



Partners
bring
trees
to city
>> 7



An eager crew of Elpis youth workers demonstrate woodworking. Left to right: Mariyan A. (R) Phoebe B., Jesus M. and Caleb B. Elpis The nonprofit Elpis Enterprises (2161 University Ave.) offers paid internships to homeless youth in screen printing, woodworking and bag manufacturing. (Photo by Terry Faust)

Remember Guantanamo?

Midway-based Center for Victims of Torture advocates for closure of prison

By JAN WILLMS

The prison at the U.S. Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay has held 779 detainees since President George W. Bush opened it in January 2002. The men were held at the prison encampment as terror suspects to be interrogated during what was called the Global War on Terrorism. The interrogations included torture. Thirty detainees remain there today.

All of the men were Muslim, and all but a handful have been held without trial or charges, according to Yumna Rizvi, senior policy analyst for the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT).

CVT is an international nonprofit headquartered at 2356 University Ave. in Saint Paul. Its vision is to see a world without torture.

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Court of Appeals sides with city over library EAW

One more legal case over demolition is pending

By JANE MCCLURE

Efforts to replace the Hamline-Midway Branch Library got a boost in June from the Minnesota Court of Appeals. On June 17, judges filed a 16-page ruling that affirmed a city decision to not conduct more detailed environmental studies on the current library.

The advocacy group Renovate 1558 took its case to the court in April, asking that the city conduct an environmental impact statement or EIS prior to library demolition.

A short environmental assessment worksheet or EAW was completed as part of the process toward library demolition and replacement. The city's position was that the EAW was sufficient.

Both types of studies, which are governed by the state's Environmental Quality Board, are used to determine various impacts of a project. The impacts scrutinized are wide-ranging. The studies are used for both construction and demolition projects.

A three-judge panel heard arguments on the case and then issued a 16-page ruling, siding with the city.

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How can the community help youth succeed?

Veteran youth workers talk about problems and offer solutions

By JAN WILLMS

What are the biggest barriers to young people succeeding in the Twin Cities? Are there enough resources to assist youth facing overwhelming challenges? Are those resources readily accessible? And what more can be done?

These questions were recently asked of some veteran youth workers who have been up close and personal with the challenges and barriers that are prevalent with many of the young people they engage with.

JEAN FAWVER

Jean Fawver is a special education teacher and work-based learning coordinator around transition and employment at Avalon School in Saint Paul. She is in her third year at Avalon and has taught special ed for seven years. Prior to that, she did youth development work in Minneapolis Public Schools.

"From my perspective, I am working primarily with students with disabilities and how that may affect their entry into employment," Fawver said. She said she



Htoonoh chiseles grooves in cross-bar canoe supports. (Photo by Terry Faust)

works more with what is going on outside of school, around housing and the stress that families may be experiencing, and how that impacts students' ability to show up and do what is required at school.

"Since the pandemic, the needs of mental health impose barriers," Fawver said. "The stress and level of anxiety young people are facing are pretty significant. As is the lack of access to support for those needs. Throw into that family problems, and employment is kind of the last priority, although it is an important piece."

Fawver said she thinks the real gaps in mental health care and housing are huge. "The other thing I see is lack of transportation and driver's licenses. Those are real barriers to high paying jobs in the area."

Fawver said there are some good programs out there, such as the trade pro-

grams through the Finishing Trades Institute and Drivers License Academy through Ramsey County, but youth must be 16 to 18 to enter some of these programs. She said she would like to see programs for younger youth so that they can transition into some of these other classes.

"Autism is being recognized more, at least here at our school," Fawver continued. "Many of our students are on the spectrum, and some of that group in particular struggle with barriers to employment."

"I see people are becoming more educated around this, and I definitely see improvement and more integration and opportunities," she continued. She added that she thinks schools can do a better job of preparing students for the work setting and the social demands of a work environment. "We could provide a lot more support," she said. "And lack of literacy skills is another big barrier. Some of our students with learning disabilities are reading at a second or third grade level, and that is a huge barrier for them."

According to Fawver, many students get hung up by the job application process. "It is an overwhelming task for some of our students just to read emails," she noted. "We make assumptions about how tech savvy our youth are, and they may be good at texting and TikTok, but not at pro-

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Martinson resigns from county board; McMurtrey announces candidacy

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It was another outstanding season for the Como Park boys volleyball team

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Find plenty of summer fun in the area. Check out the Summer in the City page.

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fessional communication. We just assume they know things that they don't know." Fawver described one of the biggest joys of her work that continuously motivates her is when she and other staff are able to get students past barriers and start to feel successful.

NINA MCGARRY

For 25 years, Nina McGarry has been a social worker with the Journeys Transition High School program in Saint Paul. She has previously worked in Montana schools doing team-building with elementary children. She was also a Wilderness guide in northwestern Montana for eight years, working with youth at risk.

"I think one thing that has taken me a long time to realize is that every person's situation is so different," McGarry said. "I might work with an unaccompanied youth who has the strongest work ethic. One youth might have a disabled parent who has never worked. Circumstances have been so different for each one. Some families may have a low income, but a strong work ethic and would never take money from the system." She said that no matter what the circumstances are, however, there can be a need for help in certain areas. "As social workers, we identify what those areas are and help with them."

McGarry said that all the youth she works with are in special ed. But as part of her program, she has worked with kids in the Juvenile Detention Center. "These are youth who fell through the cracks and became incarcerated," she said. She said when they are released, they can disappear.

But she said with incarcerated youth who are released and return to Journeys, she has seen an employment group helping to remove barriers. She said these youth received internships that were very targeted to them. "These youth did not have to get frustrated at not finding a job," she said. "These were paid internships, so there was money coming in, too. My kids thrived."

She said these kids had no idea where to look for a job, were nervous about showing up and did not know what their skills and abilities were. She added that kids in homeless situations or in foster care could be vulnerable, too.

"The more risk factors there are, the harder we need to look at what might be needed," McGarry said. She said the streamline into supportive housing is challenging. "There is very devoted homeless staff in this community, but homelessness can absolutely turn things around. 'Where can I get food? Where can I go next?' The youth can have excellent work skills and be accountable, but it is such a struggle." McGarry said she does believe that agencies and organizations are getting better at providing resources for young people in need. "Kids do see a path to moving up, and they are coming with a better vision of the future, even the ones who fall through the cracks," McGarry said. "The community is better at finding strengths, removing some of the barriers and having an upward trajectory. We cannot just stop when they enter training. There is going to be a lot of work, not just one and done."

GRETCHEN WILBRANDT

Gretchen Wilbrandt has been the director of development and community engagement at Urban Boatbuilders since September. She has also been a teacher, a consultant, a PhD student, IT worker and with the Yacht Club. Urban Boatbuilders is a nonprofit in Saint Paul that teaches youth how to build boats through paid internships. "I think everyone comes from a different situation, longing for a sense of community and support. We have fostered and developed that at Urban Boatbuilders," she said. She remarked that the COVID generation wants a little bit more connection and wants to find ways to do that.



Workers at Elpis prep boards for birdhouses as they hone their woodworking skills. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)



David Walcher of Urban Boatbuilders instructs Masyn May to lace ribs to the frame of a canoe. (Photo by Terry Faust)



Paul Ramsour of Elpis, sinks a wood screw into a Green Chair as Annette Lang talks to him about chair construction. (Photo by Terry Faust)

"We are looking to break down the silos between the nonprofit and for-profit industries," Wilbrandt said. "We have a shortage of skilled workers, and we want to break down the wall between companies to let them know we are working to ensure we have employable youths. We want to determine our young people are socially and emotionally ready. Helping connect them to stable employment is our mission." She said her agency and others are impactful by offering career readiness programs.

"We have been talking about having some events this summer," Wilbrandt said. "There are so many nonprofits along University Avenue. We have talked about getting together for a meet and greet or an eat and greet, or a lunch and learn. There is so much collaboration to be done."

Wilbrandt said one of the greatest challenges youth seeking employment face is lack of a car and driver's license. "You need a job to pay for a car, but you need

a car to get the job," she stated. She said a large number of youth are challenged by that transportation barrier. She said one company in Minneapolis will pick up employees from their doorstep to take them to work while they are getting a driver's license and car.

"The lack of affordable housing creates a lot of instability on all levels," Wilbrandt added. "I can't imagine coming out of college now with debt and looking for that first job and a place to live, and making ends meet."

"Young people are facing so many challenges," Wilbrandt continued. "Personally, I think there needs to be a paradigm shift in society that honors others, with more equity and more people need to care more about others." She cited COVID, global wars and a mental health crisis as stressors that can make young people feel hopeless. "We need to help people around us and we need micro-communities that blossom. We need to care about other people and give them a chance. We don't want to remove chairs from the table, but bring in more chairs to the table." She said there is a need for inclusive conversation, actual listening, a breaking down of White supremacy and White saviorism.

PAUL RAMSOUR

Paul Ramsour is the executive director of Elpis Enterprises in St. Paul, a nonprofit that offers paid internships to homeless youth in screen printing, woodworking and bag manufacturing. Ramsour created the organization in the late 1990s. The nonprofit teaches soft skills in business, digital literacy and customer service, as well as the trades.

Ramsour, who has spent years in the youth work field, said he thinks barriers for young people are pretty much the same, with some nuances on each of them. "Being able to not only hold down a job but to think about navigating a career path and figure out the steps to get where you want to go in life requires some stability, whether it be in housing, trans-

portation or health and wellness. I don't think those things change a lot," he said.

"Lots of people work from home these days, but you still have to apply job requirements, outcomes and responsibilities, and if you don't have stability it is hard to maintain working from home. Working from home since the pandemic has changed the most, but most of our interns are not going to get work-from-home jobs."

He said he has talked with several people who do programs similar to Elpis, and the conversations seem the same. "All the programs are affected by a lack of affordable housing," Ramsour said. "People are having a hard time finding a place to live, and that affects their ability to come to work."

Ramsour said both Ramsey and Hennepin counties are utilizing post-pandemic funding to work on youth services. He cited the Drivers License Academy helping youth get driving training and licenses as an example.

"But the problems are still the same," Ramsour said. "Just having the funding to address those issues is not enough; you need people in those jobs who can focus. Caregivers are not always in a position to see that youth take advantage of the opportunities offered. Education and work are not priorities in the household. Or the primary caregiver has abdicated that responsibility to someone else, and other needs have taken over."

He said that housing stability might be the highest priority, and education and training are not the main focus. "There is nobody there to push the youth to participate in these opportunities, and they miss out."

"I think from a health and wellness standpoint a lack of one good mentor to help youth to navigate and to be a sounding board when they run into trouble is a major barrier. They need someone to set an example in solving problems. The lack of a good mentor is a make or break situation for a lot of these kids." Ramsour said having someone to help them prioritize and make good decisions is key for most kids.

"I always believe there's hope," Ramsour continued. "You have to be really intentional about what you do, and you have to stay active. You have to constantly ask who is not present, whether it is people in your neighborhood or kids on your block. You can't get them all, but if you have an opening you can say we added one or two who would ordinarily not be here. You have to go and talk to the person who was not present, because that might be the life you change."

JOEL SISSON

Joel Sisson is a performance artist in the Twin Cities who started the Green Chair Project around 1991. "Minneapolis was called Murderapolis because of all the gang activity. A police officer had been shot. That summer I had gotten jumped and beaten up by a handful of young guys. I wondered if I should leave the area."

But then Sisson thought about if he were a young person growing up in the area and wondered if he would have acted much differently if there were no opportunities. "I also had an Adirondack chair stolen at the time, and a neighbor lady said we needed the chair back. So I thought, what if we hired young people to build chairs?"

Sisson said he and Chris Hand tore up their garden, built 100 chairs, painted them and gave them as gifts to their block.

He said the project showed that young people can be productive when given a chance. They continued building chairs for about 12 years. The project started again in the wake of George Floyd's death in 2020. Sisson worked with Elpis's woodworking department and started building chairs again. They used kits that open up and unfold, making two work tables with jigs attached. Others were shown how to build the chairs, spreading the

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project around the community.

Sisson said the challenge has always been how to reach young people and let them know about the opportunities that are out there for them. It is difficult to keep social media updated with all the summer programs available. "How do you connect with the ones who are falling through the cracks?" he asked.

Sisson applied for a grant to put information on the sides of buses and shelters, but then he followed a different path. He talked with Ramsour and Karl Erickson, the woodworking director at Elpis, about doing chair-building workshops and how to get the word out. "Out of our conversations, we talked about giving youths a handout telling them about how to prepare for job interviews and other job-seeking tools. We thought of something like a graphic novel, in comic-book-style that is culturally appropriate. We would like to find the right kinds of groups to make that happen," Sisson said. He said he has made three little booklets that could be a point to start from.

"They could be done for each ethnic group, with words from elders and a list of resources," Sisson said.

"This is something that could be done across the United States," Sisson continued. "Each region and locality could use a template and then fill in their own blanks."

Sisson said he learned about how to make public art a part of the community from Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) professor Kingi Akagawa. "He was really good about how an artist can respond to the public in his community," Sisson said.

"We need to get people outside, talking to one another," he said.

Editor's note: Freelancer Jan Willms also works at Elpis Enterprises.

KAJUAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Twenty-three-year-old Kajuan Burress moved to the Twin Cities a few years ago from Tennessee. He had completed his high school diploma there and struck out with a friend for Minnesota.

"When I came to Minnesota, my mindset was completely different," he said. "I felt like I had made it to the land of opportunity, it just felt like so much good stuff was ahead of me. Everything was new and looked good."

But Burress found that being so young and relying entirely on himself was not so easy.

"I really made some wrong decisions and started doing what was comfortable for me, not what I was supposed to do," he said. There was some incarceration along the way. "I'm trying to get out of that. I don't like it. But I'm still on probation," Burress said. Then he became homeless and spent seven months staying at the Dorothy Day Center on a bunk, with little space for any belongings.

Burress said he was living in survival mode. "Anything you do is to better your situation and lighten your load a little," he said. Eventually Burress got an internship in woodworking, and he landed a spot in supportive housing so that he now has his own room and more space.

He completed his internship and has now started another, working in maintenance. He is also considering a construction internship, but transportation issues pose a problem. Relying on public transportation eliminates a lot of positions for Burress.



He said he wishes he had someone to help him when he first arrived here — someone who could have helped him think more carefully about the decisions he made.

"You determine your life path by the decisions you make and what you choose to act on," he said. "I feel like I should have gone a certain route, taken a longer path but one that was more certain."

Burress said one mistake he made was to limit himself to certain areas in the Twin Cities. "I would never just stay in a certain area now," he said. He said exploring is how you learn about things.

"I just don't see young people paying attention to what is out there. I feel like personally

I wasted my better years around the wrong people. I should have been putting in time for myself, and maybe I would be a little further."

For now, Burress is glad for the strength he had to get through the tough times. And he is thinking about Tennessee and family. "My uncle and my grandfather both passed, and my brother had a baby. I missed all of it," he said. He would like to get closer to his family and may try somewhere else.

"There are certain parts of Minnesota I don't care to be around any more," he said. "Whether I have good or bad memories, I don't want to think about them."



Ice Cream Social

When: July 18th, 6-8PM

Where: Hamline Park, 1564 Lafond Ave

FREE Ice Cream provided by Sweet Fruci's Frozen Delights
Sponsored by Thrivent

Featuring a performance by Open Eye Theatre's Tour Puppet Show: The Amazing Cowboat!



Upcoming Events:

July 11th, Renter's Credit Workshop

July 13th, Trash Clean-Up

July 18th, Ice Cream Social

July 25th, Narcan Training

Link to our Events Calendar!



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BUILDING A STRONGER MIDWAY



BY CHAD KULAS,
Midway Chamber of
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The Midway Chamber Board of Directors recently held its annual retreat. This is common practice for nonprofits and a great way to focus on priorities and the strategies to implement work for the upcoming year. Our meeting was held at Neighborhood Development Center with our social hour at Urban Growler Brewing.

I left our retreat inspired and eager for what's next. At last year's retreat, we met with Mighty Consulting as they helped us create a strategic plan. This time around, we worked on our four identified focus areas and created our work plan. Our four focus areas are: Community, education, membership, and partnerships. The following are some of our take-aways.

COMMUNITY

Much of the community focus priorities are already done by the Midway Chamber, but we aim to continue the work and enhance where we can. Our

OUR FOCUS GOING FORWARD



Midway Chamber Board members and staff gather at the Neighborhood Development Center in June to set the organization's priorities. (Photo submitted)

Board aims to hold at least one volunteer opportunity per quarter, with past examples including supporting Keystone Community Services, Shop with Cops, the Ronald McDonald House, Habitat for Humanity, and the annual Citywide Spring Cleanup. We also inform members of grant opportunities and other programs offered by Ramsey County and other resources. Currently, the Promise Act is a great opportunity for businesses within the Promise Act boundaries.

EDUCATION

The Midway Chamber prides itself on

providing educational opportunities for members at our events. In the past year, some of the topics have been on subjects like new employment laws, the proposed Saint Paul sales tax, artificial intelligence, ReConnect Rondo, and Rethinking I-94. We will continue to find informative subjects and speakers for events, and find more ways to partner with other organizations.

MEMBERSHIP

As a chamber of commerce, we are constantly trying to find ways to show value to our members. This year we plan

to highlight anniversaries and find more fun news stories to share from our membership. As we plan out our year for events, we will continue to ensure we are meeting at different times of the day and at different parts of the Midway and nearby neighborhoods.

PARTNERSHIPS

In 2019, the Midway Chamber Board members met with organizations important to our community. These groups included neighborhood, religious, education, cultural leaders and more and totaled around 50 leaders. Each meeting had a similar format where we asked questions about their priorities for our community and how we could help. Our aim was to gain a better understanding of these groups and find ways we could partner or show support.

All of our focus areas go back to our mission: The Midway Chamber of Commerce represents businesses and organizations that are dedicated to Building a Stronger Midway by providing programs and services that help members grow and thrive. The key here has always been "building a stronger Midway." By helping educate our members, connecting businesses with resources and chamber members, and meeting with community leaders we aim to help the Midway grow and thrive.

PLANTING SEEDS



BY DR. ARTIKA TYNER,
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I interviewed Elise Washington to gain new insights into how families can inspire children to learn, grow, and lead. Elise Washington is known as Wonder Teacher Washington because for years she has possessed abilities beyond those of ordinary teachers. Her superpowers as a Reading Specialist, author, and innovator have allowed her to shine bright in District 16 (Bedford Stuyvesant Brooklyn, N.Y.) for over 25 years. She has used her superpowers to help all students and families tap into their own superpowers despite their socioeconomic status. As Wonder Teacher Washington, she wants all children to have access to quality educational experiences, that will help them to build a more just and inclusive society. Wonder Teacher Washington wants children to experience a mind opened by WONDER rather than one that is closed by BELIEF.

Q: WHY DOES FAMILY READING MATTER?

Washington: Family reading has numerous benefits, both for individuals and for the overall community. For children, exposure to books and reading from a young age is connected to improved language and cognitive and social development, as well as to higher levels of overall academic achievement. Research also shows that children who grow up in homes where reading is valued and en-

An interview with Wonder Teacher Washington READ TOGETHER, LEAD TOGETHER



Elise Washington shared her advocacy journey as a mom of a special needs child through her book, "Tika Speaks." (Photo submitted)

couraged are more likely to become lifelong readers. With all the benefits that reading brings, such as increased vocabulary, creativity, and empathy, one cannot go wrong.

Family literacy programs can provide opportunities for families to build their own literacy skills, which can in turn support their children's learning and literacy development. Family literacy programs may also provide access to resources and support networks that can help with chal-

lenges such as navigating the educational system or finding employment.

Q: HOW CAN FAMILIES PROMOTE FAMILY LEARNING ON A DAILY BASIS?

Washington: Families can promote learning in many ways, including:

- Setting up a routine: Establish a daily routine for healthy eating, sleeping, and homework time.
- Promoting literacy: Read to your child, read yourself, and point out things

in your child's environment to talk about.

- Encouraging conversation: Ask open-ended questions, engage your child in conversation, and listen to them as they learn to communicate.
- Limiting screen time: Monitor and limit how much time your child spends on TV, gaming, social media, and computers.
- Expressing expectations: Let your child know that you expect them to do their homework and that you think education is important.
- Participating in school: Attend parent-teacher conferences, Back-To-School events, and Open House. You can also participate in decisions that affect your child's education by joining the PTA (Parent-teacher association).
- Playing together: Take the time to play with your child.
- Bonding: Spend time together as a family.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE FUTURE?

Washington: Some of my major goals include continuing the efforts of closing the achievement gaps, especially amongst our youngest learners, supporting families of children with special needs, and strengthening connections with educators new and seasoned. I love filling up the Little Free Library I had installed in 2021 in front of my school building, as well sharing my advocacy journey as the mom of a special needs child through my book "Tika Speaks."

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

Monitor

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Story ideas always welcome.

Keep in touch with the Monitor. Letters to the editor under 200 words and news releases for publication can be sent via e-mail to tesha@monitorsaintpaul.com. Unsigned letters will not run.

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The Monitor is for profit and for a purpose – 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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PEACE BUBBLES

BY MELVIN GILES
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"The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class – it is the cause of human kind, the very birth-right of humanity." Anna Julia Cooper

Happy summer and Independence Month, Monitor readers.

I was in high school when we celebrated America's 200th birthday of Independence from Britain. And, now almost 250 years later, Frederick Douglass' eloquent, courageous, and historic 4th of July speech/address is still relevant today, particularly, when we look at the facts of our social, economic, health, housing, and other daily disparities. I'm sharing a few words from Mr. Douglass from 1852:

"... the Declaration of Independence is the RINGBOLT to the chain of your nation's destiny; so, indeed, I regard it. The principles contained in that instrument are saving principles. Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at whatever cost... The signers of the Declaration of Independence were brave men. They were great men too – great enough to give fame to a great age. It does not often happen to a nation to raise, at one time, such a number of truly great men. The point from which I am compelled to view them is not, certainly the most favorable; and yet I cannot contemplate their great deeds with less than admiration. They were statesmen, patriots and heroes, and for the good they did, and the principles they contended for, I will unite with you to honor their memory. They loved their

Cultivating cooperation, community, and change

country better than their own private interests; and, though this is not the highest form of human excellence, all will concede that it is a rare virtue, and that when it is exhibited, it ought to command respect. He who will, intelligently, lay down his life for his country, is a man whom it is not in human nature to despise. Your fathers staked their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, on the cause of their country. In their admiration of liberty.."

To hear more of Fredrick Douglass' 4th of July message go to <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/nations-story-what-slave-fourth-july> or just Google Fredrick Douglass.

And, in the spirit of Independence, Liberty, Justice, and Self-Determination, I asked a transplant to Minnesota to share a fresh perspective on what he has been seeing and experiencing in the Twin Cities, particularly in St. Paul and the Rondo area. Thank you, Gary Hampton

CULTIVATING COOPERATION, COMMUNITY, AND CHANGE IN RONDO AND ST. PAUL

"Over the past few weeks, there have been numerous opportunities to experience and share in the positive developments happening in the Saint Paul and Rondo communities. Just a few weeks back, the National Conference on the Black Cooperative Agenda took place at Union Depot in St. Paul. This event brought together local and national organizations, as well as individuals, to share in the cooperative spirit. This spirit is something I've experienced since relocating to the Twin Cities, through the relationships I've developed with community members in St. Paul. In particular, Melvin and Metric Giles, the Urban Farm and Garden Alliance (UFGA), and Hannah Lewis, Renewing the Countryside (RTC) have been instrumental in this journey. Their work in community building

through urban agriculture and climate initiatives has been a blessing.

The conference's location in St. Paul was fitting, and it showcased the vision and spirit of Melvin Carter, Jr., who envisions St. Paul as a focal point for future cooperative development in Minnesota and potentially on a national level. As an active champion of cooperative community, business and economic development, my heart was full as I participated and contributed to the energy and success of the conference. It was definitely the right place for such an event.

The conference resonated with the cooperative spirit of the community and the urban agriculture sector, as participants discussed food sovereignty, systems, and solutions that can lead to greater food security for all. As the conference concluded, we had the opportunity to share our experiences at the Association of Cooperative Educators conference in Bismarck, N.D. This was a great chance to highlight the positive developments in St. Paul. Melvin Giles and I shared insights about how the community is fostering cooperation through agriculture and climate initiatives.

We discussed the role of Renewing the Countryside (RTC) as a community partner in supporting urban agriculture farmers and growers. We also highlighted the mini-forest project and green screen installation in the Rondo community at Pilgrim Baptist Church, a historic site on the Underground Railroad. The green screen and mini-forest will serve as lasting symbols of what community cooperation and collaboration can achieve. The Urban Farm and Garden Alliance, RTC, the University of Minnesota, Maxfield Elementary School, Great River Greening, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources all contributed to the research and installation of these projects. A year ago, the community-centered initiative was in the com-



Gary Hampton

munity engagement and research phase, focusing on intergenerational input and participation. The green screen was planted in early May 2024 at Pilgrim Baptist Church, between the fence line and the urban farm on the property.

If you have the opportunity, visit the community to see firsthand how trust and cooperation have led to a collaborative, potentially transformative opportunity for both the community and the environment. The benefits range from protecting the soil of the urban farm from erosion during the off-growing season to improving air quality and reducing pollution, which often leads to higher asthma rates and respiratory issues in urban areas.

In closing, the initiatives in Rondo and St. Paul are bringing about agroecology and climate solutions that will provide value for generations to come. The Rondo community in St. Paul truly exemplifies the values of cooperation and shows how cooperative trust can lead to collaborative opportunities for change." Gary Hampton, The Original Intertwangler

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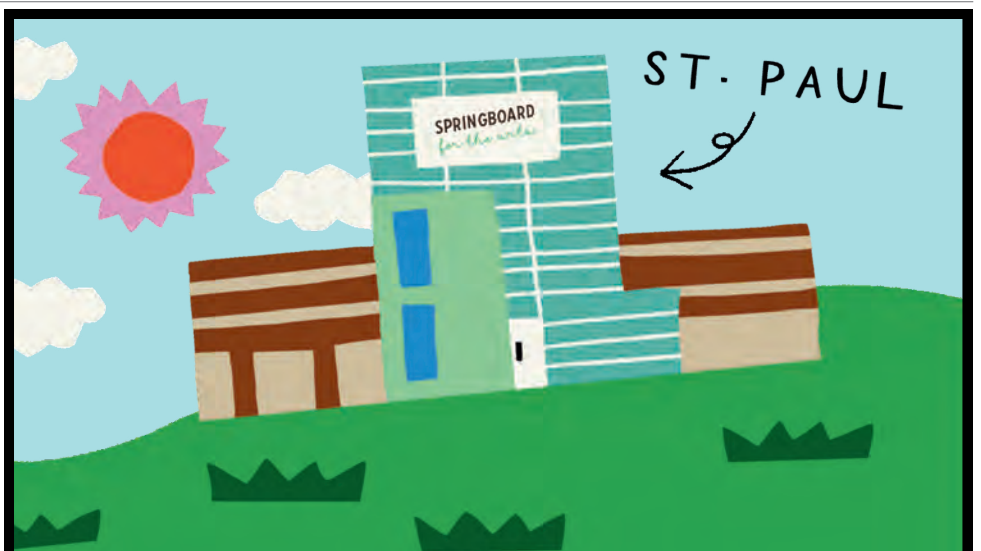
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GUANTANAMO >> from 1

Along with other organizations, CVT has sent a letter to President Joe Biden, asking him to close Guantanamo completely.

"We have been doing advocacy around Guantanamo since it opened," Rizvi said. "We have done this with other presidents, including Presidents Bush and Obama. Last year over 150 organizations from around the world signed on to a letter, and this year we have done the same."

Rizvi said the organizations have some allies in congress, specifically mentioning Sen. Dick Durbin, D-IL. "Even on the House side, we regularly engage with members and with the administration. We continue to create awareness that Guantanamo needs to be closed."

With detainees being left to languish at the encampment, Rizvi said the United States runs the risk of being accused of hypocrisy. "At the United Nations in October, Russia brought up Guantanamo to the U.S., saying it was still open and pointing to the hypocrisy."

She also worries that the situation in Guantanamo could easily be forgotten.

"It is not present any more in American life," she said. "People say 'Oh, is it still open?' It is not something regular Americans are thinking about."

Rizvi said American tax dollars are still supporting Guantanamo, even though most people do not even realize it is still open and holding detainees. She said that at the cost of \$540 million per year, Guantanamo is the most expensive prison in the world.

"One of the main purposes of our advocacy with Guantanamo is to inform the people born after 9/11 about the encampment and the process of what happened there and the fact that it remains open," Rizvi explained. She said she would like to believe that a place like Guantanamo could never happen again in the manner in which it did before.



(Photo illustration by Terry Faust)

"The United States would like to believe it has learned its lessons," she said. "Biden and Obama have turned the page. But there is still a lack of culpability at the top level. No high official has ever been held accountable (for Guantanamo.)"

"We are seeing in other parts of the world through the post-9/11 period that other countries look to the U.S. and duplicate its policies. When it comes to detention and treatment based on fundamental rights, a lack of accountability perpetuates other countries to do this."

Although the United States may not want to open something like Guantanamo again, Rizvi said the nation is stuck in a situation where 30 detainees are still held. "Who knows where that ends and another one starts?" she asked. "We are not getting past it in any truly meaningful way."



"We are seeing in other parts of the world through the post-9/11 period that other countries look to the U.S. and duplicate its policies. When it comes to detention and treatment based on fundamental rights, a lack of accountability perpetuates other countries to do this."

Yumna Rizvi



have not received any torture rehabilitation, adequate medical care or culturally informed care, Rizvi claimed. The trauma of nearly two decades of being detained with little hope for the future is real. She added that the victims of 9/11 have been betrayed and have not been able to get justice.

She said that CVT is also concerned about the military proposals around immigration today, House calls for increased security at the southern border and calls for immigrants to remain in Mexico. "It is an interesting

time to see all of that while the war in Israel continues, and we are turning away refugees who come here," she said.

She said CVT has clients from different parts of the world who talk about the difficulties they face and then are turned away. "The United States has lost its moral compass," Rizvi remarked. She added, "Marginalized communities are seen as collateral damage." She said CVT is also advocating for a cease fire in the Israeli-Hamas conflict taking place in Gaza.

Rizvi said CVT has the support of many organizations and partners in wanting to reinstate funds to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA.)

The men remaining at Guantanamo

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A new partnership means more trees for Saint Paul

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

A new partnership between the city and Green Cities Accord and City Forest Credits will result in more trees planted on streets and boulevards in Saint Paul, and better maintenance and protection of those trees over time.

Green Cities Accord is a nonprofit conservancy with a mission to foster climate resilient communities through investments in tree canopy infrastructure. The City of Saint Paul joins Hennepin County and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board as participants in the Urban Tree Carbon Offset Program.

Green Cities Accord Board Chair David Wilson said, "Trees combat climate change and enhance the livability of urban communities. When our organization was founded 10 years ago, we were focused on the aesthetic of trees and beautifying downtown Minneapolis. By now we've learned that trees are so much more important than that."

WHAT CAN TREES DO?

In this time of climate change and rising temperatures, trees are a hard-working ally. As trees mature, they store increasing amounts of carbon dioxide in their trunks and release oxygen. A mature tree canopy provides shade – this reduces ambient temperatures, and will keep the city cooler as there are more extreme heat events.

Wilson continued, "Trees are also very good at capturing storm water. Why not use the technology of trees to our advantage? About 60% of precipitation is captured by the leaves and roots of mature trees; leaves minimize erosion by softening the impact of heavy storms, and roots absorb water that otherwise runs into the storm water system and is lost. The benefits of climate mitigation expand as the tree canopy expands."

A ROBUST TREE CANOPY

Michaela Neu is director of programs and operations for Green Cities Accord. She said, "Urban trees have been hard hit by the emerald ash borer, development, and a lack of funding to replace trees and maintain them. One way we assist our partners is by soliciting corporate and philanthropic funding from entities interested in sustainability for tree planting and maintenance."

"With this new partnership, more



Hamline-Midway has been hard hit by the Emerald Ash Borer in recent years. Fry Street shows a fairly typical smattering of newly planted trees, stumps awaiting grinding, and mature trees in the background that are still healthy (in this case, maples). (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

trees will be planted and carefully monitored for 26 years – the time it takes, on average, for trees to reach maturity. Saint Paul Parks and Recreation planted more than 11,000 trees on streets and in parks between 2021-2023, and these trees are projected to sequester an estimated 39,152 metric tons of carbon over the project duration. Trees can be enrolled in our project that have been planted within the last 36 months, as well as those that will be planted as we move forward."

In addition to measuring carbon sequestration, the project quantifies improvements in air quality, storm water capture, and energy use reductions attributable to trees.

Wilson and Neu estimated that over 40 different species of trees will be planted as the city of Saint Paul continues to rebuild its tree canopy. This is one of the hard-learned lessons of previous infestations like emerald ash borer and Dutch elm disease: diversify, diversify, diversify, to avoid obliteration.



"Increasing investments in urban tree canopies is an effective way to lessen the worst effects of climate change on cities. Through partnerships like this one with the city of Saint Paul, Green Cities Accord, and City Forest Credits, we can increase funding for urban trees and improve the livability of our cities."

Michaela Neu



Proceeds from sales of carbon stored in enrolled trees, after administrative fees, will be re-invested in additional tree planting and maintenance by the city of Saint Paul.

Wilson added, "This carbon offset piece is creating a very interesting dynamic. For the first time, the city of Saint Paul is legally committed to maintaining and protecting trees enrolled in our project. None of the trees can be cut down, and there's a contractual obligation to care for them. Trees have a lot of value for the jurisdictions that plant them. There's even talk amongst some of our partners of putting enrolled trees on their balance sheets as assets; the trees are an investment in every sense of the word. Between our partnerships, we now have over 50,000 trees enrolled in our program."

For more information about the partnership between the City of Saint Paul, Green Cities Accord, and City Forest Credits, contact Michaela Neu at mneu@greencitiesaccord.org.

CARBON OFFSETS

The third party involved in the new partnership is City Forest Credits. They're a non-profit carbon registry that manages carbon and impact standards for cities across the U.S. This summer, City Forest Credits will issue the first 10% of the project's estimated 29,755 offsets projected over the duration of the project.

Green Cities Accord is responsible for the sale of these carbon offsets. Wil-



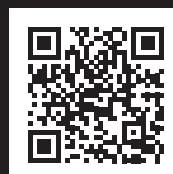
Both east-west streets bordering Hamline Elementary School are newly planted. The mix of honey locust, oak, maple, and Kentucky coffee trees will hopefully form a mature, deciduous tree canopy within the next generation. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



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CAN THE HEAT, KEEP COOL THIS SUMMER

FROGTOWN GREEN

BY RENNIE GAITHER



Do you remember how hot it was last summer? So far this year we have been enjoying cooler temperatures, but due to climate change, extreme heat events are on the rise. And very hot weather can seriously harm your health, as well as our environment.

GET OFF THE "HEAT ISLAND"

Urban neighborhoods such as Frogtown, Midway and Como are prone to heat island effects. The term "heat island" refers to urbanized areas that experience higher temperatures compared to outlying areas. Roads, buildings and other infrastructure absorb and reflect more solar heat than areas with more natural landscapes. Urban areas with concentrated infrastructure and limited green space literally become heated islands, registering temperatures up to 25 degrees hotter than shaded natural areas.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lists these environmental detriments of heat islands: increased energy consumption; higher emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases; impaired water quality; and compromised human health. While this sounds (and is) serious,



Staying cool this summer? Thank a tree. Nature lover Gita Ghei shows us how. (Photo by Frogtown Green)

there's a lot we can do to protect ourselves and our loved ones from the effects of hotter weather.

CHECK ON THE MOST VULNERABLE

During hot weather it's especially important to check on family, friends and neighbors. Calling on vulnerable people such as the elderly, those with medical

conditions, or those lacking access to air conditioning can help prevent heat-related illnesses such as heat exhaustion, stroke or even death. Keeping hydrated, cooling off in the shade, and staying informed about weather are front-line methods of combating potential heat-related health hazards.

Additionally, follow National Weather Service advisories. Be aware of cooling

center locations, and make use of methods to block heat and sunlight such as blackout curtains, shades, awnings or cardboard in windows. Green roofs that reflect the sun's rays and energy efficient appliances are more ways to take significant action.

PLANT A TREE

An effective, sustainable way to combat heat island effects is by planting trees. Deciduous trees provide shade in warm months yet allow sun exposure in fall and winter after leaf fall. They're great at soaking up stormwater and lowering air temperature by providing shade. They also cool the air around them, via water evaporation from their leaves.

Are you interested in obtaining one of nature's air conditioners? Households in Frogtown can get a free tree planted in their yard by signing up at Frogtown Green's website under its urban forestry program. Frogtown Green is a resident-led, volunteer-powered green organization that has planted over 1,000 trees in Frogtown homes and public spaces.

Extreme heat events are expected to become more common and extreme as a consequence of climate change. The Minnesota Department of Health offers lots of tips and educational tools to help combat effects of extreme heat events. Help yourself and others keep cool this summer!

Combat the heat. Plant a tree. Frogtown homeowners can learn more at: <https://www.frogtowngreen.com/copy-of-urban-forestry>

Rennie Gaither is a Frogtown Green volunteer. Frogtown Green is a resident-led and volunteer-powered environmental initiative in St Paul's most diverse neighborhood. If you'd like to know more, browse frogtowngreen.com or call 651-757-5970. For more detail on the Bee Line, see hamlinmidway.org/news/hmec/beeline

Local projects hope for Neighborhood Star Grant funds

By JANE MCCLURE

A new use for the former Trend Bar and several other business improvement projects are among area candidates for 2024 Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) funds.

More than 100 projects were submitted to the Neighborhood STAR Board by a May deadline. The board reviewed proj-

ects in June over a period of several days and will make its recommendations in the weeks ahead.

Projects make three steps. One is to the planning commission. The commission reviews projects for consistency with city plans.

The Neighborhood STAR Board recommendations themselves go to the mayor and city council. The mayor and

council can change the recommendations. Or, they can be approved as is.

A total amount of requests wasn't available. Last year the city council approved 49 projects totaling \$2.32 million. 2023 was the 30th year for the program. It is supported with a half-cent sales tax that the Minnesota Legislature approved in 1993.

The program has seen many changes over the years. The most notable change is that requests are now for grants. The program for many years provided grants and loans.

Several area businesses and nonprofits are seeking funding. Black on Black Development and Entertainment, Inc. is seeking \$50,000 toward the transformation of the former Trend Bar into the Black Diamonds, a cultural speakeasy and supper club.

The bar at 1357 University Ave. closed several years ago. The group behind the new venture had been looking at ways to use the space since early 2020.

Another area bar eyed for changes is Frogtown's Nickel Joint at 501 Blair Ave. with a request for \$94,229.

A familiar project is the ongoing renovation of 686 N. Snelling Ave. Universal

Enterprises LLC is seeking \$49,995 to continue work on the two-story commercial building. The building most recently was a fan and lighting store, but was closed for several years.

Heartlove Music seeks \$48,500 for a community music center at 1679 University Ave. Part of the building was occupied for many years by Regina Vacuum.

Asian Economic Development Association is seeking \$200,000 for its Little Mekong Night Market at 422 University Ave. The market came back in June after a hiatus, using neighborhood streets.

Hamline Midway Coalition is seeking \$50,000 for a commercial facades improvement program. Como Community Council is seeking \$30,000 for meeting room upgrades at the historic streetcar station where it has its offices.

Two requests are submitted for different areas of Frogtown Farm and Park. Health Advocates doing business as Frogtown Green, seeks \$32,052 for new benches and trees at the park. The request is for the part of the park that is not leased for organic farming.

Another request for \$50,000 is for park and garden fencing.

MARTINSON RESIGNS FROM COUNTY BOARD

After five and a half years on the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, Trista Martinson is resigning on Aug. 1 to take a new position as the Executive Director of Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E). R&E is a partnership between Ramsey and Washington counties to manage waste responsibly.



Trista Martinson's transition to a new role.

McMurtrey brings more than a decade of experience in high level public service roles, including Regional Field Director for President Barack Obama's 2012 campaign, Outreach Director for U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, and currently as the District Director for U.S. Congress-

woman Angie Craig. He also worked in communications and stakeholder engagement at Target. McMurtrey also served as the Chair of the Saint Paul DFL and member of the St. Paul Planning Commission.

McMurtrey resides in the Como Park neighborhood with his wife, State Senator Clare Oumou Verbeten, and their Golden-doodle Honey. He holds a Masters in Public Policy from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota and a Bachelors from Ripon College.

MCMURTREY ANNOUNCES RUN

Garrison McMurtrey announces his candidacy for the District 3 seat on the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners. District 3 includes Saint Anthony Park, Union Park, Como Park, Midway, Frogtown, North End, Payne Phalen neighborhoods in Saint Paul, and all of the City of Falcon Heights. The role becomes vacant following the transition of Board Chair

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BY ERIC ERICKSON
Social studies teacher

ANOTHER OUTSTANDING BOYS' VOLLEYBALL SEASON

For the third consecutive year, the boys of the Como Park volleyball team qualified and competed in the Minnesota High School Volleyball Association Tournament.

After compiling a regular season record of 12-2, the Cougars were seeded No. 11 for the 16-team state tournament. Compared to the taller players from larger schools, the Cougars did not initially strike fear or offer visual intimidation in the eyes of opponents.

That changed after the Cougars upset the No. 6 seed Eagan Wildcats in the first round. The scrappy Como squad came from behind to defeat their suburban foe 3-2, winning the fifth and final set convincingly.

Como head coach Koob Lee, a 2019 Como graduate who has already completed three seasons of varsity coaching resulting in three trips to the state tournament, praised his team's effort.

"Going into state we were very undersized," Lee said. "The best thing we could do against these taller teams is what we do best - digging balls to extend points, hus-



The Como Park boys' volleyball team earned the sixth place trophy at the Minnesota High School Volleyball Association State Tournament. (Photo by Selena Paul)

ting, doing our assignments on defense in terms of blocking, getting to the right position against certain attackers, and then continuing to attack smart and aggressively on the offensive end."

That strategy continued to keep Como competitive in the quarterfinal round where they found themselves facing off against the No. 3 seed Spring Lake Park. The Cougars surprised their larger oppo-

nents once again, capturing the first set 25-22. The favored Panthers squad made adjustments and turned the tables defeating Como 3-1 in four sets.

The boys' state volleyball tourney features consolation rounds after a team loses, which meant Como had a chance to regroup and take on Eden Prairie who was the No. 7 seed. In another match that Como was not expected to win, the Cou-

gars prevailed. That upset led to the Cougars' final match of the season for the consolation championship versus No. 5 seed Maple Grove.

Once again, Como was the underdog - David versus another proverbial Goliath. In the end, Maple Grove won the battle in five entertaining and dramatic sets. Both teams earned each other's respect as the season concluded with trophy presentations, and the Cougars collecting the sixth-place prize.

Senior Baw Reh and junior Soe Reh were both selected to the state all-tournament team. They also both earned all-conference honors along with seniors Phray Reh and Kwai Lay Lo. Those seniors have been crucial to Como's success in building a highly successful program in high school club volleyball.

Coach Lee is quick to credit the team effort involved, not just for Como but the growth of the sport through the club association. "They've done an amazing job to make volleyball possible for boys across the state. And our athletic director Koua Yang and assistant A.D. Brandon Kuether are supportive in every way."

THE MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE (MSHL) WILL OFFICIALLY SANCTION BOYS' VOLLEYBALL IN THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR.

Businesses tell planning commission they want drive-thrus

City considers restricting drive-thrus in city

By JANE MCCLURE

How St. Paul should regulate new drive-thru services is in the hands of a planning commission committee. A June 7, 2024 public hearing was dominated by foes of proposed city regulations, including restaurant company, business and hospitality industry representatives.

One proposal before the planning commission would limit where new drive-thrus could go and what kinds of businesses could have them. Another option would be a total ban on new drive-thrus.

Existing business would be grandfathered in.

The public hearing brought out a range of written opinions and in-person testimony, with opponents outnumbering supporters at the public hearing. Several people spoke against banning new drive-thru services downtown and in traditional neighborhood-zoned areas.

Angie Whitcomb, president and CEO of the statewide group Hospitality Minnesota, urged the planning commission to step back from the proposal. "Please go back to the drawing board and engage with the hospitality industry," she said.

Zachary Zelickson of Border Foods said his company would oppose a total ban. Border Foods operates Taco Bell

restaurants in St. Paul and other restaurants throughout the region, including the Taco Bell in Hamline-Midway on North Snelling Avenue. That restaurant sparked years of controversy over its drive-thru operations, especially late at night.

Industry trends indicate that more consumers use drive-thrus to get food. "Year after year those numbers increase for us," he said. More than 80 percent of customers use drive-thru services with his company.

Not allowing restaurants to reconfigure drive-thru services would mean keeping dated infrastructure in place, and could inadvertently cause more problems in the long run. Zelickson asked city officials to consider a case-by-case approach with drive-thrus.

The planning commission also heard from McDonald's and Starbucks, opposing the proposed regulations. Starbucks a few years ago shut down a drive-thru at Snelling and Marshall avenues, bringing an end to long traffic tie-ups.

Land use attorney and former Planning Commission Chairman Brian Alton urged the commission to not be overly restrictive with new drive-thrus and with proposed design changes to allow vehicle stacking. He said it is short-sighted to not allow new drive-thru downtown, as is proposed. Drive-thrus remain a "popular and convenient" option for people wanting food and other services.

St. Paul Area Chamber of Com-

merce Vice President for Governmental Affairs Amenda Duerr said the chamber wasn't notified about the change and only learned of it by seeing the June 7 agenda.

Duerr and others made several point for drive-thru services. One point made is that drive-thrus are often the only food option for night shift workers. Another is that curbside delivery of food, especially at night, can pose safety issues for workers. The issues raised were convenience for families and people with disabilities.

The only person to testify for the changes was former planning commission member Bill Lindeke. He said that drive-thrus take away from the experience people should have of getting out of their vehicles and patronizing local businesses.

"The second you put a drive-thru in, that business becomes an island," said Lindeke.

The study of drive-thru is tied to the 2040 comprehensive plan and the desire to make the city more walkable. Another impetus is problem drive-thru, such as one that was at the Snelling and Marshall Starbucks.

Drive-thru services are usually found at fast-food restaurants, coffee shops, banks and pharmacies. St. Paul has about 77 businesses with drive-thrus, including 36 restaurants, two coffee shops, 31 banks, and eight pharmacies, out of a total of about 640 restaurants, 51 coffee shops, 40 banks and 17 pharmacies.

Since March 2020, city officials have

approved site plans and/or conditional use permits for three new drive-thrus, for two banks and a coffee shop. Also approved were at least five drive through reconstructions or redesigns, all for fast food restaurants.

Motor vehicle off-site queuing that blocks sidewalks, bike lanes, or traffic lanes were cited as reasons to restrict drive-thru services. Exhaust from idling vehicles, noise and challenges with pedestrian access in reaching a business were also cited in the city staff report.

Under the St. Paul proposal, new drive-thru services would be banned in some parts of the city and still allowed in others.

New drive-thru services would be banned in the downtown central business district. In areas zoned for traditional neighborhoods use, including several arterial streets, new drive-thrus would be limited to banks and pharmacies.

Design requirements are proposed, with additional motor vehicle waiting or "stacking" spaces and design of businesses' pedestrian access in a way that shields pedestrians from crossing a drive-thru lane on foot or with a mobility device.

Also, the planning commission is asked to consider prohibiting drive-thru lanes and their driveway access points in traditional neighborhood districts within 300 feet of transit-way stations. Transit-ways include light rail, bus rapid transit, arterial bus rapid transit and modern streetcar, but not regular route bus lines.

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What does the city do with problem properties like former CVS?

Department of Safety and Inspections answer questions

By JANE MCCLURE

Problem properties, especially the vacant CVS at Snelling and University, trash along neighborhood streets and other quality of life issues need more city attention. There's also a need for equity when properties are turned in for code violations and for a better understanding of city processes.

Those were among the messages more than 50 neighbors had June 6 for Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) Director Angie Wiese.

A repeated message is this: Property owners need to be aware that the community is paying attention and that positive changes are needed.

The Hamline Midway Coalition (HMC), Union Park, and Como Park district councils hosted the discussion. The meeting was intended to explain the various DSI roles and ways neighborhood residents and business owners can work with DSI. The meeting was also a chance for

DSI to give an overview of what it does, how it responds to complaints, and what challenges DSI faces.

A major focus was the former CVS. Midway residents and business owners are tired of the vacant store's appearance, and of how the property has become a nuisance.

"CVS has been my worst neighbor," said HMC board president Cole Hanson. He and his daughter pick up a bag of trash every day.

CVS reopened after sustaining extensive damage during the 2020 civil unrest, then closed again in spring 2022. It has become a place where people loiter and leave trash. Others dump trash there.

A check of the CVS website shows that the CVS building is available for lease, and is one of more than 320 CVS properties available for lease or sale. The city faces challenges with an out-of-state owner who is not motivated to lease or sell a property.

The former CVS is in the city's vacant building program. Its owner had to pay almost \$5,000 to get into the program. For each year a building remains in the vacant building program, the charge is just under \$2,500.

It is considered a Category 2 vacant

building, with one or more violations. Category 1 buildings are those that could be easily sold to a new owner; Category 3 buildings are in the worst condition.

Wiese said DSI has assigned a staffer to regularly monitor the CVS building, issue orders for litter and graffiti cleanup, and then use the city's authority to do cleanups and assess the property owner as needed. The city has repeatedly done cleanups and assessed the owner.

There is also concern about litter along University and other streets, and conditions at vacant lots and the superblock where Allianz Field is located.

HMC and Union Park District Council (UPDC) regularly organize cleanup events. Some district council members and community leaders want others to step up, especially the leadership at Allianz Field and the United Village development. The latter area has had more cleanup recently but some neighbors are frustrated that they themselves did the cleanup for many months as volunteers.

Wiese also gave an overview of her department, which handles city license, zoning issues, animal control, various building permits, property inspections and code enforcement, and a host of other issues.

Wiese said other steps have been taken in the city as a whole to address problem properties. The city has contracted out some tasks out, including trash and rubbish collection and mowing of tall grass and weeds.

City officials are seeking approval for what are called "administrative citations" to take on property owners and others who violate city ordinances. The proposal needs to go through a Charter Commission and city council process. The current system of penalties lacks flexibility, especially when considering repeat offenders.

But there were also concerns about equity and how code enforcement is handled. Some neighbors said they have been penalized for having an item such as a mattress outside, or having tall grass and weeds for a short time while other properties have had items out for much longer. One person noted that an industrial-sized oven sat outside of one Midway property for more than a year. There was a request for equity in how property code enforcement is done and for consideration of cases where people may not be able to handle cleanup themselves.

Many questions were about the city complaint process, with residents wondering where to call. The starting point for most issues is 651-266-8989.

BUSINESS

NEW LEADER FOR EAST SIDE LEARNING CENTER

East Side Learning Center welcomes Karmit Bulman as its new executive director. Bulman previously led The Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement (MAVA) and has extensive experience managing and directing various non-profits. Her notable roles include serving as managing attorney and executive director for organizations such as The Minnesota Legal Services Coalition, The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, and Avenues for Homeless Youth.

Bulman is also an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota and Metropolitan State University. She authored "The Conflict Consultant's Handbook" and numerous articles on volunteer engagement, job equity, and race equity. Her career began as a legal services attorney, focusing on youth, housing, employment, and family issues, before transitioning to non-profit leadership.

With over 30 years of experience, Bulman has facilitated collaborative processes, conducted conflict assessments, built coalitions, and provided executive coaching and consulting. She excels in fis-



cal management, program development, fundraising, and non-profit infrastructure building. Bulman holds a bachelor's degree in political science and legal studies from Brandeis University and a Juris Doctor from Northeastern University. Her extensive background promises to bring growth and innovation to East Side Learning Center.

MALI CENTER OPENS

With a mission to return economic prosperity to North End, Rondo and surrounding communities, The Mali Center has opened its new health and wellness business hub during a ribbon-cutting on June 15, 2024. The Mali Center is located in the heart of North End at 576 Front Avenue and will provide equitable access and opportunity to small, BIPOC and women-owned businesses, as well as nonprofits that prioritize underestimated youth and communities of color.

"At The Mali Center, we're providing more than just a hub; it's a sanctuary where every endeavor, no matter how small, resonates with the power to uplift and transform," said Tyrone Minor, founder of The Mali Center. "The members of our ecosystem are not just supported, they're celebrated. As they invest in their dreams, they simultaneously invest in the community."

The 5,304-square-foot building was

formerly comprised of offices, an unfinished mezzanine and warehouse space. The facility has been repurposed into a cutting-edge fitness and training center, featuring premium amenities such as field turf, state-of-the-art training equipment and an immersive golf simulator.

A community of 18 small businesses and non-profits will operate out of The Mali Center and The F.I.T. Lab while simultaneously serving the community. The hub will not only provide an inclusive environment but will act as a community unifier and space that prioritizes health and wellness. Consistent events and workshops will provide ongoing support for small businesses, catering to both newcomers and those aiming for expansion.

The team responsible for bringing The Mali Center to life included: Sunrise Banks; The City of St. Paul; NEOO Partners, an African-American owned-led commercial real estate development and planning firm; and LSE Architects, a Black-owned architecture firm. Ryan Companies US, Inc. served as the general contractor for the project. Construction started in February and was completed in June.

For more information about The Mali Center, visit themalicenter.com.

COMO PARK AUTHOR HONORED

"Love You, Mean It (Sometimes)" is

a hilarious, unfiltered adult humor book, blending the comedic style of "Go the F**k to Sleep" with the relatable chaos of "Bad Moms." Penned by Como Park resident Libby Hilsendager, it has earned recognition from the Independent Book Publishing Professionals Group as one of the standout indie books of 2024.

The book is a finalist in the gift category in the 2024 Next Generation Indie Book Awards, the world's largest book awards program for independent publishers and self-published authors. The winners and finalists will be honored June 28th at a gala event at the US Grant Hotel in San Diego, Calif., coinciding with the American Library Association Annual Conference.

Juggling a full-time job and the myriad responsibilities of family life, Hilsendager found herself drowning in an overwhelming to-do list, constantly searching for misplaced items and grappling with endless reminders. To spread some joy and stand in solidarity with fellow mothers, she wrote a book detailing various motherhood escapades, employing the whimsy of limericks, and enlisted the talents of her amazing cousin for illustrations. More at www.libbyhilsendager.com.



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LIBRARY >> from 1

Advocates for preserving the current building had argued that an EIS is required. One issue cited in the argument for detailed studies is the building's status on the National Register of Historic Places.

Demolition was considered carefully and the city has properly relied on mitigation measures that were recommended by the State Historic Preservation Office, the ruling stated.

The EAW was conducted by the city and released in September 2023. The EAW process includes a 30-day comment period. As part of the EAW process the city had to issue a record of decision. In that decision the city indicated that the project doesn't have the potential for "significant" environmental impacts. It also stated that project impacts can be mitigated.

That prompted the challenge to the EAW and what is seen as a lack of attention to impacts such as greenhouse gases emitted during building demolition. There was also debate over the state historic office's level of review. But the appeals court disagreed with those concerns.

Renovate 1558 representatives ex-

pressed disappointment with the ruling.

Mayor Melvin Carter issued a statement after the ruling, calling it a positive step forward. He and supporters of a new library say they remain committed to the vision of a new structure.

One more legal action is pending. A trial was held in May in Ramsey County District Court. Renovate 1558 also filed that case, in an effort to stop library demolition. That case was heard by Judge Stephen Smith. A decision is expected by year's end.

Plans to demolish the library and replace it with an \$8.1 million facility at its current 1558 Minnehaha Ave. site were announced two years ago. The library has been closed for more than a year. Users go to other libraries or use bookmobile services.

If the city wins at the district court level, and a new library can be built, it will take about 18 months to complete.

It would include an outdoor reading garden, an interactive play area for children, study and meeting rooms, a wellness room, an area for teens and space to feature public art. It's also designed as a one-story building that will feature low shelving for greater accessibility.

Ads must be received by the Monitor by Monday, July 29 for the Aug. 8 issue. Call 651-917-4183 or email Denis@MonitorSaintPaul.com for more information. Classified ads will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at www.MonitorSaintPaul.com. Contact Tessa to place a Help Wanted ad at 612-260-7967, tessa@monitorsaintpaul.com.

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PLAN IT

D10 ICE CREAM SOCIAL JULY 12

The 2024 D10 Ice Cream Social will be July 12 from 5:30-8 p.m. at the Como Streetcar Station. There will be free Kiwanis Malts. Also present will be the Raptor Center, Now Make Art Clay City, the Bubble Baroness, Egg Roll Queen Food Truck, local organization fair, and three local musicians and drummers.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL AND DIAPER DRIVE JULY 18

Enjoy ice cream from Sweet Fruci's Frozen Delights at the Hamline Midway Coalition ice cream social and diaper drive on July 18, 6-8 p.m. at Hamline Park (Snelling and Lafond Ave.). Gluten-free and vegan options available.

POP ROCK SWING DANCING

Pop Rock Swing Dancing in Como

will be 6-8 p.m. various Tuesdays and Wednesdays through Aug. 27 at Como Streetcar Station (1224 Lexington Pkwy). Hazy Rhythms is hosting Pop Rock Swing Dancing this summer. See the schedule, what to expect, and RSVP (optional) at www.hazyrhythmsdance.com. Lessons start at 6 p.m., open dance starts at 7 p.m. All are welcome; no partner needed.

FREE OUTDOOR CONCERTS

Pack a picnic and dancing shoes, spread out a blanket and enjoy free outdoor concerts and activities in front of the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory Wednesdays through July 24 from 6-8p.m. Hot-dogs, ice cream treats, beer and wine will be available to purchase.

- July 17 - Ben Cook-Feltz - Americana, Folk, Indie, Pop, Rock
- July 24 - School of Rock - St. Paul and Plymouth House Bands



True North Elite group members stand in the Wall section at a Loons game at Allianz Field on Pride night, June 8, 2024. They are a non racist, non homophobic, non violent soccer supporter group from Minnesota. Since their inception in 2015, they have grown to be a boisterous voice during Minnesota United FC matches. (Photo by Joselyn Pettit)

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Things are heating up at the Bell



New Planetarium Shows

Find Showtimes

Dive into *Comets, Moons, and Asteroids Revealed*, an interactive odyssey through the solar system's lesser-known residents or enjoy *Supervolcanoes*, the new planetarium show narrated by Benedict Cumberbatch, that looks back at rare classes of eruptions that have unleashed the energy that lurks beneath the surface of Earth.



Hot Magma Summer

July 16-21

Join us for a hot magma summer experience. Find out how volcanoes work with daily eruptions in Horizon Hall and live streams of active volcanoes around the world. Want something a little closer to home? Grab a scavenger hunt and explore how Minnesota's own volcanic history bubbles just below the surface of our dioramas!



Hot Magma Summer Star Party

July 19, 9:30-11pm

Join us for our next in-person Star Party! Outside, we'll have our telescopes set up to observe our favorite deep space objects. Inside, learn more about volcanoes on Earth and in space from experts with hands-on activities. In the planetarium, take a brief tour of otherworldly volcanoes in our solar system.

bellmuseum.umn.edu