



Midway Como monitor

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Helping people through organizing...

Gagne's passion for community reflects in work

By JAN WILLMS

For nearly all of his life, Dave Gagne has been helping people through organizing and working towards change. Whether it has been people living in poverty, soldiers fighting an unpopular war or neighborhoods dealing with growing pains, Gagne has been there.

And after being at the helm of Hamline-Midway Coalition (HMC) as its executive director since October 2004 and its economic development coordinator prior to that, Gagne is taking a break. He left the Coalition May 31, and Michael Jon Olson has

taken over as the new executive director.

For Gagne, his years working with economic development along University Avenue have been a labor of love.

His service to community has been a life-long career, in different places and at different jobs, but always the same dedication to helping his fellow man.

He grew up in the Twin Cities, living mostly in Minneapolis. He attended high school in St. Louis Park, and later St. Paul Seminary.

"I began working with anti-poverty programs in Minneapo-



For nearly all of his life, Dave Gagne has been helping people through organizing and working towards change. And after being at the helm of Hamline-Midway Coalition (HMC) as its executive director since October 2004 and its economic development coordinator prior to that, Gagne is taking a break. (Photo by Terry Faust)

lis," Gagne said. "Then I lost a friend in Vietnam. I organized here and in Boston to bring the war to an end."

While in Boston, he also worked on the Garity Desegregation Effort, a major effort to desegregate Boston schools. "I trained people on how to raise funds in order to help minority schools survive," he said.

He also worked in an all-black community in Chicago in 1965, while he was in seminary. "I moved into a black neighborhood, where we were trying to work on programs to improve children's vision and hearing problems," he noted. He said there was a great distrust of the medical community in the area he was working in, and he was trying to dispel this distrust by bringing people together.

"Martin Luther King Jr. came to Chicago about this time to do a march on State Street," Gagne said. "I had fairly close contact with him and was greatly influenced by him. This led to my anti-poverty work, and my work with diverse communities."

Gagne returned to Minnesota and worked for the Archdiocese of St. Paul Minneapolis, as director of a campaign for human development. He did not become a priest, but married and moved to New England. He lived there for six years and had two children. "I became a father of a different kind," he said.

In New England he trained foster and adoptive parents. He initially tried to organize social services, but the size of the insti-

tution was too large for effective changes. Instead, he organized families to bring about changes in the system.

He moved back to Minneapolis, and he was the first director of University UNITED, working primarily on an Asian Marketplace Project, east of Dale. In 1997, he started his career with HMC.

He said his position there has been very much as a listener.

"Personality-wise, I tend to be a person who mediates," he said. "I try to respect where everyone is coming from. If people feel like they are being heard, that is the most important thing."

The goal of HMC is to make the Hamline Midway neighborhood a better place to live and work. It is governed by a 19-member board of directors, with a staff of four (two full-time and two part-time). HMC's key strength is its ability to engage its diverse constituency toward outcomes that benefit the people who live and work in the neighborhood, according to Gagne.

"The key in directing this agency is to not do everything yourself," he noted. "Work with others, and see what they can do. If you try to do it all yourself, you don't have time and everything becomes staff-driven."

He said the coalition, which is 30 years old, relies on some essential partnerships to achieve its goals. HMC works with Hamline University through Leadership in Support of Neighborhoods

Standing tall



It was mother and kid day at Como Park with the addition of a new baby giraffe and zebra. The zebra mom is named Amy and mother giraffe is Daisy, but the names for the babies hasn't yet been decided. Above, the baby giraffe checks out his size compared to his built-in measuring guide. (Photo by Terry Faust)

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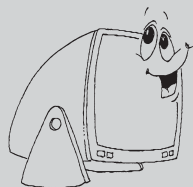
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Midway Como in a Minute

Shiloh Baptist plans move to North End

Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church's plans to move out of Summit-University neighborhood and to the North End moved ahead May 23. On a 6-1 vote the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) approved parking and setback variances for the church's new location at 501 W. Lawson Av. the BZA decision is final unless it is appealed to the St. Paul City Council.

Church officials hope to break ground for the new church in July and move by year's end or early next year. Shiloh has sought a new location for several years, after being on Hague Avenue near Victoria since 1969. The church has about 1,500 members and has outgrown its current location.

The quest for new space has been difficult as Shiloh members want to stay in St. Paul. In 2002 Shiloh members looked at moving to the Minnehaha Mall property in Frogtown. Land and development costs scuttled that idea.

The new church will seat about 1,500 members, said architect Mike Mularoni. But he, Senior Pastor Steve Daniels, Jr. and longtime congregation member Lee Walker said attendance now is a total of 400 to 450 people at two services. The new church would only have one service.

City parking requirements Shiloh needed a parking variance of 266 spaces. Based on the number of seats in the church, 504 parking spaces are needed and 238 are proposed on-site.

The church has an agreement to use about 160 parking spaces nearby at Crossroads School. Those spaces cannot technically be counted against the shortfall, but were a factor in the BZA approval.

Church representatives also

pointed out there is ample on-street parking in the area and that there are no homes along Lawson.

A four-foot setback is required for the parking lot and a one-foot setback is proposed, for a three-foot variance.

The large parking variance was a concern for two neighborhood residents who attended the BZA hearing and spoke against the project. It also prompted BZA Member Vince Courtney to vote against the project. BZA staff recommended approval, noting that the church is being built for long-term growth and that it typically won't have 1,500 people at services.

The move to the North End has the support of the District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council. It is in an area that is being studied as part of the Loeb Lake Small Area Plan. That area has a construction moratorium, but an exception was made to allow Shiloh's plans to move ahead.

Sculpture Garden site moves to new project

A proposal to redevelop the former Hamline Sculpture Garden site into market-rate rental housing is moving ahead. The St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) was to hear a request for project variances June 6, after deadline for this edition of the *Midway Como Monitor*. Any BZA decision is final unless appealed to the St. Paul City Council.

Property owner David Van Landschoot met with neighborhood residents and with the Hamline-Midway Coalition Land Use Committee in May to review a proposal for a 44-unit building on the property on the Thomas Avenue site. The building would be located between Asbury and Simpson. The site is part of what once was Samaritan Hospital's campus. Residents of the new

building would be able to park in the adjacent parking ramp that serves Hamline Park Plaza office tenants.

A 44-unit, four-story apartment building is proposed. This is the second development proposal for the site in a year. Last year a 44-unit senior housing cooperative won BZA and City Council approvals. That project, Summerhill, was dropped due to lack of pre-sales.

Summerhill met neighborhood opposition because of its five-story height and density. Some project foes also were unhappy to lose the sculpture garden and wanted the site retained as a park. But the property, even when it was a park, has always been owned by Justin Properties and was never deeded to the city for park purposes. One argument for getting rid of the park was the deteriorated condition of the some of the sculptures, which have also sustained vandalism in recent years.

The proposed apartment building project is getting a mixed reception. The district council's Land Use Committee is supporting lot coverage, parking and setback variances but opposes the creation of 44 housing units. The project's zoning allows 34 units. Adding more units requires a density variance.

One concern neighborhood residents are raising is that the property doesn't become student housing.

Renovation of Griggs Rec Center underway

The long-awaited renovation and expansion of Griggs Recreation Center is underway. But more money is needed for the project.

The St. Paul City Council voted unanimously May 18 to add \$22,194 to the Griggs budget. The additional funds will be taken from two recently completed area parks and Recreation

projects, Dunning Stadium and Recreation Center, and Iris Park.

The Dunning work dates from 1999 and the Iris Park improvements were funded in 2002. Both were paid for with federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. That is also the funding source for Griggs.

The council agreed to take the Dunning remaining balance of \$10,467 and the Iris Park remaining balance of \$11,727 and transfer that money to Griggs. The shift increases Griggs' budget from \$739,999 to \$752,194.

The shift in funds was recommended for approval in May by the city's Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee.

The Griggs project was originally approved for 2001 but has run into repeated delays. Griggs is one of the area's smallest recreation centers and lacks a gym and other amenities. But Griggs is well-used by community groups and has a dedicated neighborhood following.

Hamline-Midway residents have successfully kept the capital improvement project going, even after Mayor Randy Kelly took its funds to spend elsewhere on another project.

Supporters have also thwarted Kelly's bid to close the center in 2003, when it and other part-time recreation centers were threatened with closure.

Storm sewer project gets sound variance

A storm sewer construction project will make itself heard in the Como Park neighborhood this summer. St. Paul Public Works had to obtain a sound level variance before it could do construction work on Kaufman Avenue from Midway parkway to a point about 1,500 feet to the north.

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Como Lake Water Festival celebrates clean water with family event June 18

The Como Lake Water Festival will be held Saturday, June 18, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine, on the grassy area near the Schiffman Fountain just south of the Lakeside Pavilion (1360 North Lexington Parkway)

Come celebrate clean water at this popular, free family event.

From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. help spruce up beautiful Como Lake with a shoreline clean up. Black Bear Crossing on the Lake will provide lunch for volunteers.

The festival continues with activities, music, juggling and lots of fun! You can:

- * Enjoy the acoustic band Loose Gravel, marvel at and learn juggling techniques from Andy Edgar and mingle with the Powder Puff Clowns.

- * Learn about watersheds and water quality issues through "hands-on" activities for all ages.

- * Take a walking tour of the park's shoreline restoration and new rain gardens.

- * Paddle around Como Lake in a Wilderness Inquiry Voyageurs canoe.

- * Learn how your activities affect our lakes—no matter where you live.

- * Gain useful tips on environmentally-friendly lawn care.

- * Look at, and learn about, the different reptiles, amphibians and other critters that live in and around Como Lake.

- * Learn to fish with Department of Natural Resources Minn Aqua Fishing staff.

- * Enjoy crafts and games.

Register ahead of time if you want to volunteer for clean-up activities. Trash bags will be provided, but volunteers should bring gloves.

This event is sponsored by the Capitol Region Watershed District, Black Bear Crossings on the Lake, District 10 Community Council and the St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation. The Capitol Region Watershed District, working to protect and improve the water resources of our district, covers portions of St. Paul, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Maplewood, and Roseville.

To register as a volunteer, or for more information, contact Debbie Meister at 651-647-6816 or meisterd@qwest.net.



The Como Lake Water Festival will be held Saturday, June 18, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine, on the grassy area near the Schiffman Fountain just south of the Lakeside Pavilion (1360 North Lexington Parkway)

Gagne

Continued from page 1

(LISN). This program trains people who are emerging leaders in the neighborhood. Another strong partner is SPARC, a merger of the Hamline Midway Area Rehabilitation Corporation and the North End Area Revitalization. "This involves a strong partnership between economic development and housing development," Gagne said, "maintaining good relationships between homes and businesses."

Gagne cited University UNITED as another important partner regarding light rail and transportation-oriented development.

Referring back to the power of people having their voices heard, Gagne said that if anything stops light rail, it will be people who feel they have not had their opinions listened to. "If people think their concerns are not being heard, they begin to oppose an idea," he stated.

Reflecting on the changes he has seen along University Avenue, Gagne cites diversity as the most important. He said another major

change has been the disappearance of auto businesses.

"University UNITED has become much stronger and outspoken about the need for changes along University," Gagne added. An additional change has been the infiltration of big boxes and national franchises, which Gagne said makes it difficult for neighbors to negotiate what they want in neighborhoods.

"The major challenge in the next five years is how do we get planning again."

He laments the lack of planning that has taken place in the Hamline-Midway community. "Lack of planning has hurt both neighborhoods and commercial areas more than anything else has," he said. "We can only do what the market drives us to do."

He said he remembered when there was serious planning going on, even if the outcome was not always what was planned for. He mentioned Menards, Wal-Mart and the Love Doctor as examples of businesses that have found homes along University Avenue,

but that the community had no say over.

"One of the things University UNITED distinguishes itself for is constantly calling for more planning," he noted. "Home Depot was ready to sign for some land, and no one knew about it until University UNITED got the word out."

He said that neighbors have specific ideas, and sometimes may

not want changes. Gagne added that basing plans on only what the market will support involves limited thinking.

"The major challenge in the next five years is how do we get planning again," he commented. He noted that the Midway Chamber of Commerce used to be a strong advocate for strategic planning, but now he feels the group tends to support what the market supports. "The neighbors and University UNITED don't always agree that that's right."

Considering the option of

light transit rail along University Avenue, Gagne said it could be a very positive development, but could fly or crash based on how much people feel listened to. "We have to look at who wins and who loses, and reduce the pain for those who are hurt," he said. "It is one of these developments that requires long-range planning. The people who pay the cost today won't necessarily benefit from it."

Gagne added that long-range planning is required for all areas of development, not just light rail. "We have to look at what the community will look like in 10-15 years," he said.

Gagne suggested considering the Midway as a coordinated area, rather than as separate businesses. "It is just common sense to strengthen businesses by seeing how the relate to each other."

He said University UNITED has brought this emphasis on planning to the table. "Twenty-five per cent of our industrial jobs have changed in the past 10 years, especially west of Fairview. University UNITED looked at these statistics and identified this information."

The day after he completed his duties with the Coalition,

Gagne was restless. "This is the first time in eight years that I haven't been thinking about Hamline-Midway in one way or another," he said. "And I realize there is still some residue. I'm walking around the house, wondering where I should focus my energy," he said.

Gagne won't be idle for long, as he is already considering what he plans to do next.

"Several times in the past my heart has acted up a little, and it will probably happen again in the future," he noted. He said he just needs to get some rest and take care of his health before he embarks on another venture.

"After a couple months off, I hope to work part-time on community development with a non-profit or faith community," he said. "I want to do some writing also."

He mused over the past 12 years he has worked in the University area, and he said it has been like an extended family. "Even though I live in Seward over in Minneapolis, I know many of the businesses and families here," he said. "It is difficult to leave. But Michael Jon will carry the organization on to new places."

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THE LEADER IN IMPROVING OUR URBAN COMMUNITY

Viewpoints

The Board of Directors hired Michael Jon Olson as Executive Director of the Hamline Midway Coalition. Michael Jon comes to HMC with a broad background in community-based organizing and project management. He has worked with Seward Neighborhood Group in Minneapolis, the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing and the University of Minnesota. He has also served on the Board of the Longfellow Community Council, the Center for Neighborhoods, and Ventura Village, Inc. He is also a licensed real estate agent. Michael Jon can be reached at the Hamline Midway Coalition, 651-646-1986.

What is a block club? Want to start one?

A block club is many things to many people and can serve a range of purposes. The primary purpose is for you to know your neighbors – so you can help one another out, prevent crime, and celebrate together. At minimum, a block club has a contact list so everyone can get in touch with one another. Block clubs may have 1 or more coordinators who maintain the group with the help of other neighbors. To learn more, come to a Block Club Initiators Workshop on Thursday June 23rd, 6:30-8 p.m. at the HMC offices to learn how to start. If you are not sure if you have a block club, have questions, or would like to RSVP for the workshop, contact Jun-Li

Last month you read about preparing for a healthy pregnancy. Before or shortly after you become pregnant, you will want to choose a prenatal care provider. There are many options available in the Twin Cities. It is important that you feel comfortable with your care giver because you will be seeing a lot of each other. Pregnancies are 40 weeks long. Usually women see their health care provider once a month for the first 30 weeks, and then more frequently. During the last 4 weeks there are weekly visits.

First of all—what is prenatal care? It is a term medical people use, but I have learned that not everyone knows what it means. Pregnancy is not an illness, so why do women go to the clinic so often while they are pregnant?

Prenatal care can begin even before you get pregnant (see last month's article) and continues through delivery and beyond. The visits focus on monitoring your weight and blood pressure, fetal growth and heart tones, and checking for other problems that can occur during pregnancy. Blood work done early in your pregnancy checks your hemoglobin, and to see if you have certain infections. Part way through your pregnancy you should be screened for gestational diabetes—an imbalance that occurs in some women. About half-way through your pregnancy an ultrasound will be done to evaluate fetal growth and development. At the time of this ultrasound you might be able to find out whether you are expecting a boy or a girl. Seeing a care provider on a regular basis during your pregnancy also allows you to get information and make decisions about breast feeding, circumcision, and what you will use for birth control after you deliver.

There are four groups of people who provide prenatal care and do deliveries: family practice physicians, ob-gyn physicians, nurse midwives, and lay midwives. You may receive recommendations from friends about providers they liked, or you may want to schedule a first appointment with a provider to ask questions and find out about their philosophies. This article will tell you about each group so you can

Hamline Midway Coalition

BY THE STAFF OF HAMLINE MIDWAY COALITION

HMC has a new executive director

Wang at 651-646-1986 or jwang@hamlinemidwaycoalition.org

Leadership in Support of Neighborhood – applications due June 15th!

It is not too late to apply – but you must act fast. If you are committed to the Hamline Midway neighborhood and would like to develop leadership skills while working on community projects that contribute to the health and vitality of your neighborhood, contact Jun-Li (information above).

Register for third annual Hamline Midway Community Yard Sale by June 17th

Are you thinking of having a yard sale this summer? Hold it during the 3rd annual Hamline Midway Com-

munity Yard Sale on June 24th, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and June 25th from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. This year we will provide signs to post, maps with sale descriptions, and more. Stop by HMC to fill out a form and submit the \$4 registration fee by Friday, June 17th. Questions or offers of help: contact Krista Finstad Hanson at 646-0632 or finstad.hanson@worldnet.att.net

Permits to block off your street for National Night Out – due July 1st

Start planning for National Night Out, Tuesday, August 2nd! Join over 32 million people throughout North American as they gather in their yards, streets and neighborhood parks to prevent crime and celebrate community connections. This year, permits to block off your street or alley are due by July 1st. For permit applications, signs, and flyers, contact Jun-Li (information above).

Boulevard Stump Removal Program

The City of St. Paul has allocated funds to District Councils to help residents pay for the removal of tree stumps. For \$45, you may have one boulevard stump ground ("chipped") – clean-up and removal of residue is up to you. Funding is limited, first come first served. Contact HMC at 651-646-1986 for details.

Cares and Cures

By JANE KILIAN, M.D.

Special deliveries

decide what seems like a good fit for you. With the exception of lay midwives, all providers do deliveries at hospitals. Hospitals offer tours of their birthing facilities, and can give you the names of doctors and midwives who deliver at their site.

Family Practice physicians see all ages of people for all kinds of medical problems as well as preventive health care. A family practice doc will see you through your pregnancy and delivery, and see you for check ups after delivery. The family physician will also see your baby while in the hospital, and for a check up a week or so later ... and then every few months thereafter. The great thing about family practice physicians (and I must admit I am a bit biased about this) is continuity of care. It is a joy to see moms, dads, babies, children, teens, and grandparents all from the same family. And it a great privilege to see people for a variety of medical concerns. Health is a complicated blend of bodies and minds. The blend is smoother when one doctor is paying attention to and is familiar with the many facets of your life. Again, my bias shows.

Ob-gyn physicians (obstetrician-gynecologists) see only women, and only see them for care related to reproduction (anything involving your uterus). Ob-gyns are surgeons, so if you need a caesarean delivery, they perform the surgery. They are also the experts consulted if you have a complicated pregnancy, beyond the scope of a family doctor or midwife. They will see you after delivery, but you will need to select another provider (family practice or pediatrics) for your baby.

Nurse midwives are registered nurses with additional training (usually a masters degree) in caring for women and delivering babies. They provide excellent care and often are

able to spend more time with women during labor than physicians. They always have a physician available for back up if something becomes more involved than they are able to handle. They don't see babies, so again—you will need to select another provider for your baby.

Lay midwives may or may not be nurses. They usually train with other midwives. They see women during pregnancy and assist with home births. Not everyone wants to deliver at home. Some in the medical field are very opposed to the idea. Certainly there is less help in an emergency situation if you are not in a hospital. But for some, a home birth is their preference and lay midwives are the ones to help you with this. While it may seem "unconventional" it certainly was the norm years ago before medical care became so institutionalized.

Regardless of who you see for care during your pregnancy, I urge you to keep an open mind about your delivery. Think about how you want things to be (who will be with you, do you want to use pain medication or not, etc.) and discuss your wishes with your prenatal care provider. But remember—delivery is just a small part of the whole process of pregnancy and raising a child. The ultimate goal is that mom and baby are healthy after the entire process. You may need to compromise some of your thoughts about an ideal delivery in order to have a safe delivery. Hopefully, if you have chosen your prenatal care provider carefully, you can work all of this out together.

(Dr. Kilian is a family practice physician who lives and works in the Midway Como community. She believes that good medicine means caring for people as well as curing diseases. We want to address your health concerns so please let us know what topics you would like to see in future columns. If you have suggestions or questions, write to the Monitor c/o 1885 University Avenue West, #110, St. Paul, MN 55104. Or e-mail denisw@aplacetoremember.com.)

Do the Write Thing!

For more information on submitting letters or news announcements to the Monitor call Denis Woulfe at 651-645-7045.

Cheapskate

I admit I had doubts when we asked you to nominate the best pizza in Midway-Como land. My first worry was that you would nominate a bunch of commercial pizza chains, and we would be faced with a crisis of conscience—whether to violate our own first principle and actually review a chain restaurant.

Then I worried that no clear winner would emerge—every corner pizzeria would have its local champion, and we would end up with a laundry list that offered no more insight than a page out of the phone book.

These worries, like most of mine, were needless. (Yet I still consider it a good test for my worry-support infrastructure. One never knows when fretting will be genuinely called for, and it's good to stay in practice.)

If you're asking yourself whether I am ever going to discuss actual pizza here, well all I can say is I feel sorry for you, because you have an underdeveloped awareness of gonzo-style journalism. It's all about inserting oneself existentially into the heart of the story. You see, people don't want to read about where to find good pizza. They want to read about me and my personal quest for good pizza, and every thought that entered my head along the way. I paid good money for an advanced degree in Mass Communication, so I know these things.

I also paid good money for a massive pizza feed at John's Pizza Café, which was far and away the winner in our Pizza Poll. So now I finally know what all of you are talking about.

Here's what you told us about John's (and we found strong evidence to support each of these claims):

"Good sauce. No skimping on the cheese. Quality toppings. Thin crust. What more can I say?"

"When we have it delivered, it always arrives hot and tasty, usually sooner than they tell us on the phone."

"John's uses all fresh ingredients and has a particularly delicious sauce. You don't need bifocals to locate the toppings—all are there in copious quantities."

"Once we tasted John's, we never wanted anything else."

I agree. John's has the best pizza I've tasted in our part of town, no question. And although it's no Cheapskate's dream, it's not a bad bargain—we paid under \$60 for ample pizza and pop for eight people. Coincidentally there were only four of us to eat it all, and I like those odds.

Before Snobby and Bachelor Boy add their own twisted views, I will bestow honorable mention upon four other pizza places that readers also nominated in our poll. Two are in Midway-Como: Cheney's Midway Pizza on Aldine Street, and Bascali's on Como Avenue. The other two are within easy reach: Savoy on East Seventh, and Pizza Factory near Rice and Maryland.

Our food review funds ran out before we could try them all, and the Cheapskate runs a tight ship where funds are concerned. But the runners-up are on our radar. Let us know what you think.



Without Reservations

Best area pizza? Readers say John's

The Food Snob

Few humans could work up a crisis of conscience about pizza, but thanks to Cheapy for bringing out the moral touchstone. I, on the other hand, dreaded this assignment for a far different—selfish—reason. I don't like pizza.

What's to like about an unholy alliance of cardboard smeared with a substance that assaults the taste buds with acid and dried oregano, strewn with grease gobs and topped with a choking mass of goo?

Fortunately, John's pizza is different. In fact, it's a masterful convergence of theory and prac-

compared with the sensual delight of biting into a well balanced and perfectly cooked pie created by a Zen master of pizza. If you ever meet John himself, please extend my congratulations and gratitude. He's a living neighborhood treasure.

The Bachelor

Let's skip back a few paragraphs, shall we. I want to make sure you didn't inadvertently whiz past the most telling four-word sentence ever to slip from The Food Snob's crème-brûlée-spoiled mouth. And I quote, "I don't like pizza."

known as the Food Snob, for she has shone a light of impossible clarity into her terribly warped and privileged soul. And to think that she still dares to say that she's "not really a food snob." Sure, and I'm "not really a self-absorbed, woman-chasing, emotionally stunted product of the MTV generation."

With the telling self-revelations out of the way, let me just say that as someone who always has and always will like pizza, I REALLY liked John's. And trust me, I've slid a few pies down my

throat in my day. John's is a pizza lover's pizzeria. Heck, even the shape of the building is reminiscent of a giant pizza slice.

Perched against one of the giant picture windows, I ordered the "Popeye's Pie," which is a blend of spinach, pesto sauce, black olives, fresh mushrooms, tomatoes, and mozzarella. I was halfway through gobbling this Popeye up when I commented, "Hey, this pizza doesn't have any spaghetti sauce."

Well, you can just imagine the Food Snob's disdain as she labored to explain the pesto sauce base of this particular pie. To me, it simply showed just how good this pizza is. Having consumed 974,982,304 tomato sauce-based pizzas in my life, it still took me a while to notice this one was different. All I knew is that I liked it, and I really like John's.

"John's uses all fresh ingredients and has a particularly delicious sauce. You don't need bifocals to locate the toppings—all are there in copious quantities."

tice, seasoned with creativity. Like the majority of John's customers, we opted for the hand tossed, although I plan to return for thin and the pan. The dough had a hint of honey, and was crisp on the bottom and airy in the middle. It was also perfectly cooked.

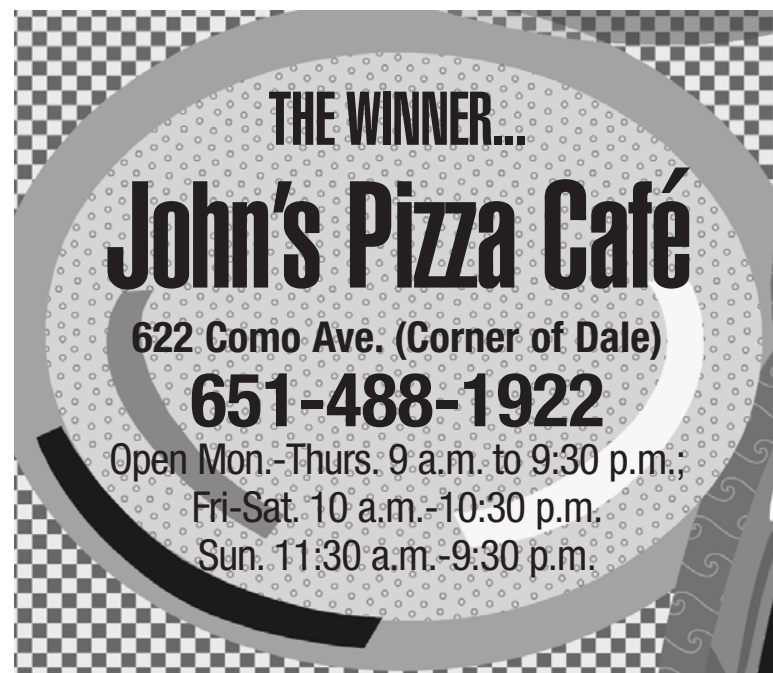
Topping choices are endless, beginning with a choice of four sauces, all house-made. We opted for the standard red (which lulled rather than seared the taste buds), topped with sausage, button mushrooms and Portabellas. Our second pizza, "Popeye's Pie," was laced with spinach pesto and scattered with tomato chunks, mushrooms, and black olives. Embracing John's whimsical side, we also selected the "Chick-A-Dilly," chicken with a rich, dill-flecked white sauce that would have shocked an Italian (but delighted our guest of Swedish descent).

When the pizzas arrived at our table (promptly and piping hot), the genius of John's became clear. Every ingredient was fresh and high quality. All the toppings were cut to ensure that they were cooked perfectly when the crust was done. Toppings were laid out evenly, ensuring a mosaic of flavors in every bite. And the proportions of sauce, toppings and cheese were ideal. Pure pizza poetry.

No I haven't been lobotomized. John's isn't perfect. The cheese is bland, but you can remedy that with a sprinkle of fresh grated parmesan (available on request). The Italian sausage should have brighter spicing and less salt. Some of the pizzas are gimmicky (bratwurst and wild rice). And, frankly, I make better crust at home.

But those flaws are minor

Well, there you have it. I don't really need to elaborate, do I? You no longer have any need to speculate about the true nature of this mysterious person



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Midway resident retires as forum manager of E-democracy.org

By JAN WILLMS

In today's frenetically paced society, what is the best way to get the attention of policy-makers and the media?

How do you draw attention to a special neighborhood issue? With so many layers of democracy, how do you draw the ear of your local council member?

For many, the method has been simple and effective. Go online to www.e-democracy.org/stpaul.

The St. Paul Issues Forum (SPIF) has been providing an avenue for information and discussion of local matters for the past six years, under the umbrella of e-democracy.org, an organization that is non-partisan and has no political agenda.

E-democracy.org began about 10 years ago, creating space online where other organizations can come and raise issues, according to Tim Erickson, who recently retired from his position as forum manager for SPIF. Other local issues forums include Minneapolis and Winona.

"SPIF is like an online town hall meeting," Erickson said. "We have been able to bring together media, citizens and officials to talk about whatever issues they choose."

He said many reporters use the site for background information. They can also contact officials through the website and receive a call back. He said that SPIF is very much a local project, with the actual management of the forum done by him and an informal group of advisors. Almost all of the operation has been done on a volunteer basis.

"SPIF is many to many," he stated. "Everybody can communicate with everybody."

Erickson, who has headed the project for the past four years, became involved because of his own interest in political and community issues.

A lifetime resident of the Midway area, he ran a graphic design business from his home



E-democracy.org began about 10 years ago, creating space online where other organizations can come and raise issues, according to Tim Erickson, who recently retired from his position as forum manager for SPIF. (Photo by Terry Faust)

for several years. After his second child was born, he became a stay-at-home dad and started participating in e-democracy discussions.

"I really enjoyed the discussions and set up my own website, politalk.com, where people could talk about particular issues for two weeks at a time. I started facilitating online discussions locally, nationally and internationally."

While doing this, Erickson was invited by Steve Clift, board chair and founder of e-democracy.org, to facilitate an online senate debate for the 1990 race.

This was early in the campaign for the seat that is currently held by Sen. Mark Dayton.

One year later, he was invited to facilitate the online mayoral debate in St. Paul. It was during the last mayoral election that he took over the management of SPIF.

"E-democracy.org has become a full-time thing for me," Erickson stated. He said he still does at least one big event a year for Politely. He also recently did online student conferences from over 70 countries.

Erickson's retirement from SPIF is more like a transition. He

will be focusing on new forum development, hoping to help other communities get started. Last summer a delegation from the United Kingdom came to Minnesota and also visited the State Capitol. The group was familiar with the issues forums and wanted to start them in the UK.

"They gave us a grant to develop things in the UK, and I went over for a week to provide some training," Erickson related. "We received funding for training materials and developing a pilot project over there."

The money from the UK grant allowed SPIF to update its

software and make its site more user friendly.

"More and more, we find the community is getting interested in what we have done," Erickson said. He has spent part of his time going out and talking to district and city councils, trying to get government officials involved. In this he has been successful, as he lists Ward 7 Council member Kathy Lantry and Jane Prince, aide to Ward 4 Council member Jay Benanav, as participants in SPIF. Numerous other officials and reporters, as well as lobbyists for various causes and organization heads, are involved.

"Having people from City Hall and District Councils participate makes it interesting," Erickson said, "and keeps it from being just a complaint forum." Erickson said that the biggest issue in recent months has been the smoking ban. Other topics of discussion have included light rail, the Peanuts statues, herbicide spraying and Home Depot and Menards moving to University Avenue.

Erickson said he serves as a mediator and referee for the online discussions, and this position has brought him both kudos and hate mail, but he has thoroughly enjoyed his facilitative role.

He is also a member of the Deliberate Democracy Consortium, a network of organizations that involve citizens in Internet discussion about public policy. Erickson attended a workshop in Brazil to talk about people getting involved in forming policy, especially in developing countries. He just returned from a California conference, and the Consortium is bringing in 25 international experts to the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota Campus June 24-25.

And all of this has evolved from Erickson's interest in getting involved in politics, late at night between diaper changes.

There is little doubt that he will be missed. As one SPIF participant, Andrew Hine, wrote: "Tim Erickson has succeeded in building a virtual highway to City Hall for us all." Erickson said he now is getting paid part-time for his work, and he is trying to encourage other groups to launch new forums.

He said the online website is also an opportunity for participants who may be too shy to voice their thoughts at a public meeting to express their opinions through the Internet.

"SPIF is an interactive e-mail discussion on important issues about St. Paul public policy," he noted.

"Participation is free and open to everyone."

Currently there are about 350 concerned citizens and community leaders subscribed to the discussion.

Erickson's position has been filled by Michele Fury, who has been with e-democracy.org for the past five years.



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Midway Como loses out in CIB allotment

By JANE MCCLURE

Don't look for a lot of improvements to city parks, playgrounds, recreation centers and other facilities in the area over the next two years. St. Paul's proposed 2006-2007 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) includes only a few projects proposed by area district councils, community development corporations and other groups. A total of 116 projects citywide are competing for the funds; only 64 are recommended for funding.

The CIB projects are to be the topic of a public hearing at 6 p.m. Thursday, June 9 at City Hall. Mayor Randy Kelly will hold a second hearing later this summer, after he reviews the CIB Committee recommendations and makes his own suggestions. The capital budget is adopted at year's end by the City Council.

CIB Committee and St. Paul Planning Commission members are concerned about the number of projects left out of the next two years' budgets. The Planning Commission has invited the CIB Committee to meet in a joint session to discuss funding concerns and issues.

"I feel very badly that we had this many large projects coming through," said CIB Committee Chairperson Gary Unger. Not all parts of St. Paul will benefit from the 2006-2007 allocations and I think that's a shame."

One project left out is the rehabilitation of the historic Hamline Park Playground Building. (See related story.) Also shut out are restoration of Dickerman Park, a new Dunning Recreation center sign, replacement of the I-94-Griggs pedestrian bridge, Ashland Park improvements, an irrigation well for the Como Park Golf Course, Pierce Butler bicycle route signs, a Capp Road-Robbins Street bike trail connection and an off-street connection for the Lexington Parkway bicycle trail between Minnehaha and Jessamine.

One large project that failed to make the cut is the proposed realignment and reconstruction of Pierce Butler Route, a \$50 million project. CIB Streets and Utilities Task Force members

get area facilities aren't funded. That means no air conditioning at recreation centers including Hancock, Langford, Northwest Como and South St. Anthony, and no security and safety improvements at Northwest Como and Rice. Outdoor basket-

University Avenue and Dale Street must move to make way for a proposed housing-commercial redevelopment project. Police would like to find a site on or near the east end of University Avenue, but haven't found property yet. Needed is a space

with off-street parking for about 120 cars.

Some years the CIB Committee has slashed street paving to free up funds for other projects. But that has only resulted in dragging out the paving program. CIB Committee Member

Paul Savage spoke for preserving the street paving dollars. "We have streets that are so crowned (with oil and pea gravel) that they cannot be properly plowed in the winter," he said. Other committee members agreed, saying that pushing back street paving only makes for more expensive projects in the future.

The capital budget does have some local bright spots. One area project that is recommended for funding is the completion of Como Park bicycle/pedestrian trail system reconstruction. The system requires a match of \$58,000 in city funds. Already in hand are \$700,000 from the federal TEA-21 program and \$375,000 from the Metropolitan Council.

Sparc, the community development corporation serving Hamline-Midway and North End-South Como, is recommended for \$500,000 for a home improvement deferred loan program. Greater Frogtown Community Development Corporation is recommended for \$500,000 for its Frogtown Facelift home rehabilitation program and \$300,000 for its flexible housing redevelopment program. But another Frogtown request, for Dale Street commercial facade improvements, didn't make the cut.

Three area streets projects are recommended for municipal-state aid dollars. These include replacement of the traffic signals at Snelling's intersections with St. Anthony and Concordia avenues (\$501,000); Victoria Street improvements between Thomas and University (\$398,000); and Great Northern Business Park street improvements along Minnehaha Avenue (\$513,000). The Ayd Mill Road off-street bicycle and pedestrian paths are recommended for \$1.22 million.

Hamline Park Playground building misses the CIB cut in 2006-2007

By JANE MCCLURE

One of the Midway's historic landmarks didn't make the cut for 2006-2007 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) funding. Unless other resources are found, the Hamline Park Playground Building will continue to deteriorate. That is not only a concern for neighborhood residents who worked to save the building more than a decade ago, it's also a worry for those interested in preserving area and African-American history.

The Kasota Limestone building at the corner of Snelling and Lafond is unique for two reasons. It was designed by Clarence "Cap" Wigington, who is recognized as the first African-American municipal architect in the United States. Wigington also designed the Harriet Island pavilion and the Highland Park water tower. He also designed the ice palaces of the 1930s St. Paul Winter Carnival.

The park building is also one of the St. Paul structures built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a federal employment program that helped men and women left jobless during the Great Depres-

sion of the 1930s. Buildings, bridges, retaining walls and other projects built by WPA workers still dot the city.

Without city funding or outside assistance, Hamline-Midway residents are concerned that the building could deteriorate further. The structure, which was built in 1938 to house St. Paul Parks and Recreation programs, is owned by the city and leased by the Hamline Midway Coalition. It has housed other tenants over the years, including the Asian American Renaissance arts organization, and is a site for many community meetings and activities.

Interim HMC Director Dave Gagne said there is concern that water leaks in the building's external walls could also cause mold and mildew problems.

In 1993 the Hamline Park Playground Building was extensively restored, after years of neglect and dwindling use. St. Paul building trades and labor workers donated time, as did community volunteers. After the restoration was completed the Hamline Midway Coalition and other tenants moved into the building.

The construction firm Building Renovation, Inc.

worked with the Coalition to prepare the 2006-2007 CIB request. The funding request describes the "significant structural and stone problems which must be dealt with to avoid serious internal and external damage." Flaking away of stone on vertical and horizontal surfaces, deterioration and disappearance of mortar joints throughout the external walls, rusted steel lintels over windows, and deteriorated caulk and joint compound in some end joints and parapet wall caps are existing problems. Another problem is that the Kasota Limestone blocks move out of place during freezing and thawing cycles.

The Coalition submitted the CIB funding request, for \$198,000. The capital budget, which is allocated every two years, or the city's annual capital maintenance budget, are the two most likely sources of city support for the renovation.

In a tight nonprofit economy, it's not known if building renovation funds could be obtained from foundations or other private sources. The Coalition and other St. Paul district councils have had to cut staff and programs as grants have dwindled.

ball courts at Hamline Park and West Minnehaha are among those missing out on renovation funds.

One challenge the CIB Committee faced is that very large projects are in line for funding. Some of these projects are pre-committed, meaning the city has no choice but to do the work.

Big projects bumped out small projects in competition for

"Not all parts of St. Paul will benefit from the 2006-2007 allocations"

asked that the city budget for a detailed environmental study of the pros and cons of road construction before considering such a large project.

Although area neighborhoods will benefit from citywide playground improvements and housing rehabilitation programs recommended for 2006-2007, other citywide programs that tar-

capital bonding, the most flexible dollars in the CIB pot. A handful of projects, including residential street paving (\$15.9 million), a new West District police station (\$4.5 million) and Jimmy Lee Recreation Center-Oxford Pool renovation and expansion (\$8.25 million), take the lion's share of those dollars.

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Rosetown Playhouse raises curtain on Como Lakeside Pavilion show

By DEBORAH BROTZ

When Como Lakeside Theater went out of existence two summers ago, it looked like Como Lakeside Pavilion's popular summer musical was gone, too. But, then Rosetown Playhouse, a community theater group, jumped at the chance to fill its spot. They will be performing "Bye, Bye, Birdie!" at 7 p.m., on July 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, and Aug. 4, 5, and 6.

"For five summers, we had a summer production in a tent in one of the parks in Roseville," said Margot Olsen, musical director for "Bye, Bye, Birdie!" and president of Rosetown Playhouse. "Our logo is a tent like the circus thing. We offer a theater venue outside. We enjoyed being in a tent and outside. But, a tent is a little less secure when it comes to rain and storms."

Rosetown Playhouse was looking for an opportunity to be outdoors, which offered more security against bad weather.

"We felt it would be great to be at Como," said Olsen. "It's such a fabulous place to perform. It's different than being on the grass. We were looking for an outdoor venue. We couldn't find anywhere else close by and wanted to stay in this area for our performances."

Since Rosetown Playhouse has no theater home, they perform two shows during the year at Roseville Area Middle School, where Olsen teaches music and theater. Michael Sheeks, who teaches music and theater at Roseville Area High School, will direct "Birdie."

"We loved being outside for our summer shows," said Olsen. "People love to be outdoors on a summer evening. Lakeside Theater has a strong history. We think people will be very receptive to Rosetown. We put on

quality entertainment and think people will really enjoy it."

Doing their first production in summer 2000, Rosetown Playhouse grew out of Patchwork Theater.

"Patchwork was a dying away community theater," said Olsen. "Rosetown was reorganized and regrouped, and brought in some new people. It took over Patchwork's properties and reformed in a different direction. Patchwork went through the typical thing where the numbers of people involved in the hard work of theater had dwindled. It was difficult to keep going."

Community theater depends on volunteers.

called Rosetown. We have people involved who live all over the Twin Cities."

In community theater, the directors are paid.

"The artistic staff is paid for by ticket sales and grants," said Olsen. "We're non-profit. We try to make each show pay for itself. Roseville Parks and Recreation has been very supportive of us as an organization and in filling the need to have arts be part of Parks and Recreation."

Rosetown Playhouse always does a musical in the summer.

"Audiences at Como enjoy musicals," said Olsen. "The show 'Birdie' has such a nice range of characters. It allows for some

"We felt it would be great to be at Como.

It's such a fabulous place to perform."

— Musical Director Margot Olson

"It's 100 percent volunteer," said Olsen. "No one who runs the organization is paid. So much work in theater is volunteer. People just got burned out and tired. Patchwork was down to one production a year. They were financially struggling."

The name Rosetown Playhouse was chosen to identify the area it serves.

"We thought it was important to identify with the North Suburban area," said Olsen. "The area of the city that was Rose Township includes what's now Roseville and also some adjoining areas. The idea was if we wanted to encompass a larger area than Roseville it should be

younger kids, teen-agers, adults, and older adults. There's opportunity for a wide range of ages in the cast. We have big casts in our shows and still have the quality people are looking for. It's nice to have one where there are characters with all those different age ranges."

Rosetown chose to perform "Birdie" for its music and story.

"The music is fun and familiar," said Olsen. "People enjoy it. The music has a draw to people because it's familiar. Musicals are light summer entertainment. This is a story with a family who has a teen-ager. Parents and teen-agers are going through things together. The character Birdie is a rock star, kind of like an Elvis character. It appeals to all different ages."

Rosetown Playhouse looks forward to getting out in front of the whole St. Paul audience.

"We're really excited about being at Como this year and hope to attract some of the audience that's used to coming to shows at Como," said Olsen. "We're excited about introducing ourselves to some of that audience."

Olsen hopes "Birdie" will build community with all people in the show.

"My number one hope is always that everybody, from the cast to everyone involved in the show, has a good experience," she said. "I hope everybody has a quality experience, and the show builds community among people who participate. We enjoy having the audience get acquainted with us and will maybe have an opportunity to participate in the future."

Ticket prices are \$9 for adults, and \$7 for children 12 and under.



SAINT PAUL Parks & Recreation 2005

Music In The Parks

June

DATE	DAY	GROUP	SITE	START TIME
1	Wed	Schubert Club Gamelan	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
2	Thu	Minneapolis Police Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
5	Sun	Erin Rogue	Phalen Amphitheater	1:30 PM
5	Sun	Star of The North Concert Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
5	Sun	City of Lakes Chorus, Sweet Adelines	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
6	Mon	QMC Pride Event - 2005	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
7	Tue	Capital City Wind Ensemble	Mears Park	11:45 AM
7	Tue	River City Jazz Orchestra	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
8	Wed	Fridley City Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
9	Thu	Red Rock Swing Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
12	Sun	Jackson Street	Phalen Amphitheater	1:30 PM
12	Sun	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
12	Sun	Shoreview Northern Lights Variety Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
13	Mon	Minneapolis Police Swing Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
14	Tue	Amy & Adams	Mears Park	11:45 AM
14	Tue	St. Paul Police Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
15	Wed	Medalist Concert Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
15	Wed	Teddy Bear Band	Harriet Island	11:15 AM
16	Thu	Robbinsdale City Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
19	Sun	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
19	Sun	Minnesota Pipes and Drums	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
20	Mon	Piano by David Alstead	Rice Park	11:45 AM
20	Mon	Northern Winds Concert Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
21	Tue	North Star Barbershop Chorus	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
22	Wed	Whistlepig String Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
22	Wed	Will Hale and The Tadpole Parade	Harriet Island	11:15 AM
23	Thu	Minnesota Sinfonia	Phalen Amphitheater	7:00 PM
23	Thu	Classic Big Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
23	Thu	Jaztronauts/MOVIE: Muppet Movie (at dusk)	Castillo Park	7:30 PM
26	Sun	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
26	Sun	Calhoun Isles Community Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
27	Mon	Ralph Hepola - Solo Tuba	Rice Park	11:45 AM
27	Mon	Brio Brass	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
28	Tue	St. Anthony Park Community Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
29	Wed	St. Louis Park Community Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
30	Thu	After 5	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
30	Thu	Papa John and the Hot Club/MOVIE: Duck Soup (at dusk)	Castillo Park	7:30 PM

July

DATE	DAY	GROUP	SITE	START TIME
3	Sun	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
3	Sun	St. Anthony Civic Orchestra	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
4	Mon	Kico Rangel Mexican Band	Cherokee Park	12:30 PM
4	Mon	Bourbon Street Boys Jazz Band	Marydale Park	2:00 PM
4	Mon	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
5	Tue	Amy & Adams	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
6	Wed	Jarfalla, Sweden Community Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
7	Thu	Kiki's House, Mike's Party	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
7	Thu	Songs of Hope/MOVIE: Shrek 2 (at dusk)	Castillo Park	7:30 PM
10	Sun	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
10	Sun	Beasley's Big Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
11	Mon	Capital City Wind Ensemble	Rice Park	11:45 AM
11	Mon	Brooklyn Community Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
12	Tue	Joe Meyer, Singer/Songwriter	Mears Park	11:45 AM
12	Tue	Bavarian Musikmeisters	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
13	Wed	Kairos Dance Theatre	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
13	Wed	Rusty's Rockin' Jamboree	Harriet Island	11:15 AM
14	Thu	Bend In The River Big Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
14	Thu	Thursday Night LIVE! - Minnesota Sinfonia	Phalen Amphitheater	7:00 PM
14	Thu	Bill Geezy Band/MOVIE: Best in Show (at dusk)	Castillo Park	7:30 PM
15	Fri	Como Pk Productions-Doug Anderson Presents: "More Than Music"	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
16	Sat	Como Pk Productions-Doug Anderson Presents: "More Than Music"	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
16	Sat	Cromulet Shakespeare Company-"A Comedy of Errors"	Como Park	7:00 PM
17	Sun	Amy & Adams	Phalen Amphitheater	1:30 PM
17	Sun	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
17	Sun	Stan Bann Big Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
18	Mon	Minnesota Sinfonia	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
19	Tue	North Star Barbershop Chorus	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
20	Wed	Kevin Hall with Kid's Mania	Harriet Island	11:15 AM
20	Wed	Somewhat Dixieland Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
21	Thu	Thursday Night LIVE! - Gypsy Mania	Phalen Amphitheater	7:00 PM
21	Thu	Café Accordion Orchestra/MOVIE: The Return of the Pink Panther (dusk)	Castillo Park	7:30 PM
22	Fri	Cromulet Shakespeare Company-"A Comedy of Errors"	Phalen Amphitheater	7:00 PM
22	Fri	Rosetown Playhouse - "Bye, Bye Birdie!"	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
23	Sat	Rosetown Playhouse - "Bye, Bye Birdie!"	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
24	Sun	The Noodlers	Phalen Amphitheater	1:30 PM
24	Sun	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
24	Sun	Lake Country Sweet Adelines	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
25	Mon	Amy & Adams	Rice Park	11:45 AM
25	Mon	Valley De Croix Sweet Adelines	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
26	Tue	South Side Aces	Mears Park	11:45 AM
26	Tue	Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
27	Wed	South Washington County Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
28	Thu	Rosetown Playhouse - "Bye, Bye Birdie!"	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
28	Thu	Thursday Night LIVE! - Rak-smey Khamera, Light from Heaven	Phalen Amphitheater	7:00 PM
28	Thu	Fuego Flamenco/MOVIE: To Kill a Mockingbird (at dusk)	Castillo Park	7:30 PM
29	Fri	Cromulet Shakespeare Company	Phalen Amphitheater	7:00 PM
29	Fri	Rosetown Playhouse - "Bye, Bye Birdie!"	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
30	Sat	Rosetown Playhouse - "Bye, Bye Birdie!"	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM
31	Sun	Piano by David Alstead	Phalen Amphitheater	1:30 PM
31	Sun	Como "Pops" Ensemble	Como Lakeside Pavilion	3:00 PM
31	Sun	Lex Ham Community Band	Como Lakeside Pavilion	7:00 PM

Location Key:

Como Lakeside Pavilion - Como Lakeside Pavilion Promenade, 1360 N. Lexington Parkway

Phalen Amphitheater - 1600 Phalen Drive in Phalen Park, next to the picnic pavilion

Mears Park - 366 Sibley Street, at the intersection of 5th and Sibley, downtown Saint Paul

Rice Park - 140 Washington Street in downtown Saint Paul, directly east of the Ordway Center

Castillo Park - 139 Concord Street in District del Sol on the West Side



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It was an unseasonable cool May morning. The paths around Como Lake were pink with petals—the persistent rain had knocked the apple tree blossoms prematurely to the ground. Wet weather notwithstanding, the park still draws neighborhood people into it. One of those loyal locals is Val Cunningham.

Rain or shine, Val has walked these paths for all the 30 years that she and her husband have lived near Como Park's western edge. "At least five days a week we walk around and through Como Park and always discover something new," exclaimed Val who is a published author, busy freelance nature writer, and avid birder.

Val had generously agreed to come out and help me get a handle on counting those cryptic little warblers that were passing through the park on spring migration. She has been keeping track of the hundreds of different birds living in and passing through Como Park since the 1980s when she first got interested in birdwatching. And, as Val and many birders admit, birdwatching can be pleasantly habit forming.

Birdwatching often awakens curiosity about bird behavior, and Val has expanded her interest in birds to include an interest in the native plants that give food and shelter to birds. "It's wonderful what's happening at Como Lake," she said in reference to the native shoreline vegetation that has been planted around the lake over the last few years. You may have seen Val helping weed that shoreline as a volunteer with EcoPartners (a partnership between the St. Paul Parks Department and community volunteers).

And Ms. Cunningham has taken part in numerous District 10 Environment Committee buckthorn removal events in Como Park's woodlands. "Non-native plants [like buckthorn] lack all the checks and balances that have developed over the ages to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Without such controls, they often become invasive, crowding out valuable native plants and the beneficial insects and other organisms that birds rely on," said Val who not only writes about restoring nature but also translates her knowledge into action.



Neighborhood Naturalist

By DEB ROBINSON

A passion for birds, books, and community service

Her passion for birds has lead her to volunteer her skills to count loon populations for the Department of Natural Resources annual loon survey. She also

May, we were identifying and counting the birds that were using the small Como Park woodland between Lexington and Nebraska Avenues. In spite of the

one hour.

From the leafy treetops, a warbler's persistent song of wild exuberance could clearly be heard above the traffic noise of



Rain or shine, Val Cunningham has walked these paths for all the 30 years that she and her husband have lived near Como Park's western edge. (Photo by Matt Schmitt.)

took part in a one-year bird survey of Arcola Mills for the Minnesota Audubon Society, and now she donates those same birding talents to the District 10 Como Park bird survey.

On that wet morning in

degraded conditions of the wooded ravine from illegal off-road bike jump construction and the subsequent buckthorn invasion, we identified 60 individuals of 27 different species of birds in that little wooded area in just

nearby Lexington Avenue. With Val's patient guidance that morning, I was able to identify the song of the elusive Tennessee warbler—a bird I'd often heard but had never actually seen.

As an active member of the

St. Paul Audubon Society, Val enjoys the society's numerous fieldtrips and the camaraderie of fellow birdwatchers. It only seemed natural for Val to volunteer her writing skills to promote the society's speakers program. But birds aren't the only things that Ms. Cunningham is passionate about—she loves books and she shares her enthusiasm for reading with young readers.

For the last 6 years Val has been a volunteer reading coach for 2nd grade students at Chelsea Elementary School. Every Thursday morning she listens to kids read aloud while she gives encouraging, nonjudgmental advice to the budding book lovers. I asked if she ever encourages the children to read books about birds. She admitted that she's tried, but, at that age, "the kids have a preference for either flesh-eating dinosaurs or cartoon animals like Arthur and Buster." Yet, no matter what topics they read, Val is continually amazed to hear the improvement of the children's reading abilities as the school year progresses. What continually amazes me is the dedication of volunteers like Val Cunningham and the many ways they enrich this community.

Val sees the hawks nesting in Como Park's woodlands and she knows that bluebirds are using the nest boxes at the Como Golf Course. "We live among wildlife, whether we know it or not, and I'd like to see St. Paul become a more wildlife friendly city, in both public and private areas," Ms. Cunningham said with conviction. And she lives her convictions by giving her time and talents to make her Como Park neighborhood a better place for birds and humans alike.

Endnotes: *Como Lake Waterfest: June 18, just south of Como Lakeside Pavilion, volunteer shoreline cleanup at 11 a.m., and free family fun from noon to 4 p.m. More info at: 651-647-6816 *Second Sundays at noon: Midway friends and neighbors meet regularly to work on this lovely little native planting in Horton Park. More info at: 651-646-4392 *EcoPartners: Volunteer for a St. Paul natural resource project and make a difference. More info at: 651-266-6458

*To contact writer: dm-robinson@bitstream.net

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In Our Community

Senior Federation holds picnic on June 21

The new Greater Ramsey County chapter of the Minnesota Senior Federation will host a potluck picnic at noon June 21 at Newell Park, 900 N. Fairview Ave., rain or shine. Up North Barbershop Quartet will entertain. Senior Federation will provide hotdogs and buns. Attendees are asked to bring a salad, hotdish or dessert to share, plus their own utensils and beverages.

The new chapter serves residents of Arden Hills, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Little Canada, Maplewood, New Brighton, Oakdale, Roseville, St. Paul and Shoreview. The event is open to all interested seniors.

For more information, interested persons may call Chuck Fried, 651-698-2277, or Keith Miller, 651-777-0109.

Minnesota Senior Federation is the primary grassroots organization of seniors in Minnesota. With more than 20,000 members and 100 affiliated organizations, the Federation is dedicated to helping seniors develop leadership skills and work toward positive social change locally, statewide and throughout the nation. Information is available by phoning 651-645-0261 or 877-645-0261.

Prehistoric Bugs at Hamline Midway Library

Prehistoric insects in Bugs Before Time (July 5), comedy with Oscar and Becca (July 7), more about insects from the Three Rivers Park District (July 12), and Eric the Juggling Magician (July 14) are some of the performances for children and their families scheduled at Hamline Midway Branch Library.

They are part of the Saint Paul Public Library's Summer Reading Program, which aims to encourage children and teens to continue to read during the summer. This year's theme is "What's Buzzin' at Your Library?" Performances will be on Thursdays, June 16 through July 14, at 10:30 a.m., and on Tuesdays, June 28 through July 26, at 7 p.m. The library is located at 1558 W. Minnehaha Avenue.

Summer Reading Program materials for children and teens, including lists for recording reading done, can be picked up at any Saint Paul Public Library or the Bookmobile, beginning on June

11. All are welcome to attend the Summer Reading Kick Off event at the Central Library in downtown Saint Paul on Saturday, June 11, beginning at 11:15 a.m. Special activities and entertainers will be featured.

For more information, please contact the Hamline Midway Branch Library at 651-642-0293 or access the Library's website at www.sppl.org.

Memory issues topic of luncheon July 12

"Memory & Aging, What's Normal & What's Not" will be the topic at a luncheon for seniors on Tuesday, July 12 at the Hamline Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood.

The event begins at 11:30 a.m. and is sponsored by the Hamline Midway Elders Program. Please call 651-209-6542 to respond or request free transportation. Call the program office if you know of anyone age 62 and older who is being discharged and needs help in their home with tasks of daily living.

Vacation Bible School at St. Tim's June 20-24

Vacation Bible School will be held June 20 through June 24 at St. Timothy Lutheran Church. This year's theme is SERENGETI-Where Kids are WILD about God.

Children ages 4 years to 5th grade are welcome to join us for fun, games, crafts, singing and treats each morning from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Cost is \$15 per child. Stop by the church office at 1465 Victoria or call the church office at 651-489-0336 to register.

Powder Puff Clown Club meets each month

The Powder Puff Clown Club meets the first Thursday of each month at Galilee Lutheran Church, 145 N. McCarron's Blvd in Roseville. Education begins at 7 p.m. Anyone interested in clowning is welcome to attend. We do shows and mingles for Senior Care Centers, Senior Residences, Nursing Homes; or wherever a smile is needed. Our parade season starts in May and keeps us busy all summer long. For more information call 651-429-7117, or write 855 Village Center Drive, Box 174, North Oaks, MN 55127.

Pop Wagner announces music series at Turf Club

Pop Wagner and friends will perform at the Turf Club (1601 University Avenue W., 651-647-0486) on the second Sunday of each month though the summer.

On June 12 Pochontas County will appear on the bill with Pop. He will share the stage with Dan Newton on July 10, and on August 14 the newly formed Foss, Terr and Wagner Trio (Tim Foss, John Terr and Pop Wagner) will appear. The fun starts at 9 p.m. and goes 'till midnight.



Pop Wagner and friends will perform at the Turf Club (1601 University Avenue W., 651-647-0486) on the second Sunday of each month though the summer.

What's Buzzin' at the Merriam Park Library

Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Avenue, will kick off its summer entertainment program on Tuesday, July 12 with an appearance by Dakota Wild Animals, an interactive show featuring reptiles and mammals from around the world. Programs are held at 10:30 and 2:00 in the basement of the library. All afternoon performances are interpreted using American Sign Language.

On July 19, nationally known master puppeteer Steve Abrams will pay a visit as part of Puppet Fest 2005, and on July 26 Professor Bear, also known as Ira Fiedelman, will entertain with storytelling and harmonica music.

These performances are part of the Saint Paul Public Library's Summer Reading Program, which aims to encourage children and teens to continue to read during the months school is not in session. Reading records and other materials can be picked up in any Saint Paul Public Library as of June 11.

For more information, please contact the Merriam Park Library at 651-642-0385.

Music on the Blacktop is June 25 at St. Timothy

Music on the Blacktop is a popu-

lar summer block party sponsored by St. Timothy Lutheran Church. The event features great live music, games, concessions (most for only 25 cents), face painting and lots of door prizes. Join the fun, greet your neighbors and listen to the music! Saturday, June 25 from 4 to 8 p.m. in front of St. Tim's, 1465 North Victoria Street. Call 651-489-0336 for more information.

Resident receives award from Hamline University

St. Paul resident Wendy Burns, assistant director of student activities and leadership development at Hamline University, was presented with the Staff Member of the Year Award at the Hamline University Honors Day Awards Ceremony on May 5.

The Hamline University Student Congress founded the Staff Member of the Year Award to recognize staff members of the Hamline community who have exemplified outstanding dedication, commitment and service to the Hamline community and to its goals and objectives.

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Holy Childhood awards music scholarships

Music Honors Scholarships were awarded by the Buchanan-Larsen Endowment on May 15 at the Penecost orchestral mass at the church of the Holy Childhood, 1435 Midway Parkway, to five Schola students completing sixth grade at Holy Childhood School.

Earning tuition grants for their outstanding achievement in the choir school are Emily Quam, Cristopher Deacy, Jacqueline Schmitz, Michael Jacobsen and Veronica Snyder. Recognition awards were presented to Madison Umidon and Michael Barton.

The Buchanan-Larsen Endowment is pleased to offer the Mary Downey Scholarship to a new student entering the fifth or sixth grade and participating fully in the Schola program, throughout which students receive voice-training, learn to read music, including complex scores, and have the opportunity to learn music appreciation in its many aspects. The Schola program continues through eighth grade. New students may apply, or inquire further by contacting Larry Gallatin, principal at 651-644-2791, ext. 306, or e-mail lgallatin@holychildhoodparish.org

Resident receives teaching award from Hamline

St. Paul resident Walter Blue, a professor of modern languages and literatures at Hamline University, was presented with The Burton and Ruth Grimes Teacher Award at the Hamline University Honors Day Awards Ceremony on May 5.

The award is presented to the outstanding teacher of the faculty of the College of Liberal Arts. Factors considered include: the loyalty of the nominee to his/her profession and Hamline University; the achievement attained in the year of the award as well as prior years in the teaching profession; the enthusiasm of the award nominee and the support of faculty members and students for the performance of the nominee in his/her profession; and the personal contact maintained and the extra efforts provided to students by the nominee.

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Hamline student receives Fulbright Fellowship

Hamline University senior Graham Lampa has been awarded a prestigious Fulbright Fellowship for foreign study as part of the U.S. government's premier scholarship program. With the latest fellowship, an impressive 20 Hamline University students have now earned Fulbright awards since 1995.

Lampa will travel to Germany to study the standardization of degree systems to an Anglo-American standard of Bachelor's, Masters and Ph.D. in order to foster greater international scholarship and to further the project of forging a common European identity. Lampa will study this reform process at three universities in Germany while based out of Trier, Hamline's sister school. He will study this change at Trier, the old university of Tübingen and the technical school in Leipzig in the former East Germany.

"Encouraging outstanding Hamline students to seek opportunities such as the Fulbright Fellowships is a part of our program

of internationalizing education," said College of Liberal Arts Dean F. Garvin Davenport. "These highly competitive fellowships help us fulfill our mission to prepare our students for lives as compassionate citizens of the world, in a world crying out for both compassion and citizenship."

The Fulbright Program is an international educational exchange program established by Congress in 1946 under legislation introduced by the late Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas. Designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries, the program is administered by the U.S. government in cooperation with over 130 countries around the world. The Fulbright Program emphasizes academic and professional excellence with awards based on open competition. Approximately 4,500 new grants are awarded annually.

Lampa graduated from



Graham Lampa as pictured at Hamline's commencement exercises May 21. (Photo by Dawn Villelia)

Hamline University May 21 with majors in German and global studies, minors in political science and philosophy and a cer-

tificate in international journalism. He is the son of Frieda Lampa of Brainerd, Minn.

Hamline's College of Liberal

Arts has steadily built its national reputation with an innovative curriculum and excellent, dedicated faculty.

Midway in a minute

Continued from page 2

The variance is for 30 days sometime between June 1 and October 28. The variance is for the hours of 5 p.m. to 7 a.m.

It's not clear yet when the 30-day period will be. The St. Paul City Council approved the noise variance May 18, following a public hearing. No one attended the public hearing to speak against the variance request.

The variance is part of a Residential Street Vitality Program, (RSVP) project that will take place in the Como Park neighborhood this summer. Community meetings and a City Council public hearing on the project have already been held.

One condition of the noise variance request is that Public Works do all it can to minimize any construction noise.

Such variance requests are rare and are usually sought for overnight work and for work in areas where underlying bedrock or other conditions

Because of the RSVP project, area residents and others driving through the area should watch for street closures or delays. Street closures are posted on the city's web site, at www.stpaul.ci.us.mn. Residents with access to the Internet can go to the city's web site and subscribe to free e-mails that regularly announce citywide street closings.

Merriam Park property should be rezoned

A vacant Merriam Park property overlooking Interstate 94 should be rezoned so that multi-family housing can be built there, the St. Paul Planning Commission decided May 6. That's despite objections from the Merriam Park Community Council (MPCC), which believes the site isn't suitable for housing.

The Planning Commission recommendation goes to the City Council for final approval June 8 after a June 1 public hearing.

Also, before the land is sold to a prospective developer the City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, will hold an additional public hearing.

The property in question is on Gilbert Street in Merriam Park, just north of I-94. It is one of several properties the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) acquired in the 1960s and 1970s when freeways were built in St. Paul.

MnDOT has been selling unused properties back to the city over the past few years. The city in turn puts the projects up for sale for redevelopment or in some cases, for adjacent property owners to expand their own yards. Most of these properties retained residential zoning, so the transfers of ownership from public to private hands have gone smoothly.

That isn't the case in Merriam Park. For about two years, developer Matt O'Hara has had plans to put about 40 townhouse units on

the property. He sees his potential market for the townhouses as area college students wanting to rent dwellings off-campus. But O'Hara's plans cannot move ahead until the land is rezoned from industrial to residential use.

MnDOT doesn't typically seek to rezone its properties. But the St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) isn't willing to purchase the land from MnDOT and then sell it to O'Hara until the zoning is changed. State law allows

the city to rezone the property by conducting a rezoning study, said city planner Patricia James.

The area studied is bounded by I-94, Prior Avenue, the Soo Line Railroad and Wilder Street. The Planning Commission authorized the study in April.

MPCC is reiterating a 2003 position it took on O'Hara's development and the rezoning request. The district council's Land Use Committee "felt that this parcel was too poorly placed for housing

and had a lot of undesirable qualities, namely, being too close to the noise of the rail line and the freeway, and being cut off from the rest of the neighborhood. It was the strong feeling of the Land use Committee that these qualities made the plot a poor location for housing." The district council committee also questioned whether there is enough demand to rent the townhouses after they are built.

— Compiled by Jane McClure

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John Lennon said, "Life is what happens, while you're making other plans." That certainly has been my life lately. My husband was recently out in Los Angeles, visiting his daughter on his way back from the NASCAR race in Las Vegas. He called me late one night and interrupted my favorite past-time of dozing on the couch and half-heartedly watching TV.

"Are you sitting down? I have news."

It was pretty funny as it was after 10 p.m. on a Saturday night, my favorite lay-around time. He proceeded to tell me that his daughter's boyfriend had asked him for her hand in marriage.

"Isn't he asking the wrong person?"

Mr. M. told me that he wanted to be old fashioned and do it right. My husband, Mr. let's-just-live-together has no time for traditions. When he approached me with his half baked plan of just living together, he was floored when I refused. I told him that we had two kids to think of and living together was out of the question. I wondered what his answer was to his daughter's boyfriend. He told me it was: "Sure."

I found that whole scene so amusing, like something out of a sitcom; the casual new age father, the traditional son-in-law. I'll have time to get used to the idea of my little girl getting married because



The Best Years

By SHERRI MOORE

Life happens while you're making other plans

the wedding was tentatively set for the spring or summer, 2006. While I was contemplating a wedding in California, the phone rang again. This time it was my son.

"Hi Ma, were you sleeping?"

Was that even a possibility in this family?

"Amy and I are talking about getting married, what do you think?"

I was speechless, my mind kept whizzing ahead while my voice had disappeared. Finally, I was able to choke out,

"It doesn't matter what I think, what do you think?"

We had a short conversation as he was in the bathroom line at a bar and his turn came up. He called back a bit later and I talked to both of them, still at a noisy bar. They were thinking fall of 2006.

My nerves immediately started to frazzle. BOTH WEDDINGS NEXT YEAR!! Then I called my husband in California and said: "Are you sitting down?"

Can you believe it? One minute we're having a nice, uneventful life without kids, the next minute, we're going to be in-laws, and wedding planners; not to mention wedding payers. Luckily, I had planned for the weddings five years ago, while refinancing the house, so there was money put aside. Both kids were told the amount they could count on, both kids were happy with what we offered.

Both kids have chosen wisely. Krista has been dating her boyfriend for three years, so this was no surprise. Greg has his law degree and is in the process of taking his bar exam. He's tall, handsome and witty. The only thing I can find fault with is he's an Orange County Republican. My stepdaughter is a Democrat, as we are. But then, it will make for interesting discussions at dinner. He's a California surfer, likes to have a good time, rarely wears shoes other than sandals, and freezes at 50 degrees. I can see

why she's crazy about him. Also, he has the most delightful parents, who I've had the honor of dining with on two occasions. They kids seem to have a lot in common, and will be very happy.

My son chose a wonderful girl. She's half Irish and Catholic, not that it matters. I'm thrilled to think that my grandchildren, the fifth generation Americans will still be half Irish. I know my deceased parents are pleased. Amy is a student at the U of M, and works there full-time as well. She's calm, and has an air of sophistication. She seems to be able to handle situations, including meeting all of my relatives last weekend, with grace and style. What a perfect compliment for my passionate, excitable son (who's a chip off the old block.) Did I mention that she's very beautiful too; long dark hair and blue eyes, and tall and thin.

All of this makes me feel very old. I'm going to be a mother-in-law to two people. There's

also the prospect of being a grandmother, which I don't have to think about right this minute. Just being a mother-in-law is a big enough change. It hardly seems possible, since I'm still so young. Having had a mother-in-law from hell, (my first marriage, not my second), I've decided to try to be laid back and not interfere. My friend Liz, laughed heartily when I told her that. This will be a new approach for me since I'm a control freak. My plans are to be the picture of restraint. Already, while visiting Krista I practiced saying: "What do you want to do?"

"What do you think?"

And my favorite, "Oh, ah ha."

I once had an aunt who would say, "Oh, ah ha" to everything and never did voice her own opinion. Come to think of it, her kids turned out to be quite whacky!

The coming year should be very interesting. There'll be plenty of work to do before the big days begin. Do any of you have some advice for me? How about some tips? I need help. I think I'll fix myself a cup of tea and try to calm down.

(Sherri Moore is a freelance writer and former resident of the Como neighborhood. She welcomes your comments and can be reached at sherrimoore92@msn.com.)

Como area resident, musician performs in 'The Lion King'

Como Area musician Ralph Hepola performed in the orchestra for the National Tour of Broadway's award-winning musical *The Lion King*, at the Historic Orpheum Theatre on Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis from April 7 to May 29.

The Lion King is one of the most-acclaimed productions in Broadway history, having earned six Tony Awards including Best Musical. Company management reported that the 2487-seat Orpheum Theatre was sold at 99.5 percent of capacity for 62 performances which means over 153,000 people enjoyed what Newsweek has called "A Landmark Event in Entertainment."

Seven Twin Cities musicians, including Hepola, joined ten touring musicians from the Disney Theatrical Division based in New York City.

Ralph Hepola, who performs on low brass instruments, is one

of the most-active freelance musicians in the Twin Cities Area. He is regularly heard with major performing arts organizations to include concerts, operas, ballets, recordings, videos, and radio broadcasts.

Hepola is principal tubaist with Minnesota Opera at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts. Since 1988, he has led the trio ROUTE 3-An American Musical Journey in concerts and at special events around the Upper Midwest.

While still a teenager, Ralph Hepola won a position in The United States Army Band of Washington, D.C. where he served for three years. His music degree is from Northwestern University, near Chicago. For five years, he was with the symphony orchestra in Basel, which is Switzerland's second-largest city. Ralph also freelanced for two years in New York City with various jazz and classical ensembles.



Como Area musician Ralph Hepola performed in the orchestra for the National Tour of Broadway's award-winning musical *The Lion King*, at the Historic Orpheum Theatre on Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis from April 7 to May 29. Hepola is principal tubaist with Minnesota Opera at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts. Since 1988, he has led the trio ROUTE 3-An American Musical Journey in concerts and at special events around the Upper Midwest.

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Adult businesses must meet new distance requirements

By JANE MCCLURE

Adult-oriented businesses hoping to open their doors in St. Paul must meet new distance separation and floor space requirements. Whether those regulations face a legal challenge remains to be seen.

The St. Paul City Council unanimously adopted new zoning regulations May 25. Those regulations will take effect in late June, in order to beat the end of a one-year moratorium on adult uses.

"There are many people who would like the city to regulate these businesses further," said Ward Four City Council Member Jay Benanav. "But I think we've pushed it as far as we can." Hamline-Midway neighborhood activists were among those pushing for more stringent guidelines, even asking that the city find ways to simply prevent new businesses from opening.

Benanav has not ruled out future amendments to the regulations. But the one-year limit on zoning-related moratoriums, which was imposed a few years ago by a state law change, doesn't allow that to happen now.

And because a 1999 legal challenge successfully invalidated the city's current regulations, "without this we have nothing."

The proposed regulations are St. Paul's second try at new adult business rules in a decade. In 1995 the City Council amended a zoning ordinance after public hearings had been held at the council and Planning Commission levels. That ordinance was challenged and overturned on procedural grounds in 1999, because the public didn't have a chance to comment on the adopted changes. That left city officials with an unenforceable ordinance, a problem that came to light when Benanav looked at ways to restrict new businesses from opening in his ward.

If the sign of a compromise is that no one is happy, the proposed regulations for businesses including strip clubs, adult bookstores and adult novelty gift businesses may be just that. Neighborhood residents opposed to adult businesses and business owners themselves don't like the new rules.

The rules use the amount of store floor space devoted to "explicit" materials as a way to define what is and is not an adult business. Any store with more than 15 percent and/or 225 square feet of space of usable floor area would be an adult-oriented business. The St. Paul Planning Commission wanted that ratio to be 15 percent or 300 square feet.

Benanav also increased the distance between new adult businesses and home and protected uses such as schools, recreation centers, places of worship and day care centers. In neighborhoods that distance would be 500 feet, not 400 feet as the Planning Commission recommended. Downtown the separation would be 250 feet, not 200 feet.

After new regulations are adopted, existing businesses would become nonconforming uses and



The St. Paul City Council unanimously adopted new zoning regulations May 25. Those regulations will take effect in late June, in order to beat the end of a one-year moratorium on adult uses. (Photo by Terry Faust)

could remain in operations. But city review and approval would be required if a business wanted to expand or relocate, or if a new business wanted to open in St. Paul.

More than a dozen people attended a May 18 council public hearing on the regulations. Foes of adult businesses contend that the proposed ordinance doesn't do enough to protect neighborhoods from new adult-oriented businesses opening their doors. Many at the hearing have been involved in debate over the opening of Fantasy Gifts and The Love Doctor. They believe the city needs to do more to restrict where new businesses can go.

Advocates for businesses and free speech argue that the city may be setting itself up for a legal challenge based on Constitutional issues. Randall Tighe, an attorney who represents several Twin Cities adult businesses, said he believes the city's ordinance could easily be challenged. In an interview after the hearing he called the ordinance "a sitting duck."

When trying to regulate adult businesses, City Planning Administrator Larry Soderholm said the city's powers are more limited than is the case with other zoning issues. That's because Constitutional free speech issues come into play with books, magazines, videos and DVDs. Even though people may dislike adult businesses, Soderholm said the city cannot simply ban such businesses from St. Paul.

Assistant City Attorney Gerald Hendrickson asked Soderholm if Benanav's changes would still allow adequate space for any new adult businesses wanting to locate in St. Paul. Soderholm said that there still would be areas where businesses could open.

Where the distance change could have the most impact is on a street like University Avenue, especially when the business separation requirements kick in.

The new regulations must be adopted soon. Because a one-year moratorium on new adult businesses expires July 19, the council must adopt and publish new regulations before then. Sticking to that tight schedule means the council must act by early June, said Planning Administrator Larry Soderholm. At this point it appears that the changes do have enough coun-

cil votes for adoption.

A City Council time limit on public hearings meant that several people didn't get to speak May 18, including Love Doctor owner Troy DeCorsey. "There's a lot I'd like to have said," he said after the meeting. DeCorsey rejects the arguments that businesses like his adult novelty gift shop contribute to the decline of the surrounding neighborhood.

But many neighbors disagree. Hamline-Midway resident Carol Hill and Snelling-Hamline resident Tewodros Suluki brought the City Council a display board, headlined This is Your Neighborhood, with pictures and news articles about the Love Doctor.

"We're concerned about the property values and economic strength of the Hamline-Midway

area," Hill said. She and others believe that businesses like Love Doctor and Fantasy Gifts contribute to a perception of a deteriorating neighborhood.

"I think this proposed ordinance weakens what we have already," said Hamline-Midway resident and former Ward Four City Council Member Kiki Sonnen. She believes the proposed regulations will allow such adult businesses to concentrate in specific areas. Her suggestions include limiting the total number of adult businesses allowed in the city, or regulating such businesses by percentage of sales of adult materials.

New regulations on adult business locations are meant to prevent the concentration of businesses in certain areas, to avoid a repeat of the problems of the 1970s and 1980s. That's when adult businesses were congregated around University and Dale, and on North Wabasha Street downtown.

The most debate May 18 centered on what are called "secondary effects." At the heart of the city's adult business regulation is the issue of how a business would potentially impact its surrounding neighborhood in terms of increased crime and decreased property values. Tighe disputes that secondary effects are caused by the adult businesses he works with.

"That has about as much truth to it as Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction," he said.

Tighe said the city's own studies, conducted more than a decade ago, show that the adverse secondary effects came from adult busi-

nesses where alcohol was served. Take liquor out of the mix and "there's no decrease in property values, no increase in crime," he said.

Tighe also disputed the city's use of a percentage of floor space area to define an adult business. He said the City Council should be honest and simply admit it wants to do all it legally can "to censor free speech you don't like."

Downtown resident and free speech advocate Rich Neumeister said the city's zoning studies don't do enough to distinguish between the various of adult businesses and what the secondary effects of those businesses are. "It's important to document secondary effects and how those are different between businesses," Neumeister said the city cannot assume that a peep show or strip club would have the same impacts as a "Ma and Pa video store" with a small section of adult movies.

"I think that's a different ball game," he said.

But Sonnen and Summit-University resident Stuart Goldbart dispute the free speech argument. "Whose free speech are we talking about, anyway?" said Goldbart. He said the city should stand up to "sex industry legal hacks" and strengthen its regulations.

Goldbart and Sonnen also argued that the City Council needs to consider the secondary effects of prostitution near adult-oriented businesses. Sonnen contends that people coming out of the Love Doctor have been solicited for sex. DeCorsey said that isn't happening.

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New to the Neighborhood

By NATE HAMILTON

Getting your groove on

I've noticed that every time I put music on, my little boy starts up his dance groove. I'm not sure where he picked up his wild dance steps; elbows swinging, head bops from side to side, a jerky foot stomps the floor, big wide open grin, sometimes yelling along with the music. It's awesome.

So, I was wondering what it is about music that we find so important, that kids are drawn to, that makes us all so happy that we feel compelled to get our groove on. I decided to talk to some experts whom might know a little more about music and why it is so important for children. I tracked down two area musician/parents to get their insight: Jonathan Rundman and Todd Seabury-Kolod.

First, I caught up via email with my friend and Twin Cities singer/songwriter/producer/musician and fellow daytime dad, Jonathan Rundman. Rundman has been playing and producing his own style of folk/rock music since the early 90's, and has toured extensively all across the U.S. More recently, Rundman says, "I spend my days at home taking care of my son, Paavo,

while my wife is at work. I only tour on the weekends, and play local shows in the evenings." Rundman says his son, "loves music—he'll play the drums or bang on the piano for long periods of time with a big smile on his face."

Rundman and his wife, a developmental psychologist, anticipate getting Paavo in music lessons when he is just a bit older, but say he is already drawn to all things musical. "We have a bit of everything playing around the house all day," Rundman says, "newer artists like the Donnas and Aimee Mann, but also bluegrass, old country, and traditional Scandinavian folk music. We take him to church with us, and it's really cool to see him reacting to hundreds of people singing loudly all around him...he's fascinated by it." Jonathan cites the power of music on a toddler's brain development as the reason they encourage music in their family life.

In 2004 Jonathan released his seventh solo album, "Public Library" to critical acclaim. Hear some of Jonathan's music and read more about him at www.jonathanrundman.com

Wanting to learn a bit more about music and child develop-

ment, I turned to a real pro, Saint Paul Early Childhood Family Education teacher, Todd Seabury-Kolod. In 2003, Todd produced the children's album "Daddy-Doo" with fellow ECFE parents and staff. All of the proceeds from the sale of the album as well as from the newly released follow-up album "Daddy-Doo-A-Rama" go to the Saint Paul ECFE program.

Todd initially began using music in his classes as "a bridge between me and the children." When he found parents and their children were really enjoying his music, he began recording.

Todd's two sons are also musicians. "Music is hot-wired to the soul" he says. "That is why we encourage it. It is a gift of being human." I asked Todd for advice on getting children involved in music. His response: "Above all else, I encourage parents to follow their own dreams and to live as passionately as they can. For some this may mean taking up an instrument."

You can learn more about the Daddy-Doo Band as well as purchase a cd at www.daddy-doo.com.

Well, I have run out of time and space. More next time.

City Council hosts public hearing on ordinance problems with 18+ nights

By JANE MCCLURE

Bars that host 18-and-up nights, teen night and college nights provide 18 to 20-year-olds with a chance to enjoy dancing and music. Unfortunately, such events also lead to underage drinking and problems in surrounding neighborhoods. The St. Paul City Council will host a public hearing at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 15 on an ordinance that would restrict bars holding such events.

The events are often marketed to college students, with fliers plastered around area neighborhoods where many students live. The proposed ordinance would ban on-sale liquor license holders from hosting the events unless the underage patrons are kept in a portion of the bar where liquor, including 3.2 malt liquor, is not served. The licensee would be responsible for making sure that underage individuals couldn't gain access to areas where liquor is "sold, served, permitted or consumed." Advertisements for the events would have to state that the events would be held in alcohol-free areas.

The restrictions wouldn't apply to bowling alleys, theaters, Midway Stadium or to the Rivercentre complex. The restrictions could be adopted as early as June 22.

Ward Five Council Member Lee Helgen introduced the restrictions June 1, in response to problems early May 30 at Rice Street nightclub Club Cancun. More than 800 people leaving an 18-and-up B96 radio station hip-hop dance party became disruptive. St.

Paul Police, Maplewood Police and the Minnesota State Highway Patrol were called to quell the disturbance, which clogged streets and forced surrounding businesses to close for a time. One person was arrested.

Helgen said what happened is "intolerable" and said the city must address the problems such events cause. He wants restrictions in place before the end of the summer and brought in the ordinance under suspension June 1. It was not on the City Council's printed agenda.

Another problem club council members discussed June 1 is at Como Avenue and Highway 280. This club, which has operated under different names over the years, is currently in an adverse action proceedings because of past behavior problems there.

Other council members agreed with Helgen's intent, but admitted that may be easier said than done. Although he supports Helgen in principle, Ward Six Council Member Dan Bostrom called the proposed ordinance "a feel-good, fuzzy kind of deal" and questioned whether it would accomplish anything. The retired police officer said it's all too easy for underage persons to attend 18-and-older events and get alcoholic beverages from their older friends. Bostrom said the only way to eliminate the problem is to ban young people from places where liquor is served.

Almost two years ago, Ward Three Council Member Pat Harris and then-Ward Five Council Member Jim Reiter spent several weeks researching such an ordi-

nance. That effort had St. Paul Police support as well as support from some liquor license holders. "But we ultimately decided not to go forward," Harris said.

Harris said the city should open up a dialogue with the Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association, business and hospitality groups and on-sale liquor license holders before any new restrictions are adopted. "I think we need to have a broader conversation about this," Harris said.

He said there is disagreement among liquor license holders about such events and a whole range of arguments raised in the discussion of restrictions. Establishments that don't have separate spaces where underage and of-age patrons could be accommodated would have to remodel or expand their nightclubs. Another issue is economic, as bands that are paid from entrance fees can make more money by opening an event to patrons age 18 and older.

The St. Paul City Attorney's Office has extensively researched restrictions similar to the ones Helgen proposed but found no feasible restrictions that all license holders could agree on, said Council President Kathy Lantry. Although she supports what Helgen is trying to do and signed the ordinance along with Helgen, Jay Benanav and Dave Thune, Lantry said the council needs to weigh the problems with underage drinking with the desire of families to enjoy dinner out at a bar-restaurant.

"How do you balance that?" Lantry said.

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Como Town latest addition to changing face of Como Park

By KAROLYN MAUER

For decades, St. Paulites have enjoyed the splendor and excitement of Como's amusement park. Managed by the O'Neil family since 1949, redevelopment became an option in November 2003. Lancer Hospitality was hired by the City of St. Paul to renovate the amusement park.

The redevelopment of the amusement park happened because the City "had a vision of improving and expanding," said Jeff Holmes, the general manager of Como Town. Lancer Hospitality understood that vision, and therefore chosen for the rebuilding.

So Como Park became home to St. Paul's newest amusement area, Como Town. It is adjacent to the Como Zoo and McNeely Conservatory. Como Town has modernized rides, some of which are one-of-a-kind. Attractions are sophisticated, yet appropriate for children.

Hodge Podge Park is located in the center of the area. Kids can dig, slide, zip, and climb in this thrilling jungle gym. The Sky Glider allows riders to control their own "plane." Rapid pedaling creates a faster ride.

Children can drive miniature cars around the track at the Driving School and extinguish the "flames" shooting from a build-

ing at the Fire Brigade Tower.

Young patrons are able to experience a firefighters' job if only for a moment.

"What makes this [Como Town] different from others is that a lot of rides are interactive," said Glenn Baron, president of Como Town.

Given that, Como Town promotes participation instead of simply being a passenger on a ride. Interaction is abundant at the new amusement area. This allows children control of the speed and pace of the ride. "It involves more senses," said Holmes.

So far, Como Town has been a hit with visitors.

Abby Amish was one of the guests on opening day. She went to Como Town with her mother, Kathy, and younger brother on June 1.

Kathy Amish, a resident of West St. Paul, thinks the amusement park is a "good attraction," and St. Paul will benefit from the redevelopment.

"I like that it's outdoors," Amish said. "The price is great and the staff is nice—they seem to be enjoying themselves."

The price to participate in the festivities of Como Town also makes the amusement park unique compared to some other entertainment centers in the

Twin Cities. Admission is free. Customers pay for tickets to ride and play attractions.

"Rides are as cheap as seventy-five cents," Baron said.

The price and innovation of Como Town are among the originality of the new amusement park. The features throughout the park will inevitably attract Minnesotans near and far.

"Como Town is a nice addition to the community," said Baron.

While the amusement park is an addition to Como, the park also built a new visitor center. It serves as the "interconnectivity between the Conservatory and Zoo," Holmes stated. Also, the new amphitheater at Como will regularly conduct plays, sing-alongs, and shows that children can join.

"With the other enhancements to the park—it [Como Town] makes the park a more desirable place," said Holmes.

The amusement park has been a part of Como since 1949. So while the Baby Boomers of St. Paul enjoyed the Zoo, Conservatory, and rides of the park that they were familiar with during their day, Minnesotans of the new millennium will also enjoy the new array of amenities that the Como Park of today has to offer.



(Photos by Terry Faust)

Transit fares to rise in July for most bus and light rail riders

By JANE MCCLURE

Transit fares will rise 25 cents July 1 for most bus and light rail riders. Metro Mobility riders will see an increase of 25 cents per fare during non-peak periods and 50 cents during peak periods. The Metropolitan Council unanimously approved the fare increases May 25, as one step in plugging a \$60 million budget hole in Metro Transit's budget for 2006-2007.

However, the council held off on a sweeping plan to cut bus routes. That is because the Minnesota Legislature has yet to act upon a transportation and

transit funding bill that Governor Tim Pawlenty will support. State lawmakers approved a 10-cent gasoline tax increase in May, which the governor promptly vetoed. It would have been Minnesota's first gasoline tax increase since 1988.

The Metropolitan Council is expected to take up the service cuts question again June 15, although it's not clear whether state lawmakers will have acted on transit and transportation funding by then. State lawmakers have indicated that other funding issues, including K-12 education, need to be resolved

before transit and transportation funding is acted upon.

When the service cuts are voted on will affect when they are implemented. Fall had been eyed as a date for the changes, but the delays make that less certain.

Metro Transit's budget is being squeezed by several factors, including rising fuel and health care costs. A shift in transit funding to motor vehicle sales taxes has also produced less revenue than anticipated. Yet another factor is transit ridership that has lagged since last year's bus strike.

Classifieds

Continued from page 15

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