

SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • JUNE 1, 2023 • VOL. 2 • NO. 10 • 24,000 CIRCULATION



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3 YEARS

"When I heard about this event, I was so excited because I grew up in this area of Minneapolis... and I wanted to contribute in some kind of way," said J. Darnell Johnson, author of children's books and Black science fiction and fantasy. "Bad things happened here. And now it's good things happening, and I wanna be part of that." Johnson was among the many Black-owned businesses featured at the Rise & Remember Festival at George Floyd Square on May 27, 2023. The three-day event included a candlelight vigil on May 25 to commemorate the legacy of George Floyd, a conference, a gala at Paisley Park to raise funds for the George Floyd Global Memorial, and an outdoor festival featuring art, music, performances and a self-care fair. The Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center (3749 Chicago Ave.) is hosting a GFGM rememory exhibit through Aug. 19. (Photo by Jill Boogren)



A CHANGE OF SEASON

By **J.D. Fratzke**
SAVORING THE 612



We nourished each other through the long, dark winter of the past three years

Last week, as some of the first truly warm days of the year finally seemed to be ushering in a real change of season, I put in my earbuds and took a stroll out my front door, heading west toward Lake Harriet. Headlines coming over public radio shared the news that the head of The United States Department of Health and Human Services, Secretary Xavier Becerra, had declared an official end to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency on May, 11 2023. I wondered if in a different time that news would have been met with more conspicuous pomp and celebration, both by myself and my fellow American citizens. Instead, because of what the global pandemic caused and what it revealed, I met the news with the same sort of reticent gratitude any self-respecting Minnesotan would greet a warm day in the month of May.

I've written and spoken quite a bit about how I was one of many Minnesota hospitality professionals who stood pensive and uncertain in our kitchens and dining rooms in the first few months of 2020. Coronavirus was showing up on our great nation's shores, and a crisis unlike anything we'd seen in our lifetimes seemed unavoidable.

My colleagues and I tried our best to prepare for communication, sanitation and austerity. As important as those elements already are to restaurant operations, we were sure our transparency and systemic practice of them would keep our guests and our vocational family members safe.

We were also sure that the necessity of exercising those practices were going to be secondary to our ability to provide certainty, so-lace and comfort – the founda-



Restaurant staff showed up to prepare and give away food in the early days of the pandemic when restaurants were closed. (Photo submitted by J.D. Fratzke)

CAUGHT BETWEEN

Over 11 years in, their family court case is still spread between two states and getting worse. Now she's been ordered to pay fines or go to jail because her daughter won't go to dad's house.

She lived in Minnesota for only five months and her daughter was born in Iowa, but Dani* has been dragged into family court in Minnesota nearly every one of the past 11 years by her ex-boyfriend.

She's been trying to figure out what happened and why things have gotten worse instead of better.

She did what everyone tells women to do when they're being abused. She left.

She fled back home to Iowa when she was six weeks pregnant, determined to raise her baby in a violence-and-alcohol-free environment with the help of her family.

And then, before her daughter had even been born, Dani found herself in



By **Tesha M. Christensen**

family court. Her ex-boyfriend had filed for custody of their unborn child two months before her due date.

She filed herself in Iowa then, but Sherburne County Judge Mary Yunker, the same one who presided over the controversial Autumn Hallow case, ruled that the case be in Minnesota instead of Iowa. (Autumn Hallow was murdered by her father and step-mother despite repeated abuse reports and attempts by her mother

in Yunker's courtroom to protect her.)

Today, neither party resides in Sherburne County, Judge Yunker retired in November 2022, and Dani has asked repeatedly to have the case moved to the state where her daughter has lived her entire life. But it remains in Minnesota.

Dani finds herself stuck between two states. Iowa begins investigations, but is then told by Minnesota that it will follow through on them. Instead, the issues dealt with in Minnesota are in regards to the latest motions filed by her ex-boyfriend Bryan.

"The nightmare doesn't exist until you're in it," said Dani. "And then no one wants to talk about it."



MARKET SERIES LAUNCHES IN PARKS

Project in Minneapolis parks aims to be incubator for young entrepreneurs who can't afford brick and mortar storefronts

By **Allie Johnson**

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is launching a series of markets in parks across the city this summer.

The Minneapolis Park Markets will highlight and promote small businesses and entrepreneurs, with about 15 to 30 vendors at each event ranging from artists to makers to local residents trying to get

new business ventures off the ground.

"The idea really came from talking with a lot of young entrepreneurs that are just starting out, who can't afford brick and mortar [stores] or maybe have an idea and want to test it, maybe have a great product but don't have the wherewithal," said Shane Stenzel, park use and events permit manager. "We looked at some of our parks and said maybe this is an opportunity."

The markets will take place on various nights from June through August at four different parks: Lake Harriet, Minnehaha Regional Park, Water Works, and The Commons. The park board selected these parks to pilot this new initiative because most – like Water Works with its proximity to James Beard award-winning restaurant Owamni, and the Stone Arch Bridge and Minnehaha Regional Park near Min-

nehaha Falls and the always popular Sea Salt Eatery – are already big draws in the summer months. Others like Lake Harriet already have existing programming such as the concert series at the bandshell that bring people to the area.

"You look at Minnehaha, you look at Lake Harriet, you look at Water Works, you look at The Commons – they're regional draws," Stenzel said. "People from the suburbs are there. People from out of state are there. That's really appealing to the market folks because it's a different clientele that they're seeing."

A fifth market was slated for Market Square, a new park near Hiawatha Avenue and East Lake Street. However, Stenzel said it's more likely that location will host a few pop-up events throughout the summer rather than a regularly occurring market.



▶ 1 CAUGHT BETWEEN

FROM A DREAM TO A NIGHTMARE

Only 23 when she met Bryan*, Dani thought she had fallen into a love story. He was charming, it moved fast, and within a few months of meeting him in Des Moines, Iowa, she had agreed to move to Elk River, Minn. "I thought he was the answer to my prayers when I met him. And then I thought there was something wrong with me," she said.

"After I moved, his personality changed really quickly from a nice man to my worst nightmare." He drank excessively, she recalled, and on more than one occasion she called her mom while she was hiding from him in a bathroom. Her mom recalls hearing him swear and yell at Dani while pounding on the closed door. She told her mom, "I'm afraid he's going to hurt me." When her mom visited, she saw how much alcohol he drank. "He had the potential for violence," Cindy* recalled. "I saw the amount he consumed." He coerced Dani into doing things she didn't want to do in the bedroom. He destroyed things her biological dad left after he died. He changed her phone password. She had to dash out of the way one day when he directed his vehicle at her in the yard. He threatened the life of her dog.

But she never called the police. Not even when he somehow sold her car without her signature. It left her even more isolated, far from home and her family. But he didn't ever punch her. Instead, he broke the things around her, throwing bottles at the door when he raged at her. When she threatened to call the police, he said he'd have them lock her up. When she said she was going to leave, he retorted that he'd report the car she was in as stolen. He wanted her tested for Borderline Personality Disorder and told her she was crazy.

Later, others gave her the words to describe the experience. Abusive. Coercive. Controlling. Gaslighting. Manipulative. Narcissistic. Friends began to suspect that he might have a personality disorder.

"I feel so bad for that version of me," Dani said. "I know I tried to stand up to him, but I never stood a chance. He had the money. He had everything. He knew that by moving me to Minnesota, he was moving me from my support system and anyone who would help me. And then he'd call me the crazy one."

Then she discovered she was pregnant. She opted not to get the abortion he suggested, and when he said they were through, she got him to put in writing that she could drive the car that was in his name and she headed back to Iowa.

She didn't know what was in front of her. "He uses the court system to terrorize me," said Dani. "I've never had a break."

"It's a form of control," pointed out her mother.

Cindy added, "He's a master gaslighter. You don't even know how to defend it. He'll put anything in an affidavit."

"His biggest go-to is, 'Dani are you of sound mind? Do you need to speak to a professional?'"

IN COURT BEFORE THE BABY IS BORN

Bryan kept calling her when he was drunk, yelling and screaming at her every day over the phone line. It took her awhile, she said, but she finally blocked his calls. Later, he used that to show she was refusing to co-parent.

On March 14, 2012, Bryan filed a pre-birth petition in Minnesota seeking to establish paternity, custody, and parenting time for the unborn child. Dani counter-filed in Iowa, but citing provisions of Iowa's version of the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act (UCCJEA), the case was placed in Minnesota. Dani's appeal was heard in Minnesota and they affirmed keeping the case in Minnesota. Despite mother and child living in another state, the Minnesota court

▶ "Research and submissions received demonstrate that perpetrators of domestic violence can also misuse family law proceedings to continue to perpetrate violence against their victims, resulting in secondary traumatization. In this context, parental alienation may be employed as a useful tactic."

UNITED NATIONS IDS LINK BETWEEN ABUSERS AND PARENTAL ALIENATION ACCUSATIONS



▶ "States ensure that the views of the child are sufficiently and independently represented in family law procedures."

▶ "States ensure mandatory training of the judiciary and other justice system professionals on gender bias, the dynamics of domestic abuse, and the relationship between allegations of domestic abuse and parental alienation and related pseudo-concepts."

▶ The report urges family court professionals: "In the context of domestic violence, there is a duty to listen and respond to children's accounts of violence, with a view to validating these experiences, ensuring that decisions are better informed and that the child's safety and welfare are promoted."

▶ The UN Special Rapporteur recommends that states legislate to prohibit the use of parental alienation or related pseudo-concepts in family law cases, the use of so-called experts in parental alienation and related pseudo-concepts, and the use of reunification camps.

2023 Custody, Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children, report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences by Reen Alsalem

said it would not be an "inconvenient forum." The ruling didn't address how the poor, young woman would find representation in another state, afford to take off work to drive five hours one way to attend hearings, or find lodging in another state. Nor did it lay out how Twin Cities-based court professionals would manage working on a case where almost all the people they needed to talk to and visit were in another state.

Bryan didn't meet his daughter, Faith*, until she was eight months old, although he was notified right away of her birth. He had given up a child for adoption 1.5 years earlier. "I begged him to come meet his daughter whom he was in court fighting for," said Dani.

"We all tried to be very supportive of Faith's relationship with her dad," said Cindy. The early visits happened at their home, where Dani lived for a few years, and were at a hotel when they included Bryan's parents.

On Dec. 11, 2014, the Minnesota court granted the parties joint legal custody, with sole physical care to Dani subject to parenting time for Bryan following a custody evaluation by Minneapolis psychologist Susan Phipps-Yonas. She recommended that Dani have sole physical custody to maintain continuity for two-year-old Faith, whose life was in Iowa, and that the parents share legal custody.

Bryan has some relatives in Iowa, and exercised parenting time there when Faith was young, although he was often hours late. He's never attended a doctors appointment, school conference, school play, recital or other event. However, his brother and his father have. "I think that's really telling," said Cindy.

A second custody evaluation was done after Bryan again filed for sole custody in 2020 when Faith was eight. Again, the custody evaluator, this time Kareem S. Braxton of Minneapolis, affirmed that the parents share joint legal custody and that Dani have sole physical custody.

FIRST CHILD ABUSE CASE AGAINST DAD

Things changed quickly after they acted on that report through mediation in the fall of October 2021.

After she visited her dad, his wife, and two younger step-siblings for Christmas in 2021, Faith began saying she didn't want to go back to her dad's house in Minnesota. She was supposed to visit one weekend a month, and her dad was court-ordered to plan those visits ahead of time by the first of each month. He had done so in November and December 2021, but then canceled last minute before exercising his holiday time.

In January 2022, there was a bad snowstorm that prevented the visit. In February, Faith was vomiting and Dani asked that the visit be rescheduled to avoid putting a vomiting child in the car for a five-hour drive. In March, Bryan's weekend overlapped with spring break, which was Dani's holiday and took precedence. They had been using a family text message thread that included Dani's parents and Bryan's parents to keep conversations civil, but after Bryan engaged in abusive language directed separately at Dani, her step-dad and her mom, Dani stated that she would be using the court-ordered Our Family Wizard app for all future correspondence. Bryan did not check his messages there.

"The messages that have come through to Dani are generally negative, accusatory and not demonstrative of mutual respect for Dani as the other parent. [Bryan] has expressed frequent concern about Dani's ability or fitness to parent, and there has not been evidence that Dani is not a fit parent," wrote Dani's therapist Marcy Schrum in an August 2022 report.

Meanwhile, Faith had begun having night terrors.

Dani was stymied in her attempt to get Faith therapeutic treatment. Bryan spoke to his daughter's therapist via telephone, and stated that he wanted her to record all conversations with his daughter and send them to him, which the therapist was not comfortable doing and did not believe was appropriate. Per court testimony, he also told the therapist that he did not agree to let his daughter be in treatment.

In April 2022, the Iowa Department of Human Services got involved and concluded that dad caused a denial of critical care for his daughter. A Child In Need of

Assistance (CINA) case was opened. Bryan was placed on the Central Abuse Registry. Faith resumed therapy.

"Faith was very good at articulating what was bothering her, but she got to the point where she would start crying and shut down, and she would not disclose anything further. I do believe she has more to say, but she was unable to disclose at that point," wrote DHS investigator Jean Entz in her report. Entz made it clear that Faith did not want to see her dad and that Dani struggled with being in the position of following the court order or trying to figure out how to force Faith into the car to see him.

Bryan did not request parenting time for May, June, July, or August 2022.

Faith's school counselor reported to a child protection worker that Faith had talked about concerns at her dad's house and did not want to visit him there. There have been concerns about how Bryan has interacted with school staff, and now only administrators will speak to him.

Faith's therapist noted that Bryan had called her an excessive amount of times, and described Bryan as "aggressive and rude."

However, his interactions with his child's school, therapist and maternal grandparents has not been factored into the case by the various professionals making recommendations on custody and parenting time. The fact that Bryan makes adults uncomfortable has not been considered relevant to how he treats his daughter. This is despite specific language in court orders (commonly known as Appendix A in Minnesota divorce decrees) that neither parent disparage the other.

When interviewed by a child protection worker, Bryan blamed Dani for problems with his daughter, and denied that he had done anything inappropriate, according to the written report issued by DHS. Notably, he did not express concern about his daughter's mental or physical health. Meanwhile, Dani, who grew up with divorced parents, affirmed the position she has taken throughout Faith's life – that a relationship with her father is important. She also asked about resources available to help the family.

SECOND ABUSE INVESTIGATION

In June, Faith's therapist, Kim Montgomery, noted that she was showing signs of a child who had been sexually abused. She had told multiple people after the Christmas visit that her dad locked her in her room and body-shamed her.

As the days got closer to when she was court-ordered to see her dad in September, Faith began disclosing more information about her past experiences with her dad to those around her whom she has established relationships with. Her mom. Her maternal grandmother. Her school counselor. Her therapist (until treatment was stopped by Minneapolis-based parenting consultant Susan Lach following a conversation she had only with Bryan).

According to court documents, Faith told her grandmother Cindy that her dad had threatened to kill her mom and her if she told anyone what her dad had been doing to her. Once he stomped his foot on an ant, grinding his foot into it, to demonstrate what he would do to her if she told the secret.

Another child protection assessment began. Bryan declined to participate in any CPS interviews, although his Minnesota attorney, Katie Jendro, called to talk about dad seeking sole custody of Faith and requesting that the court approve him moving Faith to Minnesota. Dani cooperated fully with all CPS requests.

The child protection investigation in Iowa was halted because Faith broke down and could not give any more details to the STAR Center investigator. The CPS report states that because the child is not seeing dad, they did not feel like there needed to be a second STAR interview. However, they also wrote that it was imperative that ongoing

▶ 2 CAUGHT BETWEEN

ing discovery work be done. Despite that statement and a high risk assessment rating, the same CPS report made a finding that the sexual abuse could not be confirmed and closed the case.

"Am I to understand you sat in a room with Faith and she told you her father touched her private parts and you are going to do nothing about this?" Dani asked a CPS worker.

Since some incidents happened in Minnesota, Iowa CPS said they could not address them.

Minnesota stated that it would not look into the Iowa incidents. St. Anthony Village Police Department wouldn't proceed because there was an open family court case, a detail they learned when Bryan's attorney called them.

The Iowa court declined to bring back in the guardian ad litem who had worked previously with Faith.

An Iowa judge approved an order for protection that Dani made on behalf of Faith on Sept. 23, 2022. However, after Judge Yunker contacted him and insisted that he had no jurisdiction, Judge Paul Scott set it to expire in December. He observed that Dani could seek another one in Minnesota.

To do so required Dani to go through the entire process a second time, forcing her to find and hire a new Minnesota-based attorney and try to negotiate CPS workers across state lines.

A PC BROUGHT IN

A parenting consultant, known as a PC, was appointed in Minnesota last summer, but the case has not gotten clearer with her involvement.

Susan Lach of Tuft, Lach, Jerabek & O'Connell in Maplewood has not ever met Faith. Nor has she journeyed to Iowa to meet those involved in Faith's daily life. Lach testified that she has not spoken to the child protection workers in Iowa, nor staff at the center where she was evaluated for sexual abuse.

A lawyer, Lach is neither a licensed therapist nor social worker, but her authority on the case is vast and equal to a judge. Whatever decisions she makes are considered orders and must be followed. In Minnesota, PCs are not required to have training on domestic violence, victim and perpetrator behaviors, long and short-term impacts of domestic violence and child abuse on children, child sexual abuse, child abuse, coercive control, implicit and explicit bias, or trauma. There is little oversight. (See sidebar)

Lach required \$2,000 up front, and charged \$500 an hour. Within a few months, she had charged the family \$4,700. Currently, she says Dani owes her about \$7,500.

Lach ordered that Faith discontin-

ue work with her therapist and instead begin seeing a therapist in Minnesota. She also recommended a custody flip – moving Faith from Iowa where she has lived her entire life to Minnesota, changing her school, taking her away from the family and friends she has had her entire life, and switching all her medical providers. She testified: "I don't think Faith cares where she lives. I mean, what does where she's lived her entire life have to do with where she gets therapy?"

Lach has opined that Faith was "coached" by her mother to make allegations against her dad – despite never having talked to Faith herself. Hearings have focused on Dani's credibility versus the facts of the case and Faith's safety.

ISSUES WITH PC

Lach accused Faith's therapist of picking sides and said she could not be impartial in her treatment. Statements made to the court by Montgomery, however, focus on listening to the child, and helping her work through things.

Lach's testimony includes the following statement in reference to Montgomery, who is a school-based therapist with a master's degree in social work: "It doesn't look like she has any qualifications to be doing this at all."

Cindy said she was alarmed when she testified in Yunker's courtroom by the behavior of the people working there. "In my 23 years of working in a courtroom, I have never seen a judge behave this way," stated Cindy. "She was so unprofessional. She'd look down at me and make a face and roll her eyes. She said, 'That wasn't the question. Do you need it repeated for you?' It really affected my testimony." Plus, "she would make the objection and prompt Bryan's attorney, 'Do you want to object?'" She said Yunker interrupted people.

"It's like you're embarrassed to be part of that community," said Cindy. "I have never seen anything like it."

Dani's mother and stepfather have worked in the court system their entire lives. Neither understands what is happening in their daughter's case. They're losing sleep. Their health has been affected.

"It's surreal," said Cindy. "It's like you can't believe this is happening."

Her own professional work involved writing the court transcripts for many DHS cases of abuse. "This is the most alarming case I have ever seen. I can't believe they can look at themselves and say this child doesn't deserve to be helped," said Cindy.

"You don't just up and move a 10-year-old child," said Dani. "Why would you be willing to roll the dice that big? It's unbelievable to me."

AN ORDER FOR PROTECTION

One judge approved the order for protection (OFP). Another required that she drop it.

An OFP was granted in Iowa on Sept. 23, 2022.

Judge Yunker, who is facing a lawsuit for her role in the Autumn Hallow case, retired on Nov. 15, 2022 – but not before issuing a scathing order with hefty purge conditions for Dani. Among them? An order to pay \$160,000 in fines and drop the OFP.

Additional sanctions aimed to financially target this single mom who is on government health care, per Yunker's court order, include the issuance of a \$100,000 bond. Dani was ordered to pay Bryan's attorney's fees and a fine of \$200 for every day Faith did not visit her dad since Oct. 29, 2022. The order concludes: Dani "is expressly warned future willful failure to comply with the orders of this court may result in incarceration."

Judge Yunker's order did not address the pages of abusive messages that Bryan had sent Dani and her parents.

PREDICTABLE ARC

Those with the National Safe Parents Organization say cases like Dani's follow a predictable arc, one that is backed by research.

When an abuse is brought up in family court, 73 percent of moms lose custody if they've been labeled an "alienator" – even when the courts believe that the father has abused the mother and/or child. If that abuse is sexual abuse, then a mom loses custody 97 percent of the time if a dad counters that the mom is alienating him from his child. This research was done by the Joan Meiers team out of Georgetown University, and was funded by a \$500,000 grant from the National Institute of Justice.

Domestic abuse advocates are increasingly talking about how abusers successfully use DARVO in the family court system. DARVO – which stands for deny, attack, reverse victim and offender – is a reaction perpetrators of wrong may display when being held accountable for their behavior, and has been studied by Dr. Jennifer Freyd of the University of Oregon. In assuming the role of victim, the perpetrator attacks the accuser's credibility. In family court, this is often done by accusing the protective parent of being an "alienator" and accusing them of "crazy" behavior.

"While gaslighting in the context of an abusive relationship is destabilizing and painful, nothing can prepare a survivor for the gaslighting that takes place in family court," observed national advocate Tina Swithin of One Mom's Battle, who is a member of the National Safe Parents Organization. "Worse, the court professionals often want survivors to gaslight their children by forcing them to encourage and facilitate a relationship with a parent, who may be very unhealthy or abusive. We are teaching our children to override their in-

stincts and truth because we are in a court system that believes relationships with both parents trumps everything else."

The United Nations has recently released a report on the link of parental alienation and domestic violence. "Research and submissions received demonstrate that perpetrators of domestic violence can also misuse family law proceedings to continue to perpetrate violence against their victims, resulting in secondary traumatization," reads the report. "In this context, parental alienation may be employed as a useful tactic."

The report urges family court professionals: "In the context of domestic violence, there is a duty to listen and respond to children's accounts of violence, with a view to validating these experiences, ensuring that decisions are better informed and that the child's safety and welfare are promoted."

The UN Special Rapporteur recommends that states legislate to prohibit the use of parental alienation or related pseudo-concepts in family law cases, the use of so-called experts in parental alienation and related pseudo-concepts, and the use of reunification camps. Colorado is the first to do this with the passage of a new law in May. The UN also urges states to mandate training on gender bias, dynamics of domestic abuse, and the relationship between allegations of domestic abuse and parental alienation.

'SHE JUST WANTS TO BE HEARD'

In late May 2023, Dani was ordered by her 10th Judicial Court Judge Kristi Stanislawski to pay the entire PC bill and related bond fees of \$7,500 within three days or go to jail. She has also been ordered to appear in Minnesota in person for court one time a month.

An child protection case remains open in Iowa. Faith is not currently seeing a therapist because the PC has stated she needs to be the one to pick one out.

Dani points to a notebook on her desk. "This whole notebook is filled with numbers of people I've tried to call for help. No one will listen. No one will help," she said.

"I don't trust the system anymore. I don't know why everyone wouldn't err on the side of caution. When children are involved, safety should be your first priority. I guess I'm really confused.

"You can't look at that little girl and not know that she's telling the truth. She's so scared. She just wants to be heard."

**Editor's note: In writing this story, I reviewed dozens of court documents, and reports by professionals. In recognition of the sensitive nature of this article, we have opted to refer to people by their first names or aliases. We have named the professionals working on this case as their work affects other families.*

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A PC?

Parenting Consulting is an alternative dispute resolution process authorized by MN Statute Rule 114.02 (a) (10). A Parenting Consultant (PC) is an individual agreed upon by the parties and court ordered to work with divorcing parents. The process includes attempts to facilitate agreement, coaching and deciding. PC decisions are binding.

Often, PCs are also attorneys but some are licensed therapists. Prior to Jan. 1, 2023, PCs were not required to have training to be a parenting consultant other than to be a qualified neutral. They were not required to have training in child sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, coercive control, implicit and explicit bias, trauma, long and short-term impacts of domestic violence and child abuse on children, or victim and perpetrator behaviors. Since the change to Rules 114 and 310.03, PCs are now required to have at least 18 hours of training in developmental needs of children, addressing domestic abuse in the PC process, and emotional and psychological dynamics of separation and divorce. Existing PCs are not required to adhere to the new training requirements.

The contracts with PCs require families to share their medical records. It is not a confidential process and is not protected under Rule

114. PCs are not mandated reporters of child maltreatment. A parent who disagrees with a PC decision may bring a motion to family court to contest it, and then must pay another bill for the PC to participate in the court hearings (along with attorney fees).

SCOPE AND AUTHORITY OF A PC

A parenting consultant can:

- Authorize trading time when parents do not agree
- Award compensatory parenting time to one parent
- Interpret unclear provisions in the decree
- Decide parenting issues and alterations in the parenting time schedule, including transportation
- Decide holiday and vacation schedule
- Decide school and day care absences, activities, vacation, holiday and summer camp issues, including dates and times
- Decide appropriate school and child care placement
- Consult with outside sources, including teachers, therapists, physicians, attorneys, family members, etc., and review relevant records
- Require independent evaluations and psychological testing, as well as substance use assessment, testing, monitoring and treatment
- Require therapy, anger management services, and/or parenting classes, and select the provider
- Communicate with, obtain information from, or provide information to any person without securing a ROI authorization from the parents

- Require a Safe Harbor agreement and then not share information with the parent/s. The PC may merely state, "I have considered input from a child's therapist."
- Decide issues with input from only one parent
- Make recommendations and decisions

Their rulings overrule existing court documents, including agreements parents previously made with each other.

Families using a PC are often paying fees for attorneys, individual therapists, and family therapists in addition to the PC bill. A PC's hourly fees are about that of an attorney, and range from \$250 to \$500 an hour. They typically require a retainer not to fall below \$2,000. Families can pay a PC \$5,000 or more a month. One parent can rack up the bills by asking a PC to rule on a multitude of issues even if the other parent has not agreed to pay for work on those issues. Most PC bills are split 50/50 by the parents, without factoring in who asked the PC to get involved on a specific issue. If one parent does not or can't pay for the PC, the PC can ask a judge to order payment.

Complaints about a PC may be sent to the ADR Ethics Board, 25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, St. Paul, MN 55155-1500. Complaints and sanctions may or may not be public.

THE BEST OF HUMANITY IS ALL AROUND US

We just have to choose to see it.

The Bells are not your average social media influencers. They are a family of 10 with seven adopted children. Heather Bell is the matriarch and keeps everything running with her husband, Luke, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. If you're looking for these Yoopers, their handle is @justthebells10, and they're not hard to find.



The Bell family is even more interesting than you think. (Photo courtesy of Heather Bell)

They have 2.7 million followers on TikTok, 774,000 on Facebook, 590,000 on Instagram and 181,000 on YouTube. There's a reason why they are so popular.

Like all of us, the Bells are just trying to make it in this crazy world. They love to cook big meals and share recipes that are easy and fast to make.

They talk about adoption and their foster journey, how their family was brought together by adoption through foster care and private adoption. They didn't plan on having eight children, but they are thankful for each one - David, Robert, Joshua, Hailey, Brendon, Gideon, Izzy and Noah.

Some of the children they have adopted are older. Others are teenagers. They even have developed relationships with the birth families of their children and invite them to family gatherings.

The Bells admit they have taken an unconventional path. "Everyone wants a baby [and] an instant family ... and that's not what foster care [or adoption] is about,"

Heather Bell told FamilyMinded in a story about their family.

"When [kids] are older, you have to work with them differently," Heather explains. "Each child ... has different needs. My older kids really needed us more. They're dealing with becoming adults and they're teenagers. It's different, and it can be challenging. But if you respect the children and let them have a voice, [things will turn out all right]."

Respect the children and let them have a voice. That's the key to alleviating a lot of conflicts and solving a lot of problems.

Some young people today are not getting the respect they should. Their voices are not being heard. This lack of respect can lead to a cycle of disrespect. Young people get a pessimistic view of the world. They expect negative outcomes and see many problems as unsolvable. Social media doesn't always help.

"We're in the middle of a youth mental

health crisis, and I'm concerned that social media is contributing to the harm that kids are experiencing," U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy told CNN in late May.

While the surgeon general sounds the alarm that social media presents "a profound risk of harm" for youth, the Bells are flipping the script and spreading joy to the world with their kids. It's refreshing to see, and it's inspiring a lot of people. Here's a small sampling of comments about the Bells from their fans.

- They are amazing.
- I love your story so much! Your family is such an inspiration to me and your willingness to adopt teenagers reveals what an authentically compassionate couple you are.
- You guys are amazing. Been fans since day one. I wish I felt this kinda love from my own family/parents so whenever I feel sad I come here and watch your videos and it makes me so happy.

- Many of us enjoy this sweet family due to what we missed. They are the sweetest, fun and all around good folks.
- We love you guys! Thanks for making good wholesome content.
- Y'all are just so awesome. I can see and feel the love you have for one another.
- This is what LOVE is all about!

Superlatives get thrown too easily nowadays. As do dire predictions. There is trouble in the world, but the sky is not falling. When it feels like it is, we can replace "I" with "we." If what people are carrying is too heavy, we can help them carry it.

There are great people around us every day. They should be spotlighted rather than some of the junk we get fed daily. We don't have to fall into the trap of negativity. All it takes is caring and sharing inspirational moments like the ones the Bells give us.

The Bells are the real deal. They are not the only real ones, either.

If you're having a bad day, check out Judge Lynn Toler, aka @realjudgelynn. You remember, Judge Lynn, don't you? She presided over "Divorce Court" for 14 seasons. Now she is #joytrolling on Instagram and doling out wisdom.

"I used to judge people for a living now I don't judge for peace of mind," she said.

Nothing changes if nothing changes. At the same time, everything can change in an instant. One moment can change a day. One day can change a life. One life can change the world.

The best of humanity is all around us. We just have to choose to see it.

Eric Ortiz lives in the Wedge with his family. When he's not community building, he's the head of content and strategy 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.

GOODBYE, VIC, AND THANK YOU

STORIES & JOURNEYS

I am aware that there would be no All Elders United for Justice without the vision, leadership and guidance of Vic Rosenthal. This is my goodbye and thank you to Vic Rosenthal. Sadly, Vic passed away March 28, 2023 at the age of 68. Cancer took his life, but not his spirit and commitment to justice issues.



If you have read this far you have already taken the plunge into the river (flow) of life experience that is Stories and Journeys.

Last year, Chloe Peter, writing for TMC Publications, wrote a feature article on All Elders. For this article she interviewed Vic Rosenthal; Leif Grina, the President of Minneapolis Regional Retirees Council (MRRC) AFL-CIO; and myself. This article appeared in the Messenger, Connector and Monitor. That article still exists online.

There is a back story to my awareness of and experience with Vic.

As an MRRC member I was invited to participate in a focus group organized and facilitated by Vic. It was one of several focus groups conducted by Vic across Minnesota. The purpose of these focus groups was to gauge interest in and the need for forming an organization like All Elders. This would be my only in-person meeting with Vic. Once Vic and his collaborators were done with focus groups, they concluded that there are interests and needs that could be addressed through an organization like All Elders.

Inspired by this focus group experience, I returned to my Greater Longfellow neighborhood. I started submitting a monthly notice to the Messenger announcing Elder Voices (Telling Our Stories) meeting at Turtle Bread. A small group open to whomever showed up.

I remember being contacted by Tom Beer, part of the leadership of MRRC. He wanted to know if I would be interested in serving on a steering committee to guide Vic in determining next steps toward forming an organization like All Elders. I said yes. Next I told Tesha M. Christensen

of TMC Publications that I said yes to this request. Hence, the reference at the end of each Stories and Journeys column that I serve on what is now the leadership team of All Elders.

I remember going through a period of being disengaged from All Elders and much of the other parts of my life. Cancer had taken the life of my brother. I needed to take time to absorb what had happened to my beloved brother and grieve his loss.

Apparently, during this time Vic was experiencing his own medical issues which at one point caused him to be hospitalized. I became aware of this as I was slowly and tentatively starting to re-engage with the All Elders agenda. During this time, I was experiencing my own health events. Nonetheless I was able to participate in a Zoom leadership team meeting - my first in several months. Little did I know it would be the last time I would see and hear Vic.

Shortly there after the leadership team received a Google Groups email announcing that due to his medical condition Vic could no longer do the work on justice issues to which he had dedicated his life. He had made the decision to enter hospice care. Next I received an email containing an obituary for Vic. He had died. It told me the date, time and location for his funeral service and shiva. Vic was Jewish. I was able to live stream the funeral service.

His obituary appeared in several publications along with tributes and remembrances, including from Governor Walz.

So, I say goodbye Vic and thank you for always being you. My perception of Vic is that he never thought anything was about him. He saw himself as an organizer and enabler of others in the pursuit of justice. It was always about process. Thank you for facilitating that focus group that inspired me to start Elder Voices, and later accepting me as part of the leadership team of All Elders.

Today All Elders United for Justice is a registered non-profit with the state of Minnesota. It has bylaws. A common interest in redressing Ageism. It has a bank account. An executive committee and temporary Board of Directors. A website is in the works. Jonathan Rose is executive director. We seek to fill the void left by Vic by pursuing our mission as outlined in the bylaws.

So, dear reader, who is someone in your life who has inspired you to do something you never imagined you would be doing? Tell yourself, tell others or tell me.

In gratitude. Rest in peace, Vic.

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

SOUTHWEST Connector

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We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that is both black and white, both/and. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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B-LINE BUSES AND CARS SHOULDN'T SHARE ONE LANE ON LAKE ST.

In a case of good intentions backfiring, Hennepin County has planned a B Line express bus route that will crawl along Lake Street at the pace of stalled traffic. This will result from its lane re-configuration that was planned without consulting those who live and work along this busy county road.



By Dan Kennedy

People generally like the idea of faster bus service. I have used the A-Line on Snelling Avenue in St. Paul to hasten my trips to the state fair; I think it works well. Snelling has two lanes of traffic in each direction, so cars can pass buses that are, after all, designed to stop for passengers even when the light is green.

Hennepin County will have none of that nonsense. Eastbound, the county plans just one lane of through traffic. When the bus stops at a green light, the cars behind it will stop at a green light. Worse than that, the design has most bus stops on the far corner of the stoplight, with the bus stopping in the only lane of traffic. When a bus goes through a green light and stops, cars behind the bus will stop in the intersection on a green light. When that light turns red, the cars cannot budge because there is but one lane of traffic and a bus is blocking it. So, the cross traffic also cannot move.

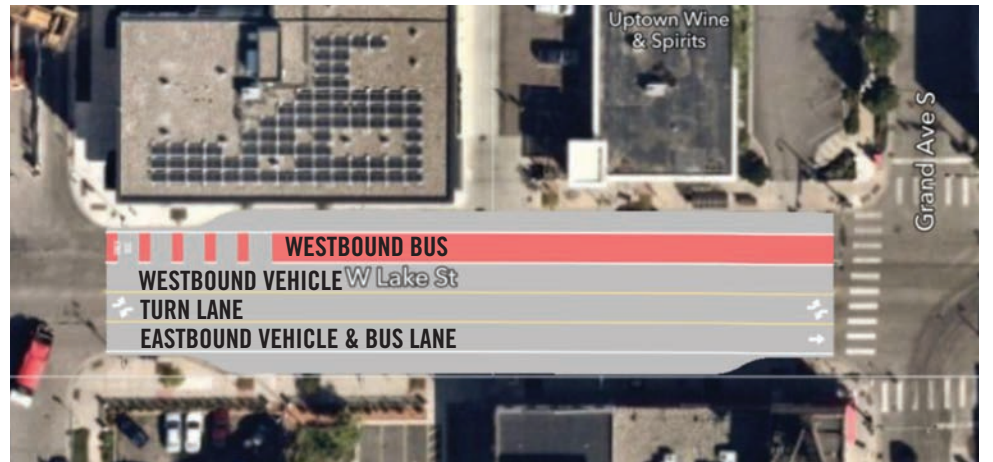
If you think that this configuration is bad for cars but good for buses, you are half right. It's bad for buses, too. Consider Lake Street at the River Road. Eastbound traffic backs up one or two blocks at each red light. That's in two lanes. If you crowd all that traffic into one lane, that doubles the length of the backup. That's bad for all vehicles that will wait several lights to

make it through the intersection – including the buses stuck in that traffic. A single lane to accommodate both buses and cars does not accommodate either.

All of the above discussion assumes that a single lane exists, but we in Longfellow know that for five months every winter we lose the right lane of eastbound traffic. The parked cars obstruct that lane, and the snow is not even cleared from the lane at several intersections. Cars that currently shift to the inner lane to avoid parked cars and mounded snow in winter (and bicycles in summer) will have no place to go.

In the planning for reconstruction 18 years ago, a vocal few wanted to restrict Lake Street to one lane in each direction. Longfellow businesses objected. Hennepin County noted that the state requires four lanes if traffic exceeds 15,000 average daily trips (ADT), and Lake Street exceeded that at Snelling Avenue (20,300) and the river (17,000) and was close at 37th-38th Avenue (12,800, projected then to exceed 15,000 in 2016). In the reconstruction, all four lanes were retained, but the businesses compromised significantly elsewhere by agreeing to construct and maintain enhanced lighting, decorative fencing, trash containers, and benches. It transformed Lake and made it an attractive street. The businesses paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for those enhancements on top of their normal taxes and the steep assessments for the roadway. They still pay an extra \$80,000 annually to maintain these improvements. Getting business support for these assessments was not easy and would not have been possible if Lake Street had been rebuilt with only two lanes.

Perhaps you think that this is not your problem because you live blocks from Lake Street. It will soon become your



Note, the B-Line traffic plan calls for only one lane of eastbound traffic, with cars and the buses sharing one lane. There will be a center lane for turning traffic. Travel westbound will have two lanes with one lane designated as a bus lane. This 4 to 3 conversion was piloted on Lyndale Ave. last year.

problem. Even now, driving on 28th or 32nd Street to the river and then to the Lake Street Bridge can save time when eastbound traffic on Lake is backed up. When that backup doubles in one lane, you can expect traffic on other east-west streets to increase.

The long lines mean gaps in traffic will occur only at stoplights, and then only when Lake Street traffic is not idling in the intersection behind a stopped bus. Elsewhere, nobody will be able to turn left onto Lake or cross Lake on foot or by car.

How was this plan developed? Not in consultation with property owners; I received no notice and learned about the plan from a fellow property owner on Lake Street who received a map shortly before the official groundbreaking on May 8. And not in consultation with the local business community; I am on the board of the Longfellow Business Association (LBA), which was never asked for input. I would have expected county representa-

tives to reach out and (1) inform property owners that they plan to restrict traffic to one lane; and (2) explain why they think one lane will suffice when their position when Lake Street was rebuilt was directly contrary.

As bad as Hennepin County's process was, the resulting plan is worse. The county should scrap its plan to abandon the current configuration of two lanes in each direction. Two lanes allow cars to pass stopped buses and prevent long backups of traffic that will ultimately slow all vehicles – including buses.

Dan Kennedy serves on the boards of the Longfellow Business Association and East Lake Special Services District, and served on the Hennepin County Project Advisory Committee when Lake Street was rebuilt. He is an attorney with Kennedy & Cain PLLC on East Lake Street, and this column reflects his personal perspective.

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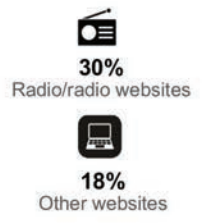
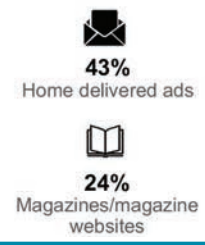
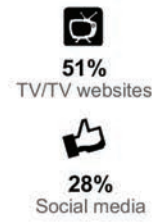
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SUMMER FUN GUIDE

Hello, Summer!

ART DROPS THROUGHOUT SUMMER

The next art drop hosted by Lake Street Council is on Thursday, June 1 at 6 p.m. in Uptown. Get photo hints to help find the art in its stories on Instagram or Facebook @VisitLakeStreet.

An art drop is when an artist leaves artwork in a public place, like a treasure hunt for gifts for the community. While the amount of artwork hidden will change each month, there will typically be up to a dozen pieces to find. The first individuals to locate each art treasure gets to take it home at no cost. Since there is a limited quantity at each art drop, each person is asked to take only one. After the art drop, stay for dinner, drinks, or shopping at a Lake Street small business.

Mark your calendars now for every first Thursday at 6 p.m. now through September for the art drops. Locations will rotate all along the Lake Street corridor and there will be new art pieces each time.

SHAKESPEARE IN OUR PARKS

Classical Actors Ensemble (CAE) announces a 9th season of Shakespeare in Our Parks with a new production of "Much Ado About Nothing." Directed by Producing Artistic Director Joseph Papke, this comedy will be performed in parks across the Twin Cities, June 16 - July 16, 2023, including partnership performances with Franconia Sculpture Park and the MN Humanities Center.

CAE honors Shakespeare's work by making high-quality entertainment available for all at no charge through its annual Shakespeare in Our Parks program. CAE encourages audiences to bring a picnic to enjoy this free outdoor entertainment for the entire family. In keeping with CAE's aesthetic, this production will include live, modern music performed by the cast.

Local shows include:

- Friday, June 16, 7 p.m.: Lyndale Park Rose Garden, 4124 Roseway Rd. 55409
- Sunday, June 18, 7 p.m.: Matthews

Park, 2318 29th Ave. S.

- Saturdays, June 1, 17, July 8, 15, 7 p.m.: Lake of the Isles (Newton Ave. S. and W. Lake of the Isles Pkwy, Mpls)

DRAG SHOW OPERA

Local drag and opera artists will showcase their original and collaborative performances at the Historic Mounds Theatre on June 16 and 17 at 7:30 p.m. and June 18 at 4 p.m. (ASL-interpreted on June 17.) Each performance will feature five opera performers -Victoria Vargas, Dom Wooten Embretson, Tracey Engleman, Justin Anthony Spenner, and Jordan Weatherston Pitts - alongside six of the Twin Cities' most legendary drag artists: Damien D'Luxe, Victoria DeVille, Andre 1,000, Rustina Phoenix Nuttz, Dick Von Dyke, Kamaree Williams. Together, they will perform new routines set to live opera performances. AOT model always offers "Pay As Able" and "Pay It Forward" ticket options to keep opera financially accessible.

SEMILLA CENTER ARTS CELEBRATION

The Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts invites you to a celebration of the Southside neighborhood, and a chance to plant beauty in the community. Come and make art that can become Semillas or Seeds of Hope! Learn how to make lanterns for a procession this fall on Lake Street. Local professional artists will be teaching how to make art Live music by local musicians and open mic. Great food. Free and family friendly. From 4-7 p.m. on Sunday, June 25; followed by an outdoor puppet show by Open Eye Theatre.

Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts is at 2742 15th Ave S. More at <https://www.semillacenter.org/>.

EXPLORE METRO'S ENDURING PLACES

Minnesota author Julie Jo Severson will be signing copies of her book, "Oldest Twin Cities: A Guide to Historic Treasures" on Saturday, June 3, from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at Swede Hollow Park, 688 Minnehaha Avenue E., St. Paul. Whether you're longing to reconnect with your metropolitan home, planning a different kind of itinerary for out-of-town guests, or shopping for a smart and timeless gift, you'll marvel at the vibrant glimpses of life, culture, and human perseverance glistening within the stories of "Oldest Twin Cities." Severson blends old-world history with modern-day relevance.

SEE A TURTLE ON LAND?

SHARE THE DETAILS ONLINE

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) received more than 300 reports of turtle sightings in 2022, including many impressive photos and videos. MPRB hopes to receive even more this year. Any and all reports help efforts to protect these animals at critical locations in the park system. Turtles are most vulnerable in springtime and when moving about on land.

Migrations of both adult turtles and tiny hatchlings can take them across roads and paths.

In 2021, dead turtles accounted for 10 percent of reported sightings; among the



dead turtles, more than 90 percent were spotted in roadways.

Adults are leaving the water to find summer habitat or suitable nesting spots on land. Snapping and painted turtles, the most common species in Minneapolis,

may migrate up to a mile to nest.

Meanwhile, hatchlings are emerging from their nests on land to make their way to water. These spring hatchlings have waited all winter in the nest (!) to make this journey; in fall, eggs laid in the spring yield a new wave of hatchlings heading to water.

Even softshell turtles, which nest on beaches or other land close to water, can still be vulnerable to predators, including domestic dogs (one reason they must be leashed).

Go to bit.ly/ReportATurtle to report turtles within Minneapolis. Report turtle sightings elsewhere at HerpMapper. Include images if at all possible: They help verify turtle species and activities.

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MARKET SERIES

Stenzel emphasized that the Minneapolis Park Markets are not farmers markets, which the park board already permits at various locations throughout the city. While visitors will not find any fresh produce at these markets, they will be able to shop a variety of other goods and learn about other services. Lake Harriet, for example, will have a vendor selling fresh cut flowers, another selling wooden children's toys, and another selling organic skincare products, among others.

The park board is partnering with several community organizations to put on some of the markets. They will work with the Black Market for the event at The Commons that will feature Black-owned businesses and professionals. At Water Works, the market will showcase a number of Indigenous vendors and artists.

Stenzel said the response from vendors who want to participate in the Minneapolis Park Markets has been great, and the events are all nearly at capacity. Stenzel said the park board may consider expanding these markets to additional parks in the future, but for now, they are going to

see how the first year goes. It all depends on the feedback they get from both vendors and park goers.

"There's so many good, really talented people in Minneapolis that maybe just can't get over that hump or just want to try something or want to do this or that," Stenzel said. "Success for us is somebody that came in that was a young entrepreneur who maybe started in the park and worked their way up to something bigger."

More information on the Minneapolis Park Markets can be found at minneapolisparkevents.org.

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EVENT INFO

A CHANGE OF SEASON

tions of hospitality and the work we chose to pursue. Isn't that the best part about your local eatery or watering hole? No matter how bad things are, you can gather with others to savor the good things in life – food, drink and the comfort of conversation.

Then we were told that we wouldn't be allowed to do that. We were told to close our doors, turn off our ovens and stopper our bottles. Hospitality practitioners were told that the best way we could help was to stay home and not do what we do best.

One of the things I've always loved about people who cook in kitchens or pour drinks or work the door or the floor of any food service operation is that being told something can't be done or isn't possible is always seen as a challenge to be overcome. Restaurant people don't walk away, we find a way...

That's why hospitality operations all over the great state of Minnesota continued to gather as teams and prepare and serve food free of charge to as many people as we knew would need it – front line workers, public school students, anyone in need anywhere we could find. It was something we knew we needed to do and we wouldn't be told "No." Since we were not allowed to officially open our doors and incorporate commerce, we just did it out of kindness. In doing so we re-discovered the true nature of our vocation and it's most spiritual reward: the ability to nourish one another.

In the year that followed, despite the violence, confrontations and upheaval that our communities experienced, I saw the bonds that hospitality workers formed over years of pressure in our kitchens and dining rooms grow stronger in our streets and public forums. More than anything, we made it a priority to declare that we



are at our strongest and at our best when we declare the importance of our diversity – when we give voice to the fact that immigrants, indigenous and people of color are the foundation of deliciousness in our country.

As I kept walking through our corner of Minneapolis, processing the three years of loss and uncertainty that began in March of 2020, I thought about how, in the aftermath of financial ruin and civil unrest, many restaurants run by several of my friends and colleagues just aren't around anymore. The hospitality business is fickle and difficult enough without the aforementioned circumstances, but there was a certain combination of the two that caused a lot of hardworking and talented members of our community to wash their hands of the only career they'd ever pursued and just walk away.

It struck me with a certain amount of weight that I was considering those losses while I was crossing Lyndale Avenue on 46th street where, just a few blocks south, chef Miguel Urrutia turned his taco truck into brick and mortar magnificence and worked like a champion with his team to keep it alive with takeout through those dark days of 2020 and 2021. A few blocks



north, chef Ann Ahmed had seen her vision through those same ugly years to grace us with the beauty and deliciousness of an homage to her family heritage by opening Khâluna in October of 2021 – a restaurant I consider one of the hands-down finest in Minnesota.

I thought about other recently opened-eateries offering new approaches to Minnesota cuisine like the daytime-only Kruse Markit on Nicollet Avenue run by the triple threat of 'Collectively Cool Humans' otherwise known as Beth Fisher, Sarah Lee and Heidi Stark – or the sister and brother team of Aubry and Kale Walch offering their vegan innovations at Herbie Butcher's Fried Chicken.

How blessed are we that on one end of our neighborhood we can gorge ourselves on the traditional aromatic classics of South Asian gastronomy at Hyderabad Indian Grill on 60th Street while savoring those same flavors elevated to futuristic presentations by Sohil G at Raag Progressive Indian Cuisine on 50th Street just east of France Avenue?

Just before I crossed the 35W bridge on the Diamond Lake exit to head back home, I passed Órale, our neighborhood staple for tacos and takeout – another

Chefs to check out include Ann Ahmed of Khâluna (at left) and the sister-brother team of Aubry and Kale Walch of Herbie Butcher's Fried Chicken.

hearty survivor of tough times – and their new next door neighbor, Thai Pepper, offering up the noodles, salads and savory heat from a country about as geographically distant as one can get from Minnesota.

I, for one, am overjoyed about that.

Something I have always loved about food is its ability to take us anywhere on the planet that we would rather be, for whatever reason we wanted to go there. After the long, dark winter of the past three years, I am beyond grateful that the aforementioned, hardworking visionaries are taking Minnesota into a new season of both culture and cuisine. It seems to me that they are already leading us home.

J.D. Fratzke is a husband, father, wilderness advocate, and word enthusiast. He has spent most of his adult life toiling in restaurant kitchens to varying degrees of success. A lifelong Minnesotan, JD and his family live in South Minneapolis.

WACSO WALKIN' AROUND CHECKIN' STUFF OUT.

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ST. PAUL APPROVES RAISED, SEPARATED BIKE TRAIL ON SUMMIT AVENUE

By **Jane McClure**

Plans for the Summit Avenue Regional Trail won a 6-1 vote from the St. Paul City Council on May 24, 2023, after more than four hours of testimony. The plans now go to the Metropolitan Council to meet a June 30 deadline.

Members of the Summit Avenue group Save Our Street, historic preservationists and some cyclists said the plan is flawed and should be discarded. They raised issues including loss of trees and impacts on the street's historic districts. Some brought up reports from project engineering consultant Bolton and Menk, which raised several technical questions about the project itself.

Others asked for a delayed vote, questioning why a decision came immediately after public testimony.

But many bicycling advocates from across the Twin Cities hailed the vote as a big win. Not only is a raised, separated bike trail promoted as safer and providing the chance for more to enjoy the street, a new trail on Summit is seen by advocates as a key tie into the greater regional bike facilities network.

A long-range plan calls for the Ayd Mill Road and the Mississippi River Boulevard trails in St. Paul to tie into Minneapolis' Midtown Greenway via land along area railroads and the railroad High Bridge over the Mississippi River. Mississippi River Boulevard and Summit are regional trails, and receive regional as well as city funds for upkeep and improvements. A decision on whether Midtown Greenway should become a regional trail has been pushed to June.

The vote on May 24 isn't expected to end many months of debate. The vote came the same day that Ramsey County District Court Judge Patrick Diamond denied a

temporary restraining order sought by the advocacy group Save Our Streets, Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association (SARPA) and attorney Robert Cattanauch to put a hold on the project. The lawsuit was focused on city delays in meeting data access requests focused on the trail. Cattanauch said his group will be evaluating its options. He maintains the city hasn't followed proper procedures with the project.

The separated raised trail would run the length of Summit. Design would vary by street segment. Much controversy centers on Summit east of Lexington Parkway where about 50 percent of on-street parking would be removed. That brought up concerns of reception halls, places of worship, sober houses and residents losing parking. Several women said they already don't feel safe walking at night, and would have to walk longer distances when the trail goes in.

More than 200 people filled the council chambers, with more than 90 signing up to speak. City officials have received thousands of comments for and against the project.

Rebuilding the entirety of Summit would cost about \$100 million; incorporating the bike trail could add about \$12 million more. The project has no timeline and no funding, although the city's proposed 1 percent sales tax increase is seen as a possible source. The sales tax would have to be approved by voters, possibly this November.

One big point of debate is tree loss. There are 1,561 trees in the Summit corridor. City and Save Our Street studies vary widely as to how many trees would be lost.

Opponents, who outnumbered supporters by more than two to one, raised many arguments against the plan. Several said the plan is being pushed along by a small band of cyclists.

DOING BETTER FOR THE CLIMATE

As city creates Climate Equity Plan, some push for more and others applaud new outline

By **Cam Gordon**

This city's recently release update to its 2013 Climate Action Plan is grabbing the attention of community members, council members and candidates alike.

Called the Climate Equity Plan, a draft was released in April and the city is taking public comment through June 5 before a new draft is released and approved this summer.

"We heard from hundreds of people in our community in the development of this new climate equity plan and worked hard to ensure it reflected what we were hearing from community priorities," said Kim Havey, who has been leading the effort as the Minneapolis Health Department's Director of sustainability.

The goal of the plan is to significantly reduce climate pollution by 2030 and make the city carbon neutral by 2050. Strategies include insulating 30,000 homes, reducing natural gas emissions, supporting 1,000 new green jobs, and expanding green space and local food production.

According to the plan, in 2021 3.6 million metric tons of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were released into the air in Minneapolis. The city estimated that 45% of that is coming from natural gas, 28% comes from electricity that is produced by burning fossil fuels, and 24% comes from motor vehicles. In order to meet the goal of zero GHG emissions by 2050, as outlined in the plan, transitioning to using clean renewable energy sources for heating, electricity and transportation is called for.

The new plan focuses on equity as well as climate action. It outlines a tale of two cities and states, "Redlining practices of the 1920s systematically provided less green infrastructure and located less desirable buildings like manufacturing facilities and transportation corridors through BIPOC, low-income neighborhoods."

The plan notes that climate change "hits our most vulnerable communities the hardest," and prioritizes the city's designated Green Zones, cultural districts and lower-income households. "Achieving equity," it says, "means that all people - regardless of their race, color, gender, age, sexuality, national origin, ability, or income - live in safe and healthy communities."

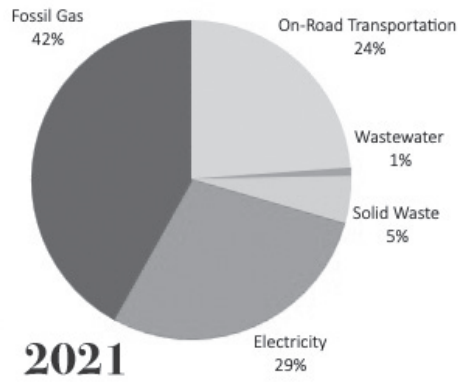
FEEDBACK AND FORUMS

The plan has been attracting attention throughout the city.

More than 500 people have commented on the draft. "We've already started incorporating some of the feedback into the next version of the plan which will be shared in the near future," said Havey.

Council members in the southwest Wards of 7, 11 and 13 have hosted community meetings about the plan. Ward 13 Council Member Linea Palmisano planned to hold a forum on June 1, and has met about the plan with groups including MN 350 and neighborhood associations.

"I am as eager as anyone to get started," said Palmisano. "We have lots of current needs that we can work to scale up quickly, such as home weatherization, green cost share, green careers and biochar. We already work on these programs and others, such as 0% loans, free Home Energy Squad visits, Truth in Sale of Housing (TISH) Energy Reports and more have continued while we've been developing



this new plan. And that is just a start - we will be in a continuous process of creating new programs and then coming back to the community for feedback on how it's working and consideration of any further policies."

Community Power has hosted several candidate forums where the plan has been discussed. MN350 has also helped educate community members on the plan.

Tangletown resident Rikki Honnold got involved with MN350 in 2020. "People changed their behaviors so quickly for coronavirus, and the city government passed urgent emergency ordinances, but the city's urgency against climate change still feels slow," Honnold said. "When I found out that there was a dedicated group specifically helping guide policy to reduce CO2 emissions, I joined in to volunteer for the sake of my children's future air quality."

Honnold added, "I do not see the city's plan as having any actions toward providing subsidies and financing for low-income families, for both weatherization and electric appliances." She is pressing for a study presented to the city council in February to be included in the plan. That study recommended starting with 4,400 buildings to transition to electrification instead of natural gas in 2024. "The CEE study presented to the council has better goals and a more urgent timeline than the city's draft plan," she said. "It would be nice to see someone with the political will to make electrification a priority, starting this year."

HOW WILL IT BE PAID FOR?

"While I'm pleased the city's proposed plan begins to show an understanding between climate action and racial equity, paying attention to the needs of our historically neglected neighborhoods, I don't think the mayor has in any way begun to reckon with the amount of revenue the city is going to need to raise to meet the climate goals he's committed to," said Longfellow resident Michelle Hensley. "He and the city council must make the major spewers of greenhouse gases in Minneapolis pay fees for their pollution, and raise the almost \$4 billion in revenue Minneapolis is going to need to meet their climate pledges."

While there is no budget presented in the plan, it identifies three sources to facilitate implementation through a "Climate Legacy Initiative." These are increasing revenues from franchise fees that are currently charged for gas and electricity based on a percentage of use, applying a social cost of carbon to emissions through the state's Pollution Control Annual Registration (PCAR) program that allows cities to collect fees from polluting businesses, and by utilizing new federal, state, and local grant funding. Palmisano said she is open to using all three sources.

"The Climate Equity Plan is meant to be an aspirational document to set aggressive and ambitious targets, like Race to Zero, that drive our decisions into the future," said Palmisano. She noted that implementation could be accelerated with adequate funding and staff. "It is up to me, as a policy maker, to help us put

into play the infrastructure that will reach those targets."

The plan has attracted the attention of southwest council candidates.

"I am glad that equity is at the center of the city's plan. For too long, diverse and historically polluted neighborhoods have had to bear a disproportionate environmental burden," said Scott Graham, who is running for the Ward 7 seat. "Weatherizing and electrifying homes in the Green Zones and across the city will be a huge lift, but it is an essential piece to reducing the energy burden close to or below 4% of income for Minneapolitans. This work will also support the creation of new green jobs for residents, another crucial piece for both our local economy and climate."

"The plan should outline a comprehensive funding strategy that meets the moment," said Katie Cashman, who is also running for the Ward 7 seat. "I would like to see the plan outline the cost of each action item, and clearly identify which city departments are in charge of implementing the action steps. The city needs to make it as easy as possible for building owners and homeowners to transition from gas-powered furnaces and water heaters to electric appliances. Outreach efforts need to be included in the budget. I'd also like to see the downtown district energy system transition off fossil fuels entirely."

"It's critical that the city do better in the 'order of operation' across Climate Plan projects. For example, the draft plan's focus on reducing car trips is particularly harsh and burdensome on Ward 13 due to the lesser density, distance from the urban center, and older population," said Kate Mortenson who is seeking the Ward 13 city council seat. "In terms of the opportunity to build or retrofit infrastructure with

talent sourced from within underinvested communities, we need a stronger tie-in with organized labor, including how to develop interest, recruit and train the anticipated climate workforce. Probably the most mysterious aspect of the draft plan is how it will be paid for."

CAUTIOUS, CURIOUS AND HOPEFUL

People appear to be both cautious and curious, but also hopeful, about the potential of this updated plan and how it might help city government to "...collaborate with residents to advance environmentally just policies that achieve deep carbon emission reductions, repair past environmental injustices perpetrated upon Indigenous, Black and Communities of color, and create solutions for a sustainable, inclusive economy," as its mission says.

"Sadly, climate change will cause drastic lifestyle changes in 10 years if we don't make gradual lifestyle changes like electrification and transitioning away from natural gas now," said Honnold.

"We are still accepting feedback and want to get this right. City staff would like to move this forward in June," said Palmisano. "If there is significant community pushback, the plan might get delayed until 2024. I think we can all agree that this is too important to wait and we need to get this work moving forward."

"We're proud that in the years to come, not only will we be doing our part to mitigate climate change, but we'll have a cleaner, greener, healthier city, and our community members will be able to see our beautiful city evolve over time," said Havey.

"It's a chance," said Hensley, "for Minneapolis to be a bold leader and set a national example of how a city can address climate change."

"If successful," added Havey, "this could make Minneapolis one of the most

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CITY BRIEFS

WEST 21ST STREET CLOSURE

West 21st Street between Upton and Thomas avenues closed to non-residential vehicle traffic on May 22. It will likely remain closed until autumn for utility, track and roadway construction related to the light rail project. Local access for residents on Upton Ave. S. will be maintained through a temporary bypass road. Kenilworth Trail will also be temporarily closed between West 21st St. and the Bryn Mawr Station for the duration of the construction season.

LEGISLATORS END SESSION

The state legislature finished its work on May 22 and adjourned until Feb 12, 2024. Among other things, they approved a health spending and policy bill, a \$2.6 billion capital investment package and \$300 million for nursing homes as part of 30 priority bills identified by the Democratic Farmer Labor party. After the session ended, southwest representative and house majority leader, State Representative Jamie Long, said, "We set out a vision and we delivered." The bills passed also included a transportation bill championed by local State Senator Scott Dibble and Representative Frank Hornstein that will provide \$1.48 billion for roads, bridges and other transportation needs in the next two years, including \$2 million for Metro Transit mental health and addiction intervention teams, and \$195 million for building passenger rail between the Twin Cities and Duluth.

DFL WARD CONVENTIONS

The Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) party has completed its planned round of city-ward level meetings to consider endorsing city council member candidates in each ward, including the southwest wards of 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13. The Ward 10 meeting was held on May 13, but was recessed before an endorsement vote could be taken due to the disruptive behavior of some participants. It may be rescheduled. At the Ward 7 meeting on May 21, Scott Graham, Katie Cashman and Scott Globus were seeking the endorsement. No candidate was endorsed and all three appear to be continuing their campaigns. At the Ward 8 meeting on May 20, Soren Stevenson was endorsed with 68% percent of the vote. Andrea Jenkins, who received 29% of the vote said she will continue in the race. Emily Koski was endorsed at the Ward 11 meeting on May 21 with 85% of the vote. Linea Palmisano was endorsed at the Ward 13 convention on April 1. Kate Mortenson was not endorsed, but is continuing her campaign. The candidate filing period goes from Aug. 1 to 15, so more candidates are likely to enter the races and others may drop out.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE

The 2023 Community Connections Conference will be held on June 10 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. This is a free annual event.

Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

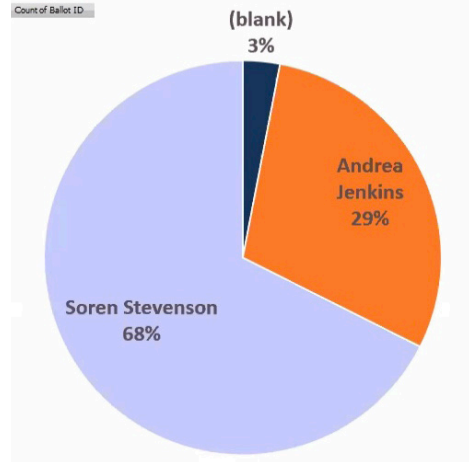
DFL ENDORSES SOREN STEVENSON FOR WARD 8 INSTEAD OF JENKINS

By **Jill Boogren**

Soren Stevenson earned the DFL endorsement for Ward 8 City Council at its convention on May 20. Of the delegates, 68% voted for Stevenson on the first ballot and over 29% for Council President Andrea Jenkins, thus sealing the party's endorsement in just one round.

"This is a clear sign that Ward 8 is ready for new leadership," said Stevenson when accepting the endorsement. "The city is ready for a kinder, safer Minneapolis, and we're gonna take this all the way to November, and we're gonna get that kinder, safer Minneapolis."

Held virtually, the convention began with a Q&A session wherein candidates were given a minute each to respond to about a dozen questions from delegates. Candidates were asked about affordable housing, food instability and accessibility for people who do not speak English as their first language. They were also asked about the best use of the Hiawatha Golf Course. (Jenkins supports its historic na-



ture and retaining the 18-hole course. Stevenson supports the plan for a 9-hole course, which he said keeps the historic site while better preparing the city for our climate future.)

In response to losing the endorsement, Jenkins said she was "very disappointed" but grateful to the 29% of people who support her. She will continue her campaign through November.

SERVICE BEING RESTORED, SECURITY COMING

The next coming Metro Transit pick (schedule change) is Saturday, June 17, 2023. After three years of bad news, caused by the pandemic and then a driver shortage, Southwest Connector readers finally have something to rejoice about!

The hiring campaigns of the past year or so have finally brought in enough drivers to restore some of the service that was previously suspended. Improvements this summer in the Southwest Connector readership area include:

- The Orange Line on I-35W between downtown Minneapolis and Burnsville will run every 15 minutes rather than once every half hour midday on weekdays.
- Route 4 (Lyndale Ave. S.) will have minor schedule changes on weekends, and northbound on weekdays at rush hour.
- Route 6 (Hennepin/Xerxes/France Aves.) will have minor schedule changes on Saturdays and weekdays during the afternoon rush hour.
- Route 23 (38th St. to Uptown Transit Center) will run once every half hour instead of once an hour midday on weekdays. Additionally, one additional trip will leave the Vets Home at 11:10 p.m.
- Route 25L, which runs through the Lowry Hill, Kenwood, and Cedar-Isles-Dean neighborhoods to the Jewish Community Center in Saint Louis Park once per day in each direction on school days, will now run every weekday, whether or not school is open.

I suspect the improvements to Route 23 will be appreciated most by Southwest



By **John Wilson**

Connector readers. I hope at least some of you find the Orange Line and Route 25L useful as well.

Security issues on buses and at stations may make some people apprehensive about using Metro Transit. I understand people don't want to be bothered or have to suffer violence or smell smoke, urine, or other bad things. You may have noticed that the inside of Uptown Transit Center has been temporarily closed. It and five other transit stops throughout the Twin Cities are slated for a new security detail to keep indecorous and nefarious behavior to a minimum. Uptown Transit Center will reopen once the new security is in place.

Metro Transit is still hiring drivers, vehicle technicians, and railway maintenance people, as well as transit police. Wages range from \$26 to \$41 an hour. If you're looking for a new career, please check out <https://metrotransit.org>.

There are still controversies and problems with the Green Line extension, which is still under construction. Most of the Green Line problems seem to revolve around the Kenilworth Corridor tunnel between Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles. With the way things are going, we probably won't see trains until 2027. More importantly, will this debacle and the one in North Minneapolis regarding placement of the Blue Line extension kill new light rail projects for the foreseeable future? Bus rapid transit, like the A, C, D, Orange, and Red Lines, seems to be the preferred way to improve transit in the future, due to its less disruptive construction process.

Do Southside Connector readers prefer LRT or BRT?

John Wilson lives in south Minneapolis and pays attention to transit issues.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

LAND BANK APPOINTS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Land Bank Twin Cities, a nonprofit organization that works to break barriers to equitable real estate development and provide investment opportunities for underserved communities across the Twin Cities, has appointed Thomas Streitz as the Interim Executive Director. Streitz was one of the original founders of Land Bank Twin Cities more than 13 years ago and most recently served as its Board Chair. Streitz's appointment follows the retirement of Sandy Oakes, who served as President of Land Bank Twin Cities for 10 years. Streitz resides in southwest Minneapolis.



SMETANA JOINS LYNDALE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

Sami Smetana is thrilled to be joining the Lyndale Neighborhood Association as Executive Director. Originally from western Wisconsin, Smetana moved to Minnesota in 2016. A resident of South Minneapolis herself, Smetana is incredibly excited to engage with and support the Lyndale community to continue to shape the neighborhood to be safe, vibrant, and sustainable. In her free time, you will likely find Smetana with her family exploring the wonderful parks throughout Minneapolis or gardening in her backyard.



BID FAREWELL TO SARAH AT KINGFIELD

Bid farewell and thank longtime Kingfield Neighborhood Association Executive Director Sarah Linnes-Robinson on Monday June 5 at Tap Society, 6:30-9 p.m. Linnes-Robinson also recently worked as the Lyndale Neighborhood Group Interim Executive Director.



WORK AT PAINTER PARK

Construction on improvements at Painter Park begins this July. The improvements include: Relocated and reconstructed tennis court includes striping for two pickleball courts using portable nets; relocated and reconstructed full basketball court with additional shoot-around hoop area; and new street-style skatepark with incorporated transition-style features.

MINNEAPOLIS BACK TO 3RD BEST PARK

Trust for Public Land has announced that Saint Paul repeated its second-place finish on the annual ParkScore index. Minneapolis climbed to third, two spots ahead of 2022's fifth place ranking. Minneapolis' rise was based largely on improvements to park amenities. Both cities finished just behind defending ParkScore champion Washington, DC, which retains the ParkScore Title for the third consecutive year. The ParkScore index evaluates park systems in the 100 most populous U.S. cities.

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