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Wilder CEO has done a lot of living

By JAN WILLMS

She is young, but she has done a lot of living. That is how MayKao Y. Hang, the President and CEO of the Amherst Wilder Foundation in St. Paul, describes herself. At 38, she is the first woman and the first person of a minority race to serve in this position, which she took over in June 2010. She had previously served as the Foundation's Director of Childhood and Family Services.

Hang's life began in Laos, and as a very young child she experienced the chaos of trying to flee a country torn by the ravages of war. Her father had been a teacher and was separated from his wife and three daughters.

"We were betrayed at the border and shot at by soldiers," Hang recalled. "We were saved by a village of lepers. They had no reason to help us, but they did."

Hang, her mother and sisters stayed in the leper village for a number of weeks. An uncle who was with them was finally able to get her dad. The family lived in a refugee camp for a year before arriving in Milwaukee when Hang was around six.

"Two moms in Wisconsin had formed a volunteer organization to help resettle kids from Southeast Asia," she said. "My family was the second one they helped resettle. We lived in Milwaukee two years, and then a friend of my dad's told us St. Paul was a good place to live. We moved here, and I grew up in the North End of St. Paul. I went to Como Park Senior High and swam at Lake McCarron. I have good memories of living in St. Paul."

Hang continued her education at Brown University in Rhode Island, where she received a B.A. in psychology. She earned her M.A. in public affairs from the University of Minnesota's



At 38, MayKao Hang is the first woman and the first person of a minority race to serve as CEO and president of the Wilder Foundation, which she took over in June 2010.

Humphrey Institute and is currently a doctoral candidate in public administration at Hamline University.

Hang said her wide range of life experiences has anchored her and fits in well with the Wilder Foundation's goals.

"I think I have a fundamental belief in investing in human beings as people," she said. "For kids and individuals who are vulnerable, I think with the right type of adjustments we can change the trajectory."

Hang said much of her life

has been changed by complete strangers, whether the lepers in Laos who helped her and her family or the unknown individual who paid for her college education. She said that Wilder helps the poorest community of greater St. Paul, regardless of background, gender or beliefs. "My professional work is in complete alignment with my personal values," she said.

She said Wilder offers services for all ages.

"We have three focus areas and aspirations," Hang said. "We

work with older adults, to make sure they have what they need to maximize their quality of life. We work with children and families, making sure they have what they need to reach their full potential. And we work with community research and leadership, creating solutions to address vital community issues."

As an example, Hang points to the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood Initiative that carves out city blocks where children can be successful in school from cradle to career. She said this program knits together resources in the community. It is led by Hamilton Bell, a school principal from North End School on special assignment.

"This was an idea at the federal level," Hang said. "In St. Paul, Wilder has been engaged in school reform efforts for 14 years." She also cited the Achievement Plus program at North End as a community school model used at various elementary schools.

"Our efforts at working on education and partnership with others in the community is helping to lower the achievement gap," Hang related. She said Dayton's Bluff elementary is the most successful in this area, having had no achievement gap for the past ten years, regardless of student turnover or economic background. She emphasized that Wilder is not doing all the work, but is a community support partner.

Hang said that the recent economic downturn has made it a very difficult time for people in need, and for the organizations that serve them.

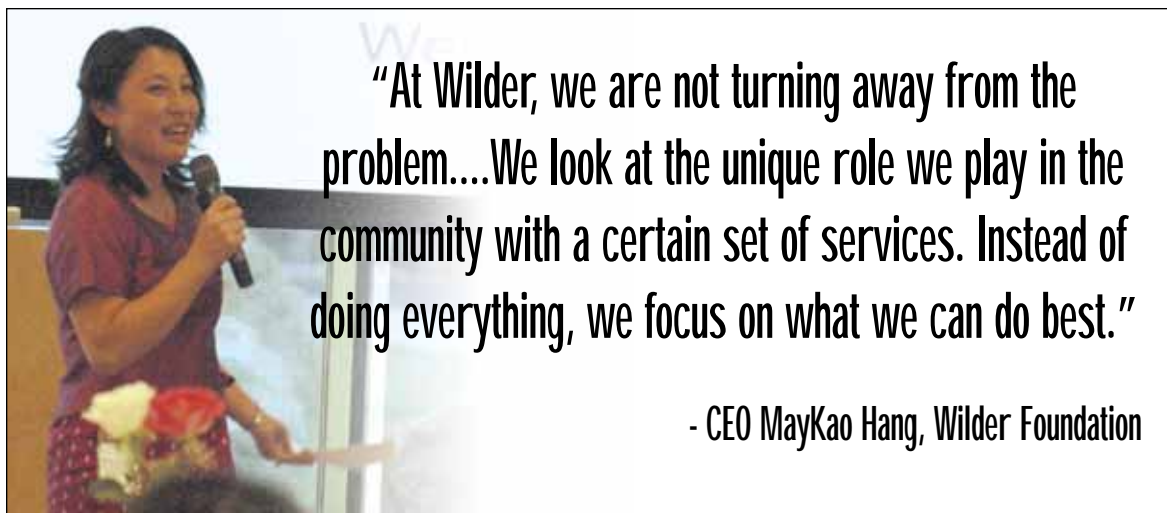
"At Wilder, we are not turning away from the problem," she said. "We are addressing it. We look at the unique role we play in the community with a certain set of services. Instead of doing everything, we focus on what we can do best."

Hang said that 40 years ago, affordable housing property management was something Wilder did, and only Wilder was doing it. "Today, other organizations also do this," she said. "We would transition that task to others, keeping what we consider a unique competency and support services. We provide family supportive housing. We are just reorganizing and in the middle of a two-year transition process."

As to what the new Minnesota government will bring,

"At Wilder, we are not turning away from the problem....We look at the unique role we play in the community with a certain set of services. Instead of doing everything, we focus on what we can do best."

- CEO MayKao Hang, Wilder Foundation



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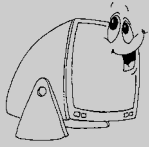
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Monitor in a Minute

Rice, Maryland work moves ahead

The reconstruction of the Rice Street and Maryland Avenue intersection can move ahead, with city and county approvals of the construction agreement. The agreement was finalized in December.

The busy intersection will be rebuilt this year. Both Rice and Maryland are classified as county-state aid highways and that requires the county and city to work together on the needed improvements. The project costs that will be shared by the city and county total about \$1.8 million, with the bulk of that amount for the right-of-way acquisition itself.

The project has been on the drawing boards for the past several years as the intersection itself is very heavily used. City and county public works studies indicate that it is feasible to rebuild the intersection. Ramsey County is responsible for preparation of the necessary designs, plans, specifications, estimates, proposals and approvals in accordance with funding requirements to take bids for the project and will incorporate agreed-upon city-prepared items into the plans and specifications. The city is making input in the areas relating to street lighting, traffic signals, traffic signing, and pavement markings.

The project has required acquiring land for right-of-way and for temporary slope and construction easements.

The project is eligible for reimbursement with federal funding and is also eligible for county-state aid dollars.

The work will include widening Maryland Avenue to provide for east-west left turn lanes at Rice Street and reconstructing the

existing traffic signal to provide east-west left turn phasing. New sidewalks will be placed on each side of Maryland Avenue.

Coalition honored by federal EPA

A local coalition of groups that pushed for Central Corridor light rail transit stops at Hamline, Victoria and Western was honored December 15 by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA gave the Transportation Equity/Stops for Us Coalition one of five 2010 National Achievement Awards in Environmental Justice.

Other winners were from California, Puerto Rico and Oregon.

The local coalition was honored for its efforts to form a broad-based partnership to secure the construction of the three new light rail transit stations, which will provide access for the transit dependent communities of east University Avenue and connect residents to housing, jobs, education, and the many amenities located throughout the Twin Cities metropolitan region.

Partners include Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Asian Economic Development Association, Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Community Stabilization Project, District Councils Collaborative, Got Voice, Got Power!, ISAIAH, Jewish Community Action, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Transit for Livable Communities and UFCW Local 789.

The EPA awards honor coalitions that take part in environmental justice efforts. The EPA noted in a press release that construction of the three light rail transit stations will directly benefit the 8,331 people who live within a quarter mile of the sta-

tions (81% minority; average median household income for homes near the three stations is \$32,000). The coalition worked extensively to influence public officials; research station spacing; map demographics; participate in and leverage to the fullest extent possible the National Environmental Policy Act process; draft state legislation; monitor public meetings; testify at public hearings; and implement a media strategy.

In a press release announcing the award, the coalition noted that while the award is an indication of the group's success, there are still environmental justice issues to be resolved along Central Corridor. The coalition wants to help small businesses survive, preserve an adequate supply of affordable housing, and enable low- and fixed-income residents to stay in their neighborhoods.

In the coming weeks, the Stops for Us coalition will be working with the EPA and other community and local government partners to plan a formal award ceremony in the Twin Cities in 2011. For more information about the Stops for Us campaign, links to web sites of coalition partners and the Environmental Protection Agency's Awards Program, please go to: www.dcc-stpaul-mpls.org.

Business operations can continue

A Pierce Butler Route shipping business can continue to operate but only if it meets several conditions. The St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) has decided. One of those conditions is for a property purchase to be completed by January 31.

The BZA December 18 vote allows Todd Nimmo to continue to operate the business. Nimmo

and city officials have differed as to whether or not the business at 733 Pierce Butler Route is indeed a motor freight terminal. The business, Rail Transfer Inc., ships products including grain and wood. City staff said the property wasn't properly zoned for the use because operations took place outside.

Nimmo met with District 7 to discuss the operation this fall. He has also met with city staff and the BZA. He had appealed a decision of the city's zoning administrator to the BZA.

The BZA voted to deny the appeal but suspended that decision. If Nimmo meets a number of conditions and agreed-upon dates he can continue to operate.

Nimmo plans to purchase part of the property where the business is operating, and continue to lease the rest. The closing must be reached by January 31. He must submit a new site plan to the city by February 15 and receive city site plan approval by April 15. He must then get a building permit and start construction of a new building by April 30. The new building has to have a certificate of occupancy by August 31 and all outside transfer of grain must cease by that date.

If those deadlines aren't met the city can then take steps to shut down the operation. Nimmo told the BZA he can meet the deadlines and is eager to move his business indoors as quickly as possible. Some Frogtown residents have complained about grain odors from the business.

Freeway plan public hearing set

A Minnesota Department of Transportation (MN/DOT) plan to rehabilitate Interstate 94 and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to be remembered Jan. 18 at Hamline University

Hamline University invites the public to a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration on Tuesday, January 18 at 4 p.m. in Sundin Music Hall (1531 Hewitt Ave.). This year's program will focus on the 55-year anniversary of Rosa Parks' inspirational act of civil disobedience, the emerging leadership of Dr. King, Jr., and the lasting effects of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The event is free and open to everyone.

Hamline University President, Dr. Linda Hanson will speak at the commemoration, as will students, faculty, and staff members. There will also be musical selections by the Hamline University Gospel Choir, audio

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

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Planning Commission OKs plans for Hamline U's new Student Center

By JANE MCCLURE

Hamline University's new student center is ready for a spring construction start, with approvals from the St. Paul Planning Commission January 7. The commission OK'd a modification to the university's conditional use permit and a variance for driveway egress. The commission's Zoning Committee had recommended approval on a 6-1 vote December 30.

The Planning Commission decision is final unless it is appealed to the St. Paul City Council within 10 days. But with no public opposition, an appeal appears to be unlikely.

The new University Center facility will be located at the northeast corner of Snelling and Englewood avenues. Construction will start in mid-March, with completion in time for the beginning of the 2012-2013 academic year.

The new building will be three stories tall, with 70,850 square feet of space. It will include two levels of underground parking, holding about 110 spaces.

"This is a facility that is sorely needed by Hamline University," said Hamline University Vice President for Finance Doug Anderson. Hamline lacks adequate student center space as its current facilities date from the 1960s.

The project has the support of Hamline Midway Coalition, which recommended approval in December. No one appeared at a December 30 Planning Commission Zoning Committee public hearing to speak against the project. Hamline has hosted four community meetings to review the plans and seek input.

The building will be set back about 25 feet from Snelling and almost 36 feet from Englewood. The permit currently requires a minimum 50-foot setback, which had to be modified by the Plan-



Above, an artist's rendering of what Hamline University's new student center will look like. The building, which was approved by the Planning Commission January 7, will be ready for a spring construction start. (Image courtesy of Hamline University)

ning Commission. Hamline University officials said the modification is needed because building within the required setback doesn't leave enough space for the new facility.

The variance is for off-street loading and unloading requirements. The city prohibits truck maneuvering for deliveries in the public right-of-way. Trucks delivering food to Sorin Hall food service will be delivering to the new University Center but will need to back in to make the deliveries. There will be about half a dozen large trucks coming in each week, with a few smaller trucks. That is similar to the numbers currently delivering to Sorin Hall.

St. Paul public Works has reviewed the variance request and

has no objections, according to city staff.

Like all of St. Paul's colleges and universities, Hamline's growth and development is regulated through a conditional use permit. Hamline's permit was originally granted in 1986 and has been modified in 1994 and 1997. The permits are used by the city to regulate campus boundaries, monitor enrollment levels and regulate the number of off-street parking spaces on-campus. The permits also set heights and setbacks for new buildings and other facilities.

Hamline's new University Center will provide office and meeting space, food service, gathering areas and limited retail space. It will replace space that is currently in Sorin Hall and the

Bush Student Center. A coffee shop, meeting space and gathering space would be on the first level, with food service on the second level and additional meeting, office and meditation space on the third level. The building will be about 45 feet tall.

The building will be built to meet LEED standards for the LEED silver qualification, with

environmentally sustainable design features including solar panels and permeable paving. McGough Construction is overseeing construction.

Anderson said university officials hope that the building will not only be a "living room" for the campus, it will also be an anchor for future redevelopment along Snelling Avenue. Hamline already owns much of the block south of the student center site.

Planning Commission members had questions about Hamline's long-term plans, and whether or not the variance was needed. Commissioner Gaius Nelson, who cast the lone Zoning Committee vote against the project, saying the building could be designed in a way that wouldn't require delivery vehicles to back in.

Most questions centered on the university's 20-year plan, which calls for eventually removing Sorin hall and creating a north-south open area or mall south to Minnehaha Avenue. Anderson said that still is in the plans but is a long ways off. The 20-year plan was approved by the university in 2008.

Other commissioners asked about building setbacks around the campus. Anderson aid the setbacks vary from 50 feet for some structures to no setback for Hutton and Walker. Sorin Hall is about 44 feet back from Englewood. Many of Hamline's buildings were erected before the setback and other permit requirements were put into place.

Wilder CEO

Continued from page 1

with changes in both the legislature and governor's office, Hang said it is really hard to tell what the new year will bring.

"Gov. Dayton is just putting together priorities," she said. "It is a long time from policy to implementation, but we will be affected. We will just have to wait and see what happens. It has not been the best climate for a very long time."

Hang said she tries to do a very value-based and mission-oriented job. She feels her position at Wilder offers a great opportunity to make a difference in the community. She realizes that her selection as CEO is an historic moment for women in general. "If, in the process (of doing my job), I'm blazing a trail, that's great," she said.

She said that right now she faces a lot of transition work and future-oriented tasks.



Hang feels her position at Wilder offers a great opportunity to make a difference in the community.

"There's already a lot happening at Wilder," she said. "The Promise program is a pretty big deal, and we are renovating one of our properties at 650 Marshall to a center for aging." She said Wilder has received a grant from the Schultz Foundation to help

consolidate its aging services.

As Hang looks toward the future of her work with Wilder, she also takes some time to reflect on her past and how her experiences have affected her.

"My parents taught me that just because the world tells you that you can't, it doesn't mean that you can't," she said. "An important life lesson is to never let others define who you are. There is a great sense of inspiration and hope living in America. You can become whatever you want to be. Take the opportunities life has given you and that can be a great contribution to society."

Hang said her mother was a woman who never had the opportunity to go to school.

"If she had been born in the United States, she said she would have been a very different person," Hang recalled. "But even without any education, she always made sure we sat down and did our homework. We learned so many lessons about overcoming obstacles."

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University Avenue property owners targeted for rezoning hope for Planning Commission reprieve

By JANE MCCLURE

Industrial property owners targeted for rezoning along the Central Corridor light rail line are hoping their pleas are heard by the St. Paul Planning Commission. The commission will continue reviewing a sweeping set of zoning recommendations in January, with the goal of voting February 4 and sending the proposals on to the St. Paul City Council.

More than 30 property owners and representatives attended the Planning Commission's December 3 public hearing to discuss recommendations for their specific properties. That was fewer than the 100 people who showed up for a November hearing to speak generally to the changes.

Several people who attended the December 3 hearing spoke for retaining industrial land and not rezoning it for traditional neighborhoods or restricted light industrial use, as is proposed. City staff proposed numerous zoning changes all along University Av-



More than 30 property owners and representatives attended the Planning Commission's December 3 public hearing to discuss recommendations for their specific properties.

enue and into the neighborhoods north and south, to promote transit-oriented, denser development.

Many protests are coming out of the West Midway, where indus-

trial land north and south of University Avenue is proposed for rezoning to TN status. Both the Midway and St. Paul Area Chambers of Commerce, the University Av-

enue Betterment Association (UABA) spoke for retaining current industrial zoning.

Several people spoke December 3 about concerns tied to 620 Pelham Boulevard. Long the site of Overnight Express, the trucking firm's recent closure opened 5.2 acres for redevelopment.

The St. Paul Port Authority bought the land several months ago, said Lorrie Louder, the Port's director of business and intergovernmental relations. Old structures were knocked and site cleanup got underway. Veteran Twin Cities developer John Allen expressed interest in a \$5 million, multi-tenant light industrial facility at the site.

Redevelopment could have generated as many as 150 new jobs and higher property taxes than were generated by Overnight Express, Louder said. But with a city staff recommendation to rezone the site for traditional neighborhoods use, that proposal is on hold.

"This site is significantly south of University Avenue," Louder said. It is west of the Rock-Tenn paper recycling plant and south of a railroad line. She said it should remain industrial and serve as a buffer between industrial and commercial uses.

Attorney Neil Polstein spoke for Allen. He said the planned 6,000 square foot office-warehouse would be a good addition for the neighborhood. He said the development cannot be built with the proposed zoning changes and the current interim zoning overlay district. "It's that simple," Polstein said his client didn't know about the restrictions when he began looking at the site.

Neighbors of the Pelham site also want to see an industrial use there, including Rock-Tenn. "We employ 475 people in good paying jobs," said Robert Carpenter. He was worked at Rock-Tenn for 30 years. The plant has been in the Midway for more than a century and wants to remain. While Rock-Tenn isn't proposed for rezoning in the Central Corridor study, Carpenter said it's important to have properties around it that serve as a buffer for industrial use.

Other property owners also objected. Attorney Marvin Liszt is representing Rihm Kenworth, a truck sales and service business that has been in the Midway for more than 70 years. The Rihm

family's property near the southwest corner of University and Cleveland is also proposed for rezoning to light industrial restricted use. That would make the business non-conforming, making it harder for the Rihms to seek financing or make other changes at their business.

"The change is precarious and creates a very dire situation for this business," Liszt said. The Rihms hold a Kenworth truck franchise, which requires them to make upgrades and changes as the parent company dictates. But that will be harder with a non-conforming use status.

"They (the Rihms) don't want to move," Liszt said. "They want to stay in this area."

"The west end of University Avenue is full of life and vitality because of the diversity of University Avenue," said Larry Peterson of UABA. He said industrial zoning should be retained to preserve the job base and keep industries here. Peterson said zoning changes need to be made slowly, so as not to drive businesses and industries out of the area and affect its vitality.

Peterson also said that the impacts of labeling small businesses all along University as non-conforming uses also must be carefully considered. He and several small business owners said rezoning and non-conforming use status would create hardship for small businesses that try to expand or renovate facilities in the future.

Small businesses, including auto repair businesses, also weighed in, as did small retailers. Michael Hafner owns 1790-1800 University, which includes an auto repair business and his furniture store. He will lose on-street parking because of light rail and sees rezoning as creating further hardship. "I really don't want to have my zoning changed and I don't know what to do," Hafner said.

But only one property owner, Wilder Foundation, expressed support for the changes – although a foundation representative did ask for parcels to be rezoned to the same TN classification for consistency. A representative of MICA, an interfaith group working on affordable housing issues, asked for policies that require new developments to include more affordable housing.

The planning Commission also heard from the manager of Uni-Dale Mall, who wasn't aware his property has already been rezoned for TN use. That worried some commissioners, including Anthony Fernandez.

"If we think that's the only property owner or manager completely in the dark about this we're fooling ourselves," Fernandez said.

Planning Administrator Donna Drummond said there have been a number of mailings about the proposed rezoning, as well as numerous meetings to discuss the proposed changes. Many property owners have contacted the city and staff was able to answer their questions. But some commissioners said that although mailings, meetings and other outreach efforts have been made, they are still concerned about the need to get the word out.

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New city budget benefits Como Park, skateboard park users and dogs

By JANE MCCLURE

Young visitors to Como Park, skateboard park users and dogs and their owners got early Christmas presents when the St. Paul City Council adopted the 2011 city budget December 15. But neighborhood commercial districts looking for help with curbside snow removal in 2011 may be shoveling and hauling away their own extra snow and ice. That's because the city overspent its 2010 snow removal budget by about \$1 million and may need those dollars to cover last year's costs.

The City Council was able to find \$3.298 million in funds that could be used to meet a number of small needs. The funds will come from Neighborhood and Cultural Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) programs budgets, some surplus right-of-way maintenance and solid waste dollars and other budgets.

Of the \$3.298 million, the council set aside \$1.279 million in case Local Government Aid (LGA) dollars are cut by the 2011 Minnesota Legislature. Those are flexible dollars, said Harris, and could

be used to cover city operating costs.

But other sources are dedicated funds, including surplus sales tax proceeds and right-of-way assessments. "Those can't be used for general operations or to bring down the property tax levy," said Ward Three Council Member Pat Harris. He was instrumental in pulling the funds together.

Harris worked for several weeks on the budget plan and brought it to the council's budget review committee December 8. His goal was to find funding for needs that weren't included in the 2011 budget, due to past cuts or lack of funding.

But one of those goals may not be met. During the budget review process, Harris and Ward Six Council Member Dan Bostrom pushed for funds to clean up curbside snow piles in some of the city's neighborhood commercial districts. The snow prevents business patrons from parking and getting out of their vehicles to reach neighborhood businesses. The city used to budget about \$250,000 per year for that purpose

but cut the allocation several years ago due to tight finances. Council members brought in lists of potential snow removal locations, which would have totaled more than \$500,000 citywide. That list was pared to about \$200,000.

The council has set aside \$207,000 for neighborhood commercial district snow removal and another \$43,000 for snow emergency purposes but those funds may be needed to cover 2010 snow removal costs, said Council President Kathy Lantry.

Of the other dedicated funding sources, the largest amount is \$1.156 million in Neighborhood STAR dollars. These can only be used for brick-and-mortar projects. The council allocated \$600,000 for the year-round Neighborhood STAR program, which provides funds for programs that don't compete in the regular grant and loan cycle. The council also allocated \$600,000 to the Como Park children's play area, \$350,000 to improvements to the Front skateboard park and \$106,251 to the downtown children's play area. If the money isn't needed to balance

the 2011 budget, the downtown play area would receive an additional \$93,749 from other sources.

A number of other projects are penciled in, if funds aren't needed in 2011 to cover a shortfall. At the request of Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark, \$140,797 was set aside for funds to study and site an off-leash dog park somewhere in Ward Four. The current draft parks system plan suggests an off-leash park in Hamline-Midway's Newell Park but Stark said that site is small and doesn't lend itself well to off-leash use. The use of Newell Park as an off-leash dog park had drawn a very mixed reaction from neighborhood residents.

The council would also revive the scaled-down Civic Organizations Partnership Program (COPP), with \$79,000. Once a competitive program to fund a number of community services, COPP has been dramatically cut back due to tight budgets. Most council members give some of all of their COPP dollars to supplement district councils' budgets.

Another \$75,000 is proposed

for the start of instant runoff voting. The council is working on ways to implement that new voting system.

Other flexible funds eyed for specific projects include Stinson Park play area improvements (\$250,000), improvements at Northwest Como Recreation Center (\$100,000), and new chillers for the North Dale refrigerated ice rink (\$115,000). Stinson Park is a small neighborhood park in the North End.

Another \$250,000 is earmarked to cover Fire Department costs from having firefighters on military leaves.

The council will use \$155,749 in Cultural STAR dollars to supplement the St. Paul Public Libraries' children's materials collections. Another \$59,000 in solid waste dollars will be used for summer litter pickup.

Neighborhood STAR dollars previously allocated for city capital projects will go to new laptop computers in police squad cars (\$245,000) and for license plate recognition readers used for parking enforcement (\$153,046.)

Traffic calming a goal of many in our area of St. Paul

By JANE MCCLURE

When the 2012-2013 Long-Range Capital Improvement budget requests arrived at City Hall January 10, it's safe to assume that the desires from area neighborhoods included improvements for traffic calming, including medians, traffic circles and diverters. Merriam Park residents, for example, are seeking to continue extension of the Marshall Avenue median.

Another group of property owners wanting median improvements is in the Energy Park Drive area, where existing medians could be expanded and beautified with plantings. St. Paul Public Works and property owners are discussing a private maintenance agreement for a median there. That is likely to be done outside of the CIB process and could be implemented in the months ahead.

Traffic calming is a goal for many areas and it's not surprising that neighborhood residents and business owners would want the medians, circles and diverters to be attractive. But any requests to city officials for more than a concrete median may mean showing some green to get some green.

Private agreements to maintain new street medians are the future policy in St. Paul, according to St. Paul Public Works Director Rich Lallier and City Engineer John Maczko. Median costs were one of many issues City Council members debated before they approved the 2011 budget last month.

"I think we have to ask that private parties maintain planted medians if there is a desire for those," said Ward Three Council Member Pat Harris. "The city just cannot afford it."

The city has planted medians on Summit Avenue, Highland

Parkway, Mount Curve Boulevard, Edgcombe Road, Lexington Parkway, Marshall Avenue, Midway Parkway, Wheelock Parkway, Johnson Parkway, Furness Parkway, Kellogg Boulevard and Raymond Avenue.

There's no real clear way to track how much the city spends to maintain existing planted medians. One difficulty in tracking how much the city spends on me-

dian maintenance is that it is overseen by both Public Works and Parks and Recreation. The city's right-of-way maintenance fund shows a \$50,000 breakout for some median work. But for

medians that are planted with grass and trees, and only require mowing, the city doesn't separate out those gas costs.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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Thoemke family fulfills long-time dream of owning sub shop, JMT Subs, in North End

By DEBORAH BROTZ

When North End resident Joe Thoemke, 30, was in high school and growing up in the North End, he worked as a manager at McDonald's on Rice Street and dreamed about owning his own restaurant. His dream came true on Dec. 27 when he opened JMT Subs, at 1046 Rice Street.

The business, which offers subs and soups, is a partnership between Thoemke and his parents, John and Mary Thoemke. He graduated from the University of St. Thomas with a bachelor's degree in business administration concentrating in entrepreneurship.

"I always wanted to run my own business," said Thoemke. "I have a degree in entrepreneurship so the time seemed right to do something like this on Rice Street."

Thoemke decided to locate his business in the space previously occupied by Dar's Double Scoop Ice Cream Shoppe, which moved next door to 1048 Rice St. While owner Kevin Barrett will continue to sell ice cream, he will be adding pizza and hot dogs to his menu.

"Hopefully, we can take advantage of the existing clientele Dar's has," said Thoemke. "We plan to cross market between the different businesses."

In Thoemke's eyes, the recession has had a positive impact on his decision to start a business.

"It's actually helped out," he said. "The equipment is cheaper. If you can make a business work in a recession, then you will be successful when the economy comes back. If you start during a slow time, then you're positioned to grow."



New sub shop JMT Subs, 1046 Rice Street, is definitely a family affair. From left to right, Mary Thoemke, Joe Thoemke, John Thoemke, and grandson Felix Meyer. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

Although Thoemke's parents helped get the business ready to open, the day-to-day running of the business will be Thoemke's responsibility. He also has two part-time employees, a niece and a nephew.

"Dad helped build some of the stuff and helped coordinate different contractors," he said.

"We're on standby if he needs help," said John. "If an employee gets sick, we'll help out."

The bread Thoemke uses makes his subs unique.

"We're using Saint Agnes Baking Co. for bread," he said. "We're getting rave reviews about it. There's flexibility to what is being offered. It's build your own. Customers can decide what they want

on their sandwich."

Although Thoemke's sandwiches are all toasted, customers can have them plain, too. Soup is also on the menu.

"It goes with sandwiches," said Thoemke. "Sandwiches and soup go together. It's something warm for the winter. In the future, I'd like to switch to homemade. We rotate a different soup of the day. We have chili every day."

Having this restaurant is important to Thoemke.

"I've always wanted to do this," he said. "I knew since I was a senior in high school this is what I wanted to do. It's important to open a healthy option on Rice Street and support the community."

While both John and Mary are retired, they decided to start a business with their son, who is the 13th of 15 children.

"We like to keep busy," she said. "We knew it was a dream of his to start his own business. I think it's really important for the Rice Street community to have locally owned businesses and people who are invested in the community."

Living in the North End for 40 years, John and Mary have been involved in the North End community in a number of ways.

John, who is a retired electrician, was president of the North End Community Organization (NECO), the forerunner to the District 6 Planning Council, in the 1970s. More recently, he served as president of the District 6 Planning Council. He also served an interim term on the Saint Paul Board of Education.

Mary, who retired from Saint Paul Public Schools where she worked as Community and Parent Outreach Coordinator at Arlington High School, was also editor of the North End News and worked part time as an assistant to Ramsey County Commissioner Janice Rettman.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



The Thoemkes are particularly proud of the fact that they will be using Saint Agnes Baking Co. for their bread. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

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Budgets to support property tax levies in state of flux

By JANE MCCLURE

Adoption of the St. Paul, Ramsey County and St. Paul Public Schools property tax levies means St. Paul property owners know what their tax bills will be. But the budgets to support those levies are in a state of flux as state lawmakers eye a budget deficit and likely cuts to city, county and school aid from the state.

St. Paul City Council was the last group to adopt a 2011 levy, voting unanimously on a zero percent increase December 15. The Ramsey County Board and School Board adopted levy increases of 2.7 percent and 9 percent December 14. The School Board was the only group that trimmed its levy, down from 9.4 percent.

Elected officials note that balancing their budgets and protecting core services hasn't been easy. County Board Chair Victoria Reinhardt referred to the "trials and tribulations" of the county's budget process.

"It's an extremely challenging time for cities all over the country," said Ward Three Council Member Pat Harris. He said elected officials and city staff showed preference in keeping the city's levy flat while protecting services.

The city will levy \$94,609,211 in 2011 to support a \$531,560,672 budget. This represents a 0 percent increase over the dollar amount levied for 2010 operations. The city's levy increased 9 percent, 15.1 percent, and 8 percent over

the past three years.

The council also adopted numerous fees and charges, including right-of-way maintenances, water fees, storm and septic sewer fees and recycling fees. Most remained flat although water rates will go up 5.5 percent and a 3 percent fee increase has been added to street right-of-way charges to deal with emerald ash borer. The votes on all of the 2011 levies, fees and charges were unanimous.

That wasn't the case with the Ramsey County Board, which voted 6-1 December 14 on its 2011 budget and a 2.7 percent levy increase. The county will levy \$267,120,152 to support a \$590,014,814 budget. The county levied \$259,971,049 in 2010. Commissioner Janice Rettman cast the lone vote against the levy increase. She continues to be concerned about the impact of even a small levy hike on strapped taxpayers.

The School Board was considering a 9.4 percent levy increase, but trimmed that amount to 9 percent. The decrease of \$486,000 was made in response to concerns raised by citizens at a recent truth-in-taxation hearing. Much of the savings come from moving employees out of leased space more quickly than originally planned.

Board members and staff acknowledged that while the decrease wasn't a large amount, they are mindful of the property tax burden on district residents. The

school district will levy \$121,744,538 in 2011 for the 2011-2012 academic year. The district levied \$111,692,236 in 2010.

The county regional rail and city housing and redevelopment levies remained flat from 2010, at \$19,938,811 and \$3,178,148 respectively.

How the levies affect individual properties varies widely by type of property and by neighborhood. Some area home owners will see a levy increase,

even if their property values have remained flat or have increased only slightly. In other parts of the city where home values have fallen property owners will see decreases. Many commercial/industrial and residential property owners in the area also will see increases in 2011.

The levies cannot change once they are adopted. But city, county and school officials are nervously eyeing a more than \$6 billion state budget shortfall. All

three local units of government have been making contingency plans. In St. Paul, for example, all city departments have been told to make budget reduction plans in case of a state aid cut by the 2001 Minnesota Legislature. If that happens the city will have to launch a mid-year budget review and reduction process. That will also be true for Ramsey County. St. Paul Public Schools operate on a budget cycle that starts July 1.

Traffic

Continued from page 5

In some cases, medians are maintained by private parties or by volunteers. Volunteer median maintenance arrangements include the Kellogg Boulevard median and a small Smith Avenue median by High Bridge Park. Bloomington St. Paul maintains the Kellogg median. In many neighborhoods, including those in the Monitor area, property owners plant and maintain their neighborhood traffic circles.

In a few cases, planted medians are maintained by the city.

It is not just the cost of maintaining plantings that is an issue for the city. It is also a matter of time. According to Maczko, it is very difficult to keep shrubs, plants and trees alive in harsh conditions. Road sand and salt

take a toll, as does heat radiating off of pavement during the summer. Adequate water is another problem. "We've had very limited success with planted medians and they are hard to maintain," Maczko said.

One of the medians that has proven to be the most challenging is along Lexington Parkway. That median went in more than a decade ago. Because it is narrower than some of the other medians, plants, shrubs and trees are closer to road spray and take more of a hit from salt, sand and chemicals. Many of the plantings have had to be replaced over the years.

The Marshall median had a three-year maintenance agreement by its funders. That has ended and the costs will go into the city's right-of-way maintenance program. The Snelling median in Macalester-Groveland neighborhood, which was installed last fall,

has a long-term maintenance agreement. Macalester College has agreed to pick up those costs. Residents north on Snelling have expressed a desire to extend the green median but it's not likely there would be any one entity or group that could pick up and handle maintenance costs in the same way.

Maczko and Lallier told the City Council that the policy for volunteers, business or institutional maintenance on new medians needs to continue. Otherwise, the city's only option is to set up an assessment district for surrounding property owners to cover the cost, as is done for brick streets downtown and for special street improvement maintenance in some neighborhoods. But council members indicated there probably isn't a lot of appetite for property owners to pick up more costs.

Sub shop

Continued from page 6

"We love this community," she said. "We've been very hopeful things will get better on Rice Street. It's been through some hard times, the neighborhood and street itself. It's getting better. We want to be part of helping it get better."

"Our commitment has been there for 40 years," said John. "Ever since we moved to the North End we've been involved. Things are getting better. Opening the

shop will do more good."

Having this business with their son makes sense to John and Mary.

"It's important to Joe to have this business," said Mary. "It's important to this community to have open doors on Rice Street and occupied buildings."

"It's important to us to support our children no matter how old they are," added John.

Wanting to hang pictures of old Rice Street and North End and put quotes in a frame about what it was like to live on Rice Street 50 or 70 years ago, Mary feels the

restaurant with its orange and yellow modern décor and green chairs will give customers a sense of history from past to present.

"My hope is it gets off to a good start," she said. "I think it is. I hope it will become a gathering place for the community. We hope the idea of putting pictures on the walls will start discussions about what the old neighborhood was like. We want to put quotes on the walls about what people liked about the old neighborhood. I'm hoping it's here long term."

For information about JMT Subs, call (651) 487-SUBS (7827).



JMT Subs will be searching for old photos of Rice Street and the North End to hang on the walls to give customers an idea of what it was like to live on Rice Street 50 or 70 years ago. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

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New superintendent enacts changes in the district...

St. Paul Public Schools prepare for busy, bumpy ride in 2011

By JAN WILLMS

St. Paul Schools have not had an easy time of it this past year, with budget cuts and belt-tightening being the modus operandi. And despite Gov. Mark Dayton's good intentions, the next year does not promise to be much better. Indeed, the school district may have to adhere to Bette Davis' famous quote from *All About Eve*: "Fasten your seat belts. It's going to be a bumpy night."

Supt. Valeria Silva, who has just been in office for a year, said that many changes have taken place in the district to deal with the lack of financial resources, but she is very satisfied with the outcome of those changes. The closure and co-location of schools have been some primary adjustments the district has had to propose.

"Change is difficult," Silva said. "There is a lot of emotional attachment, particularly to a school building. Once we are through that process, making two schools into one was a very successful change for the North End and Franklin."

The two local elementary schools co-located this past year



The closure and co-location of schools have been some primary adjustments the district has had to propose.

and will merge into one school with one name at the beginning of the next academic year.

"When you see kids learning and happy, you see that change can be good," Silva said. She said

co-locating the schools made the best out of a situation and she would do it again, although she would prefer to spend more time on the process.

"The goal of the change with these schools was mixing the resources and budgets of two buildings to operate one building," Silva explained. She said it was an opportunity for the two schools to collaborate and work together.

"The other goal was to utilize space more effectively," she added. "The buildings were not fully being used, and we are making better usage of the square footage. We have been able to keep the students together as a group, and most of the adults they were used to still available." She said each site has developed and evolved into a new culture of a new school, a very positive thing.

As for Arlington, Silva said closing that school was one of the hardest things she had to do.

"I had to close the high school, and have it affect the least number of students," Silva said. She said there was an option for students who would be this year's seniors to stay at the site and graduate as Arlington Senior High graduates if there would have been enough who had signed up. However, that didn't happen and so those students went on to other high schools.

Washington Technology Magnet School took over the premises. At the end of last year, students across the district were able to choose Washington as an option.

"We now have a very successful 7th-10th grade," she said. "There are over 1,200 in that building; the population was at 500 before." An 11th grade class will be added next year, and 12th grade the following year.

"Arlington was our newest high school, very inviting," Silva said. "There was technology all over the site and it was welcoming and culturally appealing. We will continue with the BioSMART program that was in place." Silva was referring to a program that has its focus on medical and health sciences, engineering and technology as well as the busi

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

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Schools

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ness and marketing end of science and high tech companies. "BioSMART is still alive and living very well there," Silva said.

She said that one of the most invigorating moments for her in this transition happened last September celebrating the opening of Washington. "There were 500 students in the bleachers in the gym, all 7th graders, wearing yellow T-shirts citing the 'Pride of Washington'," Silva said. She said there were 9th and 10th graders in the gym who had taken a summer training course that had taught them how to be mentors to the 7th graders. She said teachers were also present, getting the kids excited.

"They were all working together, becoming part of a new culture, and it gave me goose bumps," Silva said. "It was a difficult time to make a decision, but we listened to the community. And the positive energy there made me feel like a million dollars. We had the largest number of 7th graders in one class in St. Paul."

Another recent change in the St. Paul School District has been the establishment of a sweet-free zone in the schools, although Silva said this has been building for several years.

"We were working on this when I was the English Language Learner (ELL) director six to seven years ago," she noted. "We have always tried to keep the sugar intake something we are aware of, implementing veggie and fruits as snacks. The last couple



Supt. Valeria Silva, who has just been in office for a year, said that many changes have taken place in the district to deal with the lack of financial resources, but she is very satisfied with the outcome of those changes.

years, you would see kids eating broccoli and cucumbers in school. We are trying to change the way students eat."

Silva said the district is trying to get away from raising money by food sales, instead selling things like wrapping paper. For a party, parents are asked what else they can bring besides cupcakes. She said parents have been asked to avoid snacks with high sodium and glucose levels.

Soft drinks have not been offered in the vending machines for the past several years, either, with milk, juice or water available instead.

It is important to note that the school is not outlawing or

putting a complete ban on sweets; there may be a celebration once a month when they are allowed.

"But we're educating students to pick healthier foods and become healthier adults," Silva said.

Silva cited another change, the summer graduation ceremony. "We're offering students many choices to make up graduation credits, and they can go to college in the fall." She said that for the first time last summer, students had a ceremony with cap and gown in the summer.

"I heard from three or four parents that these young adults decided to finish summer school

to experience graduation," Silva said.

Looking back on her first year, Silva reflected on some of her accomplishments. She said she was pleased with the summer graduation process. She also felt some major cuts had been done while still keeping the school system intact.

"I had to cut \$3.2 million in the first month," she said, "and my goal was not to affect the school. We made changes in our budgeting. We had to cut \$27.2 million by closing and co-locating schools. I cut \$2.3 million out of central office staff."

Silva said a good sign is that the schools have shown an in-

crease with 500 more students than projected. And the district has kept 75 per cent more than in the past.

Silva said she thinks there has been phenomenal work done with the unions. "We're striving more on working together and making decisions in a collaborative way," she said. She also said she has enjoyed working with the East Metro Integration District. "As a new superintendent working with 12 other superintendents, it has been very energizing," Silva said. "We have all been working together to figure out how to maximize our resources and minimize our costs."

Looking at the past year from a school board member's point of view, Keith Hardy said he has seen many changes in the school district as well. Since joining the board in January 2008, Hardy said four schools have been closed.

"Budget changes have caused us to lose many good staff members and teachers," he said. "Our instrumental music programs have undergone significant changes."

Hardy said he has so far been pleased with the new superintendent's performance. But he recognizes that many challenges lay ahead.

He expressed concern with the Adequate Yearly Progress, with the schools not meeting expectations for the second year in a row in math, reading and science scores.

"That is not acceptable," he said. He said the need for expectation of higher performances needs to come from families.

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Schools

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"We need more parents and guardians in attendance at school board meetings, holding the school district accountable," Hardy said. "I can't stress that enough."

Hardy said he realizes that charter and private schools have affected the District's enrollment numbers. "Families are looking for smaller class size or a specialized population in the school. We are up against that."

When asked about the ongoing achievement gap, Hardy

said he despised the term.

"It is a cop-out term," he said. "It is archaic and a misnomer. What we have in St. Paul Public Schools, in Minnesota and in the United States is an equity gap of expectation. We need our teachers, our administrative staff, our families and yes, our students, to believe that every student can have high academic achievement regardless of race, culture or economic standing."

"We need to set higher academic expectations for each student so that there is no gap between who achieves academically and who excels," Hardy said.

Hardy said he expects the

funding for the larger urban school districts of Minneapolis and St. Paul will be affected even more this coming year. "It's part of the platform the newly elected Republican leaders ran on," he said.

With her eye on the future, Silva said the big challenge will be budgeting.

"Education is a large portion of our state budget," she said. "I do believe those elected in general understand the need to keep education on the top of the agenda. We need to start looking at ways to challenge ourselves. The new people in the House and Senate will bring new perspectives, and there will

be things for them to learn, too. We all want what is best for our kids, and education is a priority for our state today to prepare for our future."

Silva said she was happy and excited to see the Governor pick Brenda Cassellius as Commissioner of Education.

"She has done many jobs, working with issues in the schools we work with every day," Silva said. "We have not had a true practitioner in that post for the past 20 years. She knows the struggles and challenges we are facing."

Those struggles and challenges have been a part of Silva's first year on the job, and are not

going to disappear in the upcoming year. But she seems convinced that the school district, working hand-in-hand with community partners and families, can overcome the lack of financial resources.

She said SPPS is working with the City of St. Paul and the mayor, making sure services are not duplicated but instead maximized. She has also been working with Dr. Douglas Reeve of the Leadership and Learning Center to assess the best educational practices in the district.

"We're moving from systems of schools to a school system," Silva said. "We're all marching to the same agenda."

St. Paul man pleads guilty to robbing Park Midway Bank

A 57-year-old St. Paul man pleaded guilty last week in federal court in St. Paul in connection with the August 4, 2010, armed robbery of the Park Midway Bank, on Como Avenue, in St. Paul. Robert Lee Russell, Jr., pleaded guilty to one count of armed bank robbery before United States District Court Judge Richard H. Kyle. Russell was indicted on September 9, 2010.

In his plea agreement, Russell admitted stealing \$1,457 from the bank and putting the life of another person in jeopardy by using a firearm during the robbery.

According to a law enforcement affidavit filed in the case, the bank was robbed at 2:30 p.m. The robber, later identified as Russell, walked into the building, pulling a mask down over his face and wav-

ing a handgun. After demanding and receiving money, he then ordered a teller to leave with him. The teller complied, but once outside, the robber fled alone. Immediately, a bank security guard ran to check on the teller. He then gave chase to the robber. During the chase, the robber reportedly fired his gun at least one time at the officer.

Two nearby Xcel Energy em-

ployees in a company truck observed the chase. They also saw the robber get into a Dodge Caravan. As they pulled along side the van, they, too, witnessed the robber holding a handgun. The van, however, then sped away.

A short time later, police spoke with the owner of the van. The owner reported that Russell had borrowed the van earlier in the


day. Officers also learned that Russell had purchased some clothes and a backpack at a Stillwater Wal-Mart immediately following the robbery. The officers subsequently recovered from that store two bait bills obtained by the robber during the heist.

Finally, just after midnight, the Wisconsin State Patrol reported responding to a motor vehicle crash involving the same van. At the scene of the accident, Russell was found and arrested for the bank robbery. An initial search of the van yielded \$1,361 in cash inside the recently purchased backpack.

For his crime, Russell faces a potential maximum penalty of 25 years in prison. Judge Kyle will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This case is the result of an investigation by the St. Paul Police Department, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Minnesota State Patrol, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, the Wisconsin State Patrol, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Dunne.

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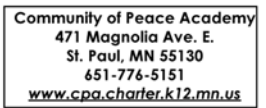


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Showcase/Open House - Thursday, February 17, 6 p.m. All are welcome. Merci!

City works to preserve legislative agenda

By JANE MCCLURE

When the 2011 Minnesota Legislature gavelled into session Jan. 4, preserving Local Government Aid (LGA) dollars became a primary focus for St. Paul city officials. But with a \$6.2 billion state deficit and major changes in House and Senate leadership, that could be easier said than done.

The St. Paul City Council wrapped up months of work by adopting its legislative agenda December 15. Ward Five Council Member Lee Helgen chairs the council's legislative committee. With a looming state budget deficit and changes in leadership, Helgen said it will be a challenging session.

"The entire landscape at the Capitol has changed," he said. With the House and Senate both under Republican majority, all of the committee leadership and structure of many committees have changed. St. Paul's entire legislative delegation is in the DFL minority and the city has lost relationships with committee leadership that it had in the past.

During legislative committee sessions this fall, council members talked about the need to work more collaboratively with groups the council may have butted heads with in the past. Council members also discussed the need to focus on protecting LGA and key initiatives, rather than going to the capitol with lengthy wish lists. There are just two bonding projects in the agenda. But some issues remain from past years, including a focus on creating jobs, protecting and improving transit, and dealing with the home foreclosure crisis.

A top priority is to push for changes to the current LGA formula, to restore previous cuts and reduce the year-to-year volatility of aid levels that cities receive. Changing the formula to factor in inflation is another focus for the city.

The city is also asking that state-imposed levy limits be removed and the state lawmakers do more to help local governments raise revenue. City Council members have differed in the specifics of doing that. Some



Ward Five Council Member Lee Helgen chairs the council's legislative committee.

ideas that have been debated include additional hospitality taxes and possible changes in the current half-cent sales tax.

Bonding requests have been pared back to two, but one could

have huge implications for the future of Midway Stadium. One request is the Lowertown Saints stadium and regional ballpark, dubbed the St. Paul Outdoor Recreation and Team Sports Initiative (SPORTS). The city is requesting \$25 million. If the project is funded it would mean the end of the Saints' use of Midway Stadium.

Funding for the long-awaited Asian Pacific Cultural Center, which would be part of the old Hamm's Brewery complex, is also request. The city is seeking \$9 million. Past allocations for this project have been vetoed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

The city is also supporting a number of other bonding requests, including District Energy's bid for \$9 million for expansion along University Avenue and Ramsey County's request for Union Depot dollars. The county is converting the old depot into a multi-modal transit hub.

The Central Corridor light rail project is again a part of the legislative agenda. The agenda calls the project and potential for

redevelopment along University Avenue "an undertaking of statewide significance that must leverage private investment and provide support for existing businesses in order to maximize job creation." The City Council is supporting programs to fund loans and grants to businesses along University Avenue during construction of Central Corridor. Another request is for more ability to use tax increment financing (TIFD) to support transit-oriented development projects, including projects along Central Corridor.

The city is supporting many efforts to retain jobs and create new ones, including support for more environmentally friendly or "green" manufacturing jobs, tax incentives for companies that hire and retain disadvantaged workers, more support for youth job programs and increasing funding for job search assistance, skills training, childcare, and related programs to help people find and retain employment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

Greetings To All



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Janice Rettman

Ramsey County Commissioner, District 3

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In Our Community

Creativity in Caregiving presented Feb. 8

"Creativity in Caregiving: Write, Sing and Dance Your Way Through Caregiving," will be addressed on Feb. 8 at 11:30 a.m. at 1415 Englewood Avenue. Persuasive research about health and the arts and ideas for how to engage in them to make aging or care giving more gratifying will be presented. A registered nurse will also be available to take blood pressures. Lunch is served from 11:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. and a free will donation is asked for the meal. Anyone who would like to come for just the presentation should arrive at 12:10 p.m.. Call the office of Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 to make reservations, or to request free transportation for medical appointments, errands or grocery shopping.

Joint Friendly Class begins Feb. 15

A free, eight week series of Joint Friendly Exercise Classes will be held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-3 p.m. at 1514 Englewood Ave. beginning Feb 15. Instructors have been trained by the MN Arthritis Foundation. Please call Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 for more information.



Elizabeth Lambrecht

Park Midway hires new SBA officer

Park Midway Bank, a \$250MM community bank in St. Paul has recently hired Elizabeth Lambrecht as Vice President - SBA Loans. Lambrecht has experience as a Commercial Banking Relationship Manager and holds a B.A. in both Accounting and Business Administration from Augsburg and a law degree from Hamline.

FREE lunchtime coffee concert series

Wednesday, February 2nd concert to feature a rare performance of Bartok's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion at Sundin Music Hall.

Patricia McPherson, Kim Craig, Oleg Levin, and Ivan Konev (piano), David Birrow and Adam Rappel (percussion) will perform Bartok and more.

The Saint Paul Conservatory of Music's Coffee Concert Series is a lunchtime musical performance series that has been offered since 2003. Concerts are presented on the first Wednesday of each month from November through May.

In keeping with the Conservatory's motto to "enrich lives through the joy of music," and as part of their efforts to increase accessibility for all populations to high quality music education and performance opportunities through their Music for All Program, all Coffee Concert performances are FREE and open to the public. They are followed by coffee, bagels and an opportunity to meet and talk with the performers.

The concert will be on Wednesday, February 2nd, NOON at Sundin Music Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave.

January events planned at Rice St. Library

The Rice Street Branch Library has many fun and educational events planned for January. Please stop in and visit us!

Family story times will be offered on Tuesday and Friday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Join Rice Street's storytelling experts for stories, finger plays, rhymes, and songs.

The Computer Gaming Club will meet on Tuesdays 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. Play Runescape, Wii, or other computer games. Bring your friends!

The Collector's Corner Neighborhood Trading Post will be open Wednesdays from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 11:00 to 2:00 p.m. Bring a tradeable natural object to the library and volunteers from the Science Museum of Minnesota will help you learn more about it.

Free Family Friendly Movie Matinees will be shown Saturdays at 2:00. Please stop in or call the library at 651-558-2223 to learn which movie will be shown each week.

Free Job Search Assistance will be offered on Fridays from 10:30 to 12:30 p.m. A consultant from Goodwill-Easter Seals will provide help with job applications and resumes. Please call 651-558-2223 for more information.

The North End Book Club

will discuss How Green was My Valley by Richard Llewellyn on Monday January 24, from 12:45-2:30 p.m. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8733. This group is offered in partnership with the Community Education Senior Program.

The STARS Homework Help Center is a quiet place for students of all ages to work on schoolwork. If you need help with homework or would like to be a Homework Helper, please visit STARS Monday through Wednesday from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Thursday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. or Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Hours are Monday and Wednesday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.; Tuesday 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; and Sunday 1 p.m.-5 p.m. All Saint Paul public libraries will be closed January 17 and 27. For more information about the Rice Street Branch Library or any of our programs, please call 651-558-2223.

Hamline Midway Library plans schedule

Hamline Midway Library has many activities to keep you busy this winter!

Be sure to check out the beloved Fireside Series, which begins in January and runs every Wednesday evening through February. The kick-off author is Peter Geye, who will read from his debut novel, *Safe from the Sea* on January 19. On January 26, spend the evening with three Coffee House Press poets - Lightsey Darst, Greg Hewett and Steve Healey. Don't miss a thrilling night as William Kent Krueger reads from his latest novel, *Vermilion Drift*, on February 2. All readings begin at 7pm. Enjoy coffee, hot cider, cookies and great authors readings by the fire!

Book lovers, unite! Join the Kids & Teens Book Club on the first Saturday of every month. Grades 3-5 meet from 1-2 p.m.; grades 6-8 meet from 2-3 p.m. Next meeting is February 5 and new members are welcome.

Paw Pals will be at the library on Saturday, January 15 from 1:30 to 3:30 pm. Call the library to register your child for this opportunity to build reading skills while reading with a therapy dog. Open to ages 6-12.

School age kids are invited to play and participate in fun activities at the Saturday Club. On January 15 from 1-3 p.m. we will be crafting bird feeders for our feathered friends. Join the fun at the library!

On January 25 at 11am, join MacPhail Center for Music's early childhood music specialists as we

explore the magic of music and play. Through hands-on musical play activities families will experience music's impact on learning and reading readiness. Together we will sing, rhyme, read, move and create! This program will be in both English and Spanish to enhance early literacy skill-building. Please call the library at 651-642-0293 to register for this popular event.

The library will host a teen movie matinee showing of *Scott Pilgrim vs. The World* on January 31st at 2p.m. Beat the cold weather and join us for snacks, fun, and *Scott Pilgrim*.

The Computer Help Lab will be running on Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5:30 in January. A staff member will be available to assist you with filling out forms online, creating a resume, and other basic computer operations. This is a drop-in lab and patrons will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis.

Storytimes continue to be offered at 10:30 a.m. on Friday mornings. Bring your child to share in the joys of reading.

Call 651-642-0293 or stop by the library at 1558 W Minnehaha Ave, near the intersection of Snelling and Minnehaha, to sign up for events that require registration. All events are free.

Accomplished authors hold readings

Bring your children and listen to more than a dozen literary legends as they read sections of their popular children's books at several Hamline University events from January 7-16. All readings are free and open to the public. Event includes readings of published works by guest authors and faculty in Hamline's Master of Fine Arts in Writing for Children and Young Adults program.

Some of the best authors of literature for young people, featuring Newbery Award winner and Hamline University faculty member Gary Schmidt. Visiting authors include Gene Yang, Pete Hautman, Deb Frasier, and Nothando Zulu. Accomplished Hamline faculty members Jane Resh Thomas, Marsha Qualey, Mary Logue, Phyllis Root, Marsha Wilson Chall, Anne Ursu will also hold readings.

When and Where:
Friday, January 14, Deb Frasier Reading, 2-2:30 p.m., GLC 100E, 1556 Hewitt Ave.;

Saturday, January 15, Pete Hautman Reading, 2-2:30 p.m., GLC 100E, 1556 Hewitt Ave.;

Gary Schmidt Reading, 6:45-7:30 p.m., GLC 100E, 1556 Hewitt Ave.

Sunday, January 16, MFAC Graduation Recognition Ceremony, Keynote Address by Gary Schmidt, 3:30 4:30 p.m., Bush Student Center Ballroom, 1551 Hewitt Ave.

Hamline holds baseball training

Hamline University will host a six-week Spring Training 2011 baseball program for players in grades 1 through 12 from January 15 to February 19. Hamline University head coach Jason Verdugo will direct the program in conjunction with U.S. Baseball Academy. Sessions are offered in advanced hitting, pitching and catching at a cost as low as \$99 for six weeks. Space is limited. Registration is now under way. For more information, visit www.USBBaseballAcademy.com, or call toll-free 866-622-4487.

Local students admitted to Concordia

The following students have been admitted to Concordia University, St. Paul:

Eva Lee, a resident of St. Paul, Minn., a student at Como Park Senior High School, was awarded the Presidents and BOLD 2 scholarships for the fall 2011 semester. These achievements provide a total of \$12,000 in funds.

Mao Vue, a resident of St. Paul, Minn., a student at Harding High School, was awarded the Presidents and BOLD 2 scholarships for the fall 2011 semester. These achievements provide a total of \$12,000 in funds.

Jennifer Yang, a resident of St. Paul, Minn., a student at Central High School, was awarded the Presidents and BOLD 2 scholarships for the fall 2011 semester. These achievements provide a total of \$12,000 in funds.

Samantha Danielson, a resident of Maplewood, Minn., a student at Roseville Area High School, was awarded the Presidents and Ignite Leadership scholarships for the fall 2011 semester. These achievements provide a total of \$12,000 in funds.

Teanna Thomas, a resident of St. Paul, Minn., a student at Highland Park Senior High School, was awarded the University scholarship for the fall 2011 semester. This achievement provides a total of \$8,000 in funds.

Coolcy Yang, a resident of St. Paul, Minn., a student at Hmong Academy Charter School, was awarded the University scholarship for the fall 2011 semester. This achievement provides a total of \$8,000 in funds.

Mae Lee Lor, a resident of St. Paul, Minn., a student at Highland Park Senior High School, was awarded the University and BOLD 2 scholarships for the fall 2011 semester. These achievements provide a total of \$10,000 in funds.

Central Corridor business demands get a voice

By JANE MCCLURE

University Avenue business owners are bracing themselves for the start of light rail construction in March, saying they will lose parking, customers and revenues. The University Avenue Business Association (UABA) and Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA) are asking that federal, state and local elected officials and the Metropolitan Council provide adequate financial compensation for their losses before the project continues.

More than two dozen businesspeople and representatives of the William Mitchell College of Law community development law clinic crowded into the Ax-Man Surplus store December 14 to make the case for more funding. City officials say they're trying to do what they can, including requesting funding from the 2011 Minnesota Legislature.

"The Metropolitan Council recognizes that construction of the Central Corridor LRT Project could adversely impact small businesses and we have done everything we can to try to minimize those impacts. These measures equal or exceed construction mitigation efforts that have been made on any transportation improvement project in Minnesota," said Metropolitan Council spokesperson Steve Dornfeld.

Some individual business owners are also considering litigation against the project, business leaders said. They declined to name businesses but the organizations have held workshops in recent years outlining the legal rights businesses have.

University Avenue has more than 900 small businesses which provide jobs, good and services

and part of the tax base, said AEDA Director Va-Megn Thoj. But many small business owners feel their livelihoods are threatened.

"We know that locally light rail construction will have a very dramatic impact," he said. Business owners expect to lose 30 to 60 percent of their revenues per business during construction, which could affect them for more than a year.

Ax-Man owner Jim Segal questioned if elected officials are waiting for "blood on the streets" before they act. "I don't think they recognize our plight," he said. "We're basically fighting against the tax money we pay in."

"It's like we're swimming in an ocean with little life jackets here," said AEDA Board President and Hmong Today publisher Seng Moua.

Businesspeople said University Avenue has lost about half a dozen businesses already in anticipation of light rail construction, and about 15 more are talking about pulling up stakes and moving.

Segal, whose business has been on University for 45 years, said Ax-Man doesn't want to leave. "I just want to survive," he said. Civic leaders talk about the benefits light rail will bring but Segal added, "If we're not here we can't participate in the benefits."

Diane Dube of William Mitchell said businesses are looking at their legal rights, in anticipation of the construction period. "There's no debating the fact that businesses will be affected and that in some cases businesses will

have no choice but to shut down," she said. Businesses will not only have construction equipment in front of their businesses and loss of vehicular and pedestrian access, they also will face planned and at times unplanned utility shut-offs.

Business organizations and the law school have asked the U.S. Department of Transportation to minimize hardships on businesses and to set up an emergency compen-



sation fund. They are calling for pressure on Congress, Governor-elect Mark Dayton and members of the Minnesota legislature to help them out.

Peterson said the business associations want a say in how compensation is provided, and want to monitor and oversee any financial disbursements. He said other organizations set up to provide help "haven't gotten it done."

Metropolitan Council officials have long contended that federal money for the \$957 million light rail project has to be used for the project itself, not for business mitigation. Dornfeld said that the federal government requires project contingency funds be held in reserve for just that — contingencies — and not be allocated in advance for other uses. Project staff will be presenting more detail on what is eligible for contingency and how commitments of contingency are made in early 2011.

Nancy Homans, senior aide to Mayor Chris Coleman, said the city has helped provide what business and off-street parking funds are available.

"We are aware of the issues businesses are raising and are working to find more ways to help them," she said. The city is requesting loan and grant assistance for businesses as part of its 2011 state legislative agenda.

Businesses have been raising concerns about lost on-street parking and lost revenues for more than three years, but the only response has been the City of St. Paul and Metropolitan Council's creation of a \$1.5 million low-interest loan fund. Of that amount \$1 million is public money and \$500,000 came from a nonprofit Central Corridor Funders Collaborative.

Segal and other business

owners said the loan fund has a number of restrictions and may be too little, too late.

Business owners indicated a ballpark figure for the assistance needs for businesses may be closer to \$40 to \$50 million.

Sid Applebaum, owner of Big Top Liquors, questioned why larger University Avenue businesses aren't joining with the smaller ones. "I'm surprised Target, Rainbow and Cub aren't represented here today because they're going to get hurt as much as the smaller people," he said.

Applebaum said that University Avenue businesses will run up against the same problems seen in Lowertown, where utility relocation has stymied business owners for months. One nightclub recently closed after suffering months of lost business due to construction.

"We have been patiently waiting for someone to do something," said UABA member and attorney Larry Peterson. The business groups are raising the compensation issue now, in anticipation of the Central Corridor's full funding grant agreement winning federal approval in early 2011. Approval of that agreement means the project can obtain half of the \$957 million in construction funds from the federal government.

Federal approval is expected to trigger construction on University between Hamline Avenue and the St-Paul-Minneapolis border in March 2011. University between Hamline and Robert Street will be under construction in 2012. Trains are to start operation in 2014.

Legislative agenda

Continued from page 11

A number of public safety initiatives are also part of the legislative agenda including more funds for crime victims, and making statutory changes that would help police and prosecutors deal with problem properties and quality of life crimes.

Another focus is housing and the mortgage foreclosure crisis and its aftermath in city neighborhoods. The city is calling for stable statewide funding to address neighborhood recovery, housing preservation, and increased affordable housing supply as a direct result of the mortgage foreclosure crisis. The council is also supporting collaborations with Minnesota Housing Partnership, Minnesota Foreclosure Partners Council and others on priority housing issues, including restoring housing markets in communities impacted by foreclosures, rehabilitating vacant and abandoned houses for economic recovery; and providing a housing safety net for vulnerable home owners.

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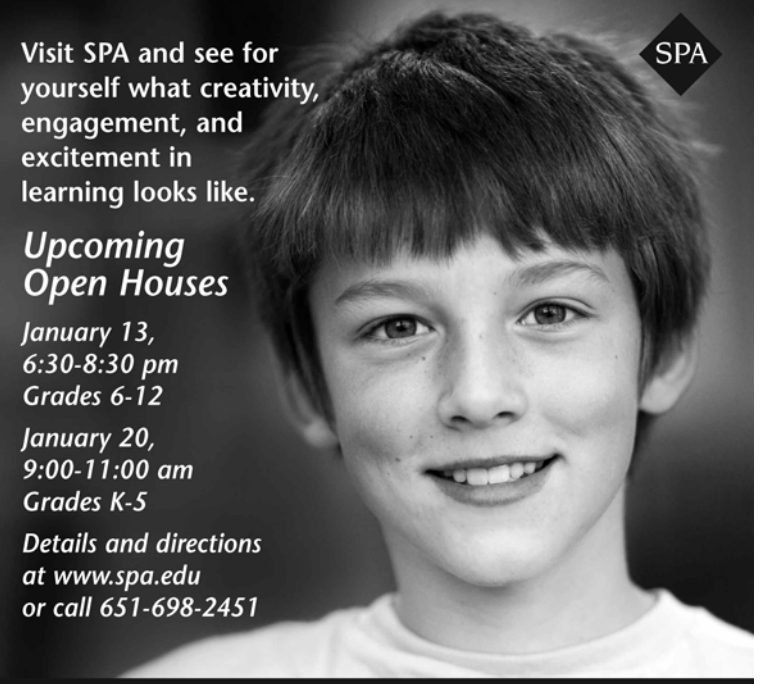
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SPA

Hamline, St. Thomas among the petitioners...

Local private schools seek permanent liquor license approval

By JANE MCCLURE

Minnesota colleges and universities wanting to serve wine or have a bar at events have decided that there is strength in numbers. Half a dozen schools, including Hamline University and the University of St. Thomas, are part of a group of the state's private schools seeking permanent liquor license approval from the 2011 Minnesota Legislature. The schools are working with legislators and the Minnesota Private Colleges Council to make the request.

Colleges and universities that don't have "dry" campuses can obtain one-time liquor licenses for events, such as alumni banquets or weddings hosted on-campus. Or, caterers may be licensed. Currently if a school wants its own liquor license, approval had to be granted by the state legislature before school officials can then go to their home cities for the licenses themselves.

For some schools, the idea of having one permanent license is a matter of convenience. Proponents argue that having a permanent license means that cities can more easily set and enforce permanent conditions, rather than having to monitor on an event-by-event basis. UST's Minneapolis campus and Augsburg College in Minneapolis have the permanent licenses, through enabling legislation and city license approvals.

But the idea has generated controversy in St. Paul neighborhoods around the University of St. Thomas, where a similar license request for the St. Paul campus was corked by community opposition last year.

UST was prepared to make

the St. Paul request on its own in 2011 but may go in with the Minnesota Private Colleges Council. Council President Paul Cerkenik said the council is preparing to

College. For Hamline University, supporting the request is more about supporting other state schools and less about Hamline itself. Hamline spokesperson



Half a dozen schools, including Hamline University and the University of St. Thomas (pictured above), are part of a group of the state's private schools seeking permanent liquor license approval from the 2011 Minnesota Legislature. (Photo courtesy of the University of St. Thomas)

discuss a request with state lawmakers. As of early January no bill had been drafted and there is no firm number of schools interested.

The colleges' council is working with colleges and universities because it makes more sense to seek enabling legislation as a group, rather than campus-by-campus, Cerkenik said.

About half a dozen schools have expressed interest, including UST, Hamline and Macalester

Dan Loritz said if the legislation is approved, Hamline officials don't foresee the need to get a permanent liquor license for their campus. But enabling legislation would provide that option if it is needed in the future.

"We hire outside vendors and they hold the liquor license," Loritz said.

UST officials and neighborhood residents began meeting in January to discuss the request. Meetings are being hosted by the

West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC). Anyone interested in attending the meetings can email dehennes@stthomas.edu or call UST for details at 651-962-5000.

UST wants the license so it has the ability to serve alcohol at events for alumni and donors, and at events held when outside parties rent a campus facility for a wedding or other gathering. Currently UST must apply for a one-time event license at gatherings where a fee is paid for an event. A fee can be defined in several ways. A license is required when a fee is paid for an event and drink tickets are given out, or when someone pays a fee and alcohol is served with a meal. Or a license is required when a per-plate donation is paid for entry to a dinner, even if the alcohol is free. But there is confusion in other cases.

Having a permanent license would mean not having to apply for numerous one-time licenses. In a typical year UST hosts 28 wedding receptions alone, as well as other alumni and donor events and staff and faculty gatherings. Having a permanent license would also allow for one set of restrictions of license conditions to be placed on events where alcohol, typically wine and beer, is consumed.

But under state law colleges and universities must seek state enabling legislation before seeking a city liquor license. During the 2010 legislative session protests prompted Rep. Erin Murphy to withdraw the St. Paul campus from a bill that would have allowed UST to apply for liquor licenses for its St. Paul and Min-

neapolis campuses. Before a second St. Paul request goes forward, Murphy has asked that UST and WSNAC meet with campus neighbors and discuss license conditions that can be set by the St. Paul City Council. Neighborhood residents have concerns about additional gatherings on-campus that would result in increased traffic and parking demand, as well as potential availability of alcohol to students.

"We're going into this knowing that we will have to have agreed-upon conditions," said UST Vice President for University and Intergovernmental Relations Doug Hennes.

Neighborhood residents have two general concerns about the on-campus liquor license, said WSNAC Co-Chairman Scott Banas. One is a general worry about a license's impact on student drinking in general. UST officials have emphasized that the license is not for student events as most students are not of legal drinking age.

But there are also worries about the potential for additional events on campus if it is easier to serve alcohol, and bringing more traffic and parking demands to the surrounding neighborhoods. Banas said some neighbors have questioned whether a license, coupled with the opening of the new Anderson Student Center, would mean more UST and private gatherings on-campus.

"The neighbors clearly want to have a say in what conditions are attached to a license," said Banas. WSNAC will also ask Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark's office to be involved.

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Dr. King Day

Continued from page 2

and video clips of Dr. King, and a charge to the university community from Michael A. Riley ('12), president of the Hamline University PRIDE Black Student Alliance.

The program is organized by the Hamline University Center for Multicultural and International Student Affairs. The center's mission is to support, assist, empower and promote the success of students of color and international students at Hamline. To better serve and retain students, the center's staff and initiatives help foster a campus community where the needs of students of color and international students are addressed and where multiculturalism and diversity are appreciated, celebrated, and advanced.

In a minute

Continued from page 2

its access points between Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis and Cretin Avenue in St. Paul gets underway in March. That plan will be the topic of a public hearing before the St. Paul City Council at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 2 at City Hall.

The hearing will outline the plans for the freeway reconstruction, which does include possibility of a sound wall in Desnoyer Park neighborhood.

MN/DOT and consultants have worked with city staff and a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to address safety and aesthetics concerns. A final project layout has been submitted to city officials for review, comment and municipal consent. St. Paul and Minneapolis have to sign off on the plans before the project can begin. State law requires that there be a public hearing before the project can proceed.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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Home Energy Funfest to offer free family entertainment

Saint Paul families are invited to enjoy an afternoon of free indoor games and prizes, huge inflatable rides, face-painting and fresh popcorn, plus entertaining and useful home energy education and resources on Saturday, January 29, from noon to 4 p.m. at Saint Paul's North End Elementary School, 27 East Geranium Avenue.



The Home Energy Funfest will be held Saturday, January 29, from noon to 4 p.m. at Saint Paul's North End Elementary School, 27 East Geranium Avenue.

Along with the fun, parents and their children can take part in a short educational workshop that makes them eligible to receive a Home Energy Squad visit from Xcel Energy for only \$30 (the regular price is \$80), which includes all energy-saving materials and labor.

Participants can also meet with representatives from local housing groups such as Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties and the Saint Paul Fire Department's Project Safe Haven to learn about the free and affordable home improvement and safety resources available to them.

The Neighborhood Energy Connection (NEC) is sponsoring the Funfest to help Saint Paul residents save energy and reduce their utility bills. Funding and support for the event has been provided by the McKnight Foundation, the Minnesota Department of Commerce through the US Department of Energy and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), and the Metro Clean Energy Resource Team.

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Escape to the Tropics January 29 & 30

During the Saint Paul Winter Carnival, all things cold are celebrated. One event stands out and gives attendees a way to escape to the tropics without even getting on a plane; the Winter Carnival Orchid Show at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory January 29 and 30, 2011.

Hundreds of orchid plants owned by the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, as well as individual and commercial orchid growers, will transform the Conservatory into a tropical wonderland where instead of King Boreas, orchids rule. Besides witnessing the beautiful plants and displays, vendors will be offering plants and other wares.

The Orchid Society of Minnesota and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory work together to exhibit the largest display of privately owned orchids in the region. The Winter Carnival Orchid Show is an American Orchid Society (AOS) judged event. Orchid judges from throughout the Midwest travel to Saint Paul to bestow awards and points.

Orchids are the largest family of flowering plants. One of the oldest and best organized of plant hobbies, orchid culture now enjoys worldwide popularity. Their incredible beauty and diversity captivate men and women of every walk of life.

The Winter Carnival Orchid Show will be held on January 29 and 30 at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory in Saint Paul from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 3-12 (\$1 off admission with Winter Carnival button).



The Winter Carnival Orchid Show will be held on January 29 and 30 at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory in Saint Paul from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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Some of the best authors of literature for young people will share their work at free public events January 7-16, at Hamline. The events include readings of published works by guest authors and faculty members in Hamline's master of fine arts in writing for children and young adults program.

Keynote speaker



Gary Schmidt, a Newbery Award winner, Hamline faculty member, and author of more than 15 books for children and young adults, including *The Wednesday Wars* and *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*

Visiting authors

Gene Yang, whose book *American Born Chinese* became the first graphic novel nominated for a National Book Award and the first to win the American Library Association's Printz Honor Award.

Pete Hautman, author of 11 young adult novels, including *Black Confession and Godless*, and winner of the 2004 National Book Award for Young People's Literature.

Deb Frasier, author and illustrator of six award-winning picture books, including *On the Day You Were Born*, *Out of the Ocean*, and her most recent, *A Fabulous Fair Alphabet*.

Hamline faculty/authors

Hamline's own prominent faculty, all published and well-established authors, including Jane Resh Thomas, Marsha Qualey, Mary Logue, Phyllis Root, Marsha Wilson Chall, Kelly Easton, Claire Rudolf Murphy, Jackie Briggs Martin, and Liza Ketchum will also offer public readings.

Free Author Readings

Friday, January 14

Author **Deb Frasier** Reading
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Saturday, January 15

Author **Pete Hautman** Reading
2-2:30 p.m., Giddens Learning Center Room 100E
1556 Hewitt Ave., Saint Paul

Author **Gary Schmidt** Reading
6:45-7:30 p.m., Giddens Learning Center Room 100E
1556 Hewitt Ave., Saint Paul

Sunday, January 16

Graduation Recognition Ceremony
Keynote Address by author **Gary Schmidt**
3:30-4:30 p.m., Bush Student Center Ballroom
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