lavelle herself has evacuated her past shanties (Slumber Party Shanty in 2016, 2017) from White Bear Lake when the temperatures reached the 40s and 50s. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

CITY BRIEFS

PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

This year, the Minneapolis Public School Board will be hiring a new superintendent who is expected to start working in July. The school board is seeking community feedback through listening sessions and a survey that will be open to complete through Jan. 23. Six listening sessions were scheduled in January including one at Washburn High School on the 13th. Upcoming sessions are set for Friday, Jan. 20 from 6-7:30 p.m. at North High School (1500 James Ave. N.); and Saturday Jan. 21 from 10-11:30 a.m. at Urban Ventures (2924 4th Ave. S). To complete the survey and for more information visit <https://board.mpls.k12.mn.us/suptsearch>

HENNEPIN COUNTY ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP

At its first meeting of 2023, on Jan. 3, the Hennepin County Board elected District 2 Commissioner Irene Fernando to be chair. Fernando, who was first elected in 2018, is the first woman of color to serve as board chair. District 2 includes north and northeast Minneapolis, as well as Golden Valley, Medicine Lake and St. Anthony. The former chair, Marian Greene, who represents District 3 and most of southwest Minneapolis, was elected to chair the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority. District 5 Commissioner Debbie Goettel will serve again as vice chair of the board. Her district also includes part of southwest Minneapolis.

CITY 2040 PLAN STILL IN COURT

The Minnesota Court of Appeals has upheld the district court's grant of summary judgment regarding the lawsuit against the Minneapolis 2040 comprehensive plan brought by Growth Minneapolis, the

Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, and Minnesota Citizens for the Protection of Migratory Birds regarding possible environmental impacts but reversed the order to halt implementation of the plan. Following the decision, the city announced that it will appeal the ruling to the Minnesota Supreme Court and will continue using and implementing the plan in the interim.

CLEAN-UP FUNDS SUPPORT LOCAL PROJECTS

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) has awarded \$2.58 million to six Minnesota communities to investigate or clean up contamination sites approved for redevelopment. DEED's Contamination Cleanup and Investigation Grant Program awards include funding for two southwest Minneapolis projects. The 3030 Nicollet project was awarded \$274,434 in clean-up funding for the 2.64-acre benzene-contaminated site that the owners plan to redeveloped into a seven-story, 110-unit mixed-use apartment building. The city of Minneapolis was also awarded \$241,050 in cleanup funding for the 1.4-acre Seven Points site at Hennepin near 31st Street that contains chlorinated solvents and other contaminants. This site will be redeveloped into a seven-story, 267-unit mixed-use apartment building with 11,159 square feet of retail space. Matching funds will be provided for both projects.

2023 CITY ELECTION

This year there will be a city general election held on Tuesday, Nov. 7 for only the 13 Minneapolis city council members, as required by state law due to the 2020 census and the redistricting that followed. So far, four of the five southwest council members have announced plans to run for re-election, including Andrea Jenkins for Ward 8, Aisha Chughtai for Ward 10,



After 25 years, Ward 7 Council Member Lisa Goodman has announced she will not be seeking re-election.

Emily Koski for Ward 11 and Linea Palmisano for Ward 13. Ward 7 Council Member Lisa Goodman has announced that she will not seek reelection and no other people have announced, or formally filed, campaigns. The Minneapolis Democratic Farmer Labor party plans to hold precinct caucuses on Tuesday, March 14 with ward conventions scheduled in April and May.

APARTMENT BUILDING PLANNED AT LAKE AND GARFIELD

The City Planning Commission has approved rezoning and plans at 2945 Garfield Ave for the construction of a new five-story, 91-unit, apartment building. The commission did not approve increasing the distance from the corner for a principal entrance from 25 feet to 60 feet.

NEW TATTOO PARLOR

The City Planning Commission has approved allowing the property at 2609 Aldrich to change uses from a jewelry store to a tattoo parlor.



Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

EAST HARRIET IS HIRING

EAST HARRIET

FARMSTEAD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

BY

Megan Nolan, coordinator

East Harriet Neighborhood Association (EHNA) is seeking a Neighborhood Coordinator.

- Part time (10-15 hours a week)
- Flexible hours that include day meetings (with the city and/or the Southwest Coordinator's group), evenings and weekends

- Contractor status, \$30/hour

EHNA is a board of volunteers from the neighborhood who organizes events, programs and outreach with the goal of strengthening our community and enhancing quality of life for our neighbors.

We are looking for a coordinator who can take board ideas and execute to make things happen. We need someone who is a self-starter, organized and has great ability to follow through with little to no supervision. The coordinator works closely with our volunteer board of directors and is a key part of the team. Beyond interacting with board members and neighborhood residents, the coordinator will also have a support system via the Southwest Coordinators group and various city of Minneapolis contacts.

Responsibilities may include:

- Attend monthly EHNA meetings and monthly Community Building Committee meetings, generally evenings after 6 p.m.
- Take care of the EHNA general meeting details: Confirm meeting dates, times, locations and speakers. Collect meeting minutes and distribute meeting materials as needed.
- Coordinate volunteers and event planning for EHNA events.

- Maintain and develop EastHarriet.org website.

- Write and distribute eNewsletter and social media communications.

- Monitor EHNA email account and mailbox and reply to correspondence as needed.

- Manage partnerships with neighbors, neighborhood businesses and property owners, the Southwest Business Association, the City of Minneapolis and other neighborhoods.

- Produce, maintain and submit reports, grants and contracts.

- Support treasurer in managing EHNA finances including monthly processing of checks, invoicing and reconciliation internally and with the City.

- Attend relevant meetings to represent EHNA and its initiatives as directed.

- Report to and communicate with the EHNA Board contact(s).

To apply, email resume and references to: info@EastHarriet.org

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

PLASTIC FREE CHALLENGE

Be part of the solution to reduce waste, protect water and wildlife, address climate change, and look after the health of ourselves and future generations by joining the Hennepin County Plastic-Free Challenge. The Plastic-Free Challenge is a month-long effort starting Feb. 1 to reduce plastic consumption, especially single-use plastics, in ways that fit best in your lifestyle and have the most impact on reducing your footprint. The online challenge has 70 actions you can choose from in seven categories. Learn more, sign up, and get ready to go plastic-free at hennepinplasticfree.ecochallenge.org.

ROOFTOP SOLAR REBATE

Tangletown Neighborhood Association's Environmental Committee is offering a rebate to Tangletown residential property owners who install solar panels on their roof as a way to create a more sustainable energy future. To do this equitably, they have created a tiered rebate application. Rebates are available to households who install rooftop solar on their Tangletown home between Feb. 1, 2023 and Jan. 31, 2024. Limit of one rebate allowed per household. The rebate cannot be larger than the amount spent on the project. Rebate applicant must own the residential property.

ARTIST APPLICATIONS FOR ART FAIR OPEN

Artist applications for the award-winning 59th annual Uptown Art Fair on Aug. 4 - 6, 2023 in the heart of Uptown Minneapolis have opened. The event footprint is located at the intersection of Lake and Hennepin, the center of a lively, upbeat business district and is the busiest intersection in the State of Minnesota. Some artists share that the Uptown Art Fair is the most successful show of the season, and in some cases, of their career. With the return of the event after a couple years of hiatus, organizers saw attendance in 2022 of 175,000 over the three-day event. Approximately 350 artists will be invited to exhibit this year.

SIMPSON MOVES INTO FORMER ZION CHURCH

Simpson Housing Services closed the doors on their Whittier location and moved into the former Zion Church building on Tuesday, Jan. 10. Their work includes providing homeless neighbors with a safe bed and warm food. Simpson expects to house neighbors in this extended stay shelter for approximately three years, while their current location is demolished and rebuilt. "While we are excited for Simpson to join Lyndale, we regret the loss of longtime leadership and engagement that have been the hallmarks of Zion Church. Zion was a pillar of community building and the hub of neighborhood service," said LNA President Douglas Herkenhoff and LNA Treasurer James Carlisle. "As Zion arranged the dispersal of their assets they generously chose to pay tribute to many of their neighborhood partners. We are delighted to share that LNA received a substantial donation from the congregation. The LNA Board of Directors extends its deep gratitude for this generous gift. We will make judicious use of the funds to support the community, to help cover costs incurred this past year, and this will also allow us to make plans for some much needed building renovations."

KINGFIELD EMPTY BOWLS COMING FEB. 12

Kingfield Empty Bowls will be in a new location for 2023 at Judson Church. Mark your calendars for Sunday, Feb. 12. This event supports Nicollet Square, an affordable Kingfield housing option for youth who have been homeless or aged out of foster care, as well as KFNA's affordable housing advocacy and educational work. Volunteers needed; email sarah@kingfield.org

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CRISIS HOTLINE

Call the Minnesota Day One Crisis Hotline at 1-866-223-1111 if you or someone you know is seeking shelter due to a dangerous relationship or needs to create a safety plan.


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The Lamp Mender Retirement Sale: Fixtures, crystal chandeliers, scones, lamps, glass, parts. Repairs still welcome. 9911 Lyndale Av S, Bloomington. Open 10am-4pm, Sat, Sun, Tues, Wed, Thurs. Closed Mon. & Fri. www.lampmender.com

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