

SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • JANUARY 18, 2024 • VOL. 3 • NO. 2 • 25,000 CIRCULATION



5 EDUCATION: Barton students show off their dance moves

2 Zumbro cafe closes in Linden Hills after 30 years

4 COLUMN: A resolution to get more connected this year

9 New year clean-up: tips to declutter and detox

A PEOPLE'S POET



Minneapolis names Southwest resident Heid E. Erdrich as poet laureate

By **Cam Gordon**

This month, Southwest resident Heid E. Erdrich became the first poet laureate for the city of Minneapolis. "We need poetry, even if we don't know we do. There's a human need for thoughtful, beautiful speech. I'm convinced it is part of our yearning for song, for prayer, for comedy, even for political speech," said Erdrich. "Our city seems deeply divided and that comes, in part, from not knowing and listening to one another. I want to find out if poetry can help us hear one another and help one

One of Heid E. Erdrich's favorite spots in the neighborhood is the Kenwood School Stone Poem Rain Garden. (Photo by Cam Gordon) (Photo by Cam Gordon)

another." Erdrich, who lives in Kenwood, started serving her one-year term on Jan. 1, 2024 and was honored at the first city council meeting of the term on Jan. 8 where she read a new poem written for the occasion. (See sidebar for excerpt.) On Jan. 18, she was part of a public celebration at The Loft Literary Center, located downtown at 1011 Washington Avenue S.

DEEP ROOTS

"Erdrich in particular has a long history of commitment to this work, and honoring her as the inaugural Poet Laureate speaks to the gravity of her impact," said Loft Program Manager Lucia LoTempio.

"We anticipate Erdrich will be a model for subsequent Poet Laureates to thrive in this role." When the city called for applicants last November, friends reached out to her. "They bugged me to apply," said Erdrich, "and I looked ahead at my 2024 schedule, realized I could make the time, and began to dream about what we could do around poetry in our city." Erdrich was born in Breckenridge, Minn., and raised in Wahpeton, N.D. where her parents taught at the Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school. She has seven siblings and her maternal grandfather, Patrick Gournau, was the tribal chair-



GET CHEAPER FOOD TO GO

Too Good to Go helps prevent food waste, lowers meal bills

By **Jan Willms**

Had a tough day at work and don't feel like cooking, but don't want to pay the price for the family to eat out? Too Good to Go (TGTG) may solve your problem, and enlist your help in preventing food waste at the same time.



Originating in Denmark in 2016, TGTG is a service with a mobile app that connects consumers to restaurants and stores that have surplus unsold food. "We connect customers with the app," said Sarah Soteroff, the lead public relations person for the United States and Canada for TGTG. "So when you go to the Google Play Store, it will ask you for information, particularly your location. I usually put in a 15-30 mile radius to see what is available. The consumer will then see a gray or green dot. Gray dots mean the food is gone, and green dots show what food is still available in a number of categories."

Soteroff continued describing the process: "You will pick something and click reserve. You will then have a specific time frame in which to pick up the food. If you do not pick up the bag, you will still be charged for it." The store or restaurant owner sets the time frame, since they know best when they have their rush and when the food is not sold anymore that day. You go and show your reserved food on your app, swipe it and pick up your surprise bag."

According to Soteroff, the customer will know the category of food reserved, but not the exact items. For example, you will see that your bag may contain: bakery items, pizza, tacos or sushi. And you will know the value of the items.

"The customer pays one-third of the value," Soteroff explained. "If you pay \$5.99, you know you are getting \$18 worth of food."

TGTG came to the United States in August 2020, starting in New York. They are now launching the app in the Twin Cities area, and some stores and restaurants have already started participating. Current business partners with TGTG include Mama Sheila's House of Soul, T-Rex Cookie Kitchen, The Buttered Tin, Milkweed Coffee, Backstory Coffee, Intown Sushi and the Butter Bakery.

"This past month, we have been reaching out to businesses and talking with them about food waste. A business can click on toogoodtogo.com and someone will connect with them," Soteroff said. "They can get started right away. They can go to the app interface, click business, and upload the food they have. They don't need anything else."

Soteroff said the business lists food if it has a surplus. If it doesn't, it does not list any that



'WE WERE CELEBRITIES'

Local students earn top spots, trip to China

By **Jill Boogren**

In the fall of 2023, two students from Yinghua Academy Chinese immersion school in northeast Minneapolis went on the trip of a lifetime. Keewaydin resident and sixth grader Sage Houdek and seventh grader Kaia Bursell from Dellwood, Minn., spent 10 days in China as part of the glob-

al competition, Chinese Bridge. They earned their spots by first competing in the U.S., delivering a speech in Chinese and a personal talent (Sage played the violin and Kaia sang). Each won the top position in their district to join just four other students from the U.S. and compete at the world level. Part contest, part television show, part cultural exchange, the event showcased the abilities of participants from 97 different countries from primary school on up, while offering a glimpse of life in Kunming, China. Sage said it was incredible to



(Left to right) Seventh grader Kaia Bursell, Yinghua Academy Director Dr. Luyi Lien, and sixth grader Sage Houdek hold their certificates and awards from Chinese Bridge.

AFTER 30 YEARS, ZUMBRO CLOSES

"WE WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU FOR THE WONDERFUL THOUGHTS AND MEMORIES YOU'VE SHARED SINCE OUR ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ZUMBRO CLOSING... AS WE COUNT DOWN THESE DAYS TO THE END OF THE MONTH WE FEEL OVERWHELMED BY YOUR KINDNESS AND ETERNALLY GRATEFUL TO BE A PART OF THIS AMAZING COMMUNITY." BARBARA NEI, NEIL HOLMAN, QUQU AND THE ZUMBRO FAMILY

- Final day: Dec. 31, 2023
- Shown in the 1996 movie "Jingle All the Way," starring Arnold Schwarzenegger
- Started as small 12-seat deli around the corner from its current location
- A developer is constructing a new building at 2803 W. 43rd St. with a mix of apartments and retail space
- Owners "do not see this as an ending, but more of a transition into something new and exciting for us all."



Zumbro owners Barbara Nei and Neil Holman, then and now. (Photo courtesy of Facebook)



Before it was the Zumbro, it was Helen's Cafe.



On Saturday, Dec. 30, 2023, at Zumbro Cafe (2803 W 43rd St.) neighbors took the opportunity for a last meal before it closed. (Left to right) Nicole, Warren, and Tripp Ryan wait outside for an hour in freezing temperatures for lunch in the cafe. The cafe opened in 1991. (Photo by Terry Faust)

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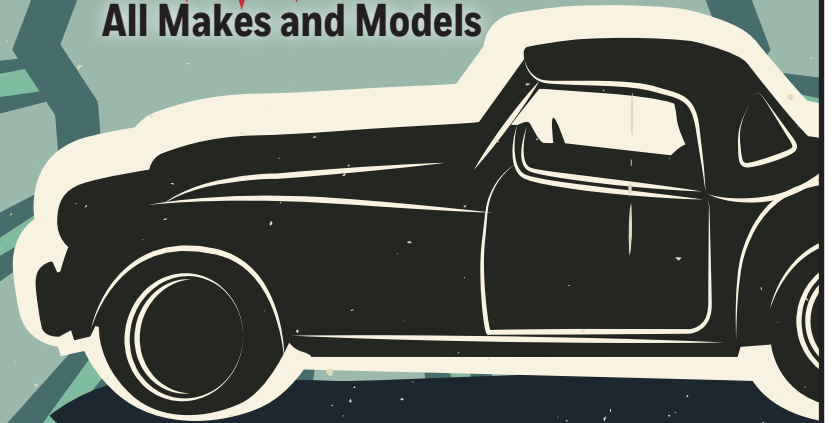
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▶ PEOPLE'S POET

man of the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe from 1953 to 1959.

Her interest in poetry goes back to her childhood. "We recited poems as children to impress our dad, who loved poetry," she recalled. "Still, he seemed incredulous that I became a professional poet and actually got paid – he was just tickled every time I won an award."

She has received many awards, including the Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry from the Library of Congress, a National Artists Fellowship from the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, and two Minnesota Book Awards.

Despite all these accomplishments, when asked about her proudest moment, she said, "Well, this honor, being the inaugural Minneapolis Poet Laureate certainly is at the top."

She earned a bachelor of arts from Dartmouth College and two masters of art from Johns Hopkins University in poetry and fiction.

In 2006, she moved with her family from St. Paul to Minneapolis. "So many things brought us here," she said. "We had found a public school that was a good fit for our oldest child who needed just the right place. We were able to be near two of my sisters and Birchbark Books." She was also starting work in the American Indian Cultural Corridor directing All My Relations Arts on West Franklin Ave. "I've felt connected to that stretch of Franklin since I moved to Minnesota in 1992," she said, "but I truly love the lakes, parks and the river, too."

One of her sisters, Louise Erdrich, is also a well-known author and owner of Birchbark books, located within walking distance of her house and across from one of her favorite spots in the neighborhood, Kenwood School's Stone Poem Rain Garden.

SETTING THE GOLD STANDARD

A panel of five judges unanimously selected Erdrich through an open application process administered by the Loft. It included three prominent members of the local literary community – Bao Phi, Carmen Giménez, and Douglas Kearney – as well as made up of members of the Minneapolis Arts Commission.

Twenty-five people submitted applications. "There was a very strong applicant pool," said Ben Johnson, director of the city's Arts & Cultural Affairs Department. "Heid E. Erdrich was selected because of the stature of her work, her quality of writ-



Heid E. Erdrich appreciates the Kenwood School's Stone Poem Rain Garden. (Photo by Cam Gordon)

ing, publication and body of work." Of the 25 applicants, the finalists also included Junauda Petrus, Miss Mari, Chavonn Shen, and Raymond Luczak.

"Our panelists cited the compelling sense of gravity in Erdrich's work, the strength in her craft, the strength in her community building, her focus on collaboration, and her ongoing development as an artist," said LoTempio.

"She will set the gold standard for all future applicants," said Johnson.

The city's poet laureate program is administered by The Loft Literary Center. As laureate, Erdrich will speak at official city events, lead at least one public event that features the sharing of poetry and community conversation, teach three classes through The Loft Literary Center, and generally help to advance the art form of poetry in the city.

Erdrich will receive an honorarium of \$8,000, and a budget of \$2,000 to plan and execute a project she designs. She may apply for a \$50,000 Academy of American

EXCERPT FROM JAN. 8 POETRY READING BY HEID E. ERDRICH

This is the City dreaming in winter, into the silence of frozen spaces in this bare year. The quiet broken by wishes. The quiet broken by calling down the snow, calling for home.

The City makes its own way home, makes its many ways home. This is the City dreaming under cold and deep skies on icy streets moving with care. Winter swallows background noise, makes the perfect place to listen, to hear one another.

Snow just another sign for home. We can laugh at it together, whether we park on one side or the other. To find our street, or find it restricted.

We plow on through. We are in it together.

When the City dreams in winter, what does it learn?

Listen to the City dreaming, calling us home, calling for a home in many languages.

Listen to the City dreaming, moving toward a chorus, learning its multiple and singular voice.



Our city seems deeply divided and that comes, in part, from not knowing and listening to one another. I want to find out if poetry can help us hear one another and help one another."

Heid E. Erdrich



roots in community," said Loft Literary Center Executive and Artistic Director Arleta Little. "We look forward to celebrating Heid and to collaborating with her in bringing her vision for poetry to the people of Minneapolis."

"I am thrilled about our investment in a Poet Laureate and our deepened commitment to expand and infuse arts and culture into this enterprise work, in connection with residents and our communities," said city council member, and poet Andrea Jenkins. "It has been a long journey for the city of Minneapolis to catch up with so many other communities in the state."

Erdrich has taught undergraduate and graduate students for decades, receiving tenure at University of St. Thomas and serving as a mentor to Augsburg University's Master of Fine Arts creative writing program from 2014 to 2022.

For those wanting to write poetry, "just think of images in your dreams and begin writing," she advises. "Keep your pen moving for five minutes and you will have a good start on a poem."

If you are looking for good poetry to read, "Minneapolis is rich in poets," she said, "but the runners up for Poet Laureate would be a good place to start. I'm a big fan of Sun Yung Shin, as well. But my particular interest is Indigenous poetry: Marcie Rendon will have a book of poems out soon and, although she's not from Minneapolis, Gwen Westerman, Minnesota Poet Laureate has a new book out."

She added, "I'm a realist, but still I have a vision of our future city united and thriving in all neighborhoods for all peoples. I don't think fear and separation can last forever – that's just unsustainable. Our population will change and the next generations will transform the city and it's their best hopes that really matter. I'm happy to hear those hopes as we make poetry together."

Poets Laureate Fellowship award.

Erdrich is Ojibwe and an enrolled member of Turtle Mountain. She has authored several poetry collections, including "Little Big Bully," "Curator of Ephemera at the New Museum for Archaic Media," "Cell Traffic: New and Selected Poems," "National Monuments," "The Mother's Tongue," and "Fishing for Myth." She also edited the "New Poets of Native Nations" anthology from Graywolf Press. Her next book is expected to be published later this year.

Since 2005, Erdrich has also curated several art exhibits focused on Native American artists. She currently serves as the 2020-2024 guest curator for the Mead Art Museum of Amherst College. Her exhibition, Boundless, that combines text and images from Amherst's collections of Native art and literature is on view at the Mead until July 2024.

A VISION OF A CITY UNITED

"Heid E. Erdrich is a people's poet with an exquisite voice and deep, deep

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GETTING MORE CONNECTED IN A HUMAN WAY

Connections with family, friends, and community lead to lasting happiness.

Happy New Year. Welcome to 2024.

Are you happy to be here? Have you already started writing an inspiring 366-page book this leap year (one page for every day)? Or are you still recovering from the holidays?



By Eric Ortiz

As we move from a season of reflection to begin tackling our resolutions, I hope you are hopeful.

I am fired up. I even wrote my goals down. This is something I usually don't do. But research has shown that people who write down their goals are 42 percent more likely to achieve them.

The reason is simple. You have more clarity and accountability when you write things down. And it's easier to remember them.

One of my goals is to spend more quality time with my family and friends and less time on my phone. It's working. My daily phone usage average is down 35 percent from last week. And my time with my kids is up.

I went to a Minnesota Timberwolves game with my son (the day before his ninth birthday), played outdoor volleyball with my 11-year-old daughter, and had some neutral (sometimes even positive) interactions with my 15-year-old daughter. Teenage girls can be a curious and challenging species (like all humans). I'll take what I can get.

I plan to do something one-on-one with my kids once a week. I want to strengthen my relationships with all of them. I want them all to know I am their No. 1 fan. There may have been some uncertainty, I've been told.

My wife and I have already received one invitation to a neighbor's house for a



One happy family: Cal, Eric, Emilia, Maria, and Eva Ortiz. And their dog, Edison (aka Eddie).

Saturday night dinner with another couple. That's one more dinner invitation than we got in all of 2023. And the meal, conversation, and company were excellent.

Short ribs, mashed potatoes, carrots, green beans, and hominy pudding were on the menu. Followed by a chocolate bundt cake and vanilla ice cream.

We talked about "A Doll's House," the 1879 play by Henrik Ibsen that was considered scandalous at the time for its look at gender equality in marriage and society.

We also discussed the Peris Hill apartments, an innovative affordable housing building in the Lowry Hill neighborhood of Minneapolis (Franklin and Hennepin). Some of the residents who live at Peris Hill are young adults coming out of foster care who qualify for the unique supportive housing program there. Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association (LHENA) volunteers did something nice for them.

One day in December, the LHENA volunteer team assembled 25 gift bags while residents gathered to enjoy homemade cookies (from LHENA bakers) and select from donated hats and gloves for the winter. Residents received a personalized food bag and card from the volunteers.

Each bag included a \$10 Starbucks card and six food items (meat, vegetable, starch, dairy, dessert and more homemade cookies from the team). The residents were overwhelmed with joy and appreciation for the gifts they received. This is just one example of how friends and family make the Wedge a wonderful neighborhood.

This past year, the LHENA volunteer network completed over 30 different projects. That's a lot of connecting.

To help build more community connections, I am leading "Let's Connect,"

a monthly community speaker series event with the Southwest Connector that spotlights great local people doing great things.

We are all interconnected. But communities can seem very disconnected these days. It doesn't have to be. There are still people who want to connect and places to connect. We can experience the best kinds of connections in meaningful ways if we want.

As Chiara Gizzi wrote in "The Power of Connection and Why We Need It Now More Than Ever":

"The human race has made abundant leaps and advancements in science and technology, but what have we learned about connection?"

"Or perhaps the better question to ask is - what have we forgotten?"

"I don't have a time machine - but if I did, I have a feeling when our ancestors were learning and creating ways to advance humanity, they didn't think that in the future we'd forget the basics of what it means to be human.

"Kindness. Empathy. Respect.

"What good is the capability to fly to the moon if we aren't capable of knocking on our neighbor's door?"

"We have missed the mark. And we need to fix it.

"Connection to others still keeps us safe, its value has just been forgotten."

It's never too late to create a sense of connectedness. These connections can create a community of belonging.

Remember what Maya Angelou said. People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.

Make every person feel like they matter. Because they do.



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

MY TAKE AWAYS FROM MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT

STORIES & JOURNEYS

Dec. 7 has come and gone. Medicare Open Enrollment has ended for 2023. Yet it feels like the engagement with me and Medicare has just begun again. So, if you have read this far you have taken the plunge into the river(flow) of life experiences which is Stories and Journeys. By the way once this column publishes, Stories and Journeys will be two years old. Here a few of my open enrollment take aways.



By Donald L. Hammen

1. My need to determine if Minnesota Medicare Consultants is still my broker. Kristin K. wrote to me via tesha@longfel-

lownokomis messenger.com about her not making contact with Leslee Gold at Minnesota Medicare Consultants (MMC). The only number I have for MMC is (952)935-4843. I tried it twice. Each time I was asked to leave my number and a brief message and somebody would get back to me. So far, no one has returned my calls. If Minnesota Medicare Consultants is no longer my broker than who is? Senior LinkAge Line (1-800-333-2433) would be a place to start for me if I needed a broker.

2. There ought to be a law. I have a dream that one day it will be illegal for Medicare Advantage Plans to market themselves using the name Medicare. Turns out that Mark Pocan representing the 2nd District of Wisconsin in the U.S. House of Representatives has introduced the Save Medicare Act H.R. 732. It would re-name Medicare Advantage (MA) to Al-

ternative Private Health Plan program. Also, civil penalties would be applied to MA plans with Medicare in the title of their ads. There are 21 co-sponsors. One of them is not my Congressional District 5 Representative Ilhan Omar. I'm thinking it's time for me to communicate with Rep. Omar about being a co-sponsor because I have a dream.

3. The need to get educated about and engage as I am able with the Minnesota Health Plan and caucus in the state legislature. On the last day of Medicare Open Enrollment, I participated in a Zoom meeting of Health Care for All Minnesota (HCAMN) and Physicians for a National Health Plan (PNHP) billed as a winter update and a look to 2024. Two things have stayed with me from that meeting. First is the observation from Rose Roach, HCAMN Board Chair, that we have about

five years to save Medicare from being overtaken by Medicare Advantage Plans. Second, looking to 2024 focusing on any Minnesota Health Plan legislation that comes up in the state House of Representatives and the activities of the Minnesota Health Plan Caucus. I learned that one of the leaders of that caucus is my state Representative Samantha Sencer-Mura, Senate District 63-A.

The Minnesota Health Plan is largely if not entirely based on the book "Healing Health Care: The Case for a Common-sense Universal Health System" by John Marty who happens to be a state senator.

4. Continue to deepen my understanding of Medicare Advantage vs. Medicare. I learn from the writing of Thom Hartmann in his "The Hidden History of American Healthcare: Why Sickness Bankrupts You and Makes Others Insanely Rich." I also learn from you, dear reader. During Medicare open enrollment Dave R., Dan M. and Lindagail R. told me their take on



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- and we don't sacrifice one for the other. We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that is both black and white, both/and. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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4 MY TAKE AWAYS

Medicare via tesha@longfellownokomisemessenger.com. From you, I am reminded that each of our stories and journeys is unique while at the same time there are common threads that enable us to learn from each other and find common ground.



For example one of the three above writers told me: "I learned about the difference between Medicare and Medicare (dis) Advantage through Christopher Westfall's YouTube videos. He is a true advocate for seniors. I've learned that Mayo quit accepting (dis)Advantage plans a few years ago."

Another writer told me that as a corporate trainer for Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN, he "... saw first hand how the insurance industry markets itself as health-care, which they are not!"

Another writer caught my attention with the words, "I'd like to yell it from the housetops. Don't abandon your traditional Medicare for Advantage! You'll be sorry in the long run."

In the meantime I invite me and you to keep telling our Medicare stories as they unfold. Tell yourself, tell others or tell me via tesha@longfellownokomisemessenger.com. Also, if you ever want to converse in person, I offer the following option. The last Friday of the month in January and February next year 10 to 11 a.m. I will be at Turtle Bread, 4205-E.34th Street. I'll be at the table with the sign that says Elder Voices.

For now in gratitude always.



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



Ronnie Hartman gets a coffee and a donut through the Too Good to Go program at Milkweed Cafe. (Photo by Terry Faust)

1 TOO GOOD TO GO

day. "Maybe it rains, and they have extra food, and they put it on the app," she said.

"We really want a reflection of the true surplus they have," she continued. She cited an example of an ice cream shop she was in that had some labels attached incorrectly. "They had this huge stash of perfectly good ice cream that could not be sold. So they had 300 pints of ice cream to go."

She said if a business has some surplus food it wants to promote, TGTG will promote the information on its Instagram account. "Our main goal is to reduce food

waste wherever it happens."

Soteroff said a business can also draw in new customers by being on the app. "Everyone is helping to lower the impact of food waste on the environment, and we help people save a little bit of money as well."

Newer partners are getting elevated as TGTG launches in the Twin Cities. "We'll have it on our Instagram, and we are adding more categories and varieties of food," Soteroff said. "We're always growing."

She said the TGTG community has no borders. "We launch somewhere and then move throughout the area. Eventually we will be national."

THE PROBLEM OF FOOD WASTE

- According to MPCA's recent report on the state of waste, food makes up 18% of landfills in Minnesota, where it breaks down and produces methane, a greenhouse gas with heat-trapping potential 25 times greater than carbon dioxide.

- Minnesotans throw out approximately 62% of food that could have been eaten or donated.

- A family of four in Minnesota could save \$1,200 a year by reducing their wasted food.

- Since launching in the U.S., Too Good To Go has saved more than 6.5 million meals from more than 14,000 partners, resulting in over \$50 million in savings for consumers to-date.

Having patience is Soteroff's biggest challenge. "We want to expand faster, but we have to think of the locations and not do everything all at once. We want to do as much as possible to eradicate food waste, but we have to do it methodically." She encouraged people to download the app and test it out for themselves.

Even in the home, a lot of food can be wasted. TGTG offers tips and tricks on how to preserve food. "We don't have to wait for government regulations. We can do it right now," she said.

Soteroff added that any local business, ranging from a gas station or convenience store to a high-end restaurant, can join TGTG.

GET 2 MONTHS FREE RENT!

Offer ends January 31, 2024. More details online.

LUXURY 55+ LIVING IN BRYN MAWR

The Eloise is an active 55+ community new to the Bryn Mawr neighborhood in Minneapolis. Located next to Theodore Wirth Park, residents enjoy a variety of floor plans, convenient amenities, and beautiful shared spaces to mingle with friends.

- 1-bedroom, 1-bedroom + den, and 2-bedroom/2-bath apartment floor plans
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Residents will also enjoy walking paths connecting to Theodore Wirth Park, Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, an on-site playground, and so much more.

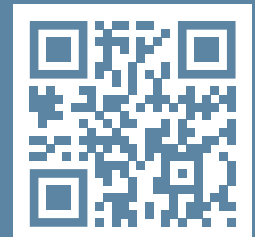


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▶ 'CELEBRITIES'

have been learning Chinese at school (she enrolled at Yinghua in kindergarten) then finally be able to use the language in the real world. But it was also exhausting. "It was very tiring, because using not your native language all day long makes your brain work more," she said.

Kaia shared a similar sentiment: "It was a really different experience because Chinese is my second language, so it made me have to use my brain, think a little bit more about what I wanna say. I felt like it also really expanded my vocabulary 'cause I'm so exposed to everything."

After an assembly at the school, Yinghua Director Dr. Luyi Lien commended the students. "This is really a proud moment for us to know our students are so well prepared for the world. Not just language, but also their way of doing things, understanding other cultures, and coping with any challenges they have faced," she said.

Each student traveled with one parent – Sage with her mom, Kristi Papenfuss, and Kaia with her mom, Cindy Bursell. Bursell, who came to the U.S. from Indonesia and speaks both Indonesian and English, was thrilled to see her daughter excel in her second language.

"I am beyond proud of her, because I can certainly say that she is bilingual," she said. "She was able to help me communicate with other people. She's very competent when people ask her [questions] in Chinese."

In fact, the parents had to rely on their kids for most of their communication.

"It was so interesting to me because I have never been really completely dependent on my child to express my thoughts and ideas," said Papenfuss, who has traveled internationally and is fluent in English and Spanish. "It was really cool to see how responsible my kid was... How much she knew linguistically and culturally and how responsible and mature she was to be able to guide me through situations that I had zero context or ability to function in."

Even during a long layover in Shanghai, the kids took charge. They figured out where to spend their time, how to get tickets for the "super-fast train" and where the stations were. They led their parents on a walking tour around the People's Square in the center of Shanghai, population 26 million.

Since Chinese was the common language of all the contestants, it opened up communications so they could get to know one another.

"I've never been around all these different people from all over the world, and it was really interesting to learn their culture and how they live and how China and Chinese has connected them to the world," said Sage. She also knows Spanish but felt more comfortable speaking Chinese – even with Spanish-speaking students.

"There were so many different people from different backgrounds and different histories, and just to meet them and learn how they live was just a really delightful experience," said Kaia.

IN AND AROUND KUNMING

Each day was meticulously planned. On top of rehearsing and performing for



Volunteer Nicole, Kristi and Sage enjoy some ice cream treats. (Photo submitted)



During the Chinese Bridge closing ceremony, Sage Houdek (at front in center wearing pink) and Kristi Papenfuss (in back wearing stripes) join other guardians and contestants who were given awards. Sage earned first place among U.S. contestants, as well as an Outstanding Performance Award. (Photo submitted)

the competition, contestants spent time at a primary school, with a host family, on a trip to the zoo, a fossil museum, the Old Town, and the Dounan Flower Market – the largest flower wholesale market in Asia. Think Stock Exchange for flowers.

"It was pretty crazy... and it smelled really good," said Sage.

School was a lot different there than in the U.S. Sage said students and teachers were very respectful and would bow and say "Good morning" to each other. It was also very quiet. "The only time anyone talked was when they raised their hand to answer questions, and they stood up and bowed and answered the question then [sat] back down and bowed again," she said.

Due to its year-round mild climate, Kunming is called the "Spring City." So while the school's classrooms are inside, the hallways are outside. "You can feel the fresh air, and it's really nice," said Sage.

Students participated in various activities, such as papercutting, calligraphy, Chinese painting and lantern making. In one unit they studied "time" – the equinox and the way the earth moves – which they were then tested on. This score, along with quizzes from some of their other ex-

cursions, was added to their performance scores to determine total scores in the competition.

In addition to having a jam-packed itinerary, the whole experience was filmed. They traveled on chartered buses, 58 primary school students with their parents, with camera crews present and conducting interviews wherever they went. It was essentially a reality TV show. There'd be drones overhead taking pictures, and people followed them with cameras – even at the hotel.

"We were celebrities," said Sage, describing being crowded by people in a park who wanted to take photos with the contestants. She said it felt very game show-y, and by the end of each day her mouth hurt from so much smiling.

Overall, Kunming was different than expected.

Sage pictured a lot of temples and old architecture, but except in the Old Town, the city was very modern. It was also very clean.

"We didn't see even one piece of trash," said Sage. Gardens and planters were everywhere, with people watering them 24/7.

Papenfuss said it was beautiful, with

high rises next to green space. "It would be like if next to Lake Nokomis we had a 12-square-block area of [20-story] high rises, and then you had the creek and the parks," she said. "We just don't have that here."

It was also not as crowded or chaotic or as loud as she expected. "It was actually really kind of calm... lots of green space and lots of electric vehicles and scooters, which don't make any sound, lots of bikes," she said.

Asked what kind of food they ate, Sage replied, "We ate a lot of noodles. Breakfast, noodles. Lunch, noodles. Dinner, guess what? Noodles."

FAMILY VISIT

Their favorite experience was spending a few hours with a host family in their home, where they shared a meal. For Sage it was awkward at first, mainly because the dad thought she couldn't speak Chinese. It got easier once he knew she could understand him. In their household was another girl Sage's age, 11, a younger sister who was about nine and a little brother who wasn't in school yet. They also had two other siblings in high school.

"It was really neat to see [Sage] just be able to hang out with normal people without cameras, without competition people, without all the hubbub... just in someone's apartment, playing a game with a kid and having tea and having lunch," said Papenfuss. "That was, for me... one of the best things, 'cause it was like just being with regular people, you know, not being on a show."

Bursell also said their visit with the host family was the most memorable thing. "We were very comfortable there, we [felt] very welcome there, [it was] just interesting to see how they live." They provided a home-cooked meal that was cooked "to perfection."

They also made dumplings together. As is tradition, they put a coin in one of the dumplings, which would bring good luck to whoever got it. As luck would have it, Kaia found the coin in her first dumpling.

PREPARATION

Asked how Yinghua Academy helped prepare the students, Dr. Lien said preparation began on their first day of school.

"We are a Chinese immersion school, meaning the students coming to the school starting day one they start to learn Chinese. So they are immersed in the Chinese language and culture," she said. "We think about how we can help them to become not just bilingual, bicultural, but really multilingual, multicultural for them to see the world in a different lens."

Both students encourage others to go if ever they can.

Sage's advice? "Practice, practice, practice. And don't get intimidated by what the other kids do, 'cause you're doing what you're doing, and it doesn't matter what they're doing. 'Cause you know you have practiced enough and can go out there and show them what you know how to do."

"If you ever get the experience to go to this competition or any competition, just take the opportunity," said Kaia. "Life is too short. Just do what you can."

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FIFTH GRADERS SHOW OFF MOVES

Sure, you've seen fifth graders do the "griddy" dance, but have you seen them tango, waltz, rumba and foxtrot?

More than 70 students at Barton Elementary School, 4237 Colfax Ave. S., Minneapolis, demonstrated those steps and all their ballroom dance skills on Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023.

Barton received a "Dancing Classrooms" grant through Heart of Dance, an organization that brings the benefits of ballroom dance to people who might not normally get the chance to experience it. The students have been part of a dance residency since September and this recital is the culmination of everything they have learned.

"I give our students so much credit for being brave enough to try this activity and now perform in front of their parents and the whole school," said Barton Principal Jeannette Sather. "Once these fifth graders got over the idea that they had to hold hands, and possibly stand very close to one another, we saw a real change. They gained confidence in themselves and respect for their dance partners. Yes, they learned the technical steps to the dances, but we found the social and emotional learning was even more important."



Sydney Johnson and Eli Anleu demonstrate their dance skills. (Photo submitted)



Jacobi Love, Amara Moore, Elsa Jones, Quinn Flannery, and Eli Disney perform with their class. (Photo submitted)

AT RIGHT: Milo Dempsey-Nicholls and Atticus Bisek demonstrate a dance on Dec. 6, 2023.

COUNTY RECYCLING GRANTS

Hennepin county is offering grants for preschools, K-12 schools and colleges in Hennepin County to start or improve waste reduction programs. The money can be spent on staff time, equipment and supplies. The first round of funding will be available to two-year colleges, Head Start, and preschools and K-12 schools with at least 50% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Applications are due by 4 p.m. Feb. 29. Applications of up to \$15,000 from any K-12 school, preschool, college, or university in the county will be accepted beginning March 20 through Nov. 15. Learn more and attend a virtual meeting Jan 31 or March 12 by contacting kira.berglund@hennepin.us.

CHANGE IN SCHOOL BOARD LEADERSHIP

At its first meeting of the year, on Jan. 2, the Minneapolis Public School Board unanimously elected Collin Beachy for the position of board chair for the year. Last year he was vice chair. Kim Ellison was elected vice chair, by a 7-2 vote, Lori Norvell was reelected clerk, and Abdul Abdi reelected to continue as treasurer for the year.

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NEW YEAR CLEAN UP: DETOX AND DECLUTTER

FROM YOUR CENTER WITHIN

The beginning of a new year is a wonderful time to look at increasing the well-being of your body and your spaces. Make 2024 your healthiest year ever.



By Michele Rae

Did you know your body is well equipped to eliminate harmful substances all day long? A full-body detox is part of regular organ function through the kidneys, liver, digestive system, skin, and lungs. There are several proactive action steps you can take to keep your body healthy and functioning optimally.

GUT HEALTH IS IMPORTANT.

- Your intestinal cells have a detoxification and excretion system that protects your gut and body from harmful toxins, such as chemicals.

- Antibiotic use, poor dental hygiene, and poor diet quality can cause an unhealthy shift in bacteria that weakens your immune and detoxification systems and increase your risk of disease and inflammation.

- Good gut health is enhanced with prebiotics, a type of fiber that feeds the good bacteria in your gut called probiotics. Foods rich in prebiotics include tomatoes, artichokes, bananas, asparagus, onions, garlic, barley, legumes, potatoes, and oats.

REDUCE TOXINS IN YOUR BODY.

- Avoid pollutants, synthetic chemicals, heavy metals, tobacco smoke, alcohol, and harsh cleaning and body care products.

- Research links high consumption of sugary and highly processed foods to obesity and other chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. These diseases hinder your body's ability to naturally detoxify by harming organs that play an important role, such as your liver and kidneys.

UTILIZE DETOX BOOSTERS.

Make sure your elimination systems are optimized.

- Drink plenty of water to keep flushing out what your body doesn't need.

- Your skin is a major elimination organ. Sweat often. Treat yourself to a sauna. Low impact aerobic exercise induces sweating, helps increase your lymphatic circulation and deep breathing.

- Be sure you are consistently having regular bowel movements.

DECLUTTER IN THE NEW YEAR

The new year is also the perfect time to declutter, streamline, and organize your space so that you can create time, space, and energy for other goals you have for 2024.

Why declutter? Removing clutter takes away visual interruptions and can feel like a breath of fresh air. Paring down and getting organized promotes greater productivity, a sense of order, feelings of self-efficacy; and it can improve your mood. The golden rule of decluttering is to keep what you need and what makes you happy. Does it have sentimental value and warms your heart? Is it beautiful and makes you smile every time you see it?

When assessing your belongings, imagine making some of your money back by selling them. If you don't think it's worth the effort to sell, give it away to people you know who will use it. Gift your family and friends. Do you have a

friend you can pass along your children's clothes and toys to as they grow out of them? Have you checked out the Buy Nothing or free cycle group in your neighborhood? We have so many community donation centers for your gifting, as well.

TIPS FOR DECLUTTERING

- Don't keep things you might need someday. Trust yourself. Pass anything you do not use at least once a year.

- Don't create piles to go through later. If you know you don't want to keep something, like a piece of mail, toss it into recycling immediately. Touching things multiple times before getting rid of them costs time, energy, space, and effort.

- If you have too many of some things, sort them out to see which is your favorite. Your duplicates deserve a new home.

- Keep a donate box or bag accessible at all times. As you pick up something you know you don't want to keep, rather than put it away, put it in your donation box. Set it in your car or remove it from the house when it is full and replace it with an empty container.

- Declutter one area at a time. Make it a deep declutter in a small area when you feel moved to increase the well-being of your spaces.

- If you're buying things you don't need, take a hard look at your spending.

Give your body and your home a fresh start in 2024!

Michele Rae, RPh, MA, NBC-HWC is the founder of The Center Within, LLC and author of "Living From the Center Within: Co-Creating Who You Are Becoming." She provides holistic coaching designed to accelerate and support personal, professional, and organizational transformation.

MPRB TO DISPLAY MOUNTAIN LION

The mountain lion that was repeatedly spotted on camera in Minneapolis in early December will be featured in a new educational display hosted by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). The Minneapolis Mountain Lion generated a lot of excitement and attention when it was spotted on camera and left footprints in the snow between Dec. 4 and Dec. 6, 2023. Unfortunately, a vehicle on Interstate 394 hit and killed the mountain lion on Dec. 6. A tag on the lion's ear revealed he had walked 650 miles from the Oglala National Grasslands in northwest Nebraska to Minneapolis in search of mates, territory, and food. The MPRB is partnering with community members to help fund the upcoming display. People who would like to support the Minneapolis Mountain Lion display can write a check payable to "Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board" with "mountain lion" in memo line.

The DNR, MPRB, and interested supporters are collaborating to taxidermy the mountain lion and mount it as part of an educational display, which will be available at program facilities for all residents to see.

BUSINESS UPDATES

Jinx Tea at 4503 France Ave. S closed in December. They will instead focus on wholesale items. A new Vietnamese-style coffeshop, Caphin Minneapolis, will take over the Jinx Tea location.

The Original Caribou Coffee at 44th and France also closed their doors in mid-December.

Two new wellness businesses will be opening on 44th and Drew - in the same building that houses Peterbuilt Fitness, Loon State Physical Therapy and Sauna Strong. They are Hanson Holistics (massage and body work) and Pilates Vault.

CITY BRIEFS

NEW CITY COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

On Jan. 8 the council elected new leadership and approved new committee's and committee membership for the upcoming two-year term. Eliot Payne was elected on a vote of 10 to 3 to be the new president with opposition from southwest council members, Andrea Jenkins and Linea Palmisano. Southwest council member Aisha Chughtai was elected vice president on a vote of 8 to 5, with opposition from southwest council members Jenkins, Palmisano and Emily Koski.

NEW CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The City Council approved seven committees: Administration & Enterprise Oversight, chaired by Robin Wonsley; Budget, chaired by Aisha Chughtai; Business, Housing & Zoning, chaired by Jamal Osman; Climate & Infrastructure, chaired by the new Ward 7 Council Member, Katie Cashman; Committee of the Whole and Public Health and Safety, both chaired by Jason Chavez. The one special committee that will meet when the chair calls a meeting will be Intergovernmental Relations, chaired by Aurin Chowdhury. There will also be a new Settlement Agreement and Consent Decree Subcommittee of Committee of the Whole that will be chaired by Eliot Payne. Southwest council members will also serve as vice chair several committees as follows: Ward 7 Council Member Koski will vice chair the Budget and Climate & Infrastructure committees. Ward 13 Council member Palmisano will vice chair Administration & Enterprise Oversight and Ward 8 Council Member Jenkins will vice chair the Settlement Agreement and Consent Decree Subcommittee.

CITY HALL RENOVATIONS

The City Council offices and Council Chamber have moved out of City Hall this

year for renovations. Until construction is completed, their offices and regular council meetings will be in the Minneapolis Public Service Center, 250 Fourth St. S.

COMPLIANCE MONITOR OPTIONS

In January, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) and city named three potential organizations to be the independent evaluator to monitor compliance with their settlement agreement. The three, Effective Law Enforcement For All (ELEFA), a nonprofit that works on police reform; Jensen Hughes, a law enforcement consulting firm committed to improving the performance of policing and Relman Colfax, a Washington, D.C.-based national civil rights firm, shared more information about their backgrounds and how they would evaluate compliance with the agreement at two public meetings in January. The council is expected to approve a monitor within the next two months.

WASHBURN PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

In December the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) denied the application to demolition the house at 400 Prospect Ave in Tangletown and directed staff to study of the potential of creating a news Washburn Park historic district. The HPC decision has been appealed and will be heard by the City Council's Business, Housing and Zoning (BHZ) Committee on Jan. 30, 2024. If the demolition is allowed by the city council, a study is very unlikely.

MET COUNCIL

The Metropolitan Governance Task Force is hosting listening sessions regarding the governance structure of the Metropolitan Council, including whether the Met Council's board should remain solely governor appointed or be elected. Learn more at www.lcc.mn.gov/mgtf/.

Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

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NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

KINGFIELD EMPTY BOWLS FEB. 11

The 13th Annual Kingfield Empty Bowls event will take place on "Soup-er Bowl" Sunday, Feb. 11, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Judson Memorial Baptist Church. Empty Bowls is an annual community event that raises money to support food and housing insecurity. Proceeds benefit Nicollet Square, a project of Beacon Interfaith Housing, Trust, Inc. Meals on Wheels, and the Kingfield Neighborhood Association. Join the Soup-er Bowl Sunday, Feb. 11 for a pregame meal in support of the partners.

Pottery Studios have always been a key to the success of these events. Several studios have been part of the event since the beginning, Dock 6 Pottery, Fired Up Studios and The Northern Clay Center; and several new studios joined the group this year, Forma Clay, Mudluk Pottery and The Workshop. Studios got creative and welcomed artists with events like throwing blindfolded, make a bowl, take a bowl, and free materials and studio time to make bowls for the event.

TALES OF LAUGHING FOX CONCERT JAN. 20

On Saturday, Jan. 20, enjoy Tales of Laughing Fox Concert at 7 p.m., Judson Church Sanctuary, 4101 Harriet Ave. S. Michael Charette (Laughing Fox) is an artist, musician, writer, performer, and member of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Ojibwe). As a self-taught Native American flute player, he enhances his stories with flute music and storytelling performances. Pay-what-you-can (suggested \$20).

SKATING PARTY JAN. 20

A Neighborhood Social at Luminary & Skating Party will be held on Saturday, Jan. 20, 5-7 p.m. at Bryant Square Park (3101 Bryant Ave. S). Meet your neighbors in a park sparkling with hundreds of luminary lanterns in a winter wonderland of snow, ice and lights. Bring your skates to experience the magic of skating under the stars, surrounded by luminaries. Warm up at a bonfire with free hot chocolate.

LYNDALE FREE FEST JAN. 22

Lyndale Free Fest on Jan. 22 is a com-

munity event where neighbors can freely and generously share their assets with neighbors, like clean clothes, household goods, books or furniture. All items are given for free to build a connected and sustainable Lyndale. Channa Kitchen will serve Trinidadian finger foods during the event from 6-8 p.m. at Painter Park Community Room. Bring your own bag.

ART SHANTY UPDATE

Art Shanty Projects was scheduled to launch their 20th Anniversary season on January 20 on the frozen water of Bdé Umán/ Lake Harriet in South Minneapolis. As of Thursday, Jan. 11 there was still open water on the lake but incoming sub-zero temperatures give the possibility of a fast deep freeze. In addition, construction of essential park infrastructure remains incomplete, impacting back of house / event operations space and public accessibility. Due to these factors combined the organization has postponed their opening date to Jan. 27. The program will end as scheduled, on Feb. 11, with no extension.

Installation was scheduled to begin Friday, Jan. 19, which will be the deadline for decision-making.

ROBERT SKAFTE'S LEGACY

As many in Stevens Square-Loring Heights know, Robert Skafte cared deeply for the green spaces in the neighborhood, including the Overlook Garden on 17th Street along I-94. SSCO has been working with Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Commissioner Elizabeth Shaffer and her staff to find a way to honor Robert's legacy with the Overlook Garden by renaming it after him. Skafte was a longtime Loring resident, a devoted volunteer, the Greening coordinator in Stevens Square, a professional dancer, and the Franklin/Nicollet Farmer's Market Coordinator. He worked at and was devoted to the Oak Grove Grocery. "He was a shining light in the neighborhood," said Jana Metge, Loring Park Neighborhood Executive Director. Robert Skafte was murdered Dec. 8 while working at Oak Grove Grocery.



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2024 DEADLINES

SOUTHWEST Connector CONNECTOR SCHEDULE

Deadlines typically 2nd and 4th Mondays. Publication typically 1st and 3rd Thursdays. * Some exceptions

Deadline date	Publication date
Break	Break
Jan. 8	Jan. 18
Break	Break
Feb. 5	Feb. 15
Feb. 16 (Friday)	Feb. 29
March 11	March 21
March 25	April 4
April 8	April 18
April 22	May 2
May 6	May 16
May 24 (Friday)	June 6
June 10	June 20
Break	Break
July 8	July 18
July 22	Aug. 1
Aug. 5	Aug. 22
Aug. 26	Sept. 5
Sept. 9	Sept. 19
Sept. 23	Oct. 3
Oct. 7	Oct. 17
Oct. 28	Nov. 7
Nov. 11	Nov. 21
Nov. 25	Dec. 5
Dec. 9	Dec. 19
Break	Break

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MARCH

Home Improvement
Living 50+

APRIL

Home & Garden
Drive & Ride

MAY

Home & Garden
Summer in the City

JUNE

Paws & Claws
Summer in the City
Living 50+

JULY

Back to School
Summer in the City

AUGUST

Back to School
Summer in the City
Nokomis Days

SEPTEMBER

Back to School - Health
Living 50+

OCTOBER

Home Improvement
Voters Guide

NOVEMBER

Holiday Recipes
Shop Small/Buy Local
Family Court Awareness Month

DECEMBER

Paws and Claws
Shop Small/Buy Local
Living 50+

LIVING 50+/AGING WELL

QUARTERLY in all 3 papers March, June, Sept, Dec

REGULAR SECTIONS

REBUILD REPAIR RECYCLE Green living
MINDFUL CREATIVITY Artist community

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Longfellow Business Asso Odd years, December

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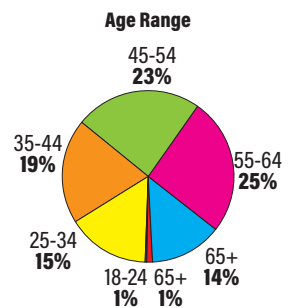
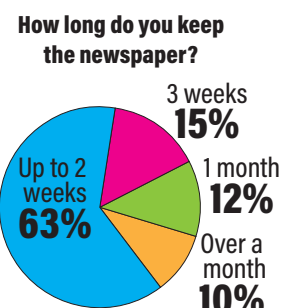
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NEXT DEADLINE: Monday, Feb. 5 | PUBLICATION: Thursday, Feb. 15

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