

GO DEEPER:
Black
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Leap opens in Midway

*New clinic for children,
teens and young adults
aims to reduce barriers*

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

When your physician looks like you and understands your culture, studies have shown your health outcomes are better.

Knowing that, Dr. Julia Joseph-Di Caprio, a Black physician, decided to open Leap Pediatric and Adolescent Care in the Midway last fall.

The longtime Merriam Park resident and former Longfellow resident observed, "There's something about listening in a different way."

A study out of the University of Minnesota looked at health outcomes of Black newborns, who die at three times the rate of White newborns. It found that when Black newborns are cared for by Black physicians, they are more likely to survive.

"That's not to say that others can't produce high-quality care, but we know outcomes are improved when bringing that level of cultural competency," added Dr. Julia.

Leap addresses the continued and growing need for high quality healthcare for those who face the greatest barriers to health and wellness in a medically under-served area.

Since opening Leap with many partners, Dr. Julia has heard from patients that they had been looking for a Black doctor for their child. "I want them to see this as possible," she said. "Many times people questioned my competence because I was Black."

'THE PERFECT PLACE TO BE'

Dr. Julia has practiced pediatrics and adolescent medicine, collaborated with organizations, and served in various healthcare leadership roles and on boards during her career. She is on the faculty at the University of Minnesota. She spent



Leap Pediatric and Adolescent Care is a Reach Out and Read Clinic. Not only do kids get to take home books at well-child visits, but Dr. Julia Joseph-Di Caprio reads to them at visits. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

20 years with the Hennepin Healthcare system, which included a 12-year stint as Chief of Pediatrics. She was the first Black female physician to lead a department there. Also on her resume is chief medical officer at UCare, medical director at Medica, and physician leader for HealthEast's care management entity and Fairview Health Services (when they were integrated). Her husband, Fernando Di Caprio, helps run QXMédical, a small medical device company based in Roseville. Dr. Julia's experience with NorthPointe Health and Wellness Clinic in north Minneapolis prompted her return to practicing medicine.

She envisioned starting a private practice that would be small, non-profit and

take insurance. It is more common in other parts of the country than in Minnesota. She also wanted to create a template that others could use. At Leap, they provide services to ages 0-26, including well-child checks, same day sick appointments, adolescent care, sports physicals, ADHD/mental health assessments, and telemedicine. Hours are 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Dr. Julia opted for a non-profit model because she wants the clinic to have longevity and live beyond her time. Board members include Mark Traynor (chair), Missy Staples-Thompson, Sheila Riggs, Patrick Mitsch, Kevin Flming and Dr.

LEAP OPENS IN MIDWAY » 2

INSPIRED

*Past meets present in YPC
show 'Inspired by Claudette &
Rosa' running Feb. 10-26*

By JILL BOOGREN

Nine months before Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin refused to give up her seat on the bus to a White passenger. She was 15. Youth Performance Company (YPC)'s "Inspired by Claudette & Rosa" explores the role each played in setting the stage for what would become the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, while drawing directly from the experiences of today's Black youth.

In the show, the "Liberation Players" are putting on a high school play and become challenged to do more than just retell past events. The result is a play that blends history and song with contemporary voices and humor to demonstrate the power of each individual to make a difference.

A collaborative effort that began last year with a script by playwright Laura Mann Hill, "Inspired" has been workshopped to include the voices of Twin Cities youth, a process that continued even as rehearsals began.

"I think it helps with the authenticity of the story that they're telling, and they were genuinely inspired by Claudette and Rosa. So, it really was a mutual level of inspiration," said Mann Hill. "It's not even my story. I feel like there were so many people that have been part of this, and I'm just kind of weaving it together, like a quilt."

YPC is located in St. Paul's Midway neighborhood (641 Fairview Ave. N.). Performances take place at The Conn Theatre (1900 Nicollet Ave.) in Minneapolis.

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Turn to page 6 to hear directly from "Inspired" cast members (back row, left to right) Layla Nerayo, Luka McIlrath, (front row) Amele Brown, Sha'Vontie Juneau and Ava O'Neal. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

Reparations commission formed to address past wrongs

*Saint Paul praised
for setting an example*

By JANE McCLURE

St. Paul has created a Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission, as a result of unanimous St. Paul City Council action Jan. 4. Approval was greeted

with applause in the council chambers as several supporters braved winter weather for the vote.

Ward Seven Council Member Jane Prince, who led efforts to work with community members and have the city study reparations, said that St. Paul must "never go backwards" in trying to right past wrongs. She said the work on reparations moves the city toward true racial justice.

The commission will serve as an advisory group to the mayor and city council. It will look at issues of systemic racism in the city, which have resulted in racial disparities in generational wealth, homeownership, health care, education, employment and pay, and fairness within the criminal justice system among the American descendants of chattel slavery.

REPARATIONS COMMITTEE » 3



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out and about
on the paper route

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Seeds of change
and beauty at Little
Free Libraries

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Como girls basketball
bounces to St. Paul
city record

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LEAP OPENS >> From 1

MayKao Hang. Leap Pediatric and Adolescent Care put in its 501c3 non-profit application in August. Their efforts were kick-started with a \$300,000 grant from UCare.

The clinic moved into a temporary space on the third floor of the 450 Syndicate building in September, and then moved to Suite 250.

"It's the perfect place to be," remarked Dr. Julia. Not only are there other social service and health agencies in the same building, but they are close to pharmacies. The building also houses Community Action, Head Start, Health Partners Dental, Ramsey County emergency and family assistance, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Service, and more. They are next to the Wilder Foundation.

The team worked to connect with local health care plans to join their networks. They currently accept UCare, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota and UnitedHealthcare, and are working to add others. They set up the necessary systems and back-ups to offer immunizations on-site as part of the Minnesota Vaccines for Children Program. Through a relationship with a lab, their testing results come back quickly. Dr. Julia lined up back-up doctors in case she's on vacation or ill.

Their first patients last fall were via telemedicine.

Now, they're working to get their name out there and connect with more patients.

REMOVING BARRIERS

"What we want to do is remove as many of the barriers as possible," explained Dr. Julia.

With a small practice, people can get in to be seen and get in quickly.

Her 30 years in the Twin Cities health field means that Dr. Julia is well-connected and can advise on specialists. "Folks get the benefit of a really personalized approach to their needs, but at the same



Working together at Leap Pediatric and Adolescent Care are (left to right) Dr. Julia Joseph-Di Caprio, office manager Tanjerai White and assistant lab supervisor Crystal Johnson. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

time they can access our specialists if they have the need for that," observed Dr. Julia.

With the referral letter, Dr. Julia and the Leap team make phone calls to let the other office know about the patient coming and check up on whether appointments have been made. They want the hand-off to be seamless.

The approach at Leap includes county health workers who can help address the myriad of needs a family faces. A child might be seen for dental pain at Leap, and while there, they determine that the family needs help getting the child to the dentist. Dr. Julia is excited about the possibilities that come with a community health worker model.

"I understand why back office paperwork is complicated – it isn't client-facing – and is complex. But I think we need to

do more to make it easier for families," stated Dr. Julia.

While Leap Pediatric and Adolescent Care offers modern services, Dr. Julia points out that part of her vision is a little old-fashioned. It's one-on-one work, and right now she's the only doctor there. "We're the voices on the phone," she said. Dr. Julia also give her patients her cell phone number.

As they move forward, they plan to continue to evaluate what areas their patients need support in and adjust to meet those needs.

If they have many patients who are from a specific cultural group, they plan to pull in a physician from that group. "If we're going to be seeing a lot of Hmong patients, we need Hmong practitioners," she observed.

AN ISSUE OF EQUITY

In the United States, Black newborns die at three times the rate of White newborns.

Findings from a recent study suggest that when Black newborns are cared for by Black physicians, the mortality penalty they suffer, as compared with White infants, is halved. For more, see study titled, "Physician-patient racial concordance and disparities in birthing mortality for newborns" published in August 2020. Writers included Rachel R. Hardeman and Aaron Sojourner of the University of Minnesota, as well as Brad N. Greenwood and Laura Huang.

REACH OUT AND READ CLINIC

Leap Pediatric and Adolescent Care is a Reach Out and Read Clinic. Not only do kids get to take home books at well-child visits, but Dr. Julia reads to them at visits. Plus, parents are given guides on how to foster literacy-rich environments at home.

"We don't ever want to get to the point where someone can't get in," she added.

THREE BLACK WOMEN UNITED IN PURPOSE

Joining Dr. Julia at Leap's office are office manager Tanjerai White, and medical assistant lab supervisor Crystal Johnson. The three have worked together at various points throughout their careers.

"I am proud of this because of the Black women I am here with," said Johnson.

White has been in the medical field for 26 years, working her way up from medical assistant to office manager. She's excited by her own growth and that of the two women she's working with. She said she is proud to represent "people of our color."

White added, "I think this will help a lot of young people."

Reach Leap at 651-350-3580, Main@leapcaremn.com or www.leapcaremn.com.

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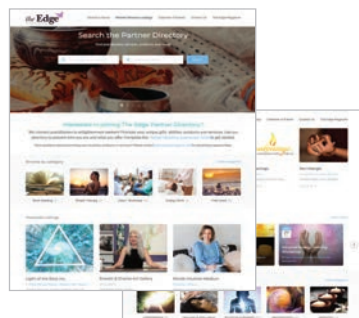


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REPARATIONS COMMISSION

>> From 1

The commission will make short-term and long-term recommendations on policies, program and budget issues. It will look at city expenditures with an eye on racial equity and prepare an annual report.

It will also look at how to pay for reparations. Sources including philanthropic donations and even taxes on sale of marijuana if that is legalized in Minnesota have been suggested.

The commission will have 11 members, to be appointed by the city council in the weeks ahead. The first members will have staggered terms, with all commission members eventually serving three-year terms. Membership is open to city residents, with the goal of having diversity in neighborhoods, races, cultures, ages, abilities, incomes and sexual orientations consistent with city's diversity and equity

goals.

The commission staff will be housed in city council offices. The commission will meet monthly.

A focus on reparations moved to the forefront after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020. Reparations have been discussed in St. Paul for the past few years, with the city council taking its first steps in 2021 with a formal apology to those affected by institutional racism. Those steps included forming an exploratory task force. The task force also recommended direct cash payments as a form of reparations.

St. Paul officials haven't indicated what reparations could look like here. In other communities reparations have taken different forms, from cash payouts to making changes in public policy.

Although efforts to provide reparations have stalled at the federal level, several states are studying reparations. Cities including Detroit, Mich., Amherst, Mass. and Evanston, Ill. have also acted or are

“

You guys are setting an example for the rest of the country with what you're doing here.”

Trahern Crews



studying the issue. Evanston was the first city to pass a reparations measure, providing \$25,000 to direct descendants of Black residents impacted by discriminatory city housing policies between 1919 and 1969. Evanston leaders acted in 2021. Evanston uses a tax on sales of legal cannabis to pay its costs.

More than two dozen people attended a December public

hearing on the reparations commission. More than a dozen others sent written comments, most in support of the commission. Opponents questioned potential costs in light of high property taxes, and whether other groups including Native Americans are also entitled to reparations.

Trahern Crews, who is credited with bringing the reparations issue forward in St. Paul, told the city Council, “You guys are setting an example for the rest of the country with what you're doing here.”

Rev. Carl Walker was among public hearing speakers whose families lost their homes when Interstate 94 was built through the old Rondo neighborhood. Loss of homes and businesses, and what is cited as inadequate compensation, has long been raised as an issue.

Walker's family and others lost their homes as well as the equity they had built up. “We wanted stability ... We were told we had to move,” Walker said.

Return to Rondo and get \$10,000

New ‘Inheritance Fund’ program aims to make reparations for Rondo residents who lost their homes

By JANE McCLURE

What do reparations look like for Rondo residents who lost their homes when Interstate 94 was built? Efforts to compensate those long-ago home owners construction took key steps ahead in January, and will continue this winter as city leaders shape an “Inheritance Fund” program.

The St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board Jan. 11 allocated \$2 million toward a city program that provides help with home down payments. Final action will be taken by the HRA and council later this month, likely increasing the fund another \$600,000. Part of those funds, and several policy changes, would be used for the city's new Inheritance Fund.

As part of his 2023 budget, Mayor Melvin Carter proposed the Inheritance Fund. It is meant to mitigate what is described as lost generational wealth of direct descendants of families who were displaced when Interstate 94 was built through the Rondo neighborhood in the 1960s. Rondo was a longtime Black neighborhood.

Families said they received pennies on the dollar when their homes were purchased to make way for the freeway.

“This targeted approach to St. Paul's specific history allows the city to address home ownership disparities in a hyper-local way that can only replace lost wealth but also can contribute to community healing,” a city staff report stated.

The city will work with the Rondo

Community Land Trust to verify residential history of people who say they are descendants of residents displaced by freeway construction.

Tara Beard, city housing director, said the changes will help St. Paul address the city's racial disparities in home ownership.

Allocations have been split between White and BIPOC applicants. Council members expressed support for the program but want updates. “We do intend to monitor the changes,” said Beard.

The Inheritance Fund will draw on two existing city programs, the Downpayment Assistance Program and the Homeowner Rehab Program. The HRA and council action Jan. 11 amended city guidelines for both programs. The amendments could make it easier for more people to use the programs.

The HRA also made a \$2 million allocation from the city's Housing Trust Fund to support the Downpayment Assistance Program.

The Downpayment Assistance Program began in 2020. Since it began the HRA has served more than 40 households earning up to 60 percent of area median income (AMI). More than \$1.5 million has been spent.

The program is supported through the city's Housing Trust Fund and has received additional funding from the Minnesota Housing Finance Authority's Impact Fund.



It's possible that HRA staff will seek the state dollars again in 2023, said Beard.

The Housing Rehab Program, formerly known as the Citywide Rehabilitation Program, has been in place since 2010. It provides affordable residential rehabilitation assistance to low and moderate-income homeowners, with the goal of helping people maintain and improve their homes. The program has served 572 households earning up to 80 percent of AMI. It is funded through the city's share of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars.

For both program, guideline changes including income limits will open opportunities to more people.

For downpayment assistance, several changes were approved. The previous income guideline was 60 percent AMI or less. The new guideline allows households to earn up to 80 percent of AMI. The change was made because many rejected applicants fell between 61 and 80 percent AMI, and these households suffer barriers to home ownership.

For households that qualify under the Inheritance Fund, income can be up to 100 percent of AMI.

Another change is that previously, properties eligible for down payment assistance had to be in specific census tracts, in neighborhoods where residents face displacement pressures, said Beard. Now the properties can be anywhere in St. Paul. Allowing households to buy homes through the city provides what she described as “economic integration.”

Finance terms were changed, from 30 years repayable if a house is sold to 15 years with amortized loan forgiveness. The new guidelines do away with limits on college and retirement savings. The purchase price limits, which were based on federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME program limits. The city has never used HUD HOME dollars for

the program, so retaining that requirement isn't needed.

The level of down payment assistance a household can get varies. The typical award is \$40,000, but an award can increase to \$110,000 with additional factors.

First-generation homeowners can receive an additional \$10,000. Household eligible through the Inheritance Fund can be awarded an additional \$50,000. Those participants can receive an additional \$10,000 if a home is purchased in the Rondo area, in a program Beard described as “return to Rondo.”

The down payment funds can cover down payments, closing costs, and property inspection costs.

Several policy changes were also approved for the housing rehabilitation fund. One key change is on the loan amounts themselves. Loans previously could be for up to \$25,000, with emergency loans for an additional \$25,000. That maximum that could be received was \$50,000.

Regular program loans are now \$40,000, with the ability to add another \$40,000 if an emergency loan is needed. A total of \$80,000 can be obtained. That is meant to address rising home maintenance costs and better reflects the \$40,000 most applicants need.

Home owners who fall under the Inheritance Fund can qualify for an additional \$15,000, and for another \$25,000 on top of that if their home is in the Rondo neighborhood. That increases that maximum available under the Inheritance Fund to \$120,000.

Other changes increase household income from AMI from 60 percent to 80 percent for the program. Emergency loan applicants could already be at 80 percent AMI including reducing financing terms from 30 to 15 years, removing life insurance policy redemption value from the household asset limit.




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OUT AND ABOUT ON THE PAPER ROUTE

TOO MUCH COFFEE

BY TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN
Owner & Editor
tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com



There's a 10-year-old in our house, and my son Axel took on a few paper routes last summer. That means, of course, that mom did, too.

I was excited he was interested in the family bonding time. He wanted to pick up a little spending money (and admits it is fun to do this job together). It turns out, we're not the only parent-child team doing delivery for TMC Publications CO. We're part of a trend in our corner of the world.

The first thing we learned is that it's best for us to split the 400-paper route into two 1-hour or so long sessions. It is more manageable that way right now. We listen to music and audio books as we go, both taking one side of a street.

We definitely got faster as we did the same route more, and worked out our routine for where we parked, picked up more papers, and got water. We also learned why the mail carriers walk across lawns – else a lot of time is eaten up walking up and down front sidewalks. I discovered a new gratitude for those who create pathways and shovel snow in their front yards to help carriers move between houses. (Little things add up, don't they?)

POLYBAGS OR RUBBER BANDS?

Our routes became testing grounds for whether we should A) use polybags to keep papers dry, B) fold and set down, or C) use rubber bands.

I started out three years ago using polybags for every delivery. They keep the paper dry unless there is a big rainstorm or really wet snow. We switched to color bags so that folks can see them easier in the snow. However, readers and carriers are asking us to use less plastic, a sentiment I agree with wholeheartedly. Plus, I've noticed that the majority of papers are picked up the same day, so we don't have to plan ahead for whether there will be rain a day or two later in the forecast. And many houses have overhangs that protect something on the front step.

My son and I tried folding papers in



Lonnie Bosby delivers the Monitor in the area around his apartment building, Skyline Towers, a place he's lived for 23 years.

half and leaving them on doorsteps for our first route this summer. It was a bit tedious and the papers didn't stay in place well, sometimes falling off the front steps as we walked to the next house. I was amazed at how even the slightest breeze caused the papers to shift.

Next, we tested out two different kinds of rubber bands, one with more rubber in it (the brown ones) versus more filler (the blue ones). This is currently our favorite method. We can roll the papers between houses and then throw it easily right onto the front steps. It doesn't catch in the wind, and is easy to throw. I love an efficient solution. Plus, my aim is getting pretty good! Except for those occasional gusts that take the paper at the last minute and deposit it into the bushes. My apologies if that happened at your house (and your Ring door cam caught my grimace).

I love the pace of a walk through the neighborhood, and how I actually stop to smell the roses as I'm delivering papers. It's good exercise, too. I see some folks working on their computers from their covered porches. Others are doing yardwork or reading. And we pass a lot of folks walking their dogs. I feel a lovely sense of community as I go from door to door, dropping off papers.

VITAL CARRIERS

Our carriers are vital members of the TMC Publications team. There aren't a lot of papers still being delivered door-to-door like ours is. In the Twin Cities,



My son Axel and I deliver for several of our newspapers and enjoy our outdoor exercise together.



Jeff Mattson (left) and Lyle James are dedicated carriers who deliver in all kinds of weather.

more and more are switching to mail (like the Park Bugle and Villager), bulk drops (like Southside Pride) or online-only. We believe pretty strongly in the democratic way that door-to-door delivery ensures that everyone get a copy of the paper – old, young, rich and poor. During the first weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became super clear that our "old-fashioned" way of getting the news out to folks had some real advantages. Even during the stay-at-home order, we could still keep people connected with each other.

Of course, we also use the Internet for news and updates between the issues, and you can find our entire e-Editions or each individual story on our website. But, there's just something about the feel and smell of a printed paper... We even hear from millennials that they appreciate the screen-free moments they get as they peruse the paper.

We've had a lot of new carriers come aboard this year as we switched from hiring the delivery out to a subcontractor and moving the majority of it in-house. (IDS delivers some of our routes for the Monitor and Messenger.) Bjorn Willms joined us in 2021 when we launched the Southwest Connector in southwest Minneapolis, and has pulled together a great roster of folks. It can take some time to learn the ropes, and we've had the occasional kerfuffle. One day, a first timer drove down the streets of Nokomis throwing papers out a vehicle window, and Bjorn and I dashed out early the next morning when we were notified to clean up and redeliver

each copy. At other times, a house on a side street gets missed until the resident gives us a call and alerts us.

See a carrier out there? Let them know you're grateful they bring the paper to your front door.

MEET OUR CARRIERS

Axel and I aren't the only kiddo-parent teams to join our carrier roster to do a little family bonding while delivering neighborhood news. Two homeschool families are doing routes for the Messenger.

Over in southwest Minneapolis, Michael Scrivner and his 13-year-old daughter, Lily, signed up for a Kingfield route delivering the Southwest Connector. It was a first for both of them. Lily likes getting out and the exercise.

It's the same for Jason Walker and his daughter, Nettie, in Linden Hills. Nettie talked up the route so much that her friend Brittney Keating decided to do a route, too.

Amy Swanson used to deliver the Southwest Journal, and is joined by four-year-old Eva when she delivers papers in the Kenny neighborhood.

Lonnie Bosby lives in Skyline Towers in the Midway area and the paper route is one of his many gigs (which includes snow removal). He delivers in the St. Paul area around his apartment building, a place he's lived for 23 years. Bosby delivered papers as a kid, and decided to try it again when he saw an advertisement for carriers. "I love this job," he said. "It's a good experience." He's got his system down, using a duffle bag to tote around the papers so he can haul more at a time than a traditional sling bag fits. He appreciates the walk, and is conscientious to put the paper on the front steps. "I see stuff other people don't see," remarked Bosby.

Some folks do routes for two or three newspapers, while others just do one in their own neighborhood.

Jeff Mattson and Lyle James are two heavy hitters, who manage multiple routes for the Monitor, Messenger and Connector, delivering papers for us every week.

Want to put a face to the name? Check out our Instagram and Facebook pages for images of our carriers. With the snow and ice, now is a great time to let a carrier know you appreciate them.

Interested in picking up your own route and making \$11-14 an hour? Email Bjorn at delivery@tmcpub.com.

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Letter

ST. PAUL NEEDS NEEDS TO BUS MORE STUDENTS

I am a senior at Saint Paul Central. I would like to bring the attention of the

press to an issue that is affecting me and my fellow peers in Saint Paul. The current light rail that runs along University Avenue is supposed to provide safe transport to local residents, but the reality is far from that. The use of crack, fentanyl, and other illegal narcotics is often observed by my fellow peers to be used often on the

trains, and verbal and physical abuse often takes place.

The reason I bring this up is that the school Saint Paul Central no longer provides yellow bus transportation for its students – which means that low-income families who do not have access to cars are forced to travel every day in these terrible

conditions in order to gain an education.

My solution to the problem would be for Saint Paul Public schools to spend more money on supplying school buses.

**Gabriel Johnson
St. Paul student**

Monitor

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CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

PLANTING SEEDS

BY DR. ARTIKA TYNER,
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February marks the beginning of Black History Month. This is an important opportunity to pause, reflect, and grow. It is an invitation to learn about the valuable contributions of Black leaders in shaping the course of U.S. history. Our nonprofit, Planting People Growing Justice, visits schools during Black History Month to read our collection of diverse books and share key lessons from history. During each of our Black History Month visits, I start with the question: "Who founded Black History Month?" I have yet to hear a correct answer from students, parents, teachers, or administrators. I receive a range of answers from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to Rosa Parks or even Ruby Bridges. Some local Saint Paul students have even called out: Mayor Melvin Carter III. I applaud the initiative to share these responses since this is a remarkable list of heroes and sheroes. Yet, this raises concern about one's awareness of Black History Month and its origins.

Black History Month was founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson. In 1926, Dr. Woodson launched Negro History Week. His goal was to celebrate and honor Black achievements and build a legacy of change. There are many misconceptions about Black History Month. Some believe that celebrating Black History Month in February is meant to minimize the significance of the contributions of the African American community since it is a mere

28 days (29 during a Leap Year) and not a full 30-31 days. However, the month of February was a deliberate and calculated choice. Dr. Woodson selected the month of February since it is the birth month of two individuals whom he deeply admired. He sought to honor Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass who both played a significant role in abolishing slavery. Historically, celebrations were held on their birthdays which are the 12th (Lincoln) and 14th (Douglass). Woodson wanted to create a bridge between this tradition and foster a tradition of honoring the past contributions of the Black community with the founding of Negro History Week. Beginning in 1976, U.S. presidents have proclaimed February as Black History Month annually.

Throughout February, I will continue my mission of visiting schools and teaching about Black History Month. I will begin by sharing about the 2023 theme which is: Black Resistance. This signifies the important role of Black leaders who fought for racial equality and justice. I will introduce unsung Black sheroes who are featured in my latest books.

Have you heard of one of the first self-made female millionaires who established her own college in 1918 (Poro College) and developed a global haircare empire? Annie Turnbo Malone experimented with different combinations of chemicals, herbs, mineral oils, and vegetables to create hair care products. She created a special mix, Wonderful Hair Grower, which became a bestseller.

Malone employed 75,000 women in the haircare and beauty industry as Poro agents. Her most notable mentee was Sarah Breedlove Walker; better known as: Madam C.J. Walker. In addition to being an innovative entrepreneur and community leader, Malone was also a philanthro-



pist. She supported higher education by funding scholarships at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and supporting an orphanage in St. Louis—now the Annie Malone Children and Family Service Center.

Did you know three years before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus and accept the inhumane conditions of segregation, a soldier took a stand for justice? Most people have heard about Rosa Parks' brave actions that led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955. But other Black women challenged segregation in transportation like Ida B. Wells and Claudette Colvin. Three years before the bus boycott, Sarah Keys Evans refused to give up her seat on a bus traveling from New Jersey to visit her family in North Carolina. She was dressed in full uniform when she was told to give her seat to a white Marine. She refused and was arrested. She filed a complaint with the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)—Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company. It challenged the discrimination Evans faced by calling attention to federal law on interstate commerce. On Nov. 7, 1955,

the ICC ruled in favor of Evans. The ICC agreed that the segregation Evans experienced had been "undue and unreasonable prejudice and disadvantage," which violated the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887.

Did you know there was an all-Black female battalion serving in Europe during World War II? The 6888th was the lifeline of World War II. They ended a two-year backlog of mail services by organizing over 17 million pieces of mail in Birmingham, England. They completed the mission in three months although it was anticipated to take twice as long. This was vitally important since mail served as a connection between soldiers and their loved ones by providing encouragement and support. The motto was: "No mail, low morale." They also cleared backlogs in Rouen, France and Paris, France. To honor their leadership and service, a monument dedicated to the 6888th was placed at the Buffalo Soldier Monument Park in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 2018. Last year, the 6888th battalion was honored with the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress' highest honor.

Black History Month is an invitation to learn more about United States history. These book recommendations can serve as resources on your learning journey:

- The Untold Story of Annie Turnbo Malone: Hair Care Millionaire, by Dr. Artika R. Tyner, Capstone (2023).
- The Untold Story of Sarah Keys Evans: Civil Rights Soldier, by Dr. Artika R. Tyner, Capstone (2023).
- The Courageous Six Triple Eight: The All-Black Female Battalion of World War II, by Dr. Artika R. Tyner, Capstone (2023).

For additional book recommendations, you can visit: <https://bookshop.org/shop/plantingpeoplegrowingjustice>.

Through her organization, Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute, Dr. Artika Tyner seeks to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach.

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'INSPIRED BY CLAUDETTE & ROSA'

>> from 1

CHANGING THE WORLD

Before directing this show, Duck Washington directed "Periphery" at YPC, which was about the Greensboro lunch counter sit-in. Both plays are about not just historical figures but historical youth who impacted their world and made a difference. For Washington, seeing youth get excited and passionate about making a positive change in the world – and inspiring courage and confidence in them to take action – is what makes it all worthwhile.

"In a place where things are happening in their community that seem impossible, like the Uprising in South Minneapolis and the loss of George Floyd, this kinda gives them an idea that they have the ability to impact it a little bit through their actions and their voices and that they're not just helpless," said Washington. "Claudette was 15 years old. The students in the lunch counter sit-ins were all in high school. But all of them moved the needle to make the world the place that it is today. And [today's students] can do that [too]. They have the power, the capacity. If they have the will and the bravery, they can make change in this world."

It is evident that this exchange between the adults and students involved at YPC is mutually beneficial.

"I learn things from them all the time," said Erin Gustafson, who has been the stage manager for YPC performances since 2019. "I stand by that kids are the smartest humans in the world, and I will continuously be learning from them."

Five "Inspired" cast members chatted before a January rehearsal about what theater, YPC and this show in particular mean to them. Here's what they had to say:



Playwright Laura Mann Hill, director Duck Washington, and stage manager Erin Gustafson gather during a rehearsal of "Inspired by Claudette & Rosa" at the Midway-based Youth Performance Company. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

AMELE BROWN, 18

First performance at age 4. Has done shows with YPC since age 11 or 12. Playing the roles of Rosa Parks and Annie from the Liberation Players. Helped workshop the play.

"We read through [the play] and talked with [the writer] about our experiences as Black youth and Minnesota and with George Floyd. I'm really into activism and I go to a lot of protests, so they wanted some of this generation's input to make the show more current and relatable... It was super cool to be able to do that because I think it's so important that we know adults who are creating these are listening to the kids, 'cause that's how you get that accuracy and that's how you reach that audience and you make the difference."

"I think what this show does so well... is they kind of reflect on today's Black youth as well as the history of Black activism and fighting for their rights... because they have that double-sided aspect, where it's the high schoolers in the school making the play about the history. So honestly my character, I have so many similarities with her, at least the Annie one... Annie's kind of my age, she's applying for colleges which I just finished doing, she's into acting, obviously she's a Black little girl, so you know, I feel like this show has characters that kids like me will be able to relate to when they come and see it, as well as... pay homage to that history."

SHA'VONTIE JUNEAU, 12, HOPE ACADEMY

Began at YPC doing camps at age 6 or 7. First play in 3rd grade, played the title

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role in "The Velveteen Rabbit" in December. Playing Jean, a narrator, and a podcast host.

"I love it 'cause I just love acting and being on stage and being able to connect with people. And just because it's based on a true story with Black people and racism, our history, I just feel it really connects to me and my heritage and what my backstory is, so I just really love being part of these kind of things."

"I think [the show is] gonna be really great, and I just love being a part of plays because I love the cast and how we get to meet new people. I just feel like it's a great experience for people who might not like... be around people, I feel like it's a new experience, I feel like it's really laid back and just like an opportunity to start [in theater]."

LUKA MCILRATH, 13, CAPITOL HILL MAGNET SCHOOL

Has done lights for YPC. First time acting on stage. Playing the role of Thomas.

"It's definitely a new experience but it's also quite a fun one to be honest, 'cause I mean you get to meet all these new people from different areas with different experiences, and you all get to come together and make something amazing. And we can all work hard together and have fun. I mean, that's the main thing."

"I've been doing lights with YPC for a bit now, and it just looked really fun."

INSPIRED >>>

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How to help kids make friends

The family and parenting resource Parenting Science notes that research indicates that the most popular children are those who exemplify certain traits. These traits include being caring; a willingness to share; a willingness to offer help; and strong verbal skills.

1) Encourage kids to seek out someone on their own. It may be challenging to walk up to a group and introduce yourself. Encourage students to seek out someone who is alone and then strike up a conversation, which can be less intimidating than approaching a group.

2) Practice conversation starters at home. Children can work with their parents to come up with topics that can help foster communication. These can include ice breakers and common interests, such as favorite television shows or video games.

3) Ask open questions. The social networking advisement site Young Scot suggests having students ask open questions, such as: "How was your summer?" or "What sports do you like to play?" These types of questions can kick-start in-depth conversations.

4) Help children be active listeners. An active listener is someone who makes it clear that he or she is paying attention. Making eye contact, orienting the body toward the speaker and making relevant verbal responses are some active listening strategies that can help kids more fully engage with their peers. Feeling valued and listened to may encourage other children to be more friendly and engaging.

5) Join a team, get involved in a club, or sign up for a summer camp. Kids often make friends in social or extracurricular settings, such as on a sports team. With a shared interest, it's easy to find topics to discuss.

INSPIRED >> from 6

'Cause you get to see the whole cast have good bonds with each other and have fun while on stage and just show their excitement, ready for the whole audience to see. As a person who's up in the booth all the time you get to see it, too. Also, I started theater doing lights specifically around this time last year, so it's been almost a year where I've been actually involved in theater, and I just wanted to take part in a civil rights play that YPC does.

"Theater is an amazing way to get along with others and meet new people... anyone can get involved with theater."

LAYLA NERAYO, ROSEVILLE AREA HIGH SCHOOL

In theater since age 5. First show at YPC. Playing the roles of Claudette Colvin and Nyla.

"[Claudette] was a 15-year-old girl who had done essentially what Rosa Parks did about nine months prior. She held her seat on the bus refusing to give it up, but it was later decided that she wasn't going to be the face of the bus boycott because of many reasons, one of which was colorism within the Black community, because she



Cast rehearse a scene from "Inspired by Claudette & Rosa" at Youth Performance Company in January 2023. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

was darker skinned, and the other being she was young, she was a teenager. And people felt that the public would trust Rosa Parks more.

"I really did love learning more about her throughout the process of this show. A lot especially about Black history has come to light within the past few years, so I had heard about her but being able to really dive deeper and hear about what she did and why she did it was really interesting.

"I really love the fact that the show makes a beautiful effort to incorporate a majority of the history surrounding Claudette, so it's not only her history with the bus boycott but with Rosa and with her struggles even within the Black community, which I think not enough people pay attention to."

AVA O'NEAL, 15, ROSEVILLE AREA HIGH SCHOOL

First show at YPC. Playing the role of Sonia.

"I like that this show is really a discussion about social injustice and issues like that. A lot of the shows that I do in school, they're not really as serious, they don't delve into real topics like this, they're more fantasy. I was really excited to start doing a show that talked about real issues. Also I liked that in this show it's not just about social injustice, but it's about people my age learning about it and learning how to deal with struggles surrounding it, and that was something that's really important to me.

"Something I've learned from the show so far is that it's okay to still be learning. Sometimes I feel a lot of pressure to have as much knowledge as possible on social issues, and while it is important to have knowledge and be educated on those things, this show is helping teach me that it's okay to still be learning because we're kind of always gonna be learning, and it's okay to not know everything all the time."

CARE PACKAGES FOR STREET WORKS



For their January volunteer project, Murray Middle School National Junior Honor Society students heard guest speakers from Street Works, a local organization that works with homeless youth. The students wrote cards with well wishes for the new year to accompany care packages that they created. Murray will be performing Matilda, Jr. on March 24-26. Friday and Saturday performances will be at 7 p.m. with a Sunday matinee. (Photo submitted)

Virtual ice castle winners coming in March Monitor

It's cold out, and The Victoria Theater Arts Center, in conjunction with the St. Paul Winter Carnival, is finding ways to make the snow fun, indoors and out. This January, VTAC hosted a virtual Ice Palace building contest in their community Minecraft server, attended by a slew of awesome kids who came with their best builds ready to go. Last year, Bob Olsen, a local historian and ice palace expert, presented an invitation-only Zoom lecture available on VTAC's youtube channel.

This year, Olsen, along with Malia Lee (a fantastic local architect) and a volunteer youth judge, toured the arctic biome and pick their favorite creations, one for participating teams, and one for individual winners. Winners will receive a spotlight in the March edition of the Midway Como Frogtown Monitor, and will receive a certificate of achievement, plus a gift card to Green Acres Tubing. Keep an eye out for their names in next month's edition.

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Seeds of change and beauty at Little Free Libraries

By MAE MACFARLANE
Frogtown Green

Over the past few summers, you may have noticed an increase in blooming wildflower gardens in our neighborhoods. Have you wondered where people get some of the seeds they need to make those gardens grow? Local residents Dawn Lamm, Courtney Tchida and Stephanie Hankerson know the answer: it's MN SEED!

In mid-2020, MN SEED – a collaboration of the Como Community Seed Library, garden educator Stephannie Hankerson, and the Minnesota State Horticultural Society, with help from Frogtown Green – was born. The collaboration has grown through a network of more than a dozen "little free seed libraries" and programming to become a beloved supplier of locally-grown and freely distributed native seeds. MN SEED has been funded since 2021 by the Capitol Region Watershed District. Last month, MN SEED received the Watershed Community Outreach Program of the Year award from the Watershed District.

Lamm, the founder of the Como Community Seed Library, says that MN SEED emerged from the needs of our neighborhoods, as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. "Stephanie, Courtney and I had a conversation and it came around to us asking: 'How do we deal with possible seed shortages in coming years?' We felt it was important that people have the ability to grow their own food with the uncertainty happening."

Together, the women worked with partners to stock distribution boxes in Midway, Frogtown and Como with a succession of seed packets, neatly labeled and appropriately timed for successive planting. The libraries also included winter sowing kits and informational materials to help recipients learn more about gardening. The distribution was a huge success, with more than 9,000 seed packets snapped up by eager gardeners-to-be.

In succeeding years, MN SEED has offered programming such as seed events



Volunteers clean and package native seeds for distribution at a MN SEED workshop in January. Cleaning and packaging the seeds is just one step in the process. (Photo submitted)

and gardening workshops to promote the creation of habitats for native pollinators. They have continued to focus on distribution through the seed libraries and other means.

The seeds that end up in these libraries come from the neighborhoods and have gone through a long process to be ready for planting. In 2022, seed packets in the little free seed libraries were sourced from Monarch City, a large pollinator garden at West Minnehaha Recreation Center maintained by Frogtown Green, as well as from residential pollinator/vegetable gardens.

Seeds were gathered from the plants in late summer and fall of last year. This year, MN SEED volunteers came together to clean and package the seeds, manually separating the seed from the seed-pod or chaff. Once the seeds were cleaned, they were put into small envelopes and labeled. The packaged and labeled seeds will be available in several little free seed

libraries around Midway and Frogtown. Some "winter sowing" kits will also be included to help with the next step the seeds take before they can be planted.

"Winter sowing is a process that starts growing seeds in recycled plastics," explains Stephanie Hankerson. "It's different from indoor starting and snow seeding. You're creating a mini-greenhouse, using recyclable containers, such as milk jugs or salad containers that are four inches or taller."

Hankerson explains the process this way: "You add some drainage holes, put the soil in, then the seeds. After that you label everything and make sure you add water to it. Then you put it outside to let it go through stratification, which is the freezing and thawing process that opens the seeds."

Residents of Hamline-Midway, Frogtown, Como and Rondo will be able to pick up their seeds and winter sowing kits in February, and can find more spe-

cific dates and locations for workshops on the MN SEED website, listed below. Frogtown's Little Free Libraries are located at 160 Charles Avenue, 843 Van Buren Avenue, and at the Lily Pad, 625 Dale Street; other locations are yet to be determined.

Meanwhile, just like the gardens it supports, MN SEED continues to grow. Lamm says that in the next year, the group will offer K-12 programming at schools and additional rec centers.

To sign up to access seed swaps, webinars, in-person workshops and tips from local pros throughout the year for free through MN SEED, visit northerngardener.org/what-we-do/mn-seed-project; call the Minnesota State Horticultural Society; or contact Courtney Tchida at 651-643-3601.

Frogtown Green is an environmental initiative working to make Frogtown the greenest neighborhood in St. Paul. Mae Macfarlane is an AmeriCorps member assigned to Frogtown Green.

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"Being the first to do this or that means you have the responsibility to work in the interest of a second, a seventh, a nine hundredth to follow where you pioneered." – Johnnetta B. Cole

"And now let us welcome the New Year, Full of things that have never been." – Rainer Maria Rilke

"What the people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise." – Barbara Jordan

Happy and Grateful 2023
Monitor readers,

I'm busting with joy and gratefulness, as well as mourning and grieving. I keep trusting the process of yin/yang and living that unpredictable balance that all will be well and that all is well – which is hard to swallow or believe-in based on the past few years! Yet, I go into 2023 feeling op-

A BLESSING FOR A NEW YEAR

timistic and hopeful. It could be that for the first time in a long time, that our state government's three law-making forces are controlled by one political party and that ruling party can't make any political excuses for doing the right things. The things that their party has championed for decades. I believe the party would do well remembering, reflecting, and re-energizing the creative concepts, equitable solutions, and environmental justice restoration that their former colleagues worked and fought for in Minnesota and across America. And, for sure, as a kid, a young adult, and as an older adult I accept and resonate with the common sense values and respect of those previous party law makers who honored our veterans, first responders, essential workers, farmers, and everyday people.

I'm also optimistic because I keep learning and discovering new ways of being present to support and give back to our beautiful planet in a way that gives back to support, nurture, and grow community and community members in a yin/yang manner. For instance, one of my 2023 goals is to plant seeds about the healing and regenerative benefits of urban food and mini-forests. As a cheerleader and peace love warrior promoter of Greta

Thunberg's climate change advocacy, I believe that urban food and mini-forests can greatly assist in grounding our chaotic world, particularly on local lands, towns, counties, and cities in Minnesota and in our Midway communities.

AND, HERE IS A NEW YEAR MESSAGE OF BALANCE AND SELF-INVESTMENT FROM QUEEN TEA

It's time to balance our accounts. Evaluating how we under or overspend our energy can support balanced stewardship moving forward. My word for 2023 is revenue.

The good news is this: we can pivot to realign our time and energy investments and study patterns of our dividends. Just as an investor watches the daily undulating financial market, we must look at our biometric indicators of breath quality, blood pressure, inflammation, and pain tolerance to make those important decisions on what grudges, responsibilities, or old stories we are ready to release. Emotional balance is a skill and therefore an asset.

As a Soul Medic, I see people out of options and disconnected from their bodies. It's time for us to come home to our bod-

ies and remind ourselves that we are worthy of our unique gifts and the pursuit of pulling our victory out of thin air.

Affirmation: I am worthy of a return on the investment of my energy.

Let's breathe deeply together and reflect. What are we ready to release?

Meditations: "The deeper the emotion, ready for release, the greater the momentum I experience in life."

How will we hold space for change in our daily practice? Our intention setting can begin in the heart space. We can let go with journaling, exercise, breathing, mindfulness, and meditation.

Join me as we offer the overspending of our energy to the universe in exchange for clarity, balance, and collective joy. Sincerely, Queen Tea – Thank you, Queen Tea!

ALL WILL BE WELL AND ALL IS WELL

Have a wonderful year of discovery, joy, and don't sweat the small things. All will be well and all is well. Keep the positive vibrations flowing. Stay optimistic!

May Peace Be In the Rondo, Frogtown, Hamline/Midway, Como, and Surrounding Communities...

May Peace Be In Our Homes & Communities...

May Peace Prevail On Earth (MPPOE)!

PLAN IT

BLACK LOVE CELEBRATION FEB. 12

The Black Youth Healing Arts Center (BYHAC) is hosting Black Love: A Celebration of Self, Family and Community on Sunday, Feb. 12 from 3:30-6:30 p.m. at 643 Virginia Street. This is a free family friendly event. Meet the BYHAC staff, tour the building, create your own rice therapy bags, make greeting cards and affirmation jars, write your own poetry, or visit the selfie booth for pictures.

T. Mychael Rambo will emcee the event and introduce local talent such as vocalist, Thomasina Petris; award winning poet and St. Paul Central alum, Danez Smith; and rising music talent, Detrell Melodies. Shop the "Ebony Emporium" – local black artists and goods from black businesses will be there with clothing, jewelry, plants, wellness bags, and slices of red velvet cake. BYHAC artist-in-residence, Teneka Graves, will have beautiful

handmade wood burned earrings and you can purchase your favorite lipstick from Tameka Jones of Lip Esteem. This event is cosponsored by Guns Down Love Up, Midway Rise Up, Planting People Growing Justice and Love First, who will be giving away will give away joy bags.

'SPRINGBOARD ON ICE' RINK AND WINTER EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

To welcome the new year, Springboard for the Arts created a community ice rink at its site on 262 University Avenue. Springboard will partner with a roster of local organizations and artists for "Springboard on Ice," featuring a variety of community events, ice-skating workshops, and gatherings. Attend Free Skating Lessons with Brownbody on Sunday, Feb. 12, 1-3:30 p.m. Check out Interactive Art and Activities with Art Shanty Projects on Saturday, Feb. 25 and March 4, 1-3:30 p.m. For a full list of ice-rink events, visit <https://springboardforthearts.org/springboard-on-ice/>.

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND: 'FROGTOWN THEN AND NOW' MARCH 11

The community is invited to a "then and now" slide show about Frogtown and the Midway area at Rondo Library on Saturday, March 11 from 2:30-4:30 p.m. There will be story-telling and guessing games to go with slides of neighborhood landmarks, celebrities and spaces. This is a free event, hosted by Frogtown Green and orchestrated by Andy Dawkins, former Minnesota State Representative for the area for 15 years, who assembled the show.

"When we did this show the first time, back in January at the Half Time Rec, we had tremendous fun showing old photos of places and signs in Frogtown, along with photos of what's on each site now," Dawkins reported. "Here's another chance to celebrate the neighborhood, both then – and now!" For more information, visit the Frogtown Green website Events page, www.frogtowngreen.com.

Scholarships available

When St. Paul Rotary celebrated its 100th Anniversary 13 years ago, the Club created an endowed scholarship program to send a St. Paul high school student to college every year with a \$20,000 scholarship (\$5,000-per-year). The winners are known as Centennial Scholars. Eligible students are St. Paul high school graduates who have participated in the club's internationally recognized youth leadership program, Camp RYLA (Rotary Youth Leadership Awards). Interested Saint Paul students should submit their applications now for the leadership camp in order to be consideration for the Centennial Scholarship award after graduation. Applications for Camp RYLA (April 21-25) are now open: <https://campryla.org/>. Applications for the Centennial Scholarship open in March 2023. More information can be found here: <https://www.stpaulrotary.org/page/centennial-scholarships>.

Emotions Anonymous meetings Fridays in St. Paul

Anyone is welcome to attend Emotions Anonymous. One opportunity is the phone/in person meeting at 7 p.m. on Fridays, in the parlor space at Twin Cities Friends Meetinghouse, 1725 Grand Ave., or by calling 206-451-6094, then as prompted, 240-591-0215#, and lastly, 722360#. The group is self-supporting by its own contributions. Attendance is encouraged whether or not one can contribute. Emotions Anonymous offers a 12-step program to help people deal with stress in daily living and to live a healthier emo-

tional life. EA is not affiliated with any other organization. The program is open to anyone who has a desire to become emotionally well. Members attend for various reasons, among them depression, anxiety, relationship problems and other emotional difficulties.

EA aims for an atmosphere of love and acceptance. No questions are asked. Meetings are volunteer led and, like AA, founded on the principle of anonymity. Contact Paul at 651-402-6774 or visit www.emotionsanonymous.org.

FREE PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS

• Chair Yoga (Thursday 10:30 a.m.) and Arthritis-Friendly Exercise (Tuesday and Thursday 1:30 p.m.) meet until March 9. Join any time, in-person and on Zoom.

• Solo Seniors Resource Group - begins Monday, Feb. 27, 10-11 a.m. A group for older adults who are aging without a partner or close family to assist.

• Jody's Documentary Series, last Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m.

• Knit & Crochet Group, Mondays 1-3 p.m., in-person and on Zoom.

• Hamline Midway Elders Winter Social, March 1, 1-3 p.m. Coffee and Treats,

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Como girls set St. Paul City record

Cougars reach 82 consecutive conference wins

COMO PARK SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

BY ERIC ERICKSON
Social studies teacher



With another undefeated season in the St. Paul City Conference in the books, the Como girls basketball team earned their ninth consecutive conference championship.

The last time the Cougars lost a game to a city competitor was in 2015. As the conference champs, Como has had the honor of representing St. Paul versus the Minneapolis City Conference champion in the traditional Twin Cities Game to end the regular season.

Como has never lost a Twin Cities Title Game either. They'll look to keep that streak alive when they cross the river on Saturday, Feb. 25 and face the to-be-determined Minneapolis champ.

The consistent dominance within the city is remarkable for several reasons. Dynastic programs often occur under one coach. The Cougars have had three different head coaches lead them to titles.

John Robinson coached the first group whose star was the city's all-time leading scorer, Andrayah Adams. They were the first Como basketball team to ever win the conference.

Robinson switched to coach the Como boys after that historic season and was replaced by Alexis Gray-Lawson who guided the team to the team's first state tournament appearance during Adams' senior year.

For the three most recent conference title runs, it has been Olonda England at the helm. She brought the Cougars all the way to a third-place finish in the state tournament last year with her daughter Ronnie Porter as the team's star point guard.

Despite the 2022 graduation of Porter and four other seniors who are all playing college basketball now, the Cougars are right back where they've always been.

Leading the squad this year is senior guard Shania Nichols-VanNett. One of the best pure shooters in the state, she has expanded her role this year to be the team's facilitator and fast-break catalyst.

Nichols-VanNett is averaging 20.7 points per game, along with 5.2 assists, 5.6 rebounds and 2.8 steals. It should be noted, she frequently plays less than half



A focused effort by the Como girls' basketball team resulted in a 88-63 victory over Central and extended the program's conference remarkable winning streak. (Photo by Eric Erickson)

a game when the Cougars are blowing out an opponent.

Coach England uses her entire bench liberally and gets all 13 varsity players quality minutes in those situations, plus several JV players.

There are only two other seniors on the roster: center Zhane Singer and forward Kayla James. Both have gone from key reserves last year to being major contributors for the 2023 campaign.

Singer is scoring 13 points per game and hauling down over 10 rebounds per contest. James is a good three-point shooter and quick defender with averages

of 7.6 points, 4.8 rebounds and 2 assists.

The team's depth includes juniors Alice Wagner-Hemstad, Greta Seppanen, Sahara Hinton and Asia Mohamed, sophomores Makyia Kenney, Cecelia Davis, Elayna VanNett and Jailyn Walker, freshman Aletha Keizer and 8th grader Ahmani Crump.

The team's assistant coaches are Ronnie Smith, LaVera Jeffrie, and Jeff Dmytruk.

After the Twin Cities Title Game, the Cougars will begin the Section 3AAA Tournament at home on March 1.

Come out to clean up Como, Orchard Rec

DISTRICT 10 COMO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

BY SHEVEK MCKEE
Executive director
district10@
district10comopark.org



The D10 Como Community Council would like to thank everyone who came out to our Feb. 4 Blizzard Breakfast at North Dale Rec Center. We couldn't have done it without our partners at the Parks and Rec Department, Bethel Lutheran for putting the pancake in pancake breakfast, and all of our board and community volunteers that helped plan and execute the event.

Our next community events are the April 22 Regional Parks Cleanup Day at the Como Pavilion and the May 13 Pick Up and Party at Orchard Rec. You can find

details about these and all our 2023 events at District10ComoPark.org/Events.

COMO COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVES

D10 Como Park partners with the American Red Cross and the Como Zoo & Conservatory to host community blood drives at the Zoo. Space is limited, reservations required. 2023 drive dates: March 8, May 25, Aug. 1, Oct. 17 and Dec. 6. Each is from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

With so many still working from home, workplace blood drives have all but vanished, affecting the Red Cross' reserve levels. Community blood drives are the perfect opportunity to take a break from the home office or start a trip to the zoo!

There are also opportunities to volunteer at the check-in table. The drives are split into two shifts of two volunteers each, 9 a.m. to noon and noon to 3 p.m. It's light work and a great way to connect with another neighbor.

2022 COMO CURB CLEANUP RESULTS

Back in October and November, D10 Como Park continued the work started by the Como Active Citizen's Network and partnered with the Capitol Region Watershed District to lead the Como Curb Cleanup, a coordinator effort to remove fallen leaves from the stormwater system.

Then in December participants were asked to report their cleaning efforts. With 47 participants reporting in, we've calculated how much invasive algae was prevented with our community effort. Thank you to everyone who participated and shared your results!!

- Total responding participants: 47
- Total feet cleaned: 24,979ft
- Number of miles cleaned: 4.7
- Equivalent number of times around Como Lake cleaned: 2.8
- Phosphorus estimated in 1ft of curb: 0.0003125 lbs.
- Total lbs. of phosphorus prevented from reaching Como Lake: 7.81lbs
- Tons of curly leaf pond weed this phosphorus amount could produce: 2.45t (4,891lbs!)

JOIN COUNCIL BOARD IN 2023

Here's your chance to tackle that new year's resolution to get more involved: Several seats are up for election in April to the District 10 Como Community Council board.

These positions serve two-year terms, through April 2025. To get on the ballot, apply now at District10ComoPark.org/Elections. That's where you can also learn more about the roles and opportunities of board members. The filing deadline is Sunday April 2. The election ends April 18. If you have any questions or would like to know more about being a board member you can reach out to district10@district10comopark.org

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Land Use Committee - Tuesday, Feb. 21, 6 p.m.
- D10 Board - Tuesday, Feb. 21, 7:15 p.m.
- Environment Committee - Wednesday, March 1, 6 p.m.
- Neighborhood Relations Committee - Wednesday, March 1, 7:15 p.m.

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Lerner Press to distribute PPGJ Press books

Planting People Growing Justice Press founder, Dr. Artika Tyner, announced that it has entered a distribution arrangement with Lerner Publisher Services, a division of Lerner Publishing Group. The publishing group will be the exclusive distribution avenue for PPGJ Press in all markets beginning Jan. 1, 2022. Lerner Publisher Services will utilize its reputation and expertise to expand the market reach for PPGJ Press.

"Leaders are readers and our books seek to inspire the next generation of leaders," said Tyner.

Planting People Growing Justice Press is well-known for exploring culture and history across the African diaspora. Lerner Publishing Services will initially distribute three PPGJ Press children's book titles that include "Amazing Africa, A to Z," "Gumbo Joy," and the multiple award-winning "Justice Makes a Difference: The Story of Miss Freedom Fighter, Esquire."

The publishing agreement will significantly increase PPGJ Press' ability to put books in the hands of young people that reflect the diversity of the United States.

A nationally-recognized author and civil rights attorney, Tyner founded PPGJ Press and Bookstore in 2017 to improve literacy, encourage and empower children to find joy in reading, and create social change. The Black woman-owned book publisher is working to increase diversity in books, promote youth leadership development, and provide young readers with lifelong tools to make a difference in the world.

The books are fun and open new vistas for children, from STEM careers to teaching them about Black men and women who have made an indelible impact on the world.

ATTORNEY OF THE YEAR 2022

The Minnesota Lawyer has recognized Dr. Artika Tyner as an Attorney of the Year 2022 for outstanding service to the profession. This prestigious award is in recognition of Tyner's work in promoting racial justice, training and inspiring lawyers and law students to serve as leaders, and developing pioneering research related to diversity, equity and inclusion. Official ceremonies are set for Feb. 15, 2023.

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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.

LAMP SALE

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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SPRINGBOARD for the arts

For over 31 years, Springboard for the Arts has supported artists with the tools to make a living and a life. This year, be sure to join us for new in-person and online workshops, trainings, events, community gatherings, and more!



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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund and the generous support of Minnesota United.



Make memories at the Bell Museum



Snow: Tiny Crystals, Global Impact

On view January 21–May 7, 2023

Visit *Snow: Tiny Crystals, Global Impact*, a hands-on science exhibition about the nature and wonder of snow and the impact of climate change on our snowy planet. Explore how snow shapes and sustains life on Earth, snow's vital roles in sustaining our water supply and more!



Sensory Friendly Saturday

February 18, 8–10 am

This monthly series provides a welcoming and accessible environment for individuals, families, and children who have sensory sensitivities. Experience our Minnesota Journey gallery, temporary exhibits, the Touch & See Lab, and a brief planetarium show at 8:45 am—all with lowered lighting, quieter sounds, and fewer visitors.



February Star Party

February 24, 7:30–9:00 pm

Join us for our next in-person Star Party! Outside we'll have our telescopes set up to observe the Moon and our favorite deep space objects (weather permitting). Inside, you can explore hands-on activities, and our expert astronomy team will guide you through the night sky and highlight cosmic sights in our planetarium.



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