

SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • SEPTEMBER 7, 2023 • VOL. 2 • NO. 15 • 25,000 CIRCULATION



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'CHANGE ISN'T CHEAP' SAYS MAYOR FREY

Proposed budget sets aside \$16 million to implement dual consent decrees, \$217 million for police department

By **Cam Gordon**

On Aug. 15, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey presented his proposed 2024 budget to the city council for consideration. The formal process for what many consider the year's most important council decision has begun, with final budget approval expected on Dec. 5.

Saying that the proposal is "largely geared toward following through on commitments that have already been made," the mayor highlighted several specific initiatives in his address to the council.

If approved, the mayor noted that the budget would set aside new funding to support the council legislative department, provide \$720,000 for future planning and improvements to George Floyd Square, and increase funding to neighborhood organizations by \$420,000 bringing the base funding to \$15,000 a year for each neighborhood (from \$10,000).

"I have been a longtime advocate for increased funding for neighborhood organizations, this was one of my top requests to the mayor for consideration in his 2024 Budget," said Ward 13 City Council member Linea Palmisano. "This is a good start, but I think we still need to go further."

"I have concerns about funding for neighborhood associations, which was dramatically cut last year," said Ward 13 Council candidate Kate Mortenson. "I want to see full and equitable support for neighborhood associations with fewer, not more, government strings attached."

The mayor also called attention to a dedicated \$10 million a year for a new climate legacy fund, \$3 million for the behavior crisis response, \$5 million annually for public housing, \$3 million for opioid response, \$2.7 million for parkway repairs, and an added \$1 million to increase shelter capacity for those experiencing homelessness.

"I am glad to see the mayor's proposed 2024 budget reflect a strong, comprehensive commitment to public safety," said Ward 7 City Council candidate Scott Graham. "It provides funding to fully staff our police department, to add civilian positions to strengthen investigative and administrative functions, and to expand alternative crisis response, specifically the behavioral crisis response program."

"I'm celebrating several key investments in our shared future, but especially the \$10 million dollars we will be dedicating to climate action," said Ward 7 Council candidate Katie Cashman. "When we started a grassroots Minneapolis Green New Deal coalition in 2021, we com-

PARKS FOR ALL MURAL PROJECT



Nine community artists are creating murals this year in Minneapolis parks they have ties to

By **Talia McWright**

Kao Lee Thao and Ash Kubesh spent 66 hours over 10 days painting two new murals that represent Thao's Hmong heritage at Boom Island Park. The artwork is part of the Minneapolis Parks and Recre-

ation Board's 2023 "Parks for All Mural Project."

Nine artists in all were chosen to paint murals at multiple park locations, with the aim to decrease tagging and vandalism.

Parks for All is a comprehensive plan adopted by the board in 2021 as a way to create and accomplish nine goals that will sustainably benefit parks across the state for years to come. (See sidebar for complete list.) The mural project was funded

through the board's budget and grant initiatives, as well as by local organizations. Artists were chosen for the mural project through a call for artists application in collaboration with Forecast Public Art. Over 140 artists applied. Once selected, the artists were given \$6,000 for labor and \$3,000 for materials.

"I'm really excited to help communicate out to community what the park board has adopted as policy through the interpreta-

HEAR REAL-LIFE STORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE SEPT. 14

Hennepin History Museum partners with Minneapolis Interview Project

By **Jill Boogren**

On Sept. 14, the Minneapolis Interview Project and Hennepin History Museum (2303 3rd Ave. S.) will present an evening of real-life stories about social justice at the Capri Theater (2207 West Broadway) in North Minneapolis. The event marks the culmination of seven years of work by historian, teacher and Southside resident Anne Winkler-Morey, who set out



Anne Winkler-Morey (Courtesy of Eric Mueller)

to interview 100 people to reveal "hidden histories of inequality and the struggle for social justice in Minneapolis."

Among interviewees are artists, human rights advocates, poets, organizers, educators and more - many of whom were born here, others who moved here from different cities and countries - whose experiences and perspectives provide a richly varied look at what it's like to live in this city at this time. Nearly 30 of the project participants will be at the

event. Excerpts from their interviews will be shared, followed by a panel and conversation. Housing, schools, environmental justice, racial justice, gender and sexuality are just some of the topics touched on.

"There are all these individual stories, but I hear [the interviewees] talking to each other, echoing different themes or disagreeing with each other, in ways that are really interesting, so I wanted to give people just a tiny flavor of that," said Winkler-Morey.

Having read Malcolm X and Studs Terkel's "Working" as a teen, Winkler-Morey, now 65, knew from a young age the value of true stories and how important they are

George Floyd Square holds vigil for Ricky Cobb II

By **Jill Boogren**

Community members stood with the family of Ricky Cobb II at George Floyd Square on Aug. 5, 2023 to offer support and demand justice for Cobb, who was fatally shot on July 31 by a Minnesota State Patrol trooper on I-94 in North Minneapolis.

"How many more people have to die until Minnesota wakes up to say enough is enough?!" asked Faith Allen, preaching to the dozens of activists gathered on Chicago Ave. for a rally and vigil. She urged people to get up and do something. "Use your power. Stand up. Use your voice. You have power."

Rev. Jia Starr Brown acknowledged that, like many activists, she was tired and assured others that just being present – even if coming empty handed – mattered. "This is a space to say, 'You don't have to bring or be anything but yourself,'" she said. "It's okay to be tired. This is exhausting."

People offered comfort to one another through art, food, music and – at the end of the evening – dancing to the music of Brass Solidarity.

Cobb was pulled over for an alleged traffic violation. Dash camera and body-worn video footage released by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety shows a trooper, later identified as Brett Seide, talking to Cobb from the driver's side of the vehicle. "I'm gonna need you to step out of the vehicle. We just have some stuff to talk about," he is heard saying. The two of them are talking back and forth, with the trooper telling Cobb to give him his

'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH'



Rashad Cobb (holding microphone) stands with family in grief over the loss at the hands of state troopers of his twin brother, Ricky Cobb II. "What are we gonna do for us, as citizens, together...? I'm a peaceful person. I don't really agree with violence." (Photo by Jill Boogren)



An exhausted Rev. Jia Starr Brown tells activists, "It's okay to be tired," and that being present for the families matters. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

keys and Cobb asking why and whether he could contact his attorney. During this exchange, another trooper, Ryan Londregan, approaches from the passenger side, pulls the door open, reaches in with his gun drawn while shouting, "Get out of the car now!" and fires his gun.

Cobb drove forward a short distance before coming to a stop at the center divider. The medical examiner ruled Cobb's death a homicide from multiple gunshot wounds.

According to Communities United Against Police Brutality (CUAPB), Londregan escalated the situation, which resulted in Cobb's death. "These officers engaged in excessive, unnecessary force including deadly force that killed Mr. Cobb and endangered others," read a CUAPB press release. A third trooper, Garrett Erickson, was also present.

Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty issued a statement indicating that the three troopers have been placed on leave and the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) is investigating the incident. Activists have called for the troopers to be fired and charges brought immediately. On Aug. 18, the family announced their intent to file a civil lawsuit.

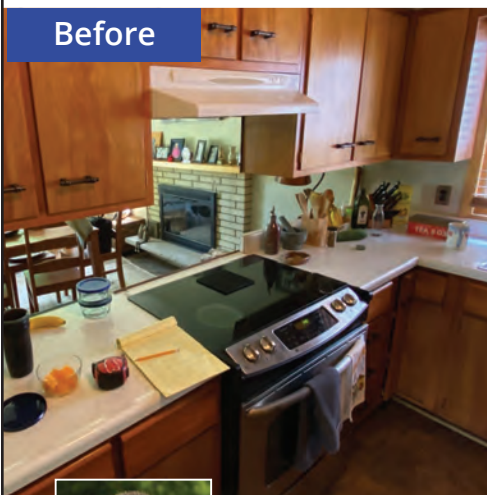
Family and friends of Cristian Rivera-Coba were also present for the rally and vigil. Rivera-Coba died in the Anoka County Jail on July 21, three days after he was incarcerated. The Sherburne County Sheriff's Office is investigating his death.

A spokesperson with ties to the family said he asked them to come. "I brought them to 38th and Chicago today to see that there's a whole community that they didn't even know existed," he said. "I just wanted to show them there's a whole group of people that will stand up with them, fight for answers, fight so we know what happened to Cristian and get them the justice they deserve."

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BUDGET COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

September

Sept. 11, 10 a.m. – Budget Overview, Financial Policies Overview, and Schedule 5 Overview
 Sept. 11, 1:30 p.m. – Consent Decree Budget Presentation
 Department Presentations to Budget Committee: (Subject to Change)
 Sept. 12, 10 a.m. – Mayor, City Council, City Clerk, City Auditor, City Attorney
 Sept. 14, 10 a.m. – Office of Public Service, Intergovernmental Relations
 Sept. 18, 10 a.m. – Finance & Property Services
 Sept. 26, 10 a.m. – Human Resources, Information and Technology
 Sept. 28, 10 a.m. – 311 Service Center, Communications, Neighborhood & Community Relations
 Sept. 13, 4 p.m. – Mayor Presents 2024 Budget to the BET, Public Hearing on Maximum Levy, BET Sets Maximum Levy

October

Department Presentations to Budget Committee: (Subject to Change)
 Oct. 2, 10 A.M. – Minneapolis Convention Center & Downtown Assets, Health & Youth Coordinating Board
 Oct. 3, 10 A.M. – Community Planning & Economic Development, Regulatory Services, Arts & Cultural Affairs
 Oct. 10, 10 A.M. – Public Works, Civil Rights
 Oct. 12, 10 A.M. – Race Equity Inclusion & Belonging, Performance Management & Innovation
 Oct. 16, 10 A.M. – Office of Community Safety, Emergency Management
 Oct. 23, 10 A.M. – 911/MECC, Neighborhood Safety
 Oct. 23, 1:30 PM – Fire, Police
 Oct. 24, 10 A.M. – Capital Budget Presentation, MPRB, City Assessor
 Oct. 25, 6:05 PM – Public Hearing #1

November

Nov. 1, 10 A.M. – Public Hearing #2
 Nov. 30, 10 A.M. – Mark Up Meeting #1
 Dec. 1, 10 A.M. – Mark Up Meeting #2

December

Dec. 5, 6:05 p.m. – Truth in Taxation Hearing/
 Budget Adoption in Adjourned City Council Meeting

▶ 1 CHANGE ISN'T CHEAP

mitted ourselves to building power, neighborhood by neighborhood, for equitable investment in climate action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and builds resiliency, with the inclusion of union labor provisions and workforce development for a just transition.”

“My fellow Ward 7 volunteers and I spent hours every week talking to our neighbors about how important this decade is for climate action, and gathered groups together to meet our council member, write letters to the mayor, and bring more voices into the conversation,” added Cashman. “There is strength and power in organizing, and today I’m proud to say it paid off.”

EXPECTED \$150-160 PROPERTY TAX BUMP

The total amount needed to cover these and other city expenses is \$1.8 billion, an 8.3% increase from the current budget of \$1.66 billion. The funds will come from \$1.81 billion in revenues, which is a 15% increase from last year and includes an increase in state local government aid, and franchise fee increases. It also includes a 6.2% increase in the property tax levy, which will raise the total amount collected by \$27.6 million in 2024.

The property tax increase of 6.2% is expected to result in a \$150-160 increase in property taxes for the median priced single-family home. Such a home, valued at \$331,000, would have city-only property taxes of about \$1,952 that, according to the city, would be divided so that \$21 was for the public housing, \$56 to cover pensions costs, \$134 for public works, \$154 for the fire department, \$260 for capital improvements and debts, \$342 for parks, \$409 for the police department and \$576 for all other city services.

“It is very important to me that the community is part of and is engaged in the budget process,” said Ward 11 Council member Emily Koski, who chairs the city’s budget committee. Koski held meetings earlier in the year focused on budget priorities,

and said that she used them to create budget priorities that she shared with the mayor when he was developing his proposal.

“At a high-level, I am grateful to see significant investment in our shared priorities of public services and infrastructure, public safety, and affordable housing,” said Koski.

\$3 MILLION FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

One aspect of the budget that has found support is increased funding for affordable housing in general and public housing in particular.

“It is great to see a growing investment in the affordable housing trust fund, the Minneapolis homes program, and the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA). Expanding the Minneapolis homes program enables greater homeownership opportunities in our communities of color,” said Graham. “These expenditures signal a strong commitment to ensuring long-term housing affordability and facilitating homeownership opportunities for those who seek them.”

The Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET) must approve a maximum city levy amount prior to the city council approving any budget. The BET chair, Samantha Pree-Stinson, advocated for the need for a public housing levy as a candidate and since taking office in 2022. In May, she presided over a meeting of the BET where MPHA made their request for a levy, followed by time for resident testimony.

“Residents showed up and told us what they needed. They told us they need a fully funded levy. We have the responsibility to take these residents’ and their needs seriously. The proposed \$5 million in ongoing funding is a big win by residents, for residents,” said Pree-Stinson. “I will bring the proposal for a fully funded levy to the Sept. 20 meeting of the BET and look forward to seeing residents and supporters there.”

Additional funding for two full time employees in the oversight and evaluation division of the office of the city auditor has mixed reviews.

Palmisano supports it. “This office works to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of government services. With this increased staffing and capacity, I am looking to bring forward an audit of how city assessments are calculated and applied,” she said.

The city auditor is one of the few departments that works under the authority of the city council, and not the mayor, under the governance structure charter amendment passed last election.

“Since an outside monitor will be evaluating reforms to remain in compliance with multiple police abuse settlements, there is simply no need for a \$2.4 million audit department,” said Mortenson. “I would instead grow the capacity of the City’s Office of Innovation and Evaluation, where some game-changer work has come from, including the behavioral crisis response program.”

WHAT'S NEXT

The budget will next go to the council’s budget committee for review and hearings. There will be 13 meetings covering department level budgets that will be televised, available online and open to the public in the city hall council chambers. There will be three public hearings where any member of the public may address the council. They are scheduled for Oct. 25, Nov. 1, and Dec. 5. Two meetings, called budget “mark-up” meetings will be held (Nov. 30 and Dec. 1) where council members may propose and vote on budget amendments.

“In the coming weeks, I will be diving deeper into the mayor’s 2024 recommended budget and levy to ensure that it meets my budget priorities, and the city of Minneapolis’s budget priorities,” said Koski. “I welcome any feedback from my neighbors, communities, neighborhood organizations, and more. I welcome feedback at any of my upcoming Ward 11 monthly meetings, or via call or email, and the sooner the better so I have the feedback well in advance of the budget committee’s mark-up meetings.” See www.minneapolis.gov/government/budget/.

▶ 1 REAL-LIFE STORIES

in telling the people’s history. She had already been gathering testimonials while on a bike tour around the U.S. perimeter and was in the process of compiling them for a book about her journey (“Allegiance to Winds and Waters: Bicycling the Political Divides of the United States,” 2022). Fascinated by how geography and history both shape and are shaped by the people, she found herself wondering whether she had a right to say anything about places she’d been in for only 24 or 36 hours.

For that matter, how well did she even know the place where she lived? Minneapolis. She wanted to explore it with fresher eyes.

In 2016, while teaching at Metro State University, she had planned to meet with a former student of hers, Kirk Washington Jr., to hear some of his life stories as a prominent community member in North Minneapolis. The day before they were to meet, he was tragically killed in a car accident. A tremendous loss for the community, his death instilled in her the importance of not waiting for the “right” time to make these connections.

“If I have these questions and I really want to have these conversations that are not like the kinds of conversations you have on social media,” she reasoned, “Then I should just start.”

And so she did.

And she began to see that people living in the same place can have very different experiences – and know little about other people’s experiences.

16 BEFORE SHE SAW A LAKE IN ‘CITY OF LAKES’

One interviewee, Tammy Ortegon, Minneapolis artist and hair stylist at ColorWheel Gallery (46th & Grand), said even though Minneapolis is known as the “City of Lakes,” Ortegon was 16 years old before she even saw one. “When you live



Loring Park painting by T. Ortegon.

in Northeast Minneapolis and you don’t drive, you have to go pretty far to get to a lake,” she told the Minneapolis Interview Project.

This made Winkler-Morey think about public access – who is invited, who is not, and in what ways is public policy created that keeps people excluded. Examples include which ball games are allowed or not allowed (baseball, soccer and football, for example, are racially and class coded), whether there is bus access to parks and if they have picnic facilities. Recreation shapes and is shaped by the people who live there.

LIVING HISTORY

The murder of George Floyd in 2020 personally impacted Winkler-Morey, who lives 10 blocks from 38th and Chicago and as an activist has been involved in protests before, during and after that year. And it certainly impacted the project. By then Winkler-Morey had interviewed about 70 people, with whom she then reconnected to see if they wanted to add any reflections. Many did, and anyone interviewed after that time was asked what

2020 was like for them.

But she wants to remind people that things don’t happen in a vacuum, something she was aware of as a historian and from doing those earlier interviews.

“While [2020] was a watershed moment, the people have been struggling in Minneapolis for centuries,” she said. “So it’s not the only thing that’s fueling our need to focus on this place.”

The murder of Jamar Clark and the two and a half-week occupation of the Fourth Precinct police station in 2015 was on a lot of people’s minds when she began the project. She had spent a 12-hour day at the Justice for Jamar Clark protest, and one of the things she saw then, and again in 2020, was the way in which people found ways to be involved – to feed and clothe each other, for example.

“I heard from people, the same kind of thing that I heard from 2020, there was this moment where if I was hungry, I knew where to go,” she said. Although it was on a much larger scale in 2020, Winkler-Morey believes the protest for Jamar Clark laid the groundwork for it. And the Occupy movement before that.

2020 was also a pivotal moment for the Hennepin History Museum, who is co-hosting the living history event and in whose library the stories will be permanently housed.

“2020 and all the events that followed have been humbling for museum people if they’re paying attention,” said the museum’s executive director John Crippen. “In 2020 in particular, people were creating art, they were expressing themselves and creating this huge activist movement, and they didn’t want it relegated or coopted by

traditional institutions. So we’ve had to be very careful not to get in people’s way and not to do things just ‘cause this is the way we’ve always done it.”

Crippen spoke of the impetus and urgency in some people’s minds to collect the history as it’s happening, but rather than quickly store it away, he wanted to come up with other ways to collaborate and document current events. They’ve worked with Memorialize the Movement, who has saved the plywood art created around town during the Uprising, and with artist seangarrison on live paintings in public spaces.

It’s a balance to enable stories to be out and talked about when they’re most relevant while properly preserving them so they can be reused or even rediscovered decades later.

“We play the current and the future game all the time,” said Crippen. “We’re excited that there’s a chance for people 20, 30 years from now to come and rediscover these anew and say, ‘Oh, wow. I’m glad somebody was talking to these folks and grabbing their stories, because now I can get a perspective on that time that I didn’t live through or that I wanted some fresh perspective on.”

For Winkler-Morey, it’s especially important for people’s history to be taken up by public sites like the Hennepin History Museum.

“It’s our responsibility to tell those stories, because they will be erased otherwise,” she said. “It’s all about access, right? Access is everything.”

An Evening of Real-Life Stories about Social Justice in Minneapolis will take place Sept. 14, 6-8 p.m., at the Capri Theater (2207 West Broadway). The event is free, but reservations (at hennepinhistory.org) are required.

The Minneapolis Interview Project interviews, with photos by Eric Mueller, are available at turtleroad.org and @MinneapolisProject on Facebook.

AFTER KANSAS NEWSPAPER RAID: GOOD PEOPLE SHOWING UP

In the aftermath of police seizure of Kansas newspaper computers, let's talk about value of free press

If you're reading this right now, we have won. Every week, our newspapers struggles to cover local issues. We are limited by staffing, time and newsprint space, and we struggle to pay bills to keep our circulation going. We accept this burden.



By James C. Pittman

What we are not constrained by, however, is the government. The First Amendment has protected the free press from the beginning. Federal and state laws allow us to keep our sources confidential, and we keep local elected leaders and government agencies in check.

When community members approach us with news tips, we have the responsibility to verify the information. We then have the legal and ethical duty to maintain the confidentiality of sources. The police are prohibited by the Constitution, federal and state laws and various case laws from using search warrants to raid news organizations to find out what dirty details we have on someone or who provided it.

This should be a shorter column with a historical review. Sadly, the role of the small community newspaper was put to the test this month in an obscure Midwestern town. Police officers raided a newsroom in Marion, Kan. (population 1,920) and seized every computer and cell phone from the newspaper's publisher and two staff members on duty. Police read reporters their rights and demanded answers to questions. What was the crime these journalists were accused of committing? Verifying information. Well, the police claimed it was identity theft, but these charges never saw light of day in a court of law.

The details have all the makings of a TV movie of the week. There's the small-



Joan Meyer died of cardiac arrest Aug. 12, a day after unconstitutional police raids on her home and beloved newspaper, The Marion County Record.

town police chief, Gideon Cody, who recently came to Marion after working 24 years with Kansas City Police Department in Missouri. Local businesswoman Kari Newell was seeking a liquor license for launching a new restaurant inside a historic hotel in Marion. Making the decisions were the city council members, who have a long history of in-fighting. Keeping all these characters in check for the public falls on the Marion County Record.

The Record, a weekly paper, has been in print since 1869. Eric Meyer, a retired metropolitan daily editor and journalism professor, took over the business from his parents, whose affiliation with the paper started in 1948. Eric has written several probing articles about local politics and local business owners. At age 98, his mother Joan (pronounced Joe-Ann) was still fully alert and insisted that no one could edit the copy on her weekly memories column.

The Record received a news tip that Newell had been driving on a suspended license since being convicted of drunk driving in 2008. This was newsworthy because Newell was waiting for the Marion city council to approve her new restaurant's liquor license. Negative information about her past could have affected the local council members' decisions. A source sent the Record and the vice-mayor a screenshot from a police database that revealed Newell's negative driving record.

Cody's background was also being probed by the Record, whose reporters wanted to know why he came to Marion for a chief job that paid nearly half of what he earned as a captain in Kansas City. The Record was stonewalled by the higher KCPD echelon who refused to release Cody's personnel file.

Eric Meyer practiced responsible journalism by attempting to verify the news tips. Cody refused to confirm to Meyer why he left KCPD so abruptly. Meyer discussed Newell's alcohol-related driver's license suspension with Cody. Meyer then told Cody that the Record newspaper staff had verified Newell's driving record on an internet database operated by the state. Cody said nothing about Newell but threatened to sue if the Record published anything about his tenure at KCPD. Meyer chose not to publish either story on Cody or Newell.

Within a few days, Cody and his police force (whose roster would barely form a baseball team) stormed the Record office with a search warrant that gave them the authority to search every byte of data storage. Cody's cops and local deputies also raided the vice-mayor's house, believing that she was a co-conspirator in spreading negative information about Newell. The final target of the police raid was the home that Eric shared with his mother. Joan hurled obscenities at the officers and local deputies and charged them with her metal walker as she demanded they leave her house. The cops ignored her as they seized computers and photographed personal papers.

The next day, Joan asked Eric, "Where are all the good people who are supposed to stop this?" A few moments later, Joan was gone. The coroner ruled her death a sudden coronary attack, possibly related to stress.

Good people did arrive for Joan and her family. The county attorney in Marion (whose brother owns the hotel where Newell's restaurant operates) quashed the warrants. The Record still made it to press even without their computers, which were returned a week later. The Kansas City Star used their legal clout to obtain Cody's personnel file, which revealed he

retired early from KCPD to avoid being demoted to sergeant over sexual harassment complaints. Thousands of people nationwide have subscribed to the Record, tripling their subscription base. The Kansas governor sent the Kansas Bureau of Investigation to probe the police inquiries. The state has since announced that the database the Record used is open to the public and that no crime was committed. Good people, government and press alike, stood up to right this wrong. Lawsuits by the Record are pending.

In the end, Cody's secrets were uncovered by the press. That's what journalists do. We hold local leaders and decision makers responsible by asking questions and verifying the information we print. It's what the Marion County Record has been doing since 1869 and what Joan Meyer spent her last breath defending.

Her photo should hang in every newsroom in America as a blessing to journalists and a warning to cops who should dare try such a raid again in our lifetimes.

James C. Pittman started his newspaper career in Minnesota, and has worked in law enforcement since 2002. He is a graduate of Bethel University, served in the U.S. Air Force, and currently works for a large municipal police agency.

SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY NEWS & SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT ACT

- Introduced by Congresswoman Claudia Tenney (NY-24) and Congresswoman Suzan DelBene (WA-1), both members of the Ways and Means Committee.
- Makes refundable tax credits available to local newspapers of up to \$25,000 per journalist in the first year and up to \$15,000 per journalist in the next four years.
- Makes non-refundable tax credits available to local businesses that advertise with local newspapers of up to \$5,000 in the first year and \$2,500 in the next four years.

CALLING ALL LIFELONG LEARNERS BACK TO SCHOOL

Educators need more help so every student can have an opportunity to succeed.

Learn something new every day. This isn't a new concept. Many smart people have espoused the virtues of learning.

"Education begins at the level of the learner," said Aristotle, who believed education was the key to the whole development of a person and the primary path to living a full life and becoming a satisfied human being.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Knowl-



By Eric Ortiz



An Ella Baker student and her mom working together in class.

edge is when you learn something new

every day. Wisdom is when you let something go every day."

Martha Stewart agreed: "If you learn something new every day, you can teach something new every day."

Besides the philosophical and practical benefits of learning, there also is a health benefit. According to Vox:

"Learning changes the brain: Existing bonds between neurons – nerve cells that send messages signaling everything from breathing to thinking – are strengthened; new pathways between neurons are developed. Repeated exposure to an activity, like knitting or driving a car, strengthens these connections, and thus, we learn. Over time, recalling these skills or memories becomes easier. As we get older and are no longer exposed to organized classroom settings, acquiring fresh knowledge holds value. Studies have suggested that learning later in life may preserve cognitive function – which refers to the ability

to acquire knowledge, reason, and manipulate information – and those who have completed college had higher levels of cognitive function in their 50s than those who did not." "I think you can broadly say," says Hadley Bergstrom, an associate professor of psychological science at Vassar College, "that new learning over long periods of time is likely going to improve cognition as you age."

I learned something new the other day talking to my friend Holly Kleppe, the principal at Ella Baker School in Minneapolis. Holly told me Ella Baker had some open teaching and staff positions to fill for the 2023-24 school year. She added that over 50,000 teachers and educational staff across the United States had left the profession in 2023.

Zoom out a little farther, and over 500,000 public school teachers and other education-related staff have quit their jobs since 2020. The resignations – a result of teachers feeling stressed and burned out – peaked after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic,



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IT WAS FANTASTIC. YOU SHOULD GO, TOO.

TEAMING UP FOR GOOD

I cannot recall in my lifetime having more instances of friends telling me: "You have to go see the Walker Exhibit." Word on the street was, "Oh my god, it's fantastic." And I noticed that almost everyone I talked to were not inclined to be more articulate about what it was they loved. It was just, "I loved it. It was fantastic."



By **Larry LaVercombe**

I am not at all plugged in to the "Art Scene." But I have seen great art, and I've seen great shows at Walker: Warhol, the Calder mobiles, the incredible Rothko show in 1978.

And, wow – Yes – Pacita Abad did not disappoint.

Four of us went. Three of us loved it. The one who didn't said this to me: "I don't get it." And yes, a lot of Pacita's work is abstract, as in "nothing but color."

Some of the other work is almost "on the nose," with vivid and clear political statements. Some of the work is representational in other ways. For instance, there are two distinct series of masks. One series depicting seven distinct indigenous cultural lands. The other is like a beam of light blasting from the wall – two "painted mosaics" of the most brilliant color and geometrical design.

I imagined what it would be like to be in a square room with two of those on each wall. It would be LOUD with energy. You could clear your mind in a room like that. Or, bombard it... I was reminded of my first



A painting by Diane Mach. Her work is on exhibit at Jones Coffee at Upton and 43rd.

experience in the Jackson Pollock room at MOMA. Some people walk in and walk right back out. I like to walk in and revel in the volume of the room, the intensity coming at me from every direction.

But while Pollock is wild and "uncontrolled," Pacita is focused and meticulous. Sewn into her paintings might be tiny pink shells that form the pattern on a blanket. Or, what look to be orange draperies are actually tiny painted yellow and red diamonds. The vibrating masks, when you get up close, have "pointillistic" elements, geometrically intricate, like Mia's Tibetan Sand Painting.

You get up close to what looks like stone mosaic... and it turns out to be fabric.

This isn't just a local issue. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), more than two-thirds (68 percent) of U.S. fourth graders are not proficient in reading. It's become a national priority with a public health objective to increase fourth-grade reading proficiency by 2030.

There's a reason for the urgency. As the Annie E. Casey Foundation reports, fourth grade marks a critical transition year when kids go from learning to read to reading to learn other subjects in school. Children who reach fourth grade unable to read well are more likely to drop out of high school. Not graduating reduces their earnings potential and chances for success. Kids with poor reading skills are also more likely to engage in high-risk behavior during adolescence.

One of my favorite pieces appears about halfway through the exhibit. Titled "Cross-cultural Dressing," it depicts three women from other cultures, and on the far right, is the American. What we have to distinguish ours... is not the hair, nor the shape or color of the outfit, not the cut of the outfit, not the style. Rather what we have is the Nike shoes and the Revlon hair and the Corporate names over every aspect of ourselves. The painting sometimes reads like one of those test questions from elementary school: "Which of these does not belong with the others?"

It's both on-the-nose and profound. Was she ahead of her time? This painting is from 1993. Pacita

It's hard to learn when you can't read. To address this problem and help students increase their reading skills, we are starting a reading volunteer program at Ella Baker School with the LHENA Volunteer Network (LVN) of the Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association. Reading volunteers will come to Ella Baker and read to K-3rd graders. It's a start, but many students are also behind in math, another critical subject.

Times have changed. So we need to change with the times. Teachers and parents need more help to educate students than in the past. The community can provide that help and support schools and youth development programs.

One of those programs is Career and Technical Education (CTE), a national academic program that prepares learners

Abad died in 2004. And I'm sorry to say... the exhibit just closed last week...

UPPING THE VIBE AGAIN

I wrote a couple months ago about the Jones Coffee / Linden Hills House of Music collaboration which brings local live acoustic music to the Jones locations on Xerxes and in the village. Now Jones is upping the vibe again with two single-artist, gallery-style shows in his two locations.

At 50th and Xerxes is a collection of "torn paper assemblages" by artist Neysa Winterer. Like Abad's work, these landscapes and still-lives sometimes look like Impressionist paintings, but they are instead made of carefully constructed layers of torn paper. Using a rich and varied palette of complementary patterns and colors, the artist creates images that are both reflective and compelling, both flat and deep. You are almost asked to think... to reflect... on how the artist had to work to make these. The form itself is contemplative.

The Upton and 43rd Jones Coffee in the village is hosting the premiere public showing of the work of Diane Mach. She began painting six years ago "en plein air" with oils, but recently started working in acrylics, making abstracts and abstract landscapes with textures and scrapes embedded in the canvas. Her palette is wide as a color wheel, and there's both subtle and assertive balance in her work.

I recommend you go see them! Before they disappear.



Larry LaVercombe is a writer, filmmaker, and activist, born in Detroit and arrived in Minneapolis in 1975. He lived in a treehouse in San Diego before getting an MFA from the USC Film School. He writes most days, and as Team Larry he has been selling residential real estate in Minneapolis for 26 years.

for their future. The Minneapolis CTE is led by Michael Luseni and available to all 10-12 grade MPS students interested in earning college credit or receiving job certifications for free.

Adriana connected Michael and me. Together, we plan to explore a partnership with our community solutions program to increase meaningful employment opportunities for youth.

It's easier to succeed when you know how to learn.



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.

BACK TO SCHOOL

then decreased, but they are on the rise again. The teacher shortage was a problem. Now it's becoming a bigger problem as districts struggle to hire new teachers and some current teachers say they are likely to quit and find a new job in the next two years.

A lack of teachers has a direct impact on the learning potential and growth opportunities for students.

A few days after talking with Holly, I learned something else from my friend Adriana Cerrillo, a director with the Minneapolis Board of Education and caregiver (aunt) of an eighth-grade student at Ella Baker. Adriana told me many young Ella Baker students in fourth grade and younger are reading below grade level.

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DESTIGMATIZING MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS

By **Jessica Torres Estrada**



To engage broader communities and understand their experience surrounding mental health stigma, we connected with Cultural Brokers from Watercourse Counseling Center (WCC) and the Somali American Parent Association (SAPA). Cultural Brokers act as a bridge between the community and service providers. Offering a unique perspective, they help provide contextual insights. Dr. Saida Adbi, PhD, MSW, LICSW, CIRCLE Project Director and Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work, emphasizes the role of Cultural Brokers in facilitating this understanding.

Cultural Brokers Ayan Abdullahi, Anisa Ali, Kubra Bashari, and Zahra Wahidy shared their unique experiences in a series of interviews shared below. We invite you to listen as these Somali and Afghan women share their own experience with stigma, how we can show support, and bring awareness to mental health.

AT THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE AND PREVALENT STIGMA

The complexity between different generations is expressed by each cultural broker, explaining that the stigma surrounding mental health is more prevalent in the older generation, but the younger generation is much more likely to talk or want to talk about mental health.

Ayan Abdullahi, a cultural broker at WCC, explains the reluctance in sharing mental health struggles among families, often due to cultural perceptions. She notes that discussions about mental health are often dichotomized – seen as either extremely bad or unmanageable. Older generations primarily focused on survival during times of war. Abdullahi went on, “What you would hear is ‘we went through so many challenges, how can you have problems now that you’re here? We went through war, famine, and so on. And so the way mental health is discussed is, ‘it’s not something that affects us’ but there’s empathy and sympathy for other people that are affected by it.”

As the cultural brokers shared, there’s a disconnect between the two generations. This contrasts between the younger generation’s opportunity for introspection and self-awareness. Zahra Wahidy, another cultural broker at WCC, notes a guarded approach to discussing mental health with her parents, But, “I am open to talk about mental health with my siblings – I think they are a little more open to that.”

Additionally, there is a general misunderstanding on what mental health means between the generations, which is why the stigma unfortunately continues to course through the community. One thing is certain: the younger generation is not backing down on continuing the conversation and encouraging the community to talk to each other about mental health.

GENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND ITS IMPACT

Generational trauma is at the forefront of discussions surrounding mental health. Generational trauma is when difficult and challenging events happen to our parents, grandparents, or ancestors and can be passed down to younger generations unintentionally. Talking about it and supporting each other can help everyone learn to heal together.

Anisa Ali, a cultural broker at SAPA, reflected on how families often attempt to shield their children from their past trauma while unknowingly passing on generational trauma. “I think education in the area of how people respond to trauma—generational trauma. And how that affects babies, kids, teenagers – how that shows up differently in the life cycle of the human being,” shared Ali. “I think that is very important in making that connection on what that means.”

The cultural brokers have highlighted some ways to support the community, foster understanding and address the stigma associated with mental health in the community.

WHAT SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CAN LOOK LIKE

The cultural brokers shared different ways that we can support their communities in addressing the stigma around mental health, dismantling barriers, and sparking conversations. They expressed how barriers in language and understanding can stifle discussions surrounding mental health. In order to open discussions, there must first be an understanding of what mental health means.

Zahra Wahidy noted, “Trauma is something that maybe makes sense in English – but in my community when you are talking about trauma... they don’t have any idea about trauma. ‘What is trauma?’ Even if we translate it in our language – it does not make sense for us.”

The English words we use can be a barrier in opening conversations. Mental health organizations and practitioners serving English Language Learners need to add an intersectional lens to their communications. A way to do that is to remember that the English words used are not always easily translated or understood in the native language of the individual. Using simple language, defining the English word in different ways (for example, listing the different symptoms), or using different words that are already in the individual’s native language are some things that can help create understanding surrounding mental health. This also includes providing information and resources in other mediums other than written. Other times, information is better received and understood through verbal means because “not everybody can read the language,” as shared by Ali.

Cultural Brokers address mental health stigma, support our communities by fostering deeper conversations and exploring perspectives



Ali continued, “The stigma will never go away to some extent because it’s so embedded in our culture. But the more people talk about it, the more they don’t get a harsh reaction.”

Providing a safe and comfortable environment for people to build connections and openly discuss mental health is integral in minimizing the stigma. The cultural brokers expressed that there is positive change happening in the community, including the religious community, and it all starts with having open discussions with one another.

“Much more religious or faith communities are getting involved in letting people know ‘you need to seek help,’” said Ali. “People are making that connection – that you can go seek mental health and still do your prayer and trust in God. It is very hard to admit that you are struggling mentally because there is a sense of vulnerability that comes with it.”

Thank you to our cultural brokers for sharing their perspectives and for their continued work within the community. Discussions on minimizing the stigma around mental health are continuous, and we look forward to working together for our collective healing.

Quotes have been edited for clarity and length.

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

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Patio season. Book Club. because it's winter near 6 months a year, we hit patio season hard and enjoy it more than just about anyone else I imagine. (Illustration by WACSO)





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1 PARK MURALS

tion of visual artists," Carrie Christensen said.

Christensen, a Saint Paul resident, is a senior planner for Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board with a background in urban planning, landscape architecture, strategic planning and more. Her role with Minneapolis Parks and Rec has allowed her to use her previous experience in her current position. Christensen leads the comprehensive planning process for the Parks for All initiative. The project is a collaboration between the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation planning division that works with policy, and the paint shop that focuses on park maintenance.

"This is a really fun partnership for us where we both identify that there is a need in our system for maintaining clean and well-managed park infrastructure," Christensen said.

Artists were chosen, in part, based on their prior experience creating murals. They were paired with parks based on their connectedness to the goals and their familiarity with the park. The nine goals for the Parks for All project are to be in effect for the next 15 years. Christensen explained that it's important for the park board to support artists that are a part of or have close connections to the communities by funding their work.

"I have a deep belief in the power of arts and artist storytelling in helping engage community in civic space making," Christensen said.

Once painted, the board's paint shop is responsible for mural upkeep. As tagging and vandalism are a concern, the paint shop takes measures to preserve the artwork by painting protective coatings on the murals that make it easier to wash away damage, touch up paint chipping, and clean as needed.

"Basically the artists install the murals, and we'll take it from there and care for the murals," Christensen said.

ARTIST JACQUI ROSENBUISH

Artist Jacqui Rosenbush, a Bloomington resident, is the chair of the city's Creative Place Making Commission. Rosenbush is a painter and has worked on over 35 murals, many of which she created during her time working with GoodSpace Murals. She also works with the non-profit performing arts circus school for youth, Circus Juventas, creating artistic pieces for their productions.

"I really love design on an epic scale and how we experience spaces, so that drives a lot of the kinds of work that I do and murals are a part of that scope," Rosenbush said.

Rosenbush has a bachelor's degree in studio art from the University of Minnesota. She has a background in sculptural art, and is captivated by the immersive experience of sculptural art. She spent nine years working with Greta McLain and GoodSpace Murals, and has been an indepen-



dent artist for two years.

"It's been a lifelong pursuit and I'm sure it'll keep going for my whole life," Rosenbush said.

For the Parks for All Mural Project, Rosenbush was assigned goal number four – "Work from our strengths and determine our role in partnerships" – at the Lake Harriet trolley tunnel. Rosenbush's project specifically highlighted the management of water quality. She expressed that this goal encompassed the role of the relationship between people and nature in managing water quality. During design preparation, she researched water quality control, and included lily pads and cattails in her mural after discovering the large role they play in filtering water.

"I wanted to look at those two things, water quality and relationship through the lens of leveraging a natural relationship that we can use to foster better care of the water," Rosenbush said.

Her favorite artist is sculptor Andy Goldworthy because he creates temporary art with materials found in nature. In her work with Circus Juventas, Rosenbush gets to practice this style of temporary art, as her work is used during a season of performances, then removed. Nature is a large aspect of the artist's work, which influences her impressionistic and expressionistic painting style. She enjoys painting murals because of how large the work is and its

attachment to the location. Artists Kao Lee Thao and Ash Kubesh work on a mural at Boom Island Park that fills two sides of a concrete wall near the river. Thao painted a woman on one side of the mural wall. "Over there she symbolizes mother nature and earth," Thao said. "When you see a woman in my pieces, it's like she's a storyteller. Like she's telling a story about the importance of water and parks and nature." She described how in Hmong culture, women often hand stitch their clothing and costumes. The woman Thao painted in bright colors on the mural, is inspired by and in honor of Hmong women. (Photos by Talia McWright)

attachment to the location.

"I really enjoy tunnels because they're such transitional spaces, and they're usually a space that's a bit dark so I love to come in and bring a brightness to it," Rosenbush said. "My favorite part of the design process is thinking about how someone will experience the whole thing."

Rosenbush has worked on many community-oriented projects in the past. She explained that she enjoys working on projects that involve community members, and allow people to experience art in a personal way. Her work is connected to her spiritual life and belief in God, and she is excited to partake in something larger than herself.

"Its [art] become the most true thing that I've done in my life," Rosenbush said. "It's so connected to who I am that it's just an outpouring of me. It feels very authentic and alive and exciting to really harness the power of being an artist."

ARTISTS KAO LEE THAO AND ASH KUBESH

Thao and Kubesh have worked together since 2003. The two started a 3D animation studio, Folklore Studio, in 2004. Together they have worked on over eight murals. Kubesh is a technical artist with a background in ceramics. He combines both ceramics and technology in his work with Folklore Studio. Thao works often

A MURAL PROJECT REFLECTING 9 PARK GOALS

- **Goal 1: Foster belonging and equity**
Artist: Aaron Johnson-Ortiz at Powderhorn Park restroom building
- **Goal 2: Steward a continuum of nature and recreation**
Artist: Jacob Dwyer at Franklin Steele Square park building
- **Goal 3: Provide core services with care**
Artist: Melodee Strong at Cleveland Park restroom building
- **Goal 4: Work from our strengths and determine our role in partnerships**
Artist: Jacqui Rosenbush
Location: Lake Harriet trolley tunnel
- **Goal 5: Expand focus on health equity**
Artist: Constanza Carballo at Van Cleve Park pump house
- **Goal 6: Strengthen ecological connections**
Artist: Thomasina TopBear at Bde Maka Ska Parkway wall
- **Goal 7: Connect through communications and technology**
Artist: Kao Lee Thao at Boom Island river wall
- **Goal 8: Cultivate a thriving workforce**
Artist: Rock Martinez at Windom NE Park warming room
- **Goal 9: Operate a financially sustainable enterprise**
Artist: Xena Goldman at West River Parkway retaining wall

with watercolor art which she describes as loose and fluid. Over the many years of working together, the two said that they have each learned different sets of skills from one another. They agreed that they both support their individual and collective artistic goals, and that working as a team has made it easier to keep going.

Thao was assigned goal number seven – connect through communication and technology – on the Boom Island river wall. As an animator, Thao felt excited to work on this goal as it combined her passion for fine arts and technology. After finishing the mural, she plans to add augmented reality (AR) components to the piece, making the painting an interactive experience.

"I try to connect community with technology because AR is the future right now," Thao said.

Much of her inspiration for the mural comes from her Hmong heritage. She explained that in Hmong culture, water holds significance as many believe that dragons may lurk in open bodies of water. To change the fearful narrative, Thao painted a dragon that is meant to be playful and inviting. She also expressed that the mural symbolized a journey for many Hmong people who had to cross the Mekong river due to the Vietnam war, and those who came to America and changed their views

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WASHBURN HIGH SCHOOL BAND FROM 1970S REUNITES

Billy McLaughlin and the Paradox come together at the Parkway Theater with special guests on Sept. 24

Acclaimed artist and composer Billy McLaughlin's first band at Washburn High School (WHS) in south Minneapolis, an 11-piece group – counting the roadies -- called Paradox, with a gifted female singer (okay, she really went to Southwest High), had a lot stacked against it in the mid-70's. First, they were too young and had to sneak into play in clubs and bars. Second, there was another older, hard rock band in the cities also called Paradox knockin' down gigs all over town. Third, agents like Marsh Edelman and the guys at GMA kept booking them at high school dances out of the metro.

That didn't prevent them though from getting an unsolicited critique from Robert Hilburn, who went on to become one of the nation's most revered rock critics at The Los Angeles Times! Read on to learn more.

On Sept. 24, 2023, Billy's Paradox band is getting back together at The Parkway Theater for a one-night-only reunion show that will transport you back 45 years or so in what promises to be an evening of late 70's nostalgia with at least 5 original members, including the band's terrific singer, Karen Pedersen.

Paradox's core included Washburn's McLaughlin, PJ Letofsky, Dan Cross, Bruce Bailey, the late Dave Pedersen, John Doyle and others from WHS. The talented band members went off on various paths – see below -- but this show reunites many original members playing a wide-ranging repertoire, from rock to new wave to R&B music from 1978 through 1980. Special guests include Randy Casey, John Hartley, Todd Bergum and members of the Belfast Cowboys horn section led by Tim Martin.

"It's pretty bizarre that Robert Hilburn even knew about us, but PJ's father Irv Letofsky was the LA Times Sunday Calendar Editor, and Hilburn's boss. Irv was in town for PJ's graduation, and Hilburn for the opening of Bruce Springsteen's 'Darkness



Paradox – 11-pieces strong initially – pose on a south Minneapolis rooftop in the 70s with their roadies. (Photo submitted)



The 5-piece version of Paradox (left to right): Sheldon Sorenson, PJ Letofsky, Karen Pedersen, the late John Doyle and Billy McLaughlin. (Photo submitted)



Let's answer the question of what to do next after your 40th high school reunion has come and gone? Get the band back together and rock out an awesome show in a great theater in your high school neighborhood – The Parkway!"

Billy McLaughlin

on the Edge of Town' tour," McLaughlin recalls. "So, we played in PJ's garage for the graduation party, and they were there. After that, Hilburn brought most of the band to the Springsteen show -- 10th row!"

"What he told me was that you guys know how to play -- you just have to do original music," PJ said. "Hilburn was my buddy. He gave me my first Sex

Pistols record, snuck me into the Whisky A Go Go to see Blondie's first LA appearance when I was visiting dad in LA! And many more when I went to college there that next year."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

- Billy Mac is still keeping the dream alive, doing over 100 dates a year still!
- PJ is making documentary films in LA.
- Karen Pedersen has been singing every day while pursuing business and raising a family in British Columbia, "But I still call Minnesota my home!"
- Dan Cross is a Professor at Southwestern Illinois College teaching film in Belleville, Ill.
- Even the roadies have achieved fame: Matt Larson was Prince's Road Manager for many years, and now is working with Billie Eilish.
- Larry Case is still working as guitar tech for Billy, The Suburbs, The Jayhawks, Helmet and many others.

▶1 PARKS MURALS

and beliefs since living in the country. Her intent with the mural was both to represent and validate these experiences.

"It's a reminder that nature is so important," Thao said. "I think we forget about that because we're so attached to our technology and social media, but being out in nature is really important."

The mural is painted with bright colors of teal and green, pink and orange. For Thao, the colors aren't only vibrant because they're her favorite colors, but because they represent the diversity of the communities she lives and works in.

"I paint with vibrant colors because it speaks to people of color," Thao said.

Thao also painted a woman on one side of the mural wall. She described how in Hmong culture, women often hand stitch their clothing and costumes. The woman Thao painted in bright colors on the mural, is inspired by and in honor of Hmong women.

"Over there she symbolizes mother nature and earth," Thao said looking at the woman she painted on the mural. "When you see a woman in my pieces, it's like she's a storyteller. Like she's telling a story about the importance of water and parks and nature."

The Parks for All Mural Project is set to be completed in the fall. Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board plans to have an unveiling celebration once all the murals are finished, which they will announce on their website

LYNDALE AVE SOUTH RECONSTRUCTION

Designing a safer road for all

Hennepin County is working to build a Lyndale Avenue for today and tomorrow. The county is partnering with the city of Minneapolis, Metro Transit and others to continue improving safety for all users on Lyndale Avenue South (County Road 22) between Franklin Avenue (County Road 5) and 31st Street.

In July 2022, a new three-lane road configuration was implemented on this stretch of Lyndale Avenue South as part of a pilot project. Initial traffic data and

feedback from people along the corridor is generally supportive of the change.

Through the fall of 2025, the county will be taking lessons learned from the pilot and finalizing the plan to rebuild this more than 50-year-old portion of Lyndale Avenue South. The 2026 reconstruction will include new streetlights, curbs, signals, sidewalks, pavement, underground utility work, and more.

BE PART OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The county is looking for community feedback on the vision for the future of Lyndale Avenue. Visit BeHeardHennepin.org/Lyndale-Avenue, the project webpage, to take a five-minute survey and sign up to receive project update emails.

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RIGHT TO VOTE RESTORED TO 55,000 PAROLED FELONS

On March 3, 2023 Governor Tim Walz signed into law legislation that restores the vote to more than 55,000 formerly incarcerated Minnesotans. In the largest expansion of voting since 18-year-olds won the right to vote in 1972, Minnesota joins 22 other states to give felons their voting rights, once they have completed their prison term. Previously anyone serving on probation or parole had to finish that extended sentence before voting rights were restored. Walz called this “a good day for democracy. We’re a country of second chances... and the idea of not allowing those voices to have a say in the very governing of the communities they live in is simply unacceptable.”

After two decades of advocacy, a large coalition of groups sued the state for this constitutional right under the principle of no taxation without representation. One of the plaintiffs, Jennifer Schroeder, had served one year for a felony drug charge – but was given a 40 year probational sentence on her release. The language in the lawsuit pointed out that “the plaintiffs have been deemed safe to live in their communities where they raise their children, contribute to Minnesota’s economic, cultural, religious, civic and political life, and pay taxes... but Minnesota denies plaintiffs an essential indicium of citizenship, the right to vote.” The Supreme Court ruled against the plaintiffs saying the law didn’t violate the state’s Constitution and sent it back to the legislature. In response, Senator Bobby Joe Champion (DFL-Minneapolis) and Representative Cedrick Frazier (DFL-New Hope) sponsored the Restore the Vote Act which successfully passed. Secretary of State Steve Simon is working with the Department of Corrections to spread the word about this new voting right. The bill



requires that a written notice and a voter registration application be given to each of these individuals on their release from prison, and to alert them, that as of July 1 they could register to vote in this year’s elections.

Why is this act so important? According to the organization, National Voter Registration Day, felony disenfranchisement disproportionately represents Black, Latino, and Indigenous residents who are already overrepresented in the criminal justice system. It has played a role in disengaging future generations, as children are more likely to vote if their parents do. “People who are prohibited from voting, they have to pay their taxes, they have to obey all the laws... but they don’t have any choice in who represents them” said Attorney General Keith Ellison. “Now they do.”

A recent commentary article in the Minnesota Reformer points out that restoring the vote will make Minnesota safer. “Many victims and survivors of violence want to disrupt the ongoing cycle of harm, punishment and isolation.” Having been “locked out of democracy... studies show that having the right to vote immediately after incarceration improves public safety. Community engagement can reduce future

FORUMS

MEET CANDIDATES AT UPCOMING FORUMS

- Ward 7: Loring Park /Downtown Area– Sept. 28, 5:30 to 8 p.m., The Woman’s Club of Minneapolis, 410 Oak Grove St. & Oct. 12, 7 to 8:30 p.m., Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church, 2020 W Lake of the Isles Parkway
 - Ward 10: Oct. 2, 6:30-8 p.m., Abyssinian Cultural Center, 3rd Floor 322 W. Lake St.
 - Ward 11: Sept. 27, 7-8:30 p.m., Mayflower Church, 106 East Diamond Lake Road.
 - Ward 13: Sept. 6, 6 to 7:30 p.m., Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church, 5025 Knox Ave. S.
- > View recordings: League of Women Voters Minneapolis website (lwvmpls.org)

arrests for justice-impacted citizens... and reduce one’s perceived status as an “outsider.” According to Christopher Uggen, a University of Minnesota professor of sociology who has made a study of felon voting rights: “This would really reduce the multiplier effect... where the pronounced disparities in criminal justice are leading to pronounced disparities in political power.”

For help getting the word out to family, friends, church and community groups, contact Secretary of State Steve Simon at steve.simon@state.mn.us. Help ensure that all those eligible to vote know about this right. Please check the Secretary of State website mnvotes.gov for updates on the guidelines for eligibility.

For information on voter registration and eligibility, voting deadlines and locations, questions about Ranked Choice Voting, and more, go to: vote.minneapolismn.gov. For education on this new law and to develop a voting plan contact vote@lwvmpls.org.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS



CEDAR LAKE CHANNEL REOPENS

The Cedar Lake (Kenilworth) Channel has reopened to recreational use. As part of the Green Line Extension (GLE) LRT Project, three new concrete bridges have been constructed over the channel. No additional significant closures are planned for the channel, but short-term closures may be needed to conduct minor work.

CEDAR LAKE ROAD BRIDGE REOPENS

The Cedar Lake Road Bridge over the railroad tracks near Morgan Ave. S. in Bryn Mawr reopened in August. Repairs to the timber support structure of the bridge are completed, and the bridge is open to pedestrians, bikes, and cars. The bridge had been closed since April 2022, and is scheduled for replacement in 2027.

Cedar Lake Parkway also reopened. The work at Lake Street and Dean Parkway including replacing traffic signals, lane adjustments and restriping crosswalks is near completion.

CIDNA FALL FESTIVAL OCT. 7

The Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association fall festival will be Oct. 7 (rain date Oct. 8) at Park Siding Park. Volunteers are needed. There will be an ice cream truck, hot dogs and veggie dogs, games, face painting and music.

TALK TO ME DAY SEPT. 23

“Talk to Me Day,” an innovative event is set to transform Loring Park into a hub of human connection on Saturday, Sept. 23 2023, from noon to 6 p.m. Strangers Meeting Strangers (SMS) is the brainchild behind “Talk to Me Day.”

LEARN ABOUT SOLAR SEPT. 24

Hear the firsthand experiences of homeowners who have gone solar on Sunday, Sept. 24, 3-5 p.m., 5031 Lyndale Avenue S. “This is a great opportunity to get your questions answered about going solar plus learn about our Tangletown Residential Rooftop Solar Rebate!” say organizers. More at info@tangletown.org.

PEACE WALK SEPT. 30

On Saturday, Sept. 30, Friends For a NonViolent World and Vote Climate will have a day of fundraising and celebration with Twin Cities Nonviolent. This day starts at 10 a.m. at Brackett Park in Minneapolis where people will assemble for Friends For a NonViolent World’s Peace and Justice fundraising walk. Twin Cities Nonviolent is promoting a full roster of events during the Twelve Days Free From Violence. Check out the schedule of events at twincitiesnonviolent.org.

CITY BRIEFS

CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE FILINGS

Aug. 15 was the last day for candidates for any of the 13 city council wards to file to be on the Nov. 7 municipal ballot. The following candidates listed by ward and in order of filing date, have filed to be on the ballot in southwest Minneapolis wards. Ward 7: Scott Grahm, Katie Cashman and Kenneth Foxworth. Ward 8: Andrea Jenkins, Soren Stevenson, Bob Sullentrop and Terry White. For ward 10, they are Nasri Warsame, Bruce Dachis, Aisha Chughtai and Greg Kline. Ward 11: Emily Koski and Gabrielle Prosser. Ward 13: Kate Mortenson, Linea Palmisano, Bob Carney and Zach Metzger.

EARLY VOTING OPENS SEPT. 22

The Early Vote Center at 980 E. Hennepin Ave. opens at 8 a.m. Sept. 22 for people to vote early and in person. Also on Sept. 22, the city will begin mailing ballots to voters who have requested to vote early by mail. Learn more about voting this year at <https://vote.minneapolismn.gov/voters/>

SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICT HEARING

On Oct. 12, the city council will hold a public hearing to consider next year’s services and service charges for the Linden

Hills, Lowry Hill, and Uptown districts. A special service district allows property owners in a commercial area to be assessed to fund amenities and services beyond what the city ordinarily provides. This may include street furniture and fixtures as well as cleaning, landscaping, and maintenance of public areas.



NEW 5TH PRECINCT INSPECTOR

In August, the city of Minneapolis announced that inspector Katie Blackwell would be leaving her position as 5th Precinct Inspector to be a new assistant chief of operations. The new 5th Precinct Inspector will be Christie Nelson. Nelson has worked for the city as a police officer since 1997. The 5th precinct includes southwest Minneapolis, bounded by I-35W in the east, I-94 on the north, and the city limits on the west and south.

AS YOU GO CAMPAIGN

The city is proposing to pilot a series of events in 2024 as a part of the As You Go MPLS campaign to encourage walking, rolling or biking in a range of contexts. The 2024 projects and locations will be

determined later this year and are proposed to include 1-2 project demonstrations on streets planned for redesign and 1-3 grand opening celebrations for newly constructed street projects that encourage people to take more trips by active transportation.

NEW AIR SENSORS

In July the city health department put up 29 new “AQMesh” air sensors on streetlights around the city. The sensors will measure ozone, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds. They hope to use the information to help improve air quality.

SEWER SMOKE TESTING

The city’s public works department will be smoke testing sanitary sewers in southwest Minneapolis this summer and fall. The testing is used to identify leaks or faulty connections that may allow rainwater into the sanitary sewer system, which can overflow in a significant storm. The work started the week of Aug. 28 and testing on each block will take a few days with completion expected in November. The city plans to send notices prior to testing to all properties where testing will occur.

▶▶▶ Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

Look for the upcoming voters guide in a future edition of the Connector, published in collaboration with the League of Women Voters.



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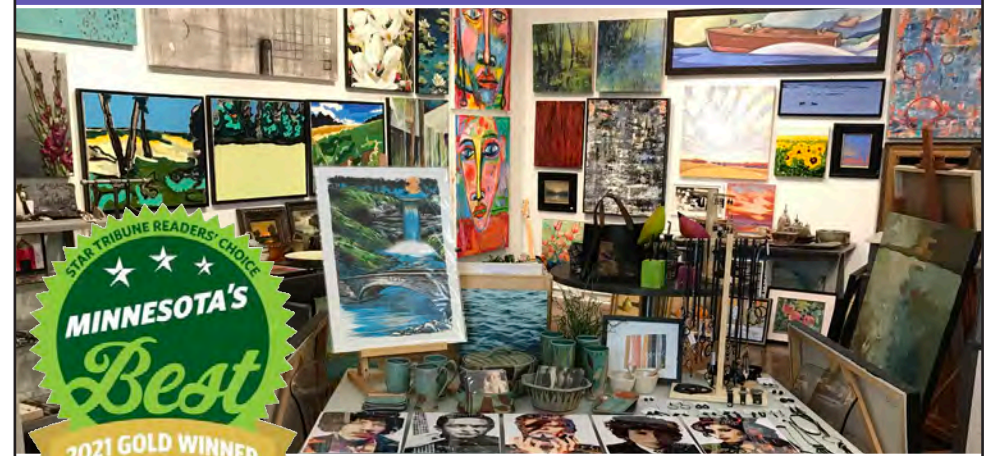
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