

SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • NOVEMBER 30, 2023 • VOL. 2 • NO. 21 • 25,000 CIRCULATION



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ASHES TO ACTION

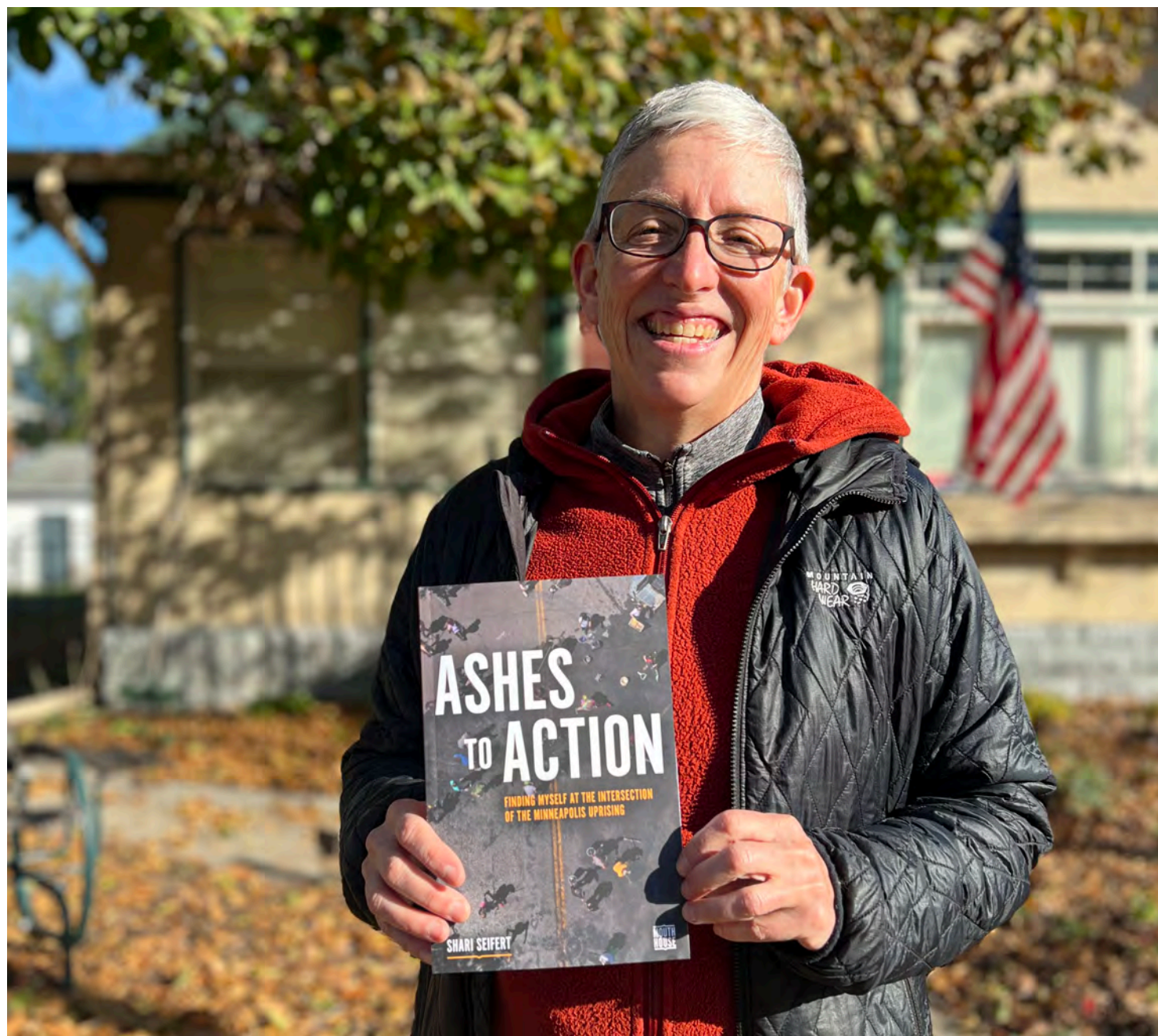
Local author Shari Seifert shares bond between church, community during uprising

By **Jill Boogren**

One of the things people found themselves asking during the uprising in May 2020 was, "What can I do?" Many brought food to distribute from makeshift food shelves. Others brought masks and hand sanitizer to protect against COVID-19. Some, like Hiawatha resident Shari Seifert, would still be at 38th and Chicago fighting for Black liberation three and a half years on.

In her book, "Ashes to Action: Finding Myself at the Intersection of the Minneapolis Uprising," Seifert shares how Calvary Lutheran Church, of which she is a member, met – and continues to meet – this moment. It serves as both a reminder of events that unfolded in the first days and weeks of the uprising, as well as a behind-the-scenes glimpse at what rolling up your sleeves looked like in real time.

Proximity placed Calvary at the back door of a revolution. Located at 39th and Chicago, the church is one block from where Minneapolis police killed George Floyd. They had already been running a food shelf serving about 25 families weekly, which quickly shot up to as many as 177 during the uprising. People volunteered to help nourish their neighbors. Calvary also set up a community table outdoors,



Shari Seifert holds her book, "Ashes to Action: Finding Myself at the Intersection of the Minneapolis Uprising," which describes the relationship between Calvary Lutheran Church and the community at George Floyd Square. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

COUNCIL MEMBERS DIVIDED ON POLICE INCENTIVE PLAN

Council members question whether spending \$15.3 million in one-time state funding for bonuses will actually solve problems

By **Cam Gordon**

Mayor Jacob Frey called a special meeting of the city council on Nov. 17, 2023, but did not get the approval he was seeking for a letter of agreement with the Police Officers Federation of Minneapolis.

Southwest council members were divided on the issue with Ward 11's Emily Koski leading the effort to derail it.

The agreement would have dedicated \$15.3 million dollars for police sign-on and retention bonuses and given more authority to police leadership to reassign

staff.

It was signed on Nov. 8 by Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara, and Director of Labor Relations Rasheda Delaney, as well as the federation's attorney James Michel, and president Sherral Schmidt, but required council approval before any funds could be used. It said that the city agrees to pay \$15,000 to new recruits over three years (\$5,000 annually per person) and \$18,000 as a retention incentive spent over 2.5 years (\$7,200 annually) for police employees who meet certain criteria. In turn, the federation would agree to give the police chief more flexibility in making staff assignments.

The southwest area council members disagreed about the approach. Council members for wards 13, 8 and 7 (Linnea Palmisano, Andrea Jenkins and Lisa Goodman) supported the mayor's proposal. The council members from wards 6, 11 and

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PUT YOUR HEART INTO IT

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



For most of my 30-year career as a professional (I use the term loosely) chef, it was a rare occasion for my wife, Lisa, and I to attend a social function together. Both of us worked in restaurants until just a few years ago and for almost 10 years both of us worked at the same restaurant – while we were raising our daughter.

Before you ask, the answer is yes. We are still married – and happily.

When my bride and I did find ourselves making small talk over cocktails with people to whom we'd just been introduced, we could practically set our watches by the inquiry directed at Lisa after I answered the question about what line of work I was in.

"You probably eat so well at home!

Oh, wait – I'll bet he's sick of cooking on his night off."

Lisa, ever gracious, would flash a smile that still makes me swoon, giggle politely, and let them know how wrong they were.

"JD loves cooking for us on his nights off. We eat very well at home."

When I met Lisa at the age of 23, my ability to contribute to the socioeconomic fabric of the 612 area code was spotty at best. I fancied myself an artist and couldn't be bothered to prioritize keeping my rent, phone bill or bank account out of a consistent state of arrears. Jobs with roofing outfits, nightclubs, record stores, delis, and international package shipping conglomerates funded my Rimbaud-esque pursuit of life as 'a banquet where every heart revealed itself, where every wine flowed.'

Lisa revealed her heart very early in our relationship as one that was not interested in a relationship with a guy who couldn't keep the phone company from suspending service due to non-payment.

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Then and now: J.D. Fratzke. "While I won't deny that all of those nights behind a stove helped me discover what I was capable of, what I could work through and persevere, what I wanted more than anything has never changed: As often as I'm able, I simply want to savor the life I share with those I love the most," he said. (Photos submitted)

▶ 1 PUT YOUR HEART

I looked at what I'd found in Lisa and I looked at myself in the mirror and I came to the conclusion that if I wanted any kind of life with real rewards and true purpose, I needed to get serious about both. I took a job in the salad station of a fine dining Italian restaurant on Nicollet Avenue, and quickly discovered a desire not just to survive, but to excel. By following the example of others around me, most of whom were born in other countries or on other continents, I came upon the revelation that everything I was passionate about – history, music, literature, paintings, film – ALL of that could be put into flavor on a plate.

THAT was the banquet I wanted to provide. THAT was the heart I wanted to reveal.

I found myself in an unfamiliar kitchen near the North Shore a few nights ago. Lisa and I had been invited to join some old friends for an impromptu dinner and I offered to prepare most of the meal. Most of us at the cabin shared a hometown on the Mississippi River in southeastern Minnesota, but had allowed our lives to plant new roots elsewhere. The evening took on a sort of 'Friends-giving' vibe (all the fun, all of the flavor, none of the genera-



J.D. Fratzke met his wife Lisa when he was 23, and still enjoys cooking for the family. (Photos submitted)

tional trauma and passive-aggressive resentment). While Lisa sat at the table with our friends and everyone caught up over luscious red wines, NA beverages, foreign cheeses and locally-sourced charcuterie, I turned yellow onions, celery, peeled carrots, and minced garlic into mirepoix – the base vegetable flavors for the mush-

room and sweet corn soup that would serve as the first course. Italian-style broccoli rabe with white wine, red chilies and lemon juice – a dish I learned to make at that Nicollet Avenue Italian restaurant in 1996 – would come next, accompanying the roasted pork with sweet potatoes and red cabbage doing its work in the oven.

I added herbs like thyme and fresh sage to the mirepoix and olive oil in the saute pan and the kitchen took on the aroma of comfort food – that edible incense of gathering, of sitting down to give the gift of nourishment with those we love – or are learning to love.

At the peak of my time in restaurant kitchens, when Lisa and I had a partnership stake in a Meat and Fish place in Saint Paul, it wasn't unusual for me to arrive at work before noon and not return home until one in the morning – or later – five or six days a week. Yet I always looked forward to the Monday night dinner we would share with our daughter; and I got downright giddy about preparing the meals for my favorite holidays – Thanksgiving and Christmas. I still do.

It would be easy to say that restaurant kitchens provided me with my purpose or that the demands of a life in hospitality gave me the direction I needed to discover the best of myself. While I won't deny that all of those nights behind a stove helped me discover what I was capable of, what I could work through and persevere, what I wanted more than anything has never changed: As often as I'm able, I simply want to savor the life I share with those I love the most.

It's the most delicious thing I've known.

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► POLICE INCENTIVES

10 (Jamal Osman, Emily Koski and Aisha Chughtai) opposed it.

STAFFING LEVELS

At the special meeting Nicki Odem, the city's chief human resources officer, described the proposal as "an effort to stop the hemorrhaging" and address "critically low staff levels."

Since 2020, Odem reported, 522 employees have left the city's police department. During the same time period the city hired only 174 new officers. The vacancy rate, based on an authorized number of 888, was 24% in 2020. This year it is 38%. According to the city's charter and a state Supreme Court ruling, the city is supposed to fund and employ at least 731 officers, or 0.0017 sworn police officers per each Minneapolis resident.

MANAGERIAL AUTHORITY, MORALE BOOST

Ward 4 Council Member LaTrisha Vetaw chairs the public safety committee and supported the agreement because of its potential to keep current and attract new officers. "We're the police department everyone runs away from," Vetaw said. "Incentives boost morale. Incentives make folks want to jump on board."

Vetaw expressed concern about more officers who are likely to retire soon. According to staff, 38 officers are currently eligible to retire, 130 officers are eligible for early retirement, 131 officers will be eligible for full retirement within the next five years, and 200 officers will be eligible for early retirement within next five years.

Frey said that the agreement is about "clawing back the managerial authority so our chief can make the best decisions about where and when to place officers in a more timely fashion." Under the current contract, officers have the opportunity to bid on assignments when a shift opens, and they are awarded based on seniority. That process requires the city to wait at least 28 days to fill a shift.

PUBLIC SAFETY AID

Concerns were raised about the source of the funding that was authorized last year in "Public Safety Aid" legislation. The funds can be spent on more than police officer personnel costs, and that in-

cludes incentives. It can also be used for community violence prevention and intervention programs, training programs, first responder wellness, and equipment.

"I asked the mayor and the administration months ago to communicate with individual council members, and the budget committee, about the \$19 million dollars in public safety funding received from the state, and cautioned that I did not think the budget committee would support use of the majority of that funding for sign-on and retention incentives for MPD," said Koski. "But here we are. They've had six months to speak to us, and they chose to wait until the last second."

"A variety of council members have been using this funding stream to propose budget amendments for community safety projects in their wards," wrote Ward 9 Council Member Jason Chavez after voting against the proposal. "This agreement would have stripped away funding from these projects."

"Now is the time for us to think holistically and broadly about a transformative public safety plan for this \$19 million in one-time funding from the state that actually improves safety and supports our police officers," said Koski. Other options she identified include "mental health crisis responses, victim services, training programs, first responder wellness, equipment related to fire, rescue and emergency services, community engagement and gun violence prevention programs."

DO SIGN-ON BONUSES WORK?

Koski questioned not only the funding source and process so far, but also the effectiveness of using the hiring and retention bonuses to recruit and retain officers. She cited the city of Seattle's 2022 sign-on bonuses for police officers as an example of this tool not working. "Seattle's police department's staff numbers have decreased since these bonuses were offered," she said. "And we can also look at ourselves as an example. We gave \$7,000 sign-on and retention bonuses last year, and our staff numbers have continued to decrease."

Ward 13 Council Member Linnea Palmisano was less concerned about the effectiveness of the incentives and identified

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Emily Koski



“

If we're trying to throw money at recruitment and retention in an effort to stop the bleeding, it hasn't worked.”

Aisha Chughtai



“

The letter of agreement is a very important tool, and it's that police management that needs to be able to assign officers to critical shifts.”

Linea Palmisano



managerial authority as the primary reason to support the agreement. "The letter of agreement is about a very important tool, and it's that police management needs to be able to assign officers to critical shifts," she said.

Ward 10 Council Member Chughtai did not think the benefits of making scheduling easier

or recruitment and retention were worth the costs. "If we're trying to throw money at recruitment and retention in an effort to stop the bleeding, it hasn't worked," she stated.

Chavez wanted to see more benefits to the city in the contract than just more flexible scheduling authority. "If we are to give bonuses," said Chavez, "they should be tied to even more significant reforms in the department."

Ward 7 Council Member Lisa Goodman shared her concerns that not spending more to try to recruit and retain officers could be seen as a violation of a court

ruling and result in the city facing another lawsuit. "The mayor has done his part to suggest a path forward and council is about to say no we're not going to do that," she said. "The litigants will be right back in court."

'STAFFING ISSUES STEM FROM WORKPLACE CULTURE'

In her closing comments, Koski said that next year, after this budget is passed, she intends to initiate a larger study of recruitment, hiring, retention and attrition among different city departments and employee groups including police.

She has also identified other ways to support recruitment and retention that include increasing professional development and training opportunities, and funding homeownership, education and relocation assistance. She has called for "specific recruitment campaigns focused on women who currently only make up roughly 12% of our officers."

"Since the letter of agreement did not pass council," said Frey in an email after the meeting, "it's possible this reform will not happen in the full contract negotiations. The chief and the community will have to continue to wait at least 28 days to fill a shift. This will directly impact the level of service we are able to provide to our community members."

"I would be more than happy to work on a compromise that includes real reforms but not at the expense of one-off negotiations that do not push for accountability," wrote Chavez. "Moving forward, the mayor needs to understand that collaboration with the city council is necessary, not just an afterthought. I expect him to bring forward the strongest tentative agreement possible. And in collaboration with the city council. Then, we can talk about these bonuses, which should be tied to real accountability and reform."

"Our staffing issues stem from our workplace culture. Internal data shows it, external data shows it. And we're not going to fix these issues by throwing money at them," said Koski. "We need to look at this problem holistically and make decisions that set us up for success not just tomorrow, not just next year, but 5, 10, even 20 years from now."

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One segment of the population that doesn't like guns is kids. At least the ones that attended a community solutions with youth workshop at the Walker Library in Uptown Minneapolis on Nov. 18, 2023. I organized the workshop with the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation, and 13 young people participated – six eighth graders, three ninth graders, three sixth graders, and one fifth grader. They ranged in age from 10 to 14.

Many of them have personal experiences with guns.

One described having a gun pulled on him and knowing a friend who was shot.

Another youth spoke passionately about the Second Amendment and explained how some people don't understand it was written to protect Americans' right to establish militias to defend themselves, not to allow individual Americans to own guns and kill each other.

Another said her mom doesn't want her to take the bus in Minneapolis because guns are everywhere and bus stops



By Eric Ortiz



Community stakeholders and youth brainstorm solutions for gun violence at Walker Library on Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023. (Photo by Eric Ortiz)

have become too dangerous.

They want things to change.

Our youth have had to grow up with guns like no generation before them. In the 1980s, when I was in elementary school in southern California, we had earthquake drills. Stop, drop, and roll. Today, kids across the U.S. have active shooter drills. Barricade yourself in the classroom, turn out the lights, and don't say a word.

Students must deal with this threat. A 10-year-old fifth grader in Houston, Texas, described what happens in active shooter drills to his mom.

Son: The teacher is supposed to lock the door, turn the lights off, and push this big desk behind the door. The first time I did an active shooter drill, I saw her having a hard time with it, so I decided to come help her. Because if she doesn't get the desk on the door in time, the intruder

can open it.

Mom: So what do you do next after you push the table?

Son: The class is supposed to stand on the back wall, but I decided to stand in front of the class, because I want to take the bullet and save my friends.

Mom: So does your teacher ask you to stand in front of the class?

Son: No. My life matters, but it's kind of like there's one person that can come home to the family, or there can be 22 people that come to a family.

Mom: Do you know why it's hard for me to accept that?

Son: Because I'm such a young age, I shouldn't really be giving my life up. Like, you shouldn't have to worry about that.

Mom: Right. If there's any time that I want you to be selfish, it's then. I need you to come home. So would you still stand in front of your friend even with me telling

you not to?

Son: Yes. I get that you would want me to come home, but it's not really a choice that you can make. It's a choice that I have to make.

Mom: I see now that there's nothing I could say that would change your mind. I just hope that it never comes to that.

Son: Talking about this makes me feel sad, but you raised a good person.

Mom: And this is why I can't have the conversation with you. You keep saying things like that, and I'm speechless. You're 10. And you're that 10-year-old who doesn't clean their room, and there is no handbook for this. This is why the conversation between you and me always ends in dead silence. Because I'm a mother, and I don't know what to say.

That conversation was four years ago. Gun violence has gotten worse. According to The Washington Post, there have been 389 school shootings since Columbine in 1999. CNN reports at least 71 this year, while the K-12 School Shooting Database (which documents when a gun is fired, brandished, or a bullet hits school property) counts 306 school shootings, breaking the 2022 record of 305.

Overall, the U.S. has had more than 600 mass shootings in 2023. It's the fourth straight year of 600 mass shootings. Before 2020, our country had never experienced more than 500 in a year.

Youth are troubled by this trend. At our solutions workshop, they shared good ideas about how to reduce gun violence.

We plan to help them put these ideas into practice to create a better future.



Eric Ortiz lives in the Wedge with his family. When he's not community building, he's the chief content officer for the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation and writes bilingual children's books with his kids. Their first book, "How the Zookalex Saved the Village," is available in English and Spanish.

ELECTIONS THIS YEAR DEMONSTRATE SUCCESS OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING

This fall, Bloomington, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, St. Louis Park, and St. Paul all used ranked choice voting for their municipal elections and were among 21 cities in seven states using ranked choice voting across the country.

Minnetonka voters also considered a City Charter amendment to repeal ranked choice voting (RCV), and conclusively rejected that repeal, voting to save RCV by a margin of 59 percent to 41 percent.

The 2023 municipal elections in Minnesota once again demonstrated the success of ranked choice voting (RCV). Voters were able to express their preferences across multiple candidates, voter turnout increased overall compared to similar elections prior to implementing RCV, the cities saved the cost of holding a city primary where only a small percentage of voters participated, and RCV continued to demonstrate its ability to accelerate repre-



By Jeanne Massey

sentation of women and people of color in elected office. Under RCV, St. Louis Park elected Nadia Mohamed, the first Somali American mayor in the United States; St. Paul elected the first all women city council, the majority of which are women of color; Minnetonka elected its first all women city council (excepting the mayor who was not on the ballot); and Minneapolis continued its progress toward greater diversity where nine out of 13 council members will be people of color, and once again, a majority will be women. These results are consistent with other jurisdictions that have implemented RCV.

RCV gives greater opportunity to women and BIPOC communities by opening the process to more candidates and new voices, incentivizing positive campaigns based on the issues, and eliminating the risk of vote-splitting between candidates with similar platforms or from the same community. It also eliminates the low-turnout and unrepresentative local primary that is a barrier to new voices in general and for underrepresented communities in particular. Since local elections are a significant pipeline to state elected

office, local voting systems can have a significant impact on the diversity and representation in our state legislative bodies, as well.

RCV REWARDS CANDIDATES WHO FOCUS ON THE ISSUES, BUILD BROAD COALITIONS OF SUPPORT

The candidates who win ranked-choice elections are those who build the broadest coalitions of voter support. In most cases, the winning candidate emerged with a majority of support outright, which occurred in 24 out of the 34 races this year. Of the 10 races that went to an RCV runoff and required additional rounds of counting, eight candidates finished with a majority or near majority of initial ballots cast; all finished with a majority of ballots continuing in the final round. The value of RCV is that candidates must reach beyond their base for second and third choice votes and campaign towards that majority, and they do that by focusing on the issues important to voters, presenting their positive vision for the city and refraining from attacking their opponents.

RCV IMPROVES THE TENOR OF CAMPAIGNS, EVEN IN A DIVISIVE ELECTION CYCLE

This election year must be placed in the context of the overall political environment. While we have seen increasing polarization in American politics in recent years, we may have reached our most polarized period yet. RCV combats polarization by changing the incentives for candidates who must campaign for a broad majority of voters, not just their base, and who benefit from not only first but also second choice votes. Candidates who engage in negative attacks may alienate their opponents' supporters and are less likely to earn second and later choice votes. RCV promotes civility, but ranked-choice elections are also not immune from the political ecosystem which, unfortunately, has become toxic. While we have seen a trend of growing civility in candidate behavior under RCV, Independent Expenditure campaigns can, unfortunately, still go negative, often to the detriment of the candidates they support.



Kingfield resident Jeanne Massey is the FairVote Minnesota Executive Director.

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DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR ALL

Communities Organizing Latine Power and Action (COPAL) celebrated the implementation of Driver's Licenses for All on Oct. 1.

Minnesota, which is home to over 80,000 undocumented immigrants, now joins 18 states and Washington, D.C. in authorizing driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, marking a historic step towards inclusivity. This law represents a significant step towards enhancing the safety and security of all Minnesotans. It ensures that undocumented individuals can legally drive, receive proper training, and obtain essential insurance coverage, making Minnesota roads safer for everyone.

But at the core of this victory is the dignity in the lives of our communities. COPAL is proud to have been part of that fight and recognizes the pressing need to ensure access to driver's licenses for all residents, including those who are undocumented. For many, driving is not a luxury but a necessity. This law will expand community members' access to cultural, religious, work, and school activities, as well as vital services like medical appointments, leading to a healthier and more engaged community.

"Oct. 1 represents a shift towards a more dignified life in Minnesota. This isn't just a change for the eligible adults who can drive now – it's a celebration for all the kids who won't miss their opportunity to play on a soccer team or visit a state park," said Ryan Pérez, Leadership and Organizing Director of COPAL. "We are restoring social lives and beginning to address a 20-year debt to immigrant families in Minnesota."

"In celebrating the implementation of Driver's Licenses for All, we recognize that this victory is not just about driver's licenses; it's about dignity, safety, and inclusion. It is a testament to the power of unity, community, and resilience," said Francisco Segovia, Executive Director of COPAL. "We are proud to have played a part in this historic moment, but our work is far from over. Our commitment to our communities continues as we pave the way for a more inclusive Minnesota where everyone can thrive."

To prepare the community to obtain their licenses, COPAL has offered Spanish-language road safety classes online and in the Twin Cities, as well as the towns of Austin, Rochester, and Winona. In addition, COPAL continues to connect community members with information about obtaining driver's licenses and assist community members with appointments through our bilingual website, navigator line, social media platforms, in-person outreach, and Workers' Center. COPAL is also in the process of making our Workers' Center into a third-party testing site in collaboration with the Minnesota Driver & Vehicle Services (DVS).

THE 'POWER' OF COMMUNITY IN PUERTO RICO

Power is generated: electric power, community power, people power. This past August, a delegation of fifteen Minnesotans visited the island of Puerto Rico to learn from communities on the frontlines of battles for many kinds of power.



By **Ryan Perez**

Communities are fighting for a reliable power grid, for example, to supply energy across the island. Following an ongoing series of natural disasters such as Hurricane Maria that resulted in months without electric power, as well as the human disaster of failed government relief efforts through FEMA, people across the island are challenging a now privatized electric monopoly. They are fighting back against corruption that has profited greatly from an unstable infrastructure, which results in the loss of human life when insulin can't be refrigerated, or when a dialysis machine can't be sustained.

When efforts to pressure the highest levels of government and private economy fail to provoke change, communities in Puerto Rico take their electrical future into their own hands, seeking local solar and other alternative energy solutions. When their purchasing power is insufficient, leaders build access to wealth through the solidarity of the Puerto Rican diaspora. This is the kind of people power that builds movement amidst a system that resists vital public policy change.

We firmly believe that in the struggle to build healthier communities in Minneapolis and across Minnesota, we can learn a lot from the resilient and adaptable organizing of the Puerto Rican people on the island. For this reason, our South Minneapolis-based organization COPAL launched a Minnesota to Puerto Rico delegation this year. Our cohort included elected officials such as Senate Majority Leader Bobby Champion and partners such as the Minnesota Environmental Partnership and the Latino Economic Development Center.

During the visit, our group visited a nonprofit organization in the mountain town of Adjuntas, Puerto Rico, called Casa Pueblo. Casa Pueblo is a people's organization dedicated to protecting natural, cultural, and human resources, within their town and across Puerto Rico. One of their founders, Alexis Massol González, spoke to our group about their solar resiliency project. Casa Pueblo is doing profound work creating an infrastructure designed to thrive regardless of the condition of the larger island grid, and despite the incompetencies and corruption of government institutions. They have developed a solar-powered theater, barbershop, and market; they have also built a sustainable coffee operation and rainforest school. When they are faced with environmental



The South Minneapolis-based organization COPAL launched a Minnesota to Puerto Rico delegation this year. The cohort included elected officials such as Senate Majority Leader Bobby Champion and partners such as the Minnesota Environmental Partnership and the Latino Economic Development Center. (Photos submitted)

calamities, they have a high level of preparedness that serves their entire municipality by providing critical independent power.


This critical and independent power supply was developed through the critical and independent organizing of the people of Adjuntas. Leaders who started the organization over 40 years ago built a democratic governing institution whose name translates to the "People's House." Casa Pueblo is not dependent on government or corporations for its power; in fact, external state actors including the U.S. Department of Energy negotiate directly with Casa Pueblo as an organization with autonomy and the mandate of their members. Those members, who make decisions impacting the future of the municipality, grew in their leadership in battles against extractive mining projects and for the protection of Puerto Rican forests. They are solar-powered, community-powered, and people-powered.

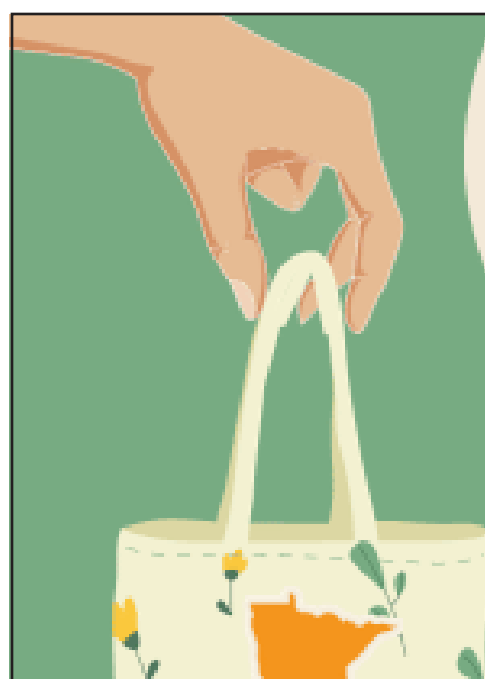
To learn and replicate the transformative work of Casa Pueblo, we must first realize that we are in a place with a lot of wealth. Earlier this year, Minnesota held a budget surplus of over \$19 billion. Imagine what a community like theirs could do with our resources! So, what we are lacking is not dollars, but political will, which can be created by organizing together and developing new leadership. So, let's harness together the core philosophy of Casa Pueblo: creative democratic organizing for



a resilient and regenerative future. Right now, COPAL is working to address environmental injustices at a systemic level by supporting public policy change and grassroots action across the state. COPAL and our partners organize to hold accountability for the systems that should be curtailing the worst impacts of pollution, all while we envision a future with clean heat, electrified transportation, and community-based agricultural systems.

Join COPAL and our partners as we seek to bring about a just environmental future for all. If you are interested in getting connected, send an email to info@copalmn.org. Siempre pa'lante!

 **Ryan Perez** is the organizing director of COPAL at 3702 E. Lake St. Contact him at ryanp@copalmn.org.



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THE SIGN PAINTER

Forrest Wozniak's skills are more popular now than ever

By Jan Willms

The Great Depression was over long before Forrest Wozniak was born. But that time period serves as a backdrop to his career as a sign painter.

Wozniak, who was born and raised in South Minneapolis, said that as a kid coming of age in the '90s, he and his friends were exposed to a lot of vibrant color in the city. "Me and my friends would find rusty objects and paint them with garish designs and have art shows," he recalled.

Simultaneously, Wozniak said he was inspired by the Woody Guthrie era. "You could ride the rails or hitchhike or travel across the country with a sign painting kit," he said.

"I don't have a traditional art upbringing and did not go to school for art," Wozniak stated, "but I was inclined to do art my whole life growing up." He started by working with a furniture company while still in high school. He built Scandinavian Modern furniture, now called router furniture. "It is really boxy, with built-in cabinets and drawers," he explained. He worked in masonry, roofing, as a handyman, and then in construction.

However, the art of sign painting continued to appeal to him, and he began working with it as a part-time opportunity. "I was doing sign painting 30 percent of the time, and the rest I was doing construction. But in 2009, I made the leap to full-time sign painting, and I never looked back," he said.

ROADTRIP THROUGH THE SOUTH

Although Wozniak did not have formal training in his field, he credits the mentors he has had throughout his career with being important factors in his professional life. "I had great mentors in masonry, construction and sign painting," he said.

Phil Vandervaart, a noted Minneapolis-based sign painter, has been a great influence in Wozniak's profession. "We worked together for 17 years, and we are still great friends," Wozniak said.

He began by painting signs for friends. "Fortunately, I learned to sell my body of work like an old-fashioned business person, by word of mouth."

Wozniak said one of his first jobs was with his friend, sign painter Ira Coyne. "He has a lot of natural talent, and I had enough common sense that I could help him," he noted. It was for a bookstore, and Wozniak said Coyne painted the sign, and he filled in with books and clouds.

He and Coyne hitchhiked and rode freights to Nevada, New Orleans and New Mexico. Wozniak painted a sign for a place called Whitey's Bar in New Orleans. "The sign was at the end of a baseball field, and featured a ball player in an old baseball uniform hitting a home run. If you hit that sign with a home run, you could drink at Whitey's for the night for free," Wozniak recalled.

HIS FIRST PROFESSIONAL SIGN: MAYDAY CAFE

He considers his first professional sign to be one he worked on for the May Day Café at 13th and Bloomington in Minneapolis. "A friend had bought it, and I was going to replace the old signs," he said. "I painted them and showed them to Phil. Phil said they were terrible. He said to come over to his house and follow his



"I don't have a traditional art upbringing and did not go to school for art," said Forrest Wozniak, "but I was inclined to do art my whole life growing up." (Photo by Terry Faust)



Signs around the city that Forest Wozniak painted include those at Angry Catfish and Hope Breakfast Bar. He teaches a continuing education class at Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD), and has adopted some interns from that course. (Photos submitted)

directions." Wozniak and his friend, Sven Lynch, went over and completed the signs with Vandervaart's guidance. "That was my first professional sign, and it is still in my portfolio today."

Reflecting on some of the strangest signs he has ever painted, Wozniak said he was painting for the Basilica Block Party. The Fallon Design Agency was promoting the concert and had hired a helicopter so the work-in-progress could be filmed.

"We were painting the entire roof of a beautiful old building that has since been torn down. Fallon was doing a stop motion filming, and we were painting the words 'Confession to God' within M.C. Hammer's pants."

Wozniak said the painters were wearing white gloves because of the extreme July heat. "That was one of the weirdest signs I remember."

He said the roof was coated first in a sort of skin used to protect women's shoes. "It's like a movie set product. You can coat a school bus with it and paint on it, then peel off the whole skin. For that roof, we had 40 bags of that skin peeling when we were done."

Another strange sign painting experience Wozniak recalled is when he worked on a sign for an animal rendering service. Semi-trucks would carry dead animals that were transformed into bone meal and pig meal.

"I can't unsee what I have seen," he said. He said he had an aerial view of the animals and a constant smell of the ammonia that was used. "It was disgusting," Wozniak said of the odors and views. "I painted beautiful cow heads and turkey silhouettes, but that job lasted for weeks, and it was traumatizing."

'PACE YOURSELF, REST YOURSELF AND TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY'

Wozniak said his signs consist of a lot of his original work, as well as restoring old signs.

He just completed a job for an architectural firm, which required him to go 45 feet up in the air.

"The higher you get, the safer you are in the way your equipment gets more and more sophisticated," he said. "I have painted silos that reach 200 feet." In such jobs he is harnessed in and uses OSHA-oriented safety precautions. He is on a platform that can hold 600 pounds.

"The most dangerous jobs are when you are only 16-20 feet in the air, where you do your own rigging," Wozniak said. He said painting from heights high above the ground comes with the job. "If you want to make a middle-class living from the trades, you have to do certain things. Part of my obligation is working from heights, painting in extreme weather and using chemicals."

He said the patterns of his work are somewhat cyclical. Many of his jobs are delivered and completed now. And he is in his workshop setting up future contracts.

"I am more organized now as a business person, so I don't do outside winter jobs if I don't have to," he noted. "I do a lot of big board signs and interior signs during the winter."

This past snowy season found him making interior signs for Huxley Eyewear. He also does consistent interior jobs for purpose-driven restaurants, such as Hope Breakfast Bar – signs that read 'Believe in Breakfast' done in gold and black.

According to Wozniak, the career of sign painting can be physically exhausting, but he has no complaints. "You pace yourself, rest yourself and take care of your body," he said.

He teaches a continuing education class in sign painting at Minneapolis College of Art Design (MCAD) and said he has adopted some interns from that course.

"An intern is highly valuable in the modern transformation of my skills," he said. "I don't have computer skills, and what an intern can do in 20 minutes with Photoshop would take me six hours."

Wozniak said he has a lot of support between interns and a sign company called SignMinds in northeast Minneapolis that builds signs for him. "Sometimes an intern apprentices with me, but I do the sign painting myself. Typically my help is on the back end."

Wozniak said that when he started, there were fewer sign painters in the Twin Cities. "Sign painting has always been a dying art, but at the same time poor people, common people, urban people, small town people, community people have always needed sign painting and sign painting has always survived in these little nodes of micro-commerce. In some ways there is this microcosm so there's a tendency for art culture, socioeconomically a little wealthier, to feel like they have found something because they found it. So, sign painting's never been dead."

"It is only now popular."

▶ 1 ASHES TO ACTION

providing water and oranges to visitors who numbered in the thousands. The first march began from their parking lot.

For the book, Seifert interviewed several neighbors about their experiences with Calvary. Three of them – Susan Heineman, Marcia Howard and Katie Dillon, each of whom lives within a block of 38th and Chicago – joined Seifert at a book launch event at church on Nov. 5, 2023. They spoke of what those early days were like and the lasting bond that has formed between Calvary and the community at George Floyd Square.

The conversation began with the banners. On the north side of the Calvary building hangs a banner that reads, “In this City for Good!” which signaled intent in two ways – to do good and to stay forever.

Heineman’s first thought when the banner went up was that she didn’t know any kind of spiritual group that doesn’t want to do good in the world. But the staying part?

“That was like, okay... Now I have the flavor of this congregation, and I really, really like it,” she said. Heineman added, “What’s touched me most is that it’s still up.”

Draped high on the bell tower facing west is a huge black and white banner of George Floyd (designed by young congregant Ella Endo) with a halo above his head. The image is inscribed with words that had been spoken by people close to Floyd. For Dillon, these were an essential counter to the defamation of Floyd that was already underway.

“The words were so personal, and the artist had just captured so much of people who loved George Floyd and put them up there for anybody to see for years and years now,” she said. “I’m just so grateful for that.”

Dillon spoke of a friend whose neighborhood closer to the Third Precinct was covered in ash, and who came to 38th and Chicago with Dillon for some grounding; the Square did not smell toxic. The streets were so full, and when they made their way to Calvary at the end of the block Dillon noticed a family with a little kid who needed to use a bathroom and was helped into the building.

“There was a presence that had just popped out of nowhere and was taking care of people at this very basic level of our bodies. I just loved that,” she said.

For Heineman, this was much larger than a simple gesture. In setting up tables with provisions outdoors, the church had already come out to meet the needs of the community. But here, they were letting people in. Calvary also remained steadfast about not allowing the police to use their parking lot, itself a bold statement.

“Saying no to the police was like a mark,” said Heineman. “We are not neutral.”

Calvary made it clear through their actions that they were there for the community. They lent out chairs and equipment, provided meeting space and charging stations, and even brought in kiddie pools that demonstrators could stand in, in the event they were tear gassed by police and needed to quickly wash off. They allowed neighbors to use their kitchen to prepare meals for the community.

All the while the food shelf remained in operation. Howard, an English teacher at Roosevelt High School and self-described “child of poverty,” shared her experience when she used the resource.

“Calvary’s Food Shelf felt like being at a grocery store. It was the most dignified experience I’ve ever had going hat-in-hand for something that was free,” she said. “Never underestimate how important allowing people to have dignity in [their time of] need is. Which is why a block and a half away in the Square, we attempt to make sure that we greet all our neighbors, our comrades, our wayfarers, with that same amount of dignity.”



During a reading of her book “Ashes to Action: Finding Myself at the Intersection of the Minneapolis Uprising” at church in November, author Shari Seifert (second from left) and community members (left to right) Susan Heineman, Marcia Howard and Katie Dillon talk about ways that Calvary Lutheran Church showed up for their neighbors at George Floyd Square during and following the uprising. (Photos by Jill Boogren)

AS SACRED SPACE

Hectic as it was at the Square, the sanctity of the space could not be denied. Dillon remembers early on seeing a handmade banner painted on cloth that read, “This is a sacred space.”

“It sort of sunk in at that moment. That’s what this is. This is a sacred space. As a physical location, it is hallowed ground,” she said. “From I think the beginning... Calvary was able to live into that.”

It was the antidote to the very real threat of White supremacists setting things on fire and getting teargassed or shot at as the National Guard marched in. Howard reiterated that at the very beginning they wanted to keep the place safe, sanitary and sacred. Interfaith vigils were arranged with pastors, rabbis and Buddhist monks so people could come together in grief.

“In true reflection, it put paid to this idea [that] George Floyd Square is a memorial for stolen lives. That this is what we’re focused on,” said Howard. “And we will say their names.”

In the book, Seifert describes a vigil she was called on to lead. Not knowing what she should say in this time and place as a White-bodied woman, she chose to renounce White supremacy and the systems that uphold it. She learned that afterwards, Howard, who at the time was in the Square about 20 hours a day, was finally able to get a full night’s sleep.

Eventually the lines blurred between the church and community, becoming one larger entity moving together during the most unlikely of times – a global pandemic.

“When many people were isolated during COVID, I was connected like nobody’s business,” said Seifert.

Going forward, Calvary hopes to nurture and be in relationship with fellow building tenants (see “Calvary church makes room for deeply affordable housing at 39th and Chicago,” Messenger October 2022); the people of the Calvary Food Shelf (see sidebar); and the community at the Square.

HUMILITY IS KEY

Originally from a small town in Texas, Seifert is not new to working for racial justice. Asked what this work might look like for the everyday church looking to dismantle racism without being in proximity to the very public, very external circumstances of a global reckoning, Seifert

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“What I have learned is that humility as a White person wading into the waters of doing anti-racism work is really, really important, because there’s much more that we don’t understand than we do understand,” she said. “White supremacy is so pervasive, it’s baked into us. It’s the air we breathe, from when we’re itty bitty. It lives in us in ways that we don’t realize.”

Humility is key to recognizing that we operate in ways that are racist and harmful without knowing it, explained Seifert. It helps to be curious and aware of one’s own physical and emotional responses when in multiracial spaces. Likewise, if people aren’t in multiracial spaces, wondering about that, too. In her book she offers suggestions for those who want to do the work: going in the spirit of accompaniment; being prepared to listen to feedback; and letting go of perfectionism – a tool of White supremacy that can freeze someone from acting or cause them to retreat into comfort.

The point is to do the work – even and especially when it’s hard. Her hope with the book is that it helps more White people engage. As Seifert writes, “Everyone has a role to play, and everyone has to play a role.”

Ashes to Action is available at Moon Palace Books, on Kindle and from the publisher, Augsburg Fortress. Seifert is giving all of her royalty payments to the George Floyd Global Memorial.

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POTTERY IN THE GROTTO: BUILDING COMMUNITY

THE ART OF...

Potter Bob Arnoldy has created a treasure in Linden Hills with his curbside pottery grotto. He explains the concept of the grotto and how the community has embraced it.



By **Suzie Marty**

Q: So, tell us what pottery in the grotto is.

A: The grotto is a small cave-like structure built into my retaining wall facing the sidewalk. It's perfect for small pieces of my work.

Q: How did you come up with the idea?

A: You know how you feel when you really like or enjoy some material thing and then it is given to you for free? That surprised, joyous feeling, that leaves you with such gratefulness. That is how I came up with the idea. It is to spread that happy, joyful feeling. I have been giving away my pottery for years and years, to family, friends, anyone that comes over to my house, really. And every time, they are so grateful and surprised that I would just give it away. It was an unspoken rule that if you came over, you left with a piece of my pottery. However, as time went on, even friends, guests, and family had had enough. I had to do something, so I thought a grotto in the front of the house would be a good way to give away my work, and to hopefully make someone's day.

Q: Besides your pottery pieces, what do you hope to offer people through pottery in the grotto?

A: I have a sign in the grotto that reads "FREE. But to take my pottery comes with a deal. If you like this piece, it's yours. All I ask is that you do something nice for a stranger today." So, the idea is to spread kindness. The world seems so angry lately, and the more kindness we share and the more we can get along, the better. It all starts in our own communities.



Potter Bob Arnoldy is behind @potteryinthegrotto and free items in his curbside pottery grotto.

Recently, I had "business cards" made up to explain the mission - to spread kindness. Along with the cards, I've started placing my pieces in new places, such as on a park bench at Lake Harriet, or at a bus stop, or along a path going to the lake, anywhere really.

Q: What do you get back from the grotto and the people who visit it?

A: First, I get to free up space in my garage! Second, I do get joy thinking about how someone liked what I put in the grotto, or left on a park bench. If the piece brings them joy too, and they pass on that joy, that is enough, really. I do, on occasion, get a thank you card or a small

little toy that may have belonged to a child. But the most amazing gift I received was from a neighbor a few blocks away. She had painted an amazing rendition of my house and included the nicest card with it.

Q: Have you been surprised by anything since starting the grotto?

A: I have. There are a few other places and people that are doing their own things to spread kindness. Little Colfax Garden, on Colfax Avenue, for example, hands out painted rocks with positive sayings. Free Little Art Galleries in Chicago give away art instead of books. My grotto's Instagram handle is @potteryinthegrotto.



Through the handle, people find me and I find other people all over the country who spread joy and kindness.

Q: How long have you been doing pottery and in what direction is your work going these days?

A: I've been a potter for the last 22 years. A friend took a class at Northern Clay Center and invited me to take a class there too. I did, and I loved it. I have been going to Northern Clay Center for nine months a year ever since. I've made more than 200 pieces in that time.

As far as my ceramic art, I enjoy functional ware, such as cups, mugs, bowls, and plates. But I also do sculptural work. That work includes garden art such as fun little houses and totem poles (ceramic pieces stacked on top of each other and fit onto a central supporting pole). I also make pieces that can hang on a wall.

I have recently joined another studio in South Minneapolis called Forma Clay Community. At Forma, they fire their kilns to different temperatures than Northern Clay does. These higher temperatures allow me to explore much brighter colors, which I am super excited about.

Bob Arnoldy's pottery is also available for purchase at my gallery, Everett & Charlie Gallery (2720 W 43rd Street in Linden Hills). Check us out at www.EverettandCharlie.com



Suzie Marty is an artist and curator at Everett & Charlie art gallery in Linden Hills. She is also an avid supporter of buying local, and a marketing specialist for the *Southwest Connector*. Contact her at ads@swconnector.com.

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HOMEGROWN TALENT ROCKS THE CEDAR

TEAMING UP FOR GOOD

When I heard that Dial Tone was having an album release party at The Cedar Cultural, I was like, "What? Didn't these kids just meet? How can they have an album already? And how can they be headlining The Cedar?"



By **Larry LaVercombe**

Turns out they have, in fact, already played the Seventh Street Entry. It's amazing what three U of M students can do in 11 months. But let's backtrack a bit.

I first met singer/guitarist Cole Pivec when he was 15 years old and fronting the teen rock band, 612LIVE! when this group of five kids who took lessons at The Linden Hills House of Music won the award for Best Teen Act at the Minnesota State Fair in 2018. Over three more years, 612LIVE! performed on various stages that I sponsored and produced, at The Linden Hills Festival and Woofstock.

Two years ago, Daisy Forester, Henning Hanson and Cole Pivec met as freshman at the U of M. Last fall, they started writing and playing music together. One of their earliest performances was at a House of Music fundraiser; Cole was no longer taking lessons at The House, but Dial Tone made a special appearance there to help out his old school.

I loved them immediately. First of all, I was surprised that Cole was not playing the role of Front Man. Daisy was center stage, confidently playing bass and belting out the songs she'd written. Cole was by her side, also singing, but now exhibiting a free-spirited wildness that I hadn't seen before. Meanwhile, the drummer, Hanning Hanson, was great. Classically trained, I later learned. Totally solid, with sharp, specific fills and no heavy-handedness.

I had arrived at this fundraiser to help out the local team of teachers, and suddenly I was being treated to a set played by three extremely talented 20-year-olds who were writing their own material.

So, like I said, last week when I heard about the album release - I couldn't wait to see them.

When I got up to the stage at the



Dial Tone performs at The Cedar. (Photo by Larry LaVercombe)

Cedar, I started chatting with one of the dads of one of the kids in the 612LIVE! band, (who is, of course, a musician himself). As we talked, I realized how truly stoked this guy was to see this band. Have you not seen these guys, yet? I asked early in the conversation. "Oh no, I've seen 'em five times," he says. "They're a blast."

They've got it, we agree. This band has it all. Smarts and good lyrics; strong technical chops; catchy riffs and rhythms. But as we watch the show, what becomes most appealing is "the vibe." The character, you might call it, of these three lovely people, all three of whom are beautiful and full of positive energy. It's remarkable. They are fun to watch, fun to dance to, fun to be near.

And this: I'll admit to not seeing a lot of "younger shows" lately, but my experience more often than not is that kids don't dance much anymore... Wrong! This whole place was dancing. Eighty percent of the audience were people aged 18-23 - and they were dancing. Most of the rest of us who are over 50 were dancing, too.

The band is definitely dancing. Cole dances all across the stage, all night long. Daisy mostly keeps to the center, but they dance with each other while they play, and they dance with the crowd, too. They love the crowd, and they show it - and the crowd loved them back. The whole thing

embarrassingly awry.

After the show, she returns to her New York hotel room a sniveling mess until a mysterious reunion with her childhood friend, Joseph Estrada, instigates a vortex of levitation, both frightening and bizarre. It turns out Joseph has powerful secrets, too.

The duo must uncover the truth before a catastrophic levitation mishap leaves them injured or, worse, dead. From the Independent Book Review: "Engaging, unique, and playful. From the start, there's the question of how everything connects, and the pieces don't completely slot together until the dazzling conclusion."

You can find the book on Amazon, of course. Discover more at <https://sharon-wagnerbooks.com/>.

“

If you guys don't know Babes in Toyland, you're gonna get educated right now.”

Daisy Forester

had that kind of throw-back, lovefest feeling that us grandparent-types feel right at home with.

Which gets me to the thing that was most memorable about this show. . . There was a profound amount of respect for the elders at this event. "Respect for our predecessors" was virtually the theme of this show.

Many times, the musicians spoke of how honored they were to be releasing their album at The Cedar. They talked deliberately about what a rich musical history we have here in Minneapolis, and how we should be proud of our deep musical culture. They played several covers giving homage to Minneapolis artists, one of them proceeded by Daisy's pronouncement, loud and clear. "If you guys don't know Babes in Toyland, you're gonna get educated right now." Then they blew into "Bruise Violet."

And guess what. Their encore of Prince's "Let's Go Crazy" left nobody un-



Dial Tone is Daisy Forester, Henning Hanson and Cole Pivec. (Photo by Meghan Bunkenburg)

happy with Cole's version of Prince's always incredible guitar work. Seriously, if you can find another 21-year-old playing guitar like that, please introduce me. I'll write about them, too.

"We are playing on the shoulders of giants," Daisy said, between songs. "That's what it feels like, to play here in the Twin Cities. And we are so grateful to have your support."

Then Cole banged out the opening riff to the next song before screaming into the microphone: "We are Dial Tone... from Minneapolis!!!"

Their next show is Dec .1 at the Fine Line. Are they sold out yet? I don't know. But if you want to see their video, go to YouTube/Dial Tone Codependency. You can also find them at Instagram/Dial Tone Official, and Dial Tone Album on Spotify.



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.

KENNY AUTHOR RELEASES FIRST NOVEL

Sharon Wagner released the paranormal sci-fi novel "The Levitation Game" on Oct. 17, 2023, with Ten 16 Press. Wagner is a supernatural author, inexhaustible travel blogger, and illustrator of children's books, including "Maya Monkey." When she's not traveling the jungles of Central America, she lives in the Kenny neighborhood with her husband and two cats.

"The Levitation Game" is her debut novel. Creative from birth, she never stops dreaming of magical worlds to unravel with words.

In the novel, aspiring magician Esme Wright has a secret: She can levitate objects as effortlessly as humming a tune - no tricks required. But when she lands her first big break on The Morning Show: Live!, defying gravity goes horribly and

embarrassingly awry.

After the show, she returns to her New York hotel room a sniveling mess until a mysterious reunion with her childhood friend, Joseph Estrada, instigates a vortex of levitation, both frightening and bizarre. It turns out Joseph has powerful secrets, too.

The duo must uncover the truth before a catastrophic levitation mishap leaves them injured or, worse, dead. From the Independent Book Review: "Engaging, unique, and playful. From the start, there's the question of how everything connects, and the pieces don't completely slot together until the dazzling conclusion."

You can find the book on Amazon, of course. Discover more at <https://sharon-wagnerbooks.com/>.



DANCER PERFORMS AT STATE THEATRE

"Loyce Houlton's Nutcracker Fantasy," Minnesota Dance Theatre's (MDT) cherished holiday tradition, returns to the State Theatre Dec. 16-23, 2023.

Geneva Higgins Whiteside of Linden Hills will dance the role of Toy Soldier, alongside additional MDT students, company members and guest artists. Higgins Whiteside has danced with MDT school for seven years. This is her second year performing in "Loyce Houlton's Nutcracker Fantasy." She danced the role of mouse in her premiere performance in the 2022 production. Higgins Whiteside is in fifth grade at Lake Harriet Community School in Linden Hills.



NEW PLAN FOR THE MALL INCLUDES WOONERF, REMOVAL OF SOME ROADWAY

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is planning work at The Mall Park next year in coordination with an ongoing Met Council sewer project in the area.

Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES), operator of the metro area wastewater collection and treatment system, is replacing and enlarging aging sewer pipe and structures near Lake of the Isles. MCES has already completed work along Humboldt Avenue, now remaining sewer upgrades along the length of The Mall Park will be done in coordination with planned improvements for the park.

A cohesive, long-term plan for all neighborhood parks in Southwest Minneapolis was completed in November 2020. The Southwest Parks Plan set a vision for 40+ neighborhood parks in Southwest Minneapolis over the next 20-30 years, including The Mall Park. The plan was created after nearly two years of community-based engagement, planning and design with individuals, neighborhood groups and community organizations throughout Southwest Minneapolis.

The plan for The Mall Park has three main parts:

WOONERF STREET DESIGN

A "woonerf" street design built between Humboldt Avenue and Hennepin Avenue. "Woonerf" is a Dutch term for a shared-living street.

Woonerfs create common space shared by walkers, bikers and low-speed motor vehicles and use traffic-calming techniques to slow vehicle traffic while still accommodating parking.

MIDTOWN GREENWAY CONNECTION

A better, multi-use trail connection

created between Hennepin Avenue and the Midtown Greenway, which travels parallel and just north of The Mall.

MORE GREEN SPACE LEADING TO THE LAKES

Two west-bound blocks of asphalt park roadway on the north side of The Mall between Irving Avenue and Bde Maka Ska Parkway replaced with recreational green space. This creates a more continuous, uninterrupted green and forested space between The Mall and the lagoon between Lake of the Isles and Bde Maka Ska.

The east-bound park road will remain so that alley access is maintained.

YOUTH MARKETS COMING TO SOUTH MINNEAPOLIS

The Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation is running community solutions with youth markets at Ella Baker School in the Lower Hill East neighborhood of Minneapolis, or the Wedge. These markets are part of the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation's community solutions program, which gives youth opportunities to put knowledge into action to create solutions for local issues.

These markets will provide youth with real-world entrepreneurial experience and bring together local business vendors, restorative practice leaders, wellness practitioners, solutions-focused community organizations, musicians, artists, food trucks, and community members for a vibrant marketplace of goods, ideas, and services.

The markets are free, accessible to all, and designed to build community, boost the local economy, and empower youth to create positive change.

When: Saturday, Dec. 9: 11 a.m.-2 p.m.



Where: Ella Baker School, in their cafeteria (1200 W 26th St, Minneapolis, MN 55405)

Cost: Free for all participants, businesses, and organizations that want table space. Participants will provide their own tables and

equipment.

Organizations or individuals can be sponsors or donate gift cards, goods, and services. Contact erictortiz@gmail.com.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

BLAISDELL Y RENOVATIONS

The Blaisdell Y is excited to share that they will undergo renovations to improve member experiences. The renovations will begin the week of Monday, Nov. 27 and are anticipated to take four weeks to complete. Blaisdell Y will be setting up a temporary fitness floor to accommodate member workouts. LNA's English classes at the Blaisdell Y will not be impacted by the renovations.

YMCA REDEVELOPMENT

Shelley Carthen Watson - President and CEO of YWCA - provided an update regarding the Uptown and Downtown YWCA buildings at the East Isles Neighborhood Association monthly meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 14. According to Watson, there has been a lot of interest in the building from corporations, non-profits and developers. Little interest has been shown by fitness facilities. Bids for the place are due at the end of November, and the YWCA plans to make a decision within a week or two after that.

The East Isles Neighborhood Association is developing a working group to interact with whoever becomes the new owner of the property. The working group's goal will be to provide community input and feedback regarding the use of the space. Contact the association if you're interested in participating: info@eastisles.org.

PAINT-A-BOWL DEC. 2

Paint-a-Bowl is a ceramics event held in conjunction with February's Empty Bowls fundraiser for the food insecure in the community. It's a no-pressure, easy way to connect with neighbors and express yourself with paint, open to all. It will be held on Saturday, Dec. 2, 1-4 p.m. at MLK Park. All invited to paint bowls for the Souper Bowl Sunday Empty Bowls event.

KINGFIELD HOLIDAZZLE PARADE DEC. 9

Kingfield's 2nd Annual Holidazzle Parade will light up Grand Avenue on Saturday, Dec. 9. Holidazzle is open to Kingfield and surrounding neighborhoods. Bring the kids and put on your best holiday lights as people travel en masse down Grand Avenue in memory of the downtown Holidazzle of yore.

COLORS OF LAKE STREET SCULPTURE

The interior of the Midtown Global Market has undergone many changes over the past year to enhance the visitor experience, including updates in paint and patterns, new electronic wayfinding signage, bathroom updates, and much more. In addition, there is the new placement and rededication of a sculpture donated by longtime partner Pangea World Theater, called Colors of Lake Street. Columbian Artist Hanna Bibliowicz brought together dozens of members of the Lake Street community to participate in the creation of the sculpture.

LAKE STREET LOYALTY CHALLENGE

The Lake Street Council announces the return of its annual Lake Street Loyalty Challenge. Originally launched in 2021, the program rewards people for supporting small businesses on Lake Street. Shoppers who spend at least \$15 at a Lake Street-area business will receive a \$15 gift card to another local business along the corridor. Participants are also entered to win a grand prize valued at more than \$500. To participate, people who spend \$15 or more at any Lake Street business between now and Dec. 15 can upload their receipt at visitlakestreet.com/lake-street-loyalty and automatically receive a \$15 gift card to another select Lake Street business at random. They will also be entered to win a grand prize pack of gift certificates to local businesses, valued at more than \$500. Each entry to the Lake Street Loyalty Challenge is limited to one per person.

CITY BRIEFS

NEW LIQUOR LICENSES APPROVED

The city council approved several liquor licenses in the area. This includes the HUGE improv Theater, in a new location at 2728 Lyndale Ave. S, that will have a "wine with strong beer, and general entertainment license." The Kenwood, a restaurant that has been in operation at 2115 21st St. W since 2012, will be adding a liquor license with no live entertainment license. Gia, at 5555 Xerxes Ave. S, where Cavé Vin closed in October, will receive a full liquor license with no live entertainment.

3030 NICOLLET

City funding for this Project for Pride in Living housing project was approved in November. It will receive tax increment financing of \$534,700; \$1,650,000 from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; and \$26,500,000 in tax exempt Multifamily Housing Revenue Bonds. The previous building, a Wells Fargo bank building, was damaged in 2020 and demolished in 2021. Project for Pride in Living plans to build a 110-unit apartment building with commercial space on the first floor, including space for a new Wells Fargo facility. Construction is expected to be completed next summer.

OTHER HOUSING PROJECTS

The city has also approved Affordable Housing Trust Fund funding for two other southwest projects. One is a loan of up to \$2,260,000 from The LOMA project located at 3246 Nicollet Ave by One Stop African Market. The LOMA is planned as 62 affordable homes for seniors with some commercial and service providers on site. The other is a loan of up to \$1,000,000 for the 1301 Lake Street 120-unit affordable housing project by CommonBond Communities.

LOCALS APPOINTED TO CITY HOUSING GROUPS

In December, the city council approved the appointments of several southwest residents to the city's housing advisory committee. This includes Amanda Leathers from ward 13, Sam Adams from Ward 10, and Catriona Stuart as a mayoral appointee, also from Ward 10. Additionally, southwest Minneapolis residents Thomas Nordyke and Abdullahi Isse were appointed to the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

The city has approved the 2023 Facade Improvement Matching Grants for local organizations to help businesses make building improvements. Among those receiving grants, is the Bryn Mawr

Neighborhood Association, who will receive \$30,000; the Lake Street Council, who will receive \$50,000; the Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association, with \$23,000; the Lynnhurst Neighborhood Association, with \$23,000; and the Southwest Business Association, with \$50,000. The funding is part of the Great Streets Program that was started in 2007. It provides grants to help businesses and property owners make building improvements like paint, signage, awnings, murals, and tuck-pointing as well as window and door replacement.

CHAVEZ BUDGET AMENDMENTS

Ward 9 Council Member Jason Chavez has announced several budget amendments he is likely to propose including a Cultural Ambassador Pilot Program that could provide \$2,100,000 to develop and implement public safety pilot programming in 2024 in the city's seven Cultural Districts that are located along East Lake Street, Franklin Avenue East, 38th Street, Cedar Avenue South, West Broadway, Central Avenue, and Lowry Avenue North. He also is proposing using \$150,000 to pay for a Lake Street Safety coordinator to help coordinate public safety responses along Lake Street.

Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

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