

SOUTHWEST Connector

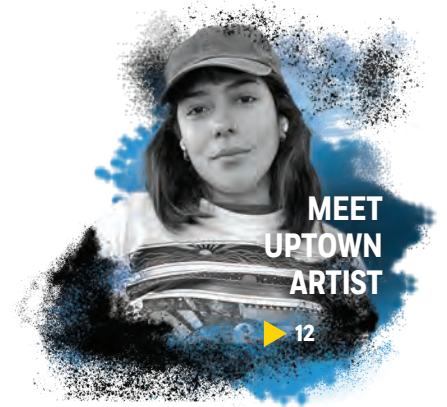
NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • MAY 2025 • VOL. 4 • NO. 6 • 25,500 CIRCULATION

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SOUTHWEST FARMERS MARKET DEBUTS

With global trade war affecting prices, organizer believes people want more affordable, local food

By Allie Johnson

There's a new farmers market in town... sort of.

The Southwest Farmers Market will be held Saturdays in the parking lot of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church at 50th Street and Knox Avenue S., starting May 17. It will replace the Fulton Farmers Market, which had formerly been held at Lake Harriet United Methodist Church at 4901 Chown Avenue S.

In its announcement, Neighborhood Roots, the nonprofit organization that operates the Southwest, Kingfield, and Nokomis farmers markets, said challenges with visibility and attendance prompted the decision to rebrand and relocate.

"[The Fulton Farmers Market] was really tucked away and hard to see in the church parking lot," said Neighborhood Roots development manager Mara Wack. "It was just not as visible a lot of people didn't know about it. It was harder to get new vendors."

There are a lot of farmers markets in the Twin Cities, particularly on Saturdays. If a vendor is not doing well at a particular market, they are going to try to sell somewhere else, said Wack.

"Customers, they want a lot of vendors," she said. "They don't want to show up to a market that only has a handful of vendors and they want more consistency. We knew if we wanted to grow and expand and make it a viable market for vendors to sell at, we had to make a change."



Past Neighborhood Roots board member Ashley Olson packs green beans at the Fulton Farmers Market. Starting this week, the Fulton Farmers Market will be replaced by the Southwest Farmers Market, and be located at a new location that will allow the market to double in size. (Photo courtesy of Neighborhood Roots)

Marriam DeMello and Jamison Whiting seek Emily Koski's seat

RACE IS ON IN WARD 11

By Cam Gordon

In Ward 11 the incumbent council member, Emily Koski, is not seeking re-election. Jamison Whiting and Marriam DeMello have stepped up to replace her.

Whiting, an attorney in the city attorney's office, formally started his campaign on Dec. 5, 2024, shortly after Koski announced she was stepping down to run for mayor (which she has since terminated). DeMello, a policy aide to St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter and a member of the Minneapolis Charter Commission, announced her campaign in March.

They are both seeking the Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) Party endorsement that could be determined at the party's Ward 11 convention on Saturday, May 31 at Washburn High School.

Party affiliation is not the only thing the two candidates have in common.

SIMILAR BACKGROUNDS

Both were raised on the southside, attended city public schools, and went on to become attorneys who now work in city government.

DeMello is the daughter of immigrants, a Palestinian father and a Syrian mother. She attended Hale, Field, and Southwest schools before becoming the first in her family to attend college. She received her law degree from Mitchell Hamline in 2018, and worked in the past for the Ram-

HENNEPIN FEST ILLUMINATES WOMEN MUSICIANS, ARTISTS

Hennepin History Museum hosts its first music festival May 31, proving it is not a 'sleepy' history center

By Allie Johnson

On Saturday, May 31, 2025, the Hennepin History Museum will host Hennepin Fest, a free outdoor festival in Whittier's Washburn Fair Oaks Park featuring music and poetry from local women and LGBTQ+ artists.

It will be the first time the museum has ever hosted a music festival. Development manager Leslie Johnson said the festival was conceived to bring the community together and explore the legacy and history of women and LGBTQ+ artists in the Twin Cities.

"Through Hennepin Fest, we want



What we really want to do is talk about how history is relevant to people's lives today and we want to talk about how we are living history right now."

Leslie Johnson



to illuminate women artists who serve as culture bearers and are transmitting personal and community history through music and art," she said.

The museum also organized the festival to "empower women and LGBTQ+ folks right now at a time in the history of this country when our rights are being threatened," added Johnson.

Concerts are the main focus of Hennepin Fest, which will run the duration of the festival and feature four performances from local women artists

whose music spans multiple genres including rap, blues, jazz, funk, and pop. Diane Miller, host of 89.3 The Current's Local Show will serve as both emcee and DJ with Connie Evingson, Annie Mack, NUNNABOVE, and Maria Isa, all scheduled to perform.

Between performances, poets Heid E. Erdich, Joyce Sutphen, and Mary Moore Easter will share spoken word. There will also be a dedicated section of the park where attendees can peruse art and handmade goods from local artisans, buy food and drinks, and enjoy family-friendly activities.

Johnson said the Hennepin History Museum does not view itself as a "sleepy" history museum, and they are hoping to prove that with Hennepin Fest.

"What we really want to do is talk about how history is relevant to people's lives today and we want to talk about how we are living history right now," she said.

One way they are doing so is by asking each artist to play a song



Diane Miller, host of 89.3 The Current Local Show will emcee the inaugural Hennepin Fest, an event to empower women and LGBTQ+ folks.

‘THERE IS AN EFFORT TO SILENCE THESE STUDENTS’

By Jan Willms

Across the country, students on a student visa or the holder of a Green Card who protest against the killing of thousands in Gaza or sign their name to an op-ed against the war in the Middle East have found themselves picked up by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and sent to remote parts of the country where they sit in detention waiting to be evicted from the United States.

In Minnesota, more than two dozen college students of primarily Middle Eastern ethnicity have been swept up by ICE officials.

“We are supposed to live in a country where everyone gets due process and everyone is entitled to a hearing,” said Dr. David Schultz, a professor of political science and legal studies at Hamline University.

He said the Trump administration is looking for courts that are more sympathetic to its requests, as more than one student has been sent to detention in Louisiana.

“I teach American politics, and if you read the Declaration of Independence, a part of it is about a statement of grievances against the King of England,” Schultz continued. “He has moved us to far distant places to put us on trial. This is part of what the Trump administration is



(Graphic by Terry Faust)

doing.” Schultz said the administration is trying to instill fear, committing high publicity actions and sending students to different courts and different detention centers, making it harder for them to mount a defense. They are also being sent away from their families and support systems.

“Their actions have created isolation for these detainees,” Schultz said.

He said a Green Card entitles its holder to all of the rights of Americans except

the right to vote. So far, in many of these cases, the students and other detained immigrants have not been given due process.

In the case of Mahmoud Khalil (at the time of this interview), he has not been given a hearing to determine the legality of his being in this country, and no evidence against him has been presented, according to Schultz. Khalil is a graduate student at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs who was a leading voice in protests against the

Hamline government professor concerned about disappearing students and constitutional rights



We are supposed to live in a country where everyone gets due process and everyone is entitled to a hearing.”

David Schultz



war in Gaza.

Another student from Tufts University is allegedly being held because she was a co-author on an op ed citing the rights of Palestinians. “There is an effort to silence these students,” Schultz stated.

“Reactionary governments do not like academics, intellectuals or students,” he said.

The Connector reached out to several local students, but none would talk even anonymously, citing

safety concerns.

Schultz noted that the United States is supposed to be a home for poets, who can criticize, analyze, second-guess and dream



Nick Koszewski of Two Rivers Bread sells a variety of breads at the Fulton Farmers Market. As of publication, there are 29 vendors participating in the market at its new, larger location at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church parking lot. “I think more people are looking to shop local,” said Neighborhood Roots development manager Mara Wack. (Photos courtesy of Neighborhood Roots)

FARMERS MARKET

The Southwest Farmers Market will have double the footprint of the Fulton market, according to Wack. As of publication, there are 29 participating vendors, seven of which will carry the seasonal produce and other agricultural products that draw customers to farmers markets in the first place. The rest will sell a mix of bakery items, canned goods like jams and salsa, homemade products like soap and candles, and prepared foods.

As with all the markets Neighborhood

Roots coordinates, there will also be live music and family-friendly activities.

“We want people that come and make an event and have something to eat and hang out,” Wack said.

Another big difference with the new Southwest Farmers Market is that it caters to more southwest Minneapolis neighborhoods, said Wack.

“Before we would primarily just work with the Fulton Neighborhood Association, but now there’s Windom, Lynnhurst, Kenny and Tangletown,” she said. “Just inviting everyone out to really let their

neighbors know that this is a new market and we’re here.”

With the burgeoning global trade war affecting food prices, Wack believes more people will be looking to farmers markets this season for some of their weekly shopping.

“I think more people are looking to shop local. When our food has to travel so far, that really affects the pricing,” she said. “A lot of people thought farmers markets were more expensive. I think this is going to be a shift where we’re seeing people come out to get more of a deal.”

DETAILS

Southwest Farmers Market

When:

Saturdays 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.,
May 17-Oct. 25

Where:

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church,
5025 Knox Ave. S.

THEY’RE BUYING ONLINE BECAUSE ITS EASIER.

ADVERTISE IN YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER AND MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM TO BUY LOCALLY.

'THE PEOPLE'S WAY' PREMIERES IN MIDWEST

Film among Best of the Fest at MSPIFF44

By Jill Boogren

After two sold out screenings – first at The Main and then at the Capri – “The People’s Way” film was given an encore screening among the “Best of the Fest” during its Midwest premiere at the Minneapolis Saint Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF) in April 2025.

A feature-length documentary, the film follows three local Black women as they navigate and find their callings in the movement for racial justice and Black liberation following George Floyd’s murder in 2020: Toshira Garraway of Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence; Jeanelle Austin of Rise & Remember; and Minneapolis City Council Member Robin Wonsley, who during the film is campaigning to represent Ward 2.

For many in the audience who have marched, held space and worked alongside these women, the film features many familiar faces and places, as well as moments both traumatic and triumphant. Viewers responded with finger snaps and applause – and at the Capri, loud cheers (and even some jeers when the mayor appears onscreen).

At its heart, the film offers an intimate look at three Black women who rise to meet this moment. They are shown in the public spotlight, as well as in quiet moments shared with their respective families. Their anguish, determination and drive is raw, tender and fierce.

Co-directors Ashley Tyner and Will Tyner, siblings from New York City, explained their decision to focus on these three individuals.

“We wanted to find Black women who were pushing things forward in really particular ways, and in different ways, as well. So I think that was a big motivation... Where is the momentum, where is the energy going? Robin had the energy going in grassroots civic engagement... Jeanelle had energy around preservation, memorialization. Toshira had energy around care for her community and for other impacted families,” said Will.

Ashley added, “Not to get too academic, we were thinking about Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s framing of abolition, this idea of ‘If we have a system we don’t like and we want to tear it down, what do we put in its place?’ So this question of who is putting something new in its place was what we wanted to look at. And then these three women really showed us that.”

Ashley and Will first came to Minneapolis in July 2020 and were drawn to stories unfolding at George Floyd Square. They met Austin and saw the work being done to preserve the memorial, as well as the ongoing occupation. It quickly became clear that they needed to stop filming and just be present.

“I think we were so driven by just wanting to be useful and figure out how to be part of something that could lead to some kind of piece of the movement, of change, and so it was like... ‘You’re interested in filming and documenting, but go pick that up.’ It was like, Okay, put [the camera] down. This isn’t important. We need to go get firewood, go get ice, whatever it may be,” said Ashley.

This was hard sometimes, Will acknowledged, because their role was to document, and it could be confusing for some people when they put the camera down in lieu of filming something.

“I think it was really... important to us to serve, participate,” he said. “We were very mindful of not wanting to come in and impose a vision and a story – extract – and that was very at top of mind. Because that’s not how we work.”



The three women featured in the film, “The People’s Way” – (left to right) Robin Wonsley, Toshira Garraway and Jeanelle Austin – pose after a Q&A with moderator Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley (far right) after a screening at The Main during the Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival on April 9. (Photo by Jill Boogren)



(Left to right) Resmaa Menakem, Jeanelle Austin, Robin Wonsley, Toshira Garraway and Elder Atum Azzahir participate in a community conversation at The Belfry before the screening of the film “The People’s Way” during MSPIFF. (Photo by Jill Boogren)



Co-director Ashley Tyner speaks at a screening at The Main during the Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival on April 9. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Raised in communities in Ohio, their upbringing was about making friends and building community. Not coming in and taking but figuring out how to give something.

The two ended up moving to Minneapolis in October 2020 and stayed until February of 2022, right around when Amir Locke was killed during a botched no-knock warrant raid of the apartment where he was sleeping (Locke was not a suspect in the warrant). They made several subsequent trips back here from New York.

IN CONVERSATION

In the film are scenes of a conversation among the three women that takes place around a table in an all-white room. This was inspired by photographer Carrie Mae Weems’ ‘Kitchen Table Series,’ a series of self portraits Weems takes over time of herself at the kitchen table – alone, with family members, with lovers.

“We were thinking about this idea of Black women gathering at the kitchen

table and thinking about and reflecting on their own power,” said Ashley.

This dialogue flowed into the film festival, first at a community conversation that took place at the Belfry (3901 Chicago Ave.) earlier in the week. It was moderated by Resmaa Menakem, author, therapist and a leading voice in healing racialized trauma. Each screening was also followed by a Q&A with the film’s subjects, moderated at The Main by Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley and at the Capri by Trahern Crews of Black Lives Matter Minnesota.

Garraway, Austin and Wonsley shared with festival audiences what, as Conley asked, pulled each of them in the direction of action.

Garraway shared her story about the father of her son, Justin Teigen, being brutally beaten and left for dead in a dumpster in 2009 after an interaction with St. Paul police officers. She reports being followed and harassed by police afterwards. At the time, there was no Black Lives Matter movement, no other people she could turn to for support. She has long asked for an investigation into the circumstances surrounding Teigen’s death and has now filed a lawsuit to reopen the case. No longer intimidated, Garraway is empowered as she joins with demonstrators and impacted families fighting for justice. For her it is imperative to get the rest of the names out there of Black men and women whose lives were taken at the hands of police.

Her first impulse when she saw the video of George Floyd’s murder was to “share, share, share” everywhere she could.

“I live what they did to Justin. I live it. And I know how they can cover up murder and twist it all around and make it become an accident,” she said. Once the Uprising happened, she felt a powerful urge to “move.”

“It was like God cracked a door for the rest of our families, and all we had to do was push. So that has been my pur-

pose, my role, what keeps me going, is to push, continue to push that door so that people can understand the state of emergency that we are in,” said Garraway.

For Austin, the pull came because she was in the protest on the 35W bridge when the truck came barreling through, triggering trauma from past marches. She needed to find another way to protest and began tending to the memorial. In that work, she saw the power of art in holding systems accountable and shared her vision of picking up where other memorials end, from 1950 forward.

“I want people to know Black people are dying all over this country still. It’s not a thing of the past. History. It’s our present. If we don’t stop it, it will continue to be our future,” she said.

Wonsley described her pull as showing possibility, specifically in the political system. She campaigned and now serves as Minneapolis’ first Black Independent Socialist City Council Member. She mentioned Menakem’s observation about Blackness as living in the duality of possibility and peril.

“We had this very horrific moment, but it gave us this sense of, what can we create out of it,” she said, acknowledging Austin’s remarks in the documentary about innovation and beauty. “[At] George Floyd Square you see people from all walks of life making do, making new things and reclaiming their space.”

HOW THEY SUSTAIN THEMSELVES

In all three forums, the women were asked how they sustain themselves.

Wonsley spoke of the importance of having a team, a network of support, to allow her to take a nap or go to a coffee shop to strategize and reflect.

“We are doing everything, holding every single role, and... because we’re in survival mode, we’re often not given the grace and the space to create in,” she said.

Austin gave a shout out to family and friends who have held her accountable to self care, accompanying her for walks around the Mall, front porch conversations, walk and talks around the lake, and even a staycation at a nearby hotel.

As an introvert, she also needs time to be by herself.

“I get drained around a lot of people, so I just have to be aware of my limits and my capacity. And I don’t always see and sometimes it comes out sideways,” she said. “It’s work to do self care. Sometimes you succeed, sometimes you fail, but you get up, keep trying, ‘cause the work is still there.”

Garraway has to force herself to take time for herself and credits Austin for urging her to rest.

“Black women, we’re getting sick. Because we know when these atrocities are happening to Black men in the community, we are the ones who pull our family together. We’re on the front lines. We are the ones just trying to keep everything together. And it’s weighing on us,” she said. “Everything we have had to endure as Black women... we feel that in our bodies, in our spirit, in our soul. We feel it, and we’re getting sick because of it.”

Asked what is needed in terms of support, Garraway urged audience members to learn about others who were killed by police.

“We have a responsibility as human beings to speak for the people that cannot speak for themselves,” she told the audience. “I want you guys to take Justin’s life, his killing, his lynching, personally. I want you guys to take Brandon Keys, Amir Locke, Leneal Frazier, Winston Smith and all of them personally. And I want you to fight for them like you would fight for your brother, your sister, your cousin, your best friend.”

The documentary website, www.ThePeoplesWayFilm.com, shares donation links for Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence, Rise & Remember and Robin4Minneapolis.

WHAT AI CAN'T REPLACE: YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Artificial intelligence is here — and it's powerful. From recommending what to watch to helping draft messages or organizing your calendar, AI is becoming part of everyday life. Used responsibly, it can be a helpful tool. But when misused, AI can also be dangerous — especially when it misappropriates local news content without attribution, compensation or context.



By **Dean Ridings**

A recent Nieman Lab investigation uncovered a sprawling network of AI-generated newsletters run by a single individual and published in more than 350 towns across 47 states. These newsletters repackage local news content — often lifted directly from trusted community newspapers — without permission, without credit and without paying a dime to the journalists who did the work.

The sites are designed to look like genuine local news sources, complete with familiar hometown branding and “about us” pages. But in reality, they rely on recycled testimonials, automated content and no local presence at all. Even more concerning, there is no disclosure that the content is generated or curated by AI — leaving readers unaware that what they're reading may not come from a local newsroom at all. That's not just misleading — it's harmful.



We've seen this before. Big Tech platforms built massive businesses using content created by local newspapers, often without fair compensation. The reporting was done by the local newspapers, but Big Tech took the content and repurposed it as an additional way of attracting eyeballs, with none of the money flowing to the local news media. The result? Advertising

dollars dried up, newsrooms shrank and communities lost critical coverage. The rise of AI scraping mirrors that same playbook. And this time, we can't afford to let it happen again.

Local newspapers are not just another media outlet — they are the most trusted source of news in America. According to the Trust in Media study by America's

Newspapers and Coda Ventures, local newspapers outperform national outlets, television and social media on every trust measure. Readers consistently cite local papers as more transparent, more ethical and more invested in their communities.

The numbers speak for themselves: 80% of Americans believe it's important to have a local newspaper. Nearly three in four say their community would suffer without one. And they're right. Local journalists consistently earn high marks for covering what matters — from school board decisions and city council meetings to local sports and events that bring neighbors together.

Americans rely on local newspapers because they deliver facts, fairness and accountability. That trust wasn't generated by an algorithm — it was earned by reporters who live and work in the communities they serve.

The best way to protect your local newspaper? Support it. Subscribe. Advertise. And back the businesses that do.

Because what's at stake isn't just the news — it's the presence of professional, community-based journalists covering the stories that matter most.

For more information about the America's Newspapers Trust in Media study, visit: <https://member.newspapers.org/trust-in-media.html>

Dean Ridings is the CEO of America's Newspapers, an organization made up of 1,700 newspaper and Solutions Partner companies committed to explaining, defending and advancing the vital role of newspapers in democracy and civil life.

STORIES & JOURNEYS

It is becoming important for me to ground myself before I write. At the end of the day, Stories and Journeys is me paying attention to my internal knowing, being still and true to myself. With this as my base line there are other things that ground me that I listed in the March Stories and Journeys. This month I have added another item to my list. That item is a daily meditation called Body Scan that I learned years ago at Common Ground Meditation Center located at 2700 East 26th Street. It is a community meditation center dedicated to the practice of mindfulness.



By **Donald L. Hammen**

ANGST

March 28. My feet along with a ride from neighbor Judith take me to the Elder Voices (Telling Our Stories/Sharing Our Journeys) meet up at Turtle Bread. Everyone (Judith, Randy, Jim, myself and Silvia) agreed on one word to describe how we are feeling/experiencing our lives in Trump's America. That word is angst. Especially so when it comes to one important question.

Did you receive your Social Security check/deposit this month? Increasingly as

ANGST, STAYING VIGILANT, DOING SOMETHING

I interact with other elders this is the question that gets asked. I feel like my very existence is under attack for working hard and earning that benefit. Where Social Security is concerned I have identified five sources of information that I receive. One word I'm starting to see with greater frequency is COLLAPSE in reference Social Security due to the hostile take over of the Social Security Administration by Elon Musk.

Recently my feet along with a ride from my friend and former co-worker Samuel enabled me to make my way to the Social Security Administration field office at 1811 Chicago Ave. I went there just to see if it's still open. The last time I called the Social Security Administration I was on hold for so long I decided to make my way to the field office. Every time I have gone there I have always been helped. Since I made that stop I have learned that there was a protest outside that office. As in protesting the closure of field offices in general.

The executive director of Social Security Works is now saying the collapse is inevitable. He is recommending that people get paper copies of their file in case they have to document their benefits. The secretaries of Arizona and Michigan have created one-page forms on their websites for people to register their complaints coming from their experiences with the current So-

cial Security Administration.

This is where I get to state that the next gathering of Elder Voices (Telling Our Stories/Sharing Our Journeys) will be Friday, April 25, 10-11 a.m. at Turtle Bread, 4205 E.34th Street. Look for the table with the Elder Voices sign.

STAY VIGILANT

Everyone seemed to leave the March Elder Voices gathering with a sense of needing to stay vigilant in these uncertain times. Staying vigilant to ways, subtle and obvious, the Trump/Musk regime is impacting our lives. For me, I am staying focused on what's happening with Social Security, efforts to privatize the postal service, and the Minnehaha Food Shelf in light of Trump's immigration policies. So, dear reader, what changes have you noticed in your daily life as a result of the Trump/Musk regime impacting your lives? Tell yourself, tell others or tell me via tesha@tmcpub.com. And if you have read this far you have taken the plunge into the river (flow) of life experiences that is Stories and Journeys.

DO SOMETHING

Southwest High School grad, designer of the Minneapolis flag, and labor activist Louise Sundin showed up at the monthly meeting of the Minneapolis Regional Re-

tires Council (AFL-CIO) recently with a list events/actions that people could participate in to resist/push back against the actions of the Trump/Musk regime. I have been able to participate in two protests at the State Capitol thanks to transportation supplied by my feet and Seward residents Tom Beer and Rita Doucet. One was protesting the proposed privatization of the postal service. The other was the massive Hands Off protest. And I contributed financially to the Minnehaha Food Shelf.

A WELCOME EMAIL FROM SOUTHWEST CONNECTOR READER CHRISTIAN NEWMAN

Somewhere in the Southwest Connector archives, there exists a photo of me at Tao Organics in Uptown handing a copy of the Southwest Connector to Christian Newman while he was working behind the counter. He is responding to an email I wrote to him on Jan. 6, 2023 at the time of his last day of employment. In this email, he celebrates what he calls our friendship at Tao. He tells me that the Southwest Connector gets delivered to the building where he lives and that he enjoys reading Stories and Journeys. There is more, but those are a couple of highlights. Christian is 20 something. I am 80. Interesting.

In gratitude for your readership.

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



We want to hear from you. Email news@SWconnector.com

Send us signed letters, press releases, events listings, notes, and ideas for our Good Neighbor feature.

SOUTHWEST Connector

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The Connector 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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STRENGTHENING YOUTH AND FAMILIES THROUGH BRAIN POWER

A new Twin Cities program aims to make brain science fun, accessible, and actionable for communities traditionally underserved by mental health systems.

Dr. Meghan Swanson is a neuroscientist at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

She conducts research at the University of Minnesota's Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain (MIDB), a research institution in Minneapolis that brings together educators, scientists, and M Health Fairview clinicians to advance brain health from early childhood through adulthood.

In her work, Swanson studies brain development in the first three years of life and investigates the neurobiology of early communication for children. She is also interested in learning how infants and their parents communicate, and how this early communication impacts brain development and later language and cognitive skills.

Some of her work is groundbreaking, such as a brain scan that allows researchers to detect autism in children as young as 6 months old. This kind of early detection helps families access critical treatment and support at the earliest possible stage.

Despite this pioneering work, Swanson still wants to do more.

"I think that there are a lot of opportunities to reach our local community," Swanson said during a meeting in April at the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain with Latino youth community journalists, ages 14 and 16, from the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation's Youth Community Journalism Institute. "I think



By Eric Ortiz



Youth community journalists from the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation's Youth Community Journalism Institute at the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain in Minneapolis. (Photo by Eric Ortiz)

historically, if you look at the groups of people that participate in studies, they do not reflect America as a whole. They don't reflect our local communities. And so you then have to ask yourself, why is that the case? Why is my sample, like the moms in my sample, why are 80 percent of them White moms with PhDs? Right? Why am I getting one cross-section of our local population and not a truly representative population? And I think that's because we don't do enough of this, what we're doing here. Reaching into our community, describing what research is, talking about the benefits."

Swanson's research has the potential to benefit any child and any family in any community. But to help more people, she and the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain need to connect with more communities.

To address this gap, the Youth Community Journalism Institute is working with the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain to create "Brain Health Solutions for All," a youth-driven, intergenerational, multilingual community engagement project to make brain science accessible and actionable for everyone.

This year-long pilot program starts in July 2025 and will bring together brain researchers, medical practitioners, health professionals, and community leaders to discuss current topics in neuroscience, psychology, pediatrics, public health, and education, with a focus on how research impacts real-world issues and community well-being. The goal is to help people of all ages understand the power of the brain to strengthen themselves and their communities.

Aimed at underserved communities (Latino, Black, Indigenous, Asian, immigrant, rural, young, and old) in Minnesota, the project will produce a youth-led video series, a podcast series, community solutions events on brain health, and information for Conversaciones de Salud, a bilingual (English/Spanish) monthly youth-led digital and print magazine. The mission is to connect cutting-edge brain research with everyday mental health practices in underserved communities across the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota.

"I've had a lot of self-reflection over the last couple months," said Swanson. "And it's really clear to me that one of the reasons why we are in this position right

now as scientists and in academia is because we have spent too much time in our ivory tower. And we weren't talking to our community."

Youth ages 9-16 from the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation's Youth Community Journalism Institute, in collaboration with primary media partner Conversaciones de Salud and Jóvenes de Salud, led by community engagement specialist Carmen Robles and Associates LLC, will produce all aspects of the project with the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain at the University of Minnesota.

Colectiva Bilingue, a nonprofit supporting families and staff of Spanish dual language programs in Minneapolis Public Schools, will provide interpreter services for the project.

The Twin Cities Mental Health Action Festival on May 15 at the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain kicks off the "Brain Health Solutions for All" program.

Brain health is a universal human issue. By focusing on it at the local level with youth in an intergenerational way, we can empower young people to lead.

"There's not one answer," added Swanson. "This is why there isn't more of that kind of two-way communication. And that's what's needed. It's not just that scientists need to share the findings of their research. It's that there needs to be more of that two-way communication every step along the way."

By centering youth voices and fostering two-way communication, this work lays the foundation for long-term community healing and more equitable mental health systems. It's an important step toward building a healthier future for all.

Eric Ortiz lives in the Wedge with his family. He is executive director of the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation, a youth and community development nonprofit, and associate director of research for The Pivot Fund, a venture philanthropy organization that invests in community newsrooms serving underserved communities.

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DIVIDE PERENNIALS TO BOOST HEALTH, BEAUTY

Welcome back to a new gardening season, and a new season of City Gardener columns! As our gardens begin to wake up from their winter rest, it's a great time to think about an often-neglected gardening task: dividing perennials.



By **Lauren Bethke**

If you've noticed that your perennial plants have fewer flowers, smaller blooms, are dying in the center, or are just looking crowded, dividing them will probably help. Dividing perennials is a simple, rewarding task that can make a big difference in your garden's overall health and appearance.

Essentially, dividing perennials is the process of digging up an established plant and separating it into smaller sections, each with its own roots and stems. This process helps rejuvenate older plants, prevent overcrowding, and encourage healthier growth. Over time, overcrowding can lead to stunted growth and increased susceptibility to pests and diseases. Dividing perennials every few years helps ensure that each section has access to sufficient nutrients, water, and space, as well as good airflow. Additionally, division is a cost-effective way to propagate and expand your garden, as the separated clumps can be replanted in other areas or shared with fellow gardeners. This simple practice helps ensure long-lasting, thriving perennials year after year.

It's best to divide perennials when the plant is not actively blooming (or about to bloom) so it can focus all of its energy on regenerating root tissue and becoming established in its new location. In general, spring is the best time to divide later blooming perennials such as yarrow and bee balm (and ferns, although they don't bloom), while fall is the best time to di-



Spring is the best time to divide ferns and later blooming perennials such as yarrow (bottom right), while fall is best for earlier blooming perennials such as lilies (top right).

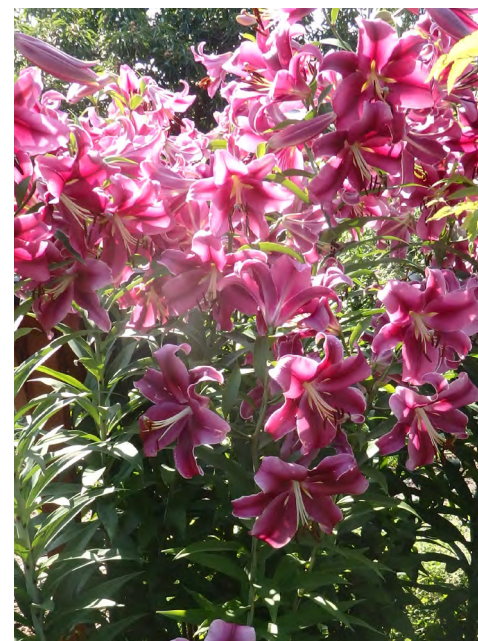
vide earlier blooming perennials such as lilies and peonies. Hardy plants like hostas can handle being divided in the spring or fall. And keep in mind that there are a few plants that don't handle division very well – especially plants with particularly long roots such as goatsbeard, columbine, and baptisia. For these plants, it's best to simply prune them without disturbing the roots. Check out the University of Minnesota Extension Yard and Garden website for a detailed list of plants and tips on how to divide them successfully.

In general, when dividing perennials, you should begin by watering the plant very well a couple of days ahead of time to ensure the soil is moist and easy to work with. When you're ready to divide, dig up the entire plant carefully, preserving as much of the root system as possible. Gently shake or wash off excess soil to expose the roots, then separate the plant into sections. Depending on how dense

the roots are, you can use a clean, sharp knife or spade to separate the plant into smaller sections, or pull them apart with your hands. Make sure each division has healthy roots and several shoots or buds, and remove any dead or damaged parts of the plant. Replant the divisions as soon as you can at the same depth they were originally growing. Water them well, and keep the soil moist until they are established.

If you can, try to divide perennials on a cloudy, overcast day – this can help reduce the risk of plants drying out during the process. And don't worry too much if your newly divided plants look a bit droopy when replanted! This is very common, but with regular watering, they should perk up.

Dividing perennials is a simple and powerful way to keep your garden healthy. With just a bit of time and care, you can rejuvenate tired plants, prevent overcrowding, and even expand your garden at no



extra cost. So, grab your shovel this spring and give your perennials the fresh start they deserve!



Lauren Bethke is a master gardener. For more information, check out the University of Minnesota Extension Yard and Garden website. Extension resources are written by experts and contain the latest and most reliable research-based information. Happy gardening!

13TH WARD NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY WALK

The 13th Ward Neighborhood Safety Walk on Tuesday, May 27 will be around Lake Harriet where lights are out due to copper wire theft. This walk spans four different neighborhoods and will take about 60 minutes. Meet at Lake Harriet Bandshell at 7 p.m.

BIKE WALK TO WORK DAY MAY 16

The City of Minneapolis will celebrate Bike To Work Day Friday, May 16. Four group rides to downtown will meet up at 7:30 a.m. across the city. Meet at:

- Farview Park (intersection of Lyndale Avenue and 26th Avenue North)
- Great Northern Greenway (intersection of Fifth Street and 18th Avenue

Northeast)

- 38th Street Station (intersection of Hiawatha Avenue and East 38th Street)
- Lyndale Farmstead Park (intersection of Bryant Avenue South and West 40th Street)

Join elected officials, public works leaders and fellow bike commuters for free coffee, donuts, and more on the Hennepin County Government Center Plaza from 7-9 a.m.

LYNDALE PLANT SALE

The Lyndale Neighborhood Association plant sale is planned for Saturday, May 31, 10a.m. – 2 p.m. at Painter Park, 620 W 34th St. Stock up on your native pollinator plants and support the Lyndale Neighborhood Association at the same time.

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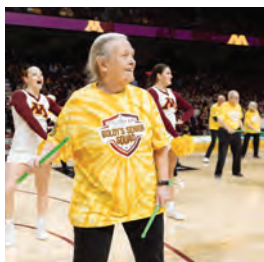
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5 AWARDS FOR TMC PUBLICATIONS

The Midwest Free Community Papers (MFCP) announced in April 2025 that TMC Publications CO had earned five awards:

- General Excellence: Southwest Connector, 1st Place
- Best Website: Midway Como Frogtown Monitor, 2nd Place
- Best Website: Southwest Connector, 3rd Place

- Best Holiday Ad (other than Christmas): Longfellow Nokomis Messenger, Chocolat Celeste, Honorable Mention
- Best Editorial Photography: Southwest Connector, Lake Harriet Lower Campus Principal, Terry Faust, 2nd Place



VOLUNTEER OF YEAR

The owner and editor of the Monitor, Messenger, and Connector, Tesha M. Christensen (at left), was named the 2025 Midway Chamber Volunteer of the Year. "Tesha does a lot for the Midway Chamber, including taking photographs at many events and promoting our work and programming through the newspaper," said Chamber Executive Director Chad Kulas. "She is also our Ambassador Committee Chair and sits on the board of directors and our communications committee. Her dedication to the Midway Chamber is also a sign of her dedication to the Midway community in general, and has helped her become an expert on what's happening around the neighborhood."

HENNEPIN FEST

during their set from a local woman musician who inspired them and share why with the audience.

"The Twin Cities has such a great music scene and there's so much inspiration for musicians and artists," said Johnson, specifically naming artists like Lizzo and the Andrews Sisters and historic venues like the Dakota Jazz Club and First Avenue. "We really want to highlight that important history in our community."

Hennepin Fest came together in a few

short months, after the museum learned in December it had received a grant from the Minnesota Humanities Center's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. The festival is also funded in part by a handful of local sponsors.

Johnson anticipates this year's festival will draw about 1,000 attendees. The museum may host another Hennepin Fest in the future, pending additional funding, she said.

Hennepin Fest will take place Saturday, May 31 from 2-7 p.m. at Washburn Fair Oaks Park, across the street from the museum. Admission to the festival is free, but reservations are encouraged. Tickets can be reserved at hennepinhistory.org/hennepinfest.



Performing at Hennepin Fest on May 31 will be NUNNABOVE (shown above), along with Maria Isa, Anne Mack and Connie Evingson (at right).

CITY OF LAKE STEWARDS PILOT LAUNCHES ON LAKE HARRIET

MN Lakes and Rivers is proud to announce the launch of a new pilot initiative, the City of Lake Stewards program, debuting on Lake Harriet in the summer of 2025.

Drawing from the success of the organization's widely respected statewide Lake Steward program, this new effort aims to inspire local residents to take simple, impactful steps to protect and preserve the waters that define life in the City of Lakes.

Thanks to the support of R.T. Rybak and The Minneapolis Foundation, the program will focus on fostering a deeper community connection to water stewardship – whether or not residents live directly on the lake.

At the heart of the program is a positive, neighbor-to-neighbor approach that encourages property owners and renters alike to take incremental steps that reduce nutrient runoff into the lake. The goal: to build momentum and shift community norms around what a "beautiful" property looks like – toward one that prioritizes ecological health and clean water through collaboration among neighbors, civic groups, and local institutions.

As part of this pilot, MN Lakes and Rivers will be hiring and training students from Washburn High School to serve as Lake Steward evaluators. These leaders will assess properties, share resources, and help homeowners and renters take

incremental steps toward environmentally friendly practices, while gaining valuable leadership experience.

"Anyone can be a Lake Steward! Whether you already have a pollinator garden, or you have no idea where to begin, we want you to join us in protecting our lakes for current and future generations" say organizers.

For more information or to get involved, get connected with MLR.

The Lake Steward program has expanded to the city with the support of MN Lakes and Rivers.



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WARD 11 RACE

sey County and the city of Minneapolis. She currently works for the city of St. Paul in the mayor's office, where she has been for the past five years.

"In addition to my lived experience as a lifelong Minneapolis resident and the daughter of a low-income immigrant family, my professional background has uniquely prepared me to serve as a city council member," said DeMello. "My entire career has been rooted in public service, with roles across the city of Minneapolis and St. Paul. I interned in regulatory services, worked for former Mayor R.T. Rybak, and held positions as a paralegal and law clerk in the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office. Currently, I serve as an aide to St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter and am a proud member of the Minneapolis Charter Commission. These experiences have given me a deep understanding of local government, a strong commitment to equity, and a proven dedication to serving our communities."

Whiting was raised by his mother in a single parent household and attended Hale, Field, and Washburn schools. He received his law degree from the University of California, Irvine School of Law in 2021. Before joining the city attorney's office in 2023, he served 10 months on the Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission and worked at the Faegre Drinker law firm for two years.

"I have dedicated my career to driving meaningful change at the intersections of justice, reform, and Minneapolis progress particularly around what I believe is our city's most important issue, improving our public safety ecosystem," said Whiting.

"After the murder of George Floyd, I was inspired to make a direct difference in public safety within the city, and I joined the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office to work on implementing the DOJ consent decree and MDHR settlement agreement. Through this work, I have had the privilege of working alongside officers eager to be part of real reform, and with community members pushing for a Minneapolis Police Department that is well-trained, accountable, and rooted in service," Whiting added.

They both live in the Hale neighborhood.

"I may be a little biased, but I truly believe our city's lakes are its greatest asset, and Lake Nokomis is the best of them,"



(Left to right) Mariam DeMello and Jamison Whiting are running for the Ward 11 city council seat being vacated by Emily Koski (lower right).



said Whiting. "What I love most about our ward, though, is that we are home to the best high school in the city, Go Millers. I have the privilege of volunteering as a football coach at Washburn High School, for both the men's and now the women's teams."

"One of the things I love most about Ward 11 is our easy access to beautiful trails, green spaces, and waterways – like Lake Nokomis, Lake Hiawatha, and Minnehaha Creek," said DeMello. "We're also home to vibrant small business hubs, such as 48th and Chicago, that add so much character to our community. What makes this area even more meaningful to me is that my parents still live nearby in the house where I grew up, which keeps me deeply rooted and connected to the community I'm proud to call home."

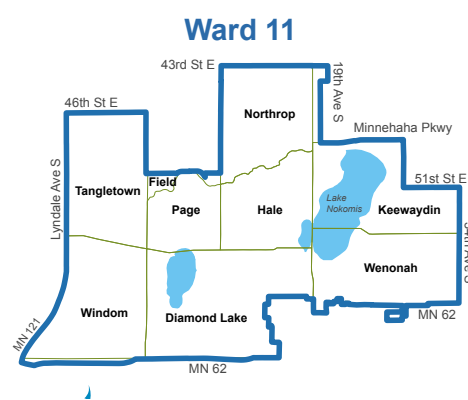
PRIORITIES

In announcing his campaign Whiting said, "I believe that our city's role is simple: to provide the mechanisms that empower our residents to live their best lives. To meet their needs so they can, in turn, give back to those around them."

He identifies five priorities on his website: a strong public safety ecosystem, safe and affordable housing for all, thriving public schools, supporting local businesses and building sustainable robust public transportation.

DeMello stresses the "need to keep the city livable through strong and sensible local governance and leadership" on her website and outlines four priorities: public safety, city services, housing, and supporting businesses.

DeMello thinks the current council and mayor are doing a good job of keeping people informed. "This commitment to communication is essential and worth continuing because transparency isn't just



good governance," she said, "it's what our community deserves when decisions are being made that affect our daily lives."

Whiting identified work on public safety as one thing the current elected group is doing right. "I can confidently say our city has taken great strides forward in developing a public safety ecosystem grounded in justice, dignity, and, above all, safety for all residents."

He added, "Our public safety ecosystem must evolve beyond traditional beliefs, and we must avoid binary thinking. A fully staffed and accountable police department is not mutually exclusive and is not only possible but required by both the settlement agreement and consent decree."

The working relationships of the elected officials is something they would like to see improve.

"I wish that the city council and mayor's office could do a better job of reaching across the aisle," said DeMello. "Our city would be better served if the city council and mayor's office could foster a more trusting, collaborative, and diplomatic relationship. In my professional experience, I've seen the powerful impact of intentional team-building and cross-functional collaboration training on organizational success. That's why I strongly support the idea of city leadership investing time, energy, and interdepartmental resources into quarterly training sessions and group activities – facilitated by a credible, nonpartisan organization – focused on bridging ideological divides and strengthening their ability to govern effectively together."

"I believe the current political climate at city hall has forced a move away from the foundational municipal basics that make Minneapolis such a great place to live," said Whiting. "The relationship between certain factions of the council and

the mayor has eroded over time and residents of Minneapolis are the ones that feel the brunt of those disagreements. Municipal governance should not be about choosing sides, it should be about delivering results. Most of our city's biggest challenges, from public safety to housing and core service delivery, are not ideological. They are issues of strategy, accountability, and execution. Unfortunately, too much of our current discourse has become polarized, mirroring national politics in all the worst ways."

DECISION-MAKING

A city council member is expected to make hundreds of decisions every month, some with significant and long-term consequences.

Whiting said that "the ability to recognize the limits of your expertise and seek out the right input is essential to good decision-making."

He believes that city employees "are experts in their fields, and their input must be at the center of how we make decisions."

He said that he also knows "that no one person has or should be expected to know all things. That is why, in addition to relying on our internal city experts, I will always prioritize listening to residents of Ward 11. People know their neighborhoods, they live with the impact of the decisions of elected officials, so they should help shape those decisions."

"I take a rational, data-informed approach when faced with a difficult decision," said DeMello. "I gather relevant information, evaluate the most feasible options, and carefully weigh the costs and benefits to determine the best possible outcome. I'm a strong proponent of strategic tools like SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats) analysis, which help me anticipate potential impacts and make thoughtful, outcome-oriented choices."

In November 2025, Minneapolis voters will elect 13 city council members, three at-large park board commissioners, six district park board commissioners, two members of the board of estimate and taxation and one mayor.

TO REACH THE CANDIDATES

- Mariam DeMello
mariam.demello@outlook.com
- Jamison Whiting
Jamisonwhitingformpls@gmail.com

PARTY ENDORSEMENTS

In Democratic Farmer Labor party ward conventions for Wards 7, 8 and 13, Elizabeth Shaffer, Soren Stevenson and Linea Palmisano were endorsed in their respective city council races.

The Green Party met in April and endorsed Adam Schneider for at-large Park and Recreation Board commissioner.

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NEW PRESIDENT AT MCAD

Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) has appointed Gwendolyn Freed, PhD, as the institution's 20th president, effective June 1, 2025. She was selected by unanimous vote of the Board of Trustees, following a national search.

Dr. Freed brings a deep passion for art and design, and more than two decades of experience in higher education, the arts, and nonprofits. "As we look ahead to MCAD's sesquicentennial and beyond, I will be focused on our growth, sustainability, and flourishing," said Dr. Freed.

Freed teaches in the University of Minnesota's graduate program in Arts and Cultural Leadership, as well as at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. She holds a doctorate in Educational Policy and Administration from the University of Minnesota, and is an alumna of the Harvard Institute for Educational Management.

The annual art auction to raise money for scholarships at MCAD is set for May 30, 7-9:30 p.m.



CITY BRIEFS

NEW NICOLLET

The city has approved a framework for redevelopment of the 10 acres of land the city owns at the former Kmart site. It includes a new park and six parcels they plan to sell to provide up to 600 rental housing units, retail uses concentrated on Lake St. and Nicollet Ave., an indoor recreation space, a full-service grocery store, and 20-25 townhomes for homeownership. The first request for proposals could go out later this year focused on the southeast quadrant of the site that is next to the proposed park followed by parcel-by-parcel requests moving clockwise through the rest of the site over the next several years.

SOO LINE GARDEN

After voting to put The Mall Park project on hold last month, on May 7, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board approved reallocating \$275,000 from the project to the Soo Line Community Gardens where gardening has halted due to soil contamination including include diesel range petroleum and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons likely left by the by railroads and grain elevators that previously used the land. The plan for the garden includes new accessible paths to the Midtown Greenway and will need additional funding.

PARTY ENDORSEMENTS

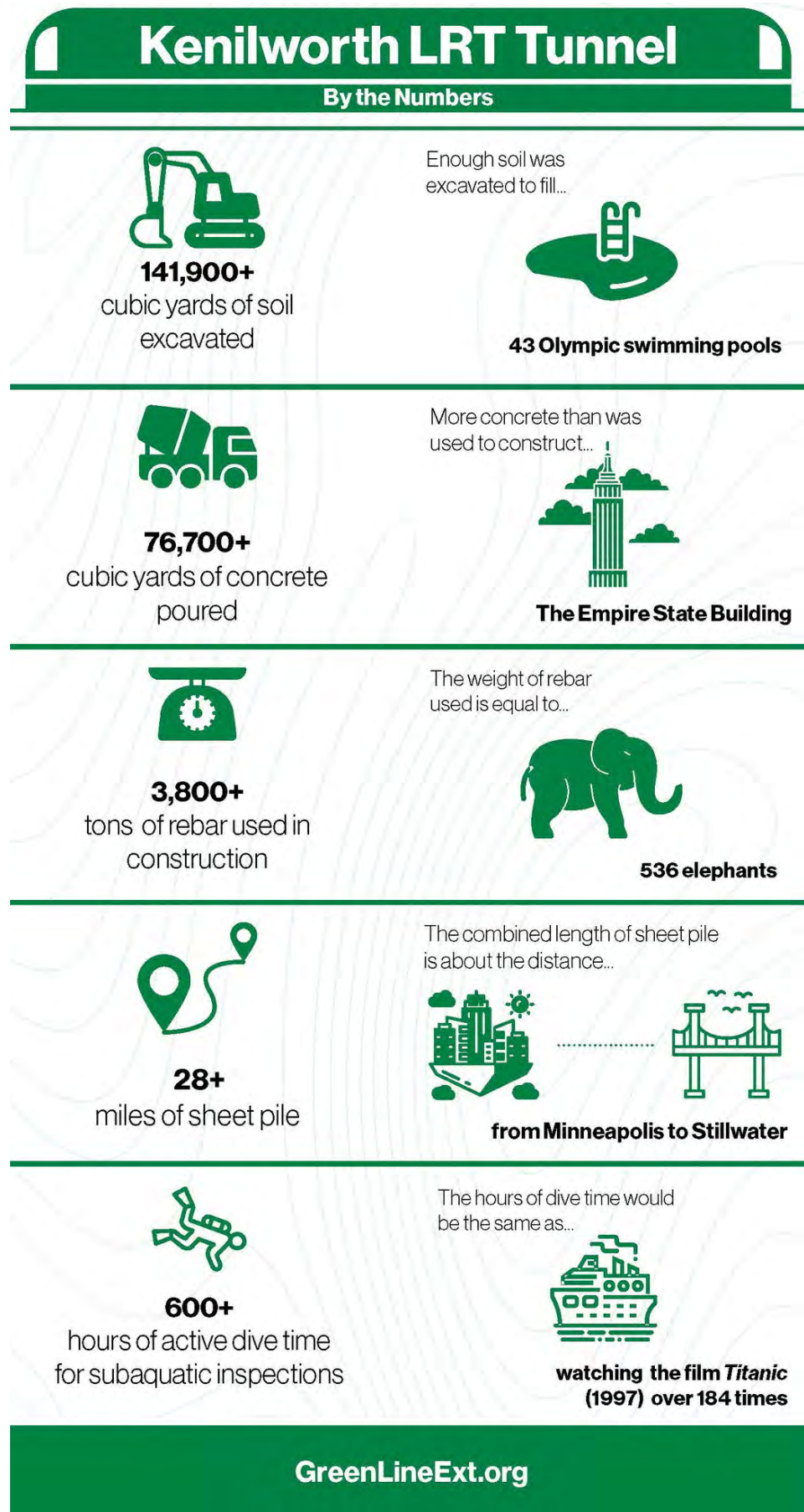
In Democratic Farmer Labor party ward conventions for Wards 8 and 13, Soren Stevenson and Linea Palmisano were endorsed in their respective city council races. The Green Party met in April and endorsed Adam Schneider for at-large Park and Recreation Board commissioner.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

Minneapolis has received a 2025 Vision Zero for Youth U.S. Leadership Award from the National Center for Safe Routes to School for their work to eliminate serious injuries and deaths among children walking and biking.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Hennepin County is holding community collection events this summer where people can dispose of garden and household hazardous waste. Waste will be accepted on Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m.



to 3 p.m. June 27 and 28 at St. Louis Park Middle School and Aug. 8 and 9 at South High School.

SOUTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP

The city has authorized a contract of \$15,000 with the Longfellow Community Council for the Bryant, Central, Corcoran, Longfellow, Nokomis East, Powderhorn Park, Hale Page Diamond Lake, and Standish-Ericsson neighborhood organizations to explore shared services, staff, training, programming and fundraising.

IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES

The city council has authorized contracts of \$80,000 with Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, \$25,000 with the International Institute of Minnesota, \$70,000 with the Volunteer Lawyers Network, \$20,000 with the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, and \$80,000 with Advocates for Human Rights to support the continuation of immigration legal services through the end of the year.

CHARTER CHANGE

The city charter commission is proposing amending the city charter to reduce the number of appointments that the city council must approve from 11, as it is currently allowed, to seven. Under their latest proposal the mayor, who now also has to approve the 11 appointees, would take over sole appointing authority for the appointments of the city's commission of health, as well as directors of civil rights, regulatory services, and emergency management.

BOULEVARD GARDEN RULES

The city has published new rules since passage of ordinance amendments allowing edible plants, including shrubs, to be grown in the boulevard without a permit. They can be found at <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/resident-services/property-housing/housing/property-maintenance/boulevard-gardens/>

 Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

BACH SOCIETY SUMMER PARTY

Bach Society of Minnesota will conclude its 2024-2025 season with two engaging public events: a festive Summer Party on Monday, June 30, at Minneapolis Cider Company, followed by A Monarch's Journey, a family-friendly theatrical production with performances on July 24 and 26 at Phoenix Theater in Minneapolis. The organization's 2025-2026 season will be announced later this summer and will begin with performances in September. More at visit www.bachsocietymn.org.

CALL FOR ARTIST THROUGH JUNE 6

Calling all local artists, designers, and illustrators who love Minneapolis Parks. Applications are now open for the 11th annual Posters for Parks show, happening Saturday, Oct. 11 at Minnehaha Park. This event features limited-edition posters that benefit our parks – artists receive 50% of each sale, with remaining proceeds supporting the Minneapolis Parks Foundation's People for Parks Fund. The call for artists closes on Friday, June 6.

REMOVE BUCKTHORN FROM SANCTUARY

The Friends of Roberts Bird Sanctuary is hosting two volunteer days to remove buckthorn along the fence between the sanctuary and Lake Harriet Parkway on May 31 and June 7 from 9 a.m. to noon. The group will meet on the hillside across from the north beach.

FAKE MPLS PARKING APP STEALING DATA

Residents and visitors searching for the MPLS Parking app should look out for a scam posing as the legitimate app. This does not affect people already using the MPLS Parking app. When using a search engine to find the MPLS Parking app, some people are finding sponsored ads instead that mimic the logo and language used in the official app. If clicked, these ads lead to third-party websites unaffiliated with the city of Minneapolis. These fraudulent websites ask for a credit card to download and use the free app, exposing victims' card numbers and personal information. The city has taken action and reported four of these fraudulent advertisements to the search engine they're sponsored on. Download the true Minneapolis Parking app directly from your phone's app store.

CONCERT AT THE WOMEN'S CLUB

An All-Star Concert at The Women's Club of Minneapolis (410 Oak Grove Street) will benefit Involve MN and Project DIVA International on Wednesday, May 28. Club favorites Lori Dokken and Connie Evingson will present an evening of music. The 118-year-old Women's Club has recently announced that it plans to sell its six-story building, but will continue operating.

KINGFIELD PORCHFEST JUNE 12

The Kingfield PorchFest will be on Thursday, June 12.

SALVAGE CRAWL

During Hennepin County's month-long salvage crawl, learn how to reuse, repurpose, and discover new salvage locations around the city. The event runs May 1-31.

ANNIE YOUNG EXHIBITION

The Annie Young Exhibition 'blooming field of faith and hope' runs April 20 – June 14 at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, 519 Oak Grove Street.

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NEXT AD DEADLINE: Monday, June 9 | PUBLICATION: Thursday, June 19



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TOO GOOD TO GO GROWS FROM 40 TO 440 RESTAURANTS IN MINNEAPOLIS

People saving on food costs with use of mobile app

By Allie Johnson

With food costs on the rise, a mobile app gaining popularity in Minneapolis offers a way for consumers to get food that might otherwise go to waste at a steep discount.

Too Good To Go partners with restaurants, grocery stores, and other local businesses to help them sell surplus food. Users can purchase a bag of food through the app for a flat fee – typically between \$5 and \$10 – and have a window of time in which to pick it up. Everything on Too Good to Go is sold at one-third of the retail cost, and it is “perfectly good food,” said Sarah Soteroff, the head of public relations for Too Good To Go North America.

When Too Good To Go first launched in the Twin Cities in 2023, there were about 40 or so local businesses on board, according to Soteroff. As of February 2025, that number is now 440, with about 17,000 users in the metro area.



A customer at Gigi's Cafe holds her bag of day-old baked goods from the Too Good To Go app. (Photo submitted)

In Minneapolis, items sold on the app range from bags of pastries and produce to sushi rolls, full meals, and even a bottle or two of wine a liquor store may be struggling to sell. Businesses can also offer “sur-

prise bags,” which means users will not know exactly what they might be getting until they pick it up.

“Say something happens like you get a canceled order and you made a hundred extra muffins that day. [Businesses] can put those directly on the app,” Soteroff said.

Too Good To Go measures its impact by the number of bags sold, with each bag representing one meal that was saved from a landfill. To date, over 400 million meals have been saved through Too Good To Go, with over 104,000 saved in Minneapolis alone, Soteroff said.

At Gigi's Cafe on 36th Street, manager Laura Stigen uses the Too Good To Go app to sell day-old baked goods. She lists bags for \$6 and each contains exactly six pastries – an \$18 value, said Stigen, although exactly what you get depends on what was leftover at the end of the previous day, if anything. Gigi's keeps \$5 of every sale through the app, with the remaining \$1 going to Too Good To Go, according to Stigen.

Gigi's has been partnering with Too Good To Go since it launched. Stigen said Gigi's always strives to be a low to no waste establishment. Before joining the

app, the cafe would donate leftover bakery items – and still does. But she saw the app as an opportunity to reach new customers.

“We were looking for ways to get new people through the building,” she said. “I was like, how can we reach a larger network and get new folks into our space?”

But actually securing a bag on Too Good To Go is no easy feat. Most days, Gigi's has only one bag for sale, and it typically gets snapped up quickly, Stigen said. Depending on when you check the app, pickings might be slim with many popular bags already sold out.

If you are struggling to find available bags near you, Soteroff recommends familiarizing yourself with when certain businesses typically list items and checking the app around that time.

Soteroff said they are always encouraging more restaurants and stores in Minneapolis to start using Too Good to Go. But the low inventory could also mean businesses are getting better about reducing the amount of surplus food they have, which is a good thing, she said.

“Our goal is to get every bag that is put on the app to be sold because if it doesn't that means we're actually contributing to more food waste,” she said.

MEET FI Q DIAZ

View exhibit by Uptown artist at La La Ice Cream

By Tesha M. Christensen

Uptown artist Filis Q. Diaz just wrapped up a show at Queermunity (3036 Hennepin Ave.) and opened an exhibit down the street at La La Ice Cream (3146 Hennepin Ave.)

“I love this part of the city,” said Diaz, who exhibits as Fi Q Diaz. “I found my home here. My community is centered around where I work, The Lowry. I've had my work displayed at local shops. I also host art nights with my artist friends from the neighborhood.”

What are your first memories of creating art? How old were you and what was it?

Diaz: My first memory of drawing was creating a romantic comic when I was 15 years old. I remember working on it for weeks, pages and pages colored with



Filis Q. Diaz or Fi Q Diaz wraps up her show at Queermunity on April 28 and opened a new exhibit down the street at La La Ice Cream. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

markers and crayons. I still remember how embarrassed I felt when my mom found it. I don't know what ever happened to that comic but I wish I had kept it.

When did you first think of yourself as an artist and what has that journey looked like for you?

Diaz: It was a difficult journey at first to accept myself as an artist, to deal with impostor syndrome, and to constantly compare my work to that of other artists,

feeling that my illustrations weren't good enough or appealing. It was hard for me to put my paintings up for sale and let them go.

What helped me move past that was the connection people express when they resonate with my art – when they smile or relate it to moments in their own lives. For me, as an artist that means everything. I create with my hands and my paints mirrors of my memories, in which others can

see reflections of themselves.

What do you hope people get from your art?

Diaz: Joy. I hope people find joy in my art.

What mediums do you use?

Diaz: I use acrylic gouache and watercolor when working on paper surfaces. I've also started drawing on wood, which I often find at second-hand stores and after a simple treatment, it becomes a great surface to work on.

Please talk about how the Queermunity show came about, what you appreciate about it, and what viewers commented on when viewing your art.

Diaz: The exhibition at Queermunity happened when, at the end of winter, I was looking for a place to show my art. I had too many finished paintings piled in a corner of my studio, and it felt like they were begging me to take them out. So, I grabbed a few and started asking around at local businesses in the neighborhood to see if I could display them there. Queermunity opened its doors to me right away – Hilary Otey was very excited about my proposal, and that's how it all began.

The exhibition was organized with the help of Kyra Crawford, who was an excellent host and guide for me. I'm so grateful for this opportunity, the visibility they gave my art was incredible, and they made me feel very lucky.

Where can people learn more?

Check Instagram as @Fipiace or on my website www.fipiace.com.





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