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monitor

Serving the Midway, Como, and North End Communities of St. Paul



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Unique Leonardo's Basement brings spirit of da Vinci to the Midway

By ERIK BURGESS

It may seem difficult to ponder the work of Leonardo da Vinci from behind the protection of a cardboard box castle. It may also be increasingly difficult to consider the spirit of such a construction with water balloons sailing over your head.

But according to Steve Jevning, founder and executive director of Leonardo's Basement, fostering an imaginative environment for children – a la da Vinci – is one of the sole purposes for his organization.

"We help [children] realize the imaginative dreams they have

with the materials we have available and the skills they have," Jevning said.

Leonardo's Basement was created in 1999 by parents and students who wished to work hands on with arts and science projects, types of projects that were not available to them at school. A non-profit, Leonardo's has been working out of their Minneapolis headquarters since then, providing year-round after school and summer courses for children, with the help of gifts and donations from individuals and foundations, such as the Midway Men's Club.



Leonardo's Basement was created in 1999 by parents and students who wished to work hands on with arts and science projects, types of projects that were not available to them at school. The program has recently set up space in the Griggs Playground building, with the idea of providing a convenient location for parents and children in the area.



Operating out of this Minneapolis location for the past 11 years, Leonardo's Basement is now creating an additional location in the Midway's Griggs Park.

The idea for a new location, Jevning said, came from his wish to provide a new convenient location for parents and children in the area, but especially to create a new community environment for the surrounding neighborhood.

"We want to just help convert that sort of sleepy, underutilized park into a gathering place," Jevning said.

Griggs, however, was not

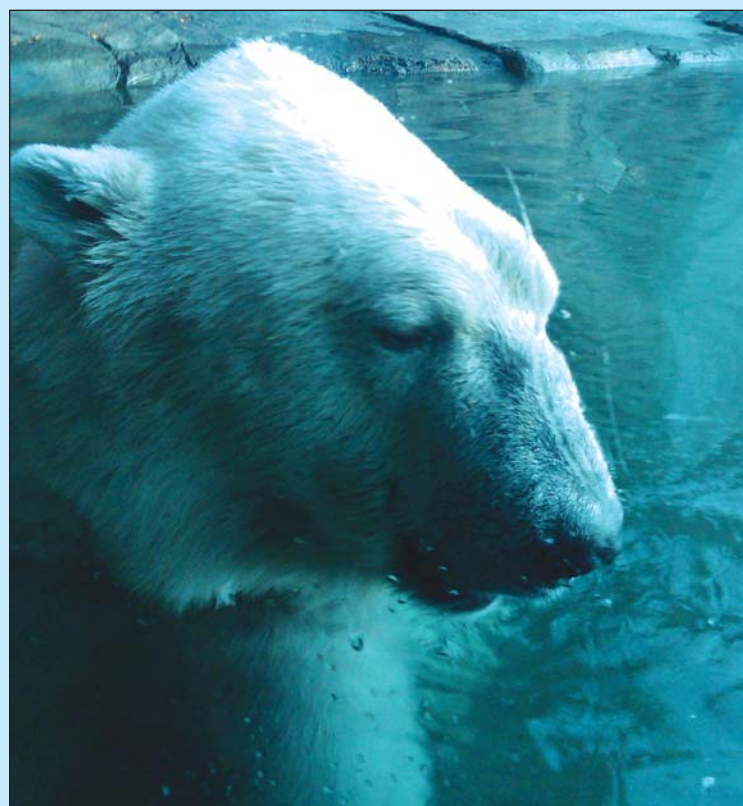
Jevning's first choice for locations in St. Paul. He said the organization considered several other parks around the St. Paul area before Griggs was presented to them by the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department.

"We had our eye on a couple of parks, and we eventually learned that those buildings were going to be torn down," he said.

Susie Odegard, program coordinator for St. Paul Parks and Recreation, said the city was looking to reevaluate the uses of several parks and recreation cen-

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Bear-y glad to be here



The Minnesota Twins aren't the only ones moving into a new home this summer. Twin polar bears, Neil and Buzz, arrived safely back to Como Zoo and into their new home, Polar Bear Odyssey, the Zoo's newest attraction which opened June 3. The fourteen-year-old male bears were accompanied by animal care staff during their trip from the Detroit Zoo where they have lived since February 2008. They were born at the Louisville Zoo and came to Como Zoo in 2002. The male bears are named for the Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

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Monitor in a Minute

Fireworks tent approved by Council

Barring an appeal to the St. Paul City Council, a fireworks tent will be allowed this summer at Midway Marketplace. The St. Paul Planning Commission recommended approval of the needed conditional use permit for the Renaissance Fireworks tent June 4, on recommendation of its Zoning Committee.

In past years the notion of a fireworks tent in the Midway area has drawn numerous objections. In 2004 a permit was approved by the Planning Commission but denied on appeal to the City Council.

But this time, only one letter of objection to the permit was received. Union Park District Council recommended approval with conditions, as did Hamline Midway Coalition.

City staff placed four conditions on the permit, limiting hours and days of operation, calling for compliance with applicable state and federal laws, and asking that fireworks be securely stored when the business isn't open. The city's fire marshal must approve the business as well.

City ordinance limits fireworks stands to be open June 25-July 5; Renaissance asked for permission to be open June 18-July 7. The fireworks stand owner asked for the longer period and said it isn't an issue with other businesses he operates. The Planning Commission did approve the longer operating period.

Tobacco regulations eyed

More stringent regulation of tobacco shops, especially business-

es where hookahs or water pipes can be smoked, is the focus of a one-year moratorium and zoning study in St. Paul. The moratorium was introduced May 12 by Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark.

The city allows tobacco shops in most of its commercial, mixed-use and industrial districts. But there is no land use definition of or development standard for a tobacco shop, which could open the door for a fairly broad range of activities.

One concern Stark is raising is that while state law does allow customers to light tobacco products in a tobacco shop for the purpose of sampling such products, there is no guidance to the regulatory term of "sampling." Questions have been raised about shops where tobacco is smoked in water pipes or hookahs and whether or not that is indeed sampling of a product.

St. Paul has a handful of shops where water pipes are sold, including Grand Hookah on Grand just west of Fairview Avenue. The pipes can also be found in some neighborhood convenience stores. In Stark's ward there have been concerns raised about businesses in the University-Raymond and North Snelling Avenue areas where water pipes are regularly smoked by customers.

Passage of a zoning moratorium means that no new businesses can be opened for one year or during the period in which proposed new zoning regulations are studied. The resolution adopted May 12 puts an interim moratorium in place. It will be superseded in the next several weeks by a yearlong moratorium. The moratorium request approved May 12 will be the subject of a series of readings and a public hearing.

The request for a study goes to the St. Paul Planning Commission and Planning and Economic Development (PED) staff.

The Planning Commission study will include a public hearing. Recommendations from the Planning Commission will then be sent on to the St. Paul City Council for another public hearing and a final vote.

State law only allows zoning-related moratoriums to be in place for one year.

Parking regulations curbed

A proposal to ease St. Paul's off-street parking regulations has been curbed for 30 days and will return to the council for a vote in mid-June. Ward Six Council Member Dan Bostrom laid over the proposed regulations May 12. The layover postpones a final vote on the regulations, which have been in the works for several months.

The regulations, which were recommended for approval earlier this year by the St. Paul Planning Commission, would require new businesses, residential, industrial and institutional uses to have fewer parking spaces than are required now. Existing land uses wouldn't be affected by the changes. The changes are meant to make it easier to redevelop and reuse properties. City staff found that in many cases, new developments or redeveloped properties weren't using all of the parking spaces they were required to have.

The changes also would require more landscaping and water runoff management for new parking lots, and would require larger-scale developments to develop transportation demand management plans.

The proposal to change the regulations went through a series of community meetings over several months. Input was sought from district councils and neighborhood business associations.

No one testified against the

regulations earlier this spring at a St. Paul City Council public hearing. But Bostrom said he is worried that in some neighborhoods, requiring new businesses to provide fewer off-street parking spaces will cause parking congestion as well as spillover parking into adjacent residential neighborhoods. Bostrom's ward includes older commercial strips including Payne Avenue and Arcade Street.

"I'm concerned about the possible unintended consequences of this," Bostrom said. He said the regulations need more scrutiny.

Building must be removed or repaired

A burned-out University Avenue building must be removed or repaired in 15 days, the St. Paul City Council decided May 19. The building at 1559-1563 University Av. was damaged by a fire in July 2008 and has been vacant since then.

Legislative Hearing Officer Marcia Moermond said that due to the building's condition it may not be a good candidate for rehabilitation. The two-story building is about 5,663 square feet in size. It had housed a number of office and retail uses since it was built in 1962.

The fire that gutted the building was believed to be arson.

Ramsey County records indicate the building's value was \$464,900 with a land value of \$163,600 before the fire. The building is owned by RKL Landholdings Inc. The owners do owe back taxes. It would cost more than \$150,000 to repair the building. At an April legislative hearing the owners had indicated it was their intent to rehabilitate the building but that they were

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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Central Corridor seeks full funding agreement

By JANE MCCLURE

Final design can get underway for the Central Corridor light rail project. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) gave the project permission to enter final design May 25. This is the next step before the 11-mile light rail line obtains a full funding grant agreement from the FTA. That is expected to happen in late fall.

Immediately upon receiving permission to enter final design, the Central Corridor project staff planned to submit the documentation needed for the full funding grant agreement.

The full funding grant agreement is critical because it commits the federal government to paying half of the \$957 million light rail line's costs. The remaining project costs are split among several entities: 30 percent from the Counties Transit Improvement Board, 10 percent from the state, 7 percent from Ramsey County and 3 percent from Hennepin County and lesser amounts from St. Paul, Metropolitan Council and the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative.

"The FTA's approval represents another important step in transforming this project from a 20-year-old dream into reality," said Metropolitan Council Chairman Peter Bell. "It will mean improved access for thousands of metro area residents to employment, educational and economic opportunities all along the corri-

dor and beyond."

St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman also hailed the agreement. "The benchmark has been years in the making. The Central Corridor will be the largest economic development opportunity our region has ever had – the announcement is another huge step forward," he said.

The City of St. Paul has led land use planning efforts tied to the project and will help pay for one of the three planned stations at Western, Victoria or Hamline.

Some construction tied to the light rail project began in downtown St. Paul last year, with more downtown and around the University of Minnesota's East Bank campus underway this year. Heavy construction will begin in August on Robert and 12th streets east of the state Capitol and north of Interstate 94. Most of the construction

along University Avenue is expected to take place in 2011 and 2012, with the west end work starting in spring 2011 and the east end work in spring

Work on the project in downtown St. Paul was able to start last year because Ramsey and Hennepin counties and the Counties Transit Improvement Board were able to advance funding for the light rail project. That also had to obtain federal approval. The FTA has already agreed to reimburse the counties and the board for the federal share of the advance work, once the full funding grant agreement is approved.

The next steps for the project will play out this month as the Metropolitan Council is expected to award the bid for the St. Paul portion of the light rail line. This is the largest of the bid packages. Bidders had to pre-qualify in order to bid. In May it was learned that five of the six bidders came in below the \$234.4 million price estimated. The bids ranged from \$205.4 million to \$246.2 million. Central Corridor project staff has to review all of the bids to make sure they meet all of the specifications. It is possible the project could come in



2012. Hamline Avenue is the dividing line for work on University. Trains are to start operating in 2014.

below cost. The bid for the work around the University of Minnesota came in about \$1 million below the estimate. However, that won't be known until the entire project is completed.

The Metropolitan Council's Transportation Committee heard an update on the bids May 24. The committee will hear the staff recommendation on the winning bid June 14 and forward that to the full Metropolitan Council for a vote June 23.

When the Central Corridor line is completed in 2014, the region will have 115 miles of bus and rail transitways. This includes the Hiawatha light rail line from Mall of America to downtown Minneapolis and the Northstar commuter rail line 40 miles from Big Lake to Minneapolis. The 1125-mile total doesn't include the Southwest Corridor from Minneapolis to Eden Prairie, which Metropolitan Council approved last month. That planned light rail line extends through several Minneapolis neighborhoods and southwestern suburbs.

The Central Corridor line will connect with Hiawatha at Metrodome Station in downtown Minneapolis and travel its last mile over existing Hiawatha track, stopping at five downtown Minneapolis stations. Hiawatha, Central, Northstar and Southwest will all eventually meet at the Target Field Station.

Mosaic exhibit begins June 12

The Picking up the Pieces Mosaic exhibit will be held June 12-July 17, at Mosaic on a Stick,

595 North Snelling Avenue. The opening reception will be 7 to 9:30 p.m., on Saturday, June 12.

Picking up the Pieces features mosaics by Suzanne Grant of St. Louis Park, and Julie Reeve, Minneapolis. For both, combining random bits and

pieces to create something beautiful is therapeutic and rewarding.

Grant's work reflects her love of brilliant color, mixed media, and the beauty and diversity found in flowers. Her mosaics include millefiori,

beads, old jewelry, glass and tile. "It would be hard for me to complete a piece using one material," says Grant. Her work is heavily influenced by the colors in Mexico and fields of flowers growing naturally, proof that all colors go together, even bright

pink and bright orange.

Reeve, who draws inspiration from nature, carries a sketchbook with her at all times so she can sketch or cut and paste things that catch her interest. "When I'm ready to start a mosaic, I go through my sketch book and something will speak to me," she says. Reeve, who also uses mixed materials, often recycles frames from thrift stores. "I like how it gives a new piece a sense of history."

Mosaic on a Stick is a mosaic supply shop, community classroom and artist studio located in the Minnesota State Fair corridor. Visit www.mosaiconastick.com for more information.

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Continued from page 2

still working with their insurance company. The insurance company has not decided whether the building can be rebuilt or whether it should be torn down. The owners have had to take legal action in an attempt to speed the process of insurance payment.

No one spoke for saving the building at the City Council public hearing May 19.

The city has issued 22 summary abatement orders on the building since the fire. City workers had to board up the building to keep trespassers out, remove improperly stored debris and clear the sidewalk of snow and ice.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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Land use plans for light rail stations nearing completion

By JANE MCCLURE

Land use plans for three Central Corridor light rail stations are nearing completion and will be released for public hearings and city action this fall. A steering committee working on plans for the Hamline, Victoria and Western stations unveiled draft proposals May 18. More than 50 people attended an open house to view the plans, which outline future land use ideas for University Avenue and the neighborhoods around the stations.

The three stations, known as infill stations, were the subject of much debate before they were added to the light rail line plans in 2008. Residents of neighborhoods around the stations argued that the stops should be added. Otherwise, there would be a mile between train stops in some of the city's most transit-dependent neighborhoods.

Metropolitan Council members and Central Corridor project staff objected, saying that adding stations would add to project costs and line travel time, harming the chances for federal funding. But community pressure and changes to federal transit funding formulas made it possible for the three stations to be added.

The city has been involved in land use planning for neighborhoods around the Central Corridor stations for more than four years. Detailed proposals have been developed suggesting long-term ideas for redevelopment.

Because the Hamline, Victoria and Western stations were added to Central Corridor plans as the first City of St. Paul station area planning process was wrapping up, the Planning Commission and City Council decided to have an additional planning process for the three stations.

George Johnson served as Planning Commission represen-

tative on the station area planning steering committees. "Light rail transit is probably the most important development that that will occur in St. Paul in the next 50 years," he said. While there will be short-term pain due to rail construction, the line and plans for the future will have long-term benefits for the city. He compared the station area planning process to the more than 20 years' planning on the East Side that resulted in the Phalen Corridor redevelopment and the construction of Phalen Boulevard.

"I think all of the station area planning has been a critical step in getting people to acknowledge the reality of light rail transit coming through their neighborhoods," said Johnson. He said the steering committees received a lot of good neighborhood input, which played a major role in shaping the plans.

In contrast to the packed Metropolitan Council and community meetings where activists pushed for the stations, the May 18 land use planning open house was low-key. Only a handful of suggestions were made to change

the plans. Area residents and steering committee members said that that for many people, it was most important that the stations be added. Another factor was that there had already been considerable public input into the first plan draft.

Another factor in the meeting turnout may be the level of change proposed, said City Planner Christina Morrison. Land use proposals for the Western and Victoria areas call for smaller-scale neighborhood redevelopment and preservation of most of the existing commercial and residential areas. Much of the housing all around Victoria and University is intact, as is housing north of Western and University and in the neighborhoods.

Both sets of plans for Victoria and Western call for improved pedestrian and bike connections north-south and east-west through the neighborhoods. In the Western area there are proposals to add small pockets of green space, including green space at the southeast corner of University and Western where Old Home Foods was located. The only public green space in

the area around that station is at Maxfield and Jackson schools.

Any plans to change the Western area would include a proposed World Cultural Heritage District, meant to promote the many cultures that live and work in the area. The neighborhood currently has a high concentration of Asian businesses.

"People wanted to see smaller-scale redevelopment in these areas," said Morrison. "They wanted to see the areas maintain more of a 'main street' feeling."

The Hamline station plan calls for more sweeping changes. Most of the changes would be seen in the blocks south of University, where much infill development is proposed in areas that are now parking lots and retail stores. More pedestrian and bike connections through the larger blocks are proposed.

Residents of the Skyline Towers high-rise participated in Hamline station area planning. Many of those residents are Somali. One request they made was to see more Somali businesses in the Hamline area, to meet the needs of Skyline residents. "They'd like to see the area be-

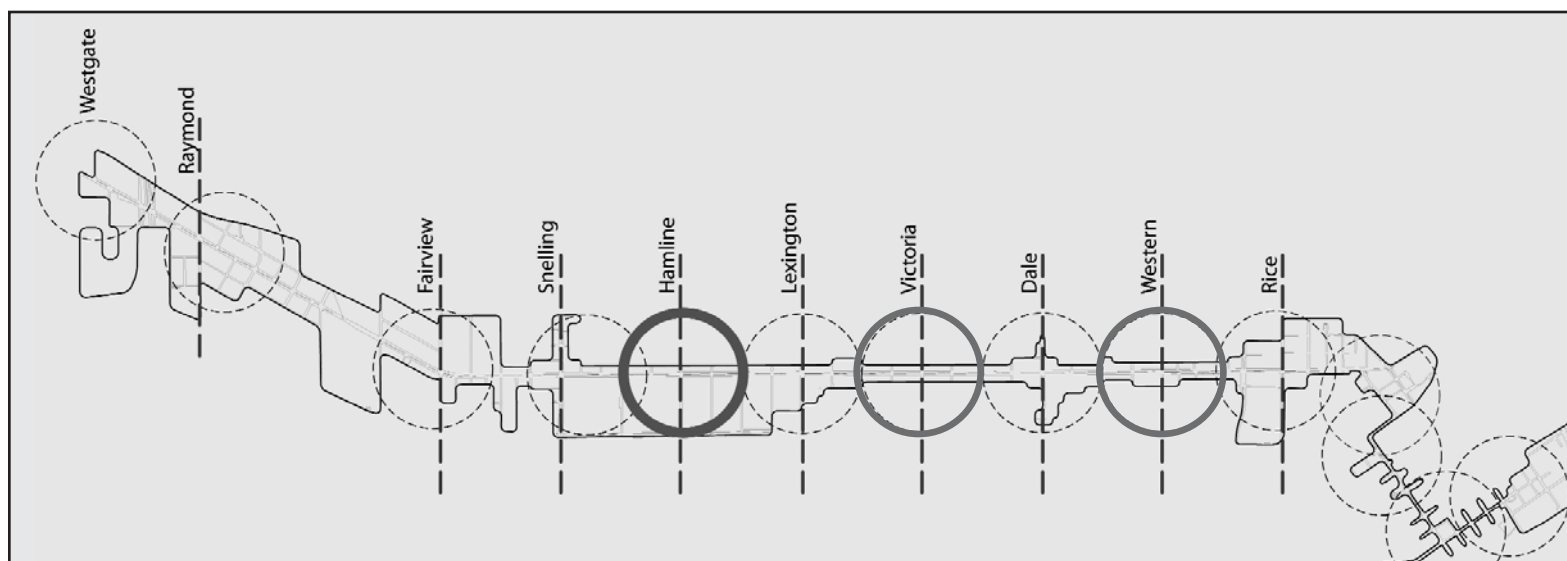
come more of an international marketplace," Morrison said.

The neighborhoods around Hamline and University had been studied earlier as parts of the Snelling and Lexington station area plans. But Morrison said the new plan allowed for more of a focus around Hamline itself.

Comments received last week will be incorporated into the draft plans and released again in mid-July, said Morrison. The steering committee will meet again to review and make recommendations on the draft. The plan will also be sent to area district councils, community development corporations and other neighborhood groups for review and approval.

The recommendations go to the Planning Commission and City Council for public hearings and final approval by the council. The Planning Commission is expected to receive the plans in mid-September.

Draft plans and steering committee agendas and minutes are on the city's Web site under Central Corridor, at www.stpaul.gov.



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By JAN WILLMS

As Lori Fritts reflects on her past seven and a half years as president of the Midway Chamber of Commerce, there are many memorable moments that come to mind. But one of her favorites revolves around Kou Vang, president of JB Realty.

"While he was chair of the Midway Chamber, the situation with the Hmong funeral home arose," Fritts said. "The Port Authority was trying to build by the river, and Kou stepped up. He knew nothing about the funeral business, but he did it."

Fritts said she would call him about a meeting, and he would be out picking up a body. "I got to know him very well during that time, and he explained to me about the four-day funerals, and people coming from across the nation to attend the ceremonies of a clan member," Fritts explained. "It was the most incredible thing."

She said the Midway Chamber had a catered luncheon at the funeral home, and Vang spent about 15 minutes talking about the cultural aspects of the Hmong funeral before the business meeting.

"Kou is a great storyteller," Fritts added. "There were about 120 people at that luncheon, and when he was talking it was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop."

Fritts recalled the event as she prepares to leave her position with the Chamber. She has presided over economically tough times as well as the planning for the Central Corridor light rail along University Avenue and all that entails.

"Everything goes in cycles," Fritts said. "When I started, a year

Outgoing Chamber President Fritts reflects on challenges and fun of last seven years



Lori Fritts reflects on her past seven and a half years as president of the Midway Chamber of Commerce. (Photo by Liberty Willms)

after Sept. 11, we were at the pit of the economy. I came into this job to build relationships, get people to sponsor events and show up at events. We had better times, and then it (the economy) went down again."

Fritts said businesses experienced trying times that first year she started. She dealt with that and with marketing the Central Corridor.

"It's been a long road from there, but I feel very good about where things are at now," she said. "It's a perfect time to have someone new come in."

During her tenure, she has seen a lot of changes along the Midway area.

"The car dealerships are gone, and there are some long-time businesses you don't see," she said. "But there are a lot of great interesting new ones, including some in the industrial area. Things are constantly morphing into different uses."

Fritts said all businesses, large and small, have felt the impact of economic change.

"We have an interesting mix," she noted. "There are non-profits, small retail and new residential buildings that have come in."

Fritts said that for the most part, the businesses have managed to survive.

"There is a difference be-

tween now and 2001," she added. "Back then there was fear of terrorism and more reasons to cut back. A lot of businesses made the decision then that they would be better prepared for a downturn the next time. A lot have been operating lean for so long, they are able to better prepare for next time. They were not so shaken by the more recent economic problems, and worked through it with more confidence."

Fritts said she also realizes the concerns that some of the merchants have about the impending LRT.

"There is no way to avoid impact with such a massive proj-

ect," she said. She recalled that six years ago, the Midway Chamber had to decide how it would deal with light rail.

"I told the members we had three choices. We could say no, and we would be left out of all the discussions. We could stay neutral and serve as a networking group and sidestep this project, or we could be strong advocates for the project and work with the businesses every step of the way," Fritts said. "We could be the conscience on the shoulder of those making decisions, some subtle and some significant." The Chamber chose to be a strong advocate.

A Business Advisory Council was formed, with the Chamber's involvement completely relating to working for businesses of any size regarding the pending light rail.

"Our members understand the domino effect," Fritts said. She said a small business affected by light rail construction, for example, could be renting and a loss in its sales could affect the building owner. A printer working on restaurant menus could have its profits affected if the restaurant loses business.

"If a business goes under, it can result in all kinds of consequences," Fritts stated.

She said a key group she has advocated for is the Business Resource Collaborative, which includes several chambers of commerce groups and business groups in Minneapolis.

"This has become more formal over the past eight months," she said. "We have a huge plan and big roll-out planned for June 17 with mayors of both cities involved. We're going to lay out a plan and identify all issues, work on construction and business mitigation."

Fritts said the Collaborative would give merchants technical assistance and prepare small businesses to be successful for the long-term, not just through construction.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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Study of West Midway authorized by Council

By JANE MCCLURE

A study of the West Midway industrial area will get underway soon. The St. Paul Planning Commission authorized the study May 13, on recommendation of its Neighborhood Planning Committee.

The study will eventually be the topic of community meetings, as well as public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council. The study, when adopted, would guide future zoning and land use decisions in the area.

The intent of the study, according to city staff, is to look at the West Midway industrial area as identified in the Central Corridor Development Strategy. City staff and members of a community task force will look at ways to best strengthen the area's industrial sector and employment base.

Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark and his legislative aide, Samantha Henningson, will be on a task force steering community, along with city staff, Planning Commission member Jon Commers and a community co-chair from St. Anthony Park/District 12. The task force itself will have representatives from Hamline Midway Coalition and Union Park District Council, as well as Midway Chamber of Commerce, an industrial real estate broker, a major property owner, a representative of the railroad, University UNITED and St. Paul Port Authority.

The West Midway Study will focus on how elements of land use can be utilized to provide a foundation for industries, broadly defined, and labor markets, both of which can capitalize on the development of light rail transit, as well as changes in the economy wrought by the current recession, fluctuating business markets, and emerging labor markets.

The study area is irregularly shaped and encompasses indus-

trial areas north of Interstate 94, north to Como Avenue and the Intercampus Transitway; and, between the city's boundary with Minneapolis eastward to Snelling Avenue and Fairview Avenue. It doesn't include the Central Corridor transit station areas that were studied previously. Nor does it include residential properties or properties that have recently been improved or redeveloped. But at the request of the St. Anthony Park Community Council, part of the planned study will focus on how the industrial area can fit with an existing residential neighborhood. The objective is to develop strategies and techniques that allow both to thrive.

The study was called for in the land use chapter of the city's recently adopted comprehensive plan. The industrial area, which is in an area roughly bounded by Snelling Avenue, the west city limits, rail lines and areas around University Avenue, is one of St. Paul's largest and oldest continuously used industrial areas. The area's roots as an industrial area spring largely from the historic presence of railroad lines and related industries. The area has strong ties to railroad, truck and bus transportation, and will have light rail in 2014.

But while many of the existing businesses in the area are successful, they do not employ large numbers of people. Job density is a huge concern, as the city needs to replace tens of thousands of jobs lost over the past two decades.

The study in part will focus on how the West Midway can evolve to capture "knowledge-based" business activity and tap into the jobs/housing mix that could grow out of the Central Corridor project.

The study is not a conventional economic development strategy, according to city staff. It will focus on land use foundations that will allow an econom-

ic development strategy to succeed, particularly in an older, increasingly intense urban area.

It will tie into a number of previous University Avenue, Central Corridor and area studies and land use plans, including the plans developed by the district councils in the area including St. Anthony Park, Hamline-Midway and Union Park.

The study will also look at existing businesses and industries, new opportunities, transportation and transit systems, possible design guidelines, sustainable or "green" development and how the various current and proposed land uses can interface.

Industrial areas and the West Midway in particular, face challenges, according to a report presented to the Planning Commission. These challenges and opportunities include:

- Construction of light rail transit through the Central Corridor.
- Redevelopment potential along University Avenue, particularly surrounding the three transit stations within the West Midway.
- Changing economy, particularly as influenced by the recession.
- Emerging industries (green manufacturing is an example).
- Emerging labor force; its readiness to take advantage to changes in the economy and emerging industries.
- Job density and strategies to increase job density.
- Sophisticated transportation access, including rail, highways, and transit.
- Local street system with perceived gaps.
- Contaminated sites.
- Proximity to the SEMI area in Minneapolis.
- Proximity to the University of Minnesota.



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St. Bernard's High School says goodbye



On Saturday, June 5, several hundred students, alumni, parents, current/former staff and community friends turned out to bid farewell to St. Bernard's High School (1961-2010). The grade school, open since 1890, closed in 2009. At 9:50 p.m., a representative from each high school class turned out one light in a classroom or other common area of the school until the building was dark. The crowd then sang the school song while holding candles in the darkness.



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FOR BUSINESS

Como Park moves closer to Walgreens on MGM site

By DEBORAH BROTZ

Como Park residents are now one step closer to having a Walgreens replace the MGM Liquor Warehouse at Lexington Parkway and Larpenteur Avenue. Community residents had an opportunity to see the third conceptual plan for a new stand alone Walgreens at the District 10 Land Use Committee Meeting on May 10.

Under the plan, the liquor store would be demolished to make way for a 14,000-square-foot Walgreens.

"Walgreens would lease the land from an investment group, put a store on the site, improve the sidewalks and add green space," said Chris Harkness, chair of the District 10 Land Use Committee. "MGM will rehab the houses behind the property on California."

The MGM corner became controversial a few years ago after MGM removed a fence separating its lot from a row of houses behind it on California Avenue. MGM and the City have been in an ongoing legal battle ever since MGM removed the 8-foot-high cedar fence in 2007.

"Their position is they want to make sure the Walgreens concept sits well with neighbors," said Harkness. "MGM and the neighborhood have been meeting with the Land Use Committee at District 10. We've had two meetings where MGM presented different plans."

The plan proposes removal of one house on California and the addition of garages with shared-access driveways for the four re-

maining houses, which are currently owned by MGM. A fence would separate the commercial and residential properties. Neighbors have several concerns.

"One of the biggest concerns is foreshortening of the lot sizes on California," said Harkness. MGM added space to these yards. They moved the Walgreens store and changed the plan a little bit so the lots would be bigger."

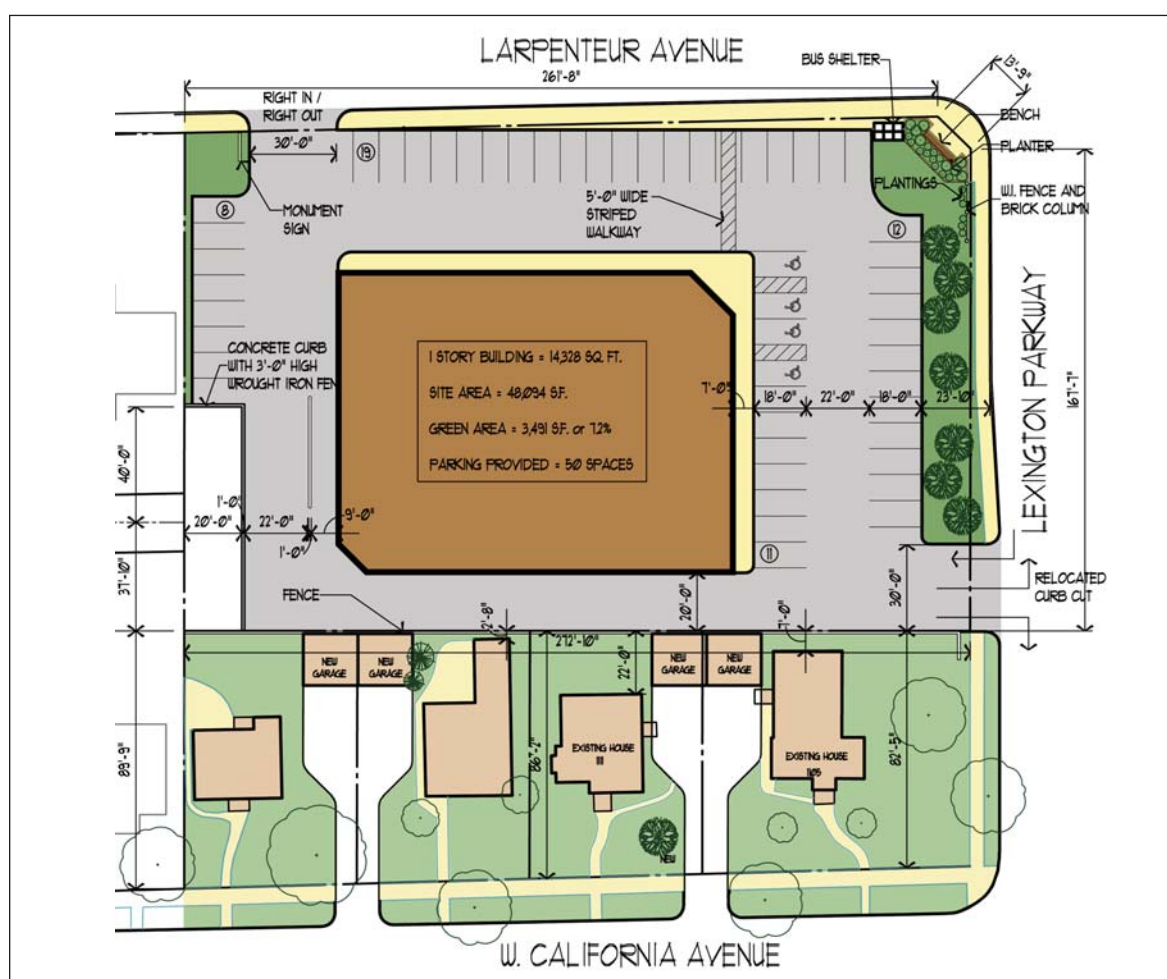
Traffic and the alley are also main concerns.

"The concern with the alley is that people will come in from Dunlap and go into the Walgreens parking lot," said Harkness. "They were not able to solve the alley issues at all at the second meeting. The week of April 16, MGM submitted a third conceptual plan with the alley dead-ended to the Land Use Committee. There would be a three-lane exit entrance on Lexington—one in and two out and two lanes on Larpenteur—one in and one out."

MGM has no signed lease with Walgreens for the site.

"This allows them to work with Walgreens," said Harkness. "We had action items we vote on. The Board heard the action item, considered the rationale and voted on the approval of the footprint and placement of a Walgreens store at that site. MGM wants to be sure that District 10 is in favor of the proposal. District 10 will do what neighbors want."

Harkness says at this time, they know that more people at Land Use Committee meetings support the idea of a Walgreens than don't.



Under the conceptual plan now being discussed by District 10, the MGM Liquor Store at Lexington and Larpenteur would be demolished to make way for a 14,000-squarefoot Walgreens.

"There are concerns about whether the site will be too big or if it will generate too much traffic," she said. "At a Land Use Meeting a straw poll taken on April 12 showed more of them in favor of a Walgreens than other

things."

Earlier in 2009, Paster Enterprises presented a redevelopment plan that included the construction of a new commercial building at the site currently occupied by Flowerama, Ted's Bar, and a

couple of residential houses across Lexington from MGM's properties.

"We got neighborhood feedback," said Howard Paster, president of Paster Enterprises. "We're still working on it. There's nothing new to present to the neighborhood to discuss and get their feedback."

People may have made an incorrect assumption that Paster was planning to put a Walgreens on his site.

"I don't think at any point did we say the tenant was Walgreens or say we had a deal with them," he said.

Paster is still working on a development for that corner.

"We're not at a point that it makes sense to share it with neighbors," he said. "We want to continue discussions with neighbors and the City. We're still putting our plan together and trying to finalize what we're working on."

Hopefully, Paster will be making a formal proposal to the Land Use Committee soon.

"We didn't want it to take as long as it has," he said. "We hope to get back to them shortly."

At the May 10 Land Use Committee Meeting, the MGM/Walgreens plan was discussed for the purpose of generating an action item to bring to the District 10 Community Council Meeting on May 18.

"The Land Use Committee voted to recommend that the Board approve the concept," said Harkness.

The Action Item put forward to the Board for consideration by the District 10 Land Use Committee requested that the Board vote to offer preliminary support for MGM's conceptual proposal to redevelop their current site on the SW corner of Lexington and Larpenteur to accommodate a one-story Walgreens store that will not

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



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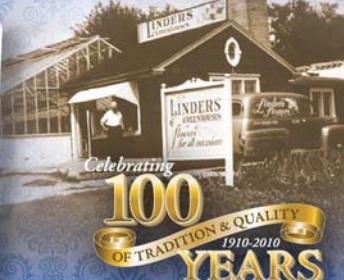
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Second Debut 2 opens on University Avenue

By TOM CONLON

It's not your mother's Goodwill Store anymore, but a Second Debut.

The rumble of car engines or boiling cooking oil have been replaced with the squeaks of hangers on circular clothes racks or the clump of shoes as a customer tries on a pair of stylish stilettos.

Expanding on a successful higher-end consignment store that began in St. Louis Park in 2005, Goodwill Easter Seals of Minnesota opened Second Debut 2 in the former Andy's Garage restaurant at Fairview and University Avenues this spring.

"In today's economy, many women facing job transitions or looking for pieces to stand out in an upcoming job interview had few affordable options for upscale, professional clothing and accessories," said Amy Lewis, Second Debut 2's store manager since its opening on April 9. "When you thought of the Goodwill Store, you probably didn't equate that with higher-end designer clothes, shoes or handbags. Second Debut 2 now meets that need."

Julie Fjellman, marketing communications administrator for Goodwill Easter Seals (GES) said while Minnesota's 20 tradi-

tional Goodwill stores continue to sell donated used clothing, household items, toys and other traditional items, changing market needs presented an opportunity for GES to expand into the higher-end consignment niche.

"The success of the St. Louis Park Second Debut store gave us confidence to open a second such boutique in the Midway, a few blocks from our headquarters," she said. "To date, we've been very pleased with the number of customers and business it has generated."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



Second Debut 2 Store Manager Amy Lewis, Sales Associate Siobhan Ditty, and Sales Associate Amy Heuberger assemble display accessories, shoes and clothing inside the new Second Debut 2 shop. (Photo by Tom Conlon)



Taken at an open house at Leonardo's Basement's Minneapolis location, participants were testing out bottle rocket contraptions, experiments that would also be able to be done at their newly opened Griggs Playground location.

Leonardo's Basement

Continued from page 1

ters. While some parks were slated for demolition, Odegard said this was never an option for Griggs.

"That wasn't an option - to take it out of commission," she said. "We definitely wanted to find a partnership [for Griggs]."

Odegard said Parks and Recreation typically searches for organizations which benefit the community and the immediate neighborhood. She said the partnership with Leonardo's Basement seemed like the perfect fit for the area, especially because of the work they do with youth.

"The partners that we put in there have to be accessible to the community," Odegard said. "Leonardo is a great organization, and it's a really good fit for the community."

While the move to the St. Paul community provides a nearer location for interested parents and students in the immediate area, Jevning said a major benefit

of moving to Griggs was the increased outdoor space - space that simply is not available in their current Minneapolis location.

"We will be able to do bigger projects and quasi-permanent projects outdoors at Griggs," Jevning said.

One such class project will involve students building two large-scale cardboard castles, and event that Jevning said will more than likely end with students storming each castle, armed with water balloons.

"Those large building constructions always result in some kind of battle," he said, laughing.

Jevning said other summer classes include building an obstacle course, rain gardens, skateboard ramps and a giant ship. He said there will also be cooking courses, now that they have kitchen facilities available at Griggs.

"We've done [these sorts of projects] in the past but not nearly to the scale we will be able to at Griggs," Jevning said.

Jevning also said the area at Griggs will allow many of the large projects to remain standing

for longer periods of time.

"Kids will be able to enjoy them, maybe for the whole summer," he said.

However, Odegard made it clear that other community events will still be taking place at Griggs Park, including events organized by the Booster Club, community baseball and softball and an outdoor skating rink in the winter. She said Jevning has been very open with ways in which Leonardo's Basement and the City of St. Paul can share the area.

"Steve's been very accommodating," she said. "We're still going to continue to do other things out of there."

Jevning said Leonardo's Basement held a grand opening event June 5 to expose the new location to the community and to have a big party.

"It's always good to have parties," he said, laughing.

Classes begin June 28. Parents and students can view the available summer courses at <http://www.leonardosbasement.org/1summer.php> or by calling 612-824-4394.

Next deadline:
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In Our Community

Como Park Tree Trek June 12

The Environmental Committee of District 10 is holding its annual Tree Identification Trek in Como Park on Saturday, June 12, from 10 a.m. to noon. Meet at the Como Park pavilion near the wooden black bear on the west side. The Tree Trek is free, open to the public and includes evergreens and woody perennials. Emphasis on tree I.D. and diseases. Call Chet Mirocha for further information.

'Public Health' topic of luncheon July 13

"The Role of Public Health in Our Lives: What's Current?" will be the topic at a luncheon for seniors on July 13 at 11:30 a.m. at 1415 Englewood Avenue. Maggie Diebel, Director Community and Family Health, MN Department of Health will be the speaker. A registered nurse will be available to take blood pressures. Anyone who would like to come for just the presentations should arrive at 12:10 p.m. A free will donation is asked for the meal. Call the office of Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 to make reservations, or request free transportation for either event, grocery shopping or medical appointments.

FREE Energy Efficiency Workshop June 29

Attend this workshop to learn how to save energy and money in your home. At the workshop you can sign up for a home visit from the Home Energy Squad to identify your home's energy needs and install energy efficient materials, such as compact fluorescent light bulbs, low flow showerheads, faucet aerators, and hot water heater blankets. This home visit will be offered at the low price of \$30, but only if you attend the free workshop! The workshop will be on Tuesday, June 29, 2010, 6:30 - 7:30pm at North Dale Recreation Center, 1414 N St Albans, St. Paul. Call or e-mail Stephanie at 651-488-7684 or cc@qwestoffice.net to reserve your spot!

District 6 planning meetings moved!

Beginning at the Land Use Task Force Meeting June 22, the Board of Directors and Land Use Task Force Meetings will be held at North Dale Recreation Center, 1414 North Saint Albans.

La Leche group discusses breastfeeding July 13

The Art of Breastfeeding and Overcoming Difficulties is the topic of the meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group on Tuesday, July 13. All expectant and nursing mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information.

Rummage Sale at Bethel Lutheran June 16-19

Bethel Lutheran Church will hold its 9th Annual Rummage Sale benefiting the Children's Christian Education Fund on June 16 (PRE-SALE admission: \$3), June 17 and 18 at 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday June 19 at 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Bethel is located in St. Paul's Como Park neighborhood at 670 W. Wheelock Parkway.

We offer a wide range of items including books, furniture, tools, houseware items, dishes, glassware, stemware, crystal, collectibles of all kinds, arts & crafts, jewelry, office supplies, working electronics, sporting goods, gently used toys & clothing for the whole family. The church will be open to receive 'almost new' donations from anyone interested in supporting this fundraiser Saturday, June 12 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

For more information about Bethel Lutheran Church, its programs and ministries visit www.bethelstpaul.com or call 651-488-6681.

Free film night at Merriam Park

Free Film Night will be held on Tues., June 22, 6:30 p.m. Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave. 651-642-0385. Audience of One. Documentary about San Francisco Pentecostal pastor who gets the word from God to make a sci-fi/religious blockbuster film. And so he does. Or tries to. Discussion will follow.

Como Park Art Crawl planned by Council

Calling All Como Artists! District 10 Como Community Council is holding a Como Park Art Crawl and is looking for artists to participate. For more information: www.district10comopark.org or call 651-644-3889

CARNIVAL benefiting KIDSPARK June 12

A community carnival is going to be held at Desnoyer Park, on Satur-

day, June 12, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., benefiting KidsPark childcare center! There will be a whole lotta' fun for children and their families!

Come enjoy carnival games, face painting, cupcake walk, moon bounce, petting zoo from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., a visit from the St. Paul Police K9 unit, St. Paul Firefighters demonstration, and performances by Engineer Paul from Choo Choo Bob's at 10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. The carnival will also have a variety of food: slushies, cotton candy, hot dogs, brats and more.

Tickets for activities will be \$1 a piece; or \$15 for an all day wristband that will include - unlimited time in the bouncy, petting zoo, games, one face painting and one time in the cake-walk. The Carnival will be held at Desnoyer Park, 525 Pelham Blvd N. This event is cash only. For more information, visit www.kidsparkdropin.org.

KidsPark is a non-profit, hourly drop-in childcare center for children 6 weeks to 5 years.

June Events at Rice St. Library

The Rice Street Branch Library has many fun and educational programs planned in June. Please stop in and visit us!

Jazz with an Attitude! will be offered on Saturday June 12 at 2 p.m. Join vocalist Lee Engele, guitarist Reynold Philipsek & their friends as they perform a mixture of hip jazz, swing, flamenco and Latin music.

Wendy's Wiggle Jiggle and Jam will perform at the library on Tuesday June 16; the Brodini Comedy Magic Show will entertain on Tuesday June 23; and the Science Museum of Minnesota will visit on June 30. All programs begin at 10:30 am and are part of the St. Paul Public

Library's Summer Reading Program.

Family story times will be offered on Tuesday mornings June 1 & 8 and on Friday mornings at 10:30. Join Rice Street's storytelling experts for stories, finger plays, rhymes, and songs.

The Runescape Club will meet on Tuesdays from 3:30-5 p.m.

Teen Time will be offered Wednesdays from 3:30-5:00. Join us for a rotating roster of activities each Wednesday! Video games, board games, and crafts are just a few of the activities teens can do.

The Collector's Corner Neighborhood Trading Post will be open Wednesdays from 4-7 p.m. and Saturdays from 1 p.m.-4 p.m. Bring a tradable natural object to the library and volunteers from the Science Museum of Minnesota will help you learn more about it

Free Family Friendly Movie Matinees will be shown Saturdays at 2 p.m. Please stop in or

call the library at 651-558-2223 to learn which movie will be shown each week.

The North End Book Club will be discussing The Shack by William Young on Monday June 28, from 12:45-2:30. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8733. This group is offered in partnership with the Community Education Senior Program.

The Community Education Senior Program will offer computer classes beginning Friday June 11 from 10:15 to 12:15. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8733. There is a fee for each class.

A series of classes on Swedish Embroidery on Monks Cloth will begin on Wednesday, June 30 from 12:45 to 2:45 p.m. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8733. This group is offered in partnership with the Community Education Senior Program

Practice giving speeches and making presentations in Spanish with the Los Lagos Toastmasters on Mondays from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Contact Ralph at 651-730-9817 for more information.

Free Foreclosure Counseling will be offered by the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development on Wednesdays from 12:30-6:30 p.m. No appointment is necessary.

Free Job Search Assistance will be offered on Fridays from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

A consultant from Goodwill-Easter Seals will provide help with job applications and resumes. Please call 651-558-2223 for more information.

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Hours are Monday and Wednesday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.; Tuesday 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The library will be closed July 4 and 5 in observance of Independence Day.

Minnesota's 'Waiting Children' info sessions

Have you ever wondered about adoption? Or if you could parent an "older" child? Or what they mean by "special needs"? Or what it costs to adopt a waiting child? Or who are Minnesota's waiting children?

Downey Side...families for youth invites community members to attend a FREE information session regarding adoption and Minnesota's Waiting Children. Sessions are held every third Tuesday of the month from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Downey office located in the Bigelow Building at 450 No. Syndicate Street - Suite 380.

Downey Side Minnesota is a non profit adoption agency, working exclusively to place "waiting children" - children

who are currently in the foster care system and are legally free for adoption - into permanent, safe, stable and loving adoptive families. Downey Side is proud to work in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Human Services on the Public Private Adoption Initiative (PPAI), a partnership between the public and private agencies through the state.

There is no charge for this meeting; however, pre-registration is required. Please e-mail stpaulmn@downeyside.org or phone 651- 228-0117 to speak with Denise or Deb.

Midway Y holds board recognition

The Midway Family YMCA of Greater Saint Paul recently held their annual board recognition ceremony and election.

Kathy Bjerke, Park Midway Bank was elected board chair, Roberta "Bobbi" Megard, Vice Chair, and Catherine Holtzclaw as immediate past board chair.

New directors elected for a three-year term to the board included Joe Dotson, Marilyn Porter, Inta Sellars, Doc Smith, and Vuthy Taing.

Current board directors elected to a second three-year term included David Gill, Annie Huidekoper, Mary Marsden and Al Emory.

Retiring board member Lori Fritts was recognized for serving six years on the community board.

Immediate Past Board Chair, Catherine Holtzclaw was recognized at the 154th Annual Meeting of the YMCA of Greater Saint Paul with the 2009 Distinguished Leader Award for her YMCA leadership to the Midway Family YMCA.

Como Park resident in HU internship

Molly Ellison from St. Paul's Como Park neighborhood is interning this spring with the Department of Corrections Record Center in Saint Paul, MN. She will be serving as a Records Clerk and Administrative Assistant.

Ellison is majoring in Political Science at Hamline University.

Hamline University attracts a diverse group of 4,900 undergraduate and graduate students who develop their passions working alongside professors invested in their success. Challenged to create and apply knowledge in local and global contexts, students develop an ethic of inclusive leadership and service, civic responsibility, and social justice. Hamline students are transformed in and out of the classroom to discover truths that shape the way they see and are able to change the world.

Workshops explore how parks and rec should plan future

By JANE MCCLURE

Tight budgets, aging facilities and changes in how people play are challenges for St. Paul's parks and recreation system. How parks and recreation should change is being explored at community workshops, which should result in a new systems plan this fall. More than a dozen people attended the first workshop, held at Oxford Community Center. Additional workshops were held at Phalen Recreation Center and North Dale Recreation Center, with a final workshop June 9 at Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Parkway. All meetings start at 6:30 p.m.

Cuts to the parks and recreation system, have hit area neighborhoods hard as Griggs, Desnoyer, Dunning, Orchard and South St. Anthony recreation centers have been rented out to other groups. Front and Sylvan were closed several months ago and torn down this spring. That's almost half of the centers in Monitor area neighborhoods.

But with more cuts in Local Government Aid from the state looming, and an inability to continually raise property taxes to cover needs, a hard look is needed at the rest of the system.

"This is a process that is long overdue," said Parks and Recreation Director Mike Hahm. He said the city has needed but lacked a comprehensive look at the parks and recreation system. "It's something we should have done 10 to 15 years ago."

"The parks and recreation system we have simply isn't sustainable now," said Greg Ingraham of Hoisington Koegler Group, one of the study consultants. The sustainability issue is both from an economic as well as a needs standpoint. Patron needs are changing as the city becomes more diverse. Types of recreation have changed.

There's more of a focus on activities promoting a healthy lifestyle. "We need to respond to trends and changes in recreation as well as changing demographics."

The lack of a system plan has been a frustration for city staff, said Hahm, especially in recent years when tough decisions have had to be made. The city had 41 recreation centers but is now down to 25. St. Paul has closed 16 recreation centers over the past few years and leased 13 of the facilities to other groups. Three buildings were torn down earlier this spring. All of the centers do allow for outside field and playground use by parks and recreation, although in a few cases the fields are scheduled by the nonprofit tenant. Orchard is an example of the tenant getting field priority, as the tenant is the Blackhawks soccer club.

When centers have been closed, Hahm said there hasn't been a vision for how to provide other services for their surrounding communities.

Parks and recreation is aware of many unmet needs, ranging from more programs for seniors to newer amenities such as splash pad water features for kids in the summertime, said Hahm.

Hahm noted that activities don't need to be tied to a building and that some of the busiest facilities and programs have no recreation center. "I drove by Dunning Field before this meeting and there must have been 400 people out there," he said. All of the ball fields

were full. Yet Dunning's recreation center closed two years ago. McMurray Field near Como Park also has no recreation center but is heavily used.

Another need is to work more closely with St. Paul Public Schools to share building space and not duplicate facilities.

City staff emphasize that no park land or facilities will be sold, as the city charter has a no net loss of parkland provision. But some facilities may change in use, depending on the input received.

"St. Paul is fortunate to have many good parks and recreation facilities, and much open space," said Ingraham. Parks and recreation is a key part of quality of life in St. Paul.

When the vision plan for parks and recreation was completed, it included 38 action steps. Of those 28 are tied to facilities, access, connections to community and activities. The vision plan also emphasizes that parks and recreation should seek quality facilities over quantity of facilities.

City staff and consultants working on the systems plan know there will be resistance to closing more recreation centers. The current recreation center system was based on a model of having a facility within six blocks of every home in the city. Looking back over the past 30 years, that model has changed. For example, Aldine Park in Merriam Park neighborhood had a recreation center years ago.

The distance now is for every home to be within a mile of a recreation center. That distance is now a mile. One of the questions meeting participants are being asked is to fill out a chart indicating how far they would walk or drive for activities, ranging from playing at a playground to running a dog off-leash.

Over the past two decades St. Paul has added large recreation centers that serve as hubs for more activities, including North Dale and Oxford. The trend seen is that the hubs, which can offer more classes and activities, have increasing participation. Hillcrest's drop-in numbers have climbed from 191,632 to 314,773 between 2007 and 2009. Overall, attendance at centers throughout the city has increased from 2.52 million in 2009 to an estimated 2.85 million this year.

Some smaller recreation centers are seeing a decrease in drop-ins and program registration. Some still thrive and are busy, noted Hahm.

Of the comments received May 19, some were pleas to keep smaller centers. "Even small recreation centers are hugely important for community building and a strong sense of neighborhood," one person wrote.

Another person wrote, "We need opportunities for kids to get as much physical activity as possible, neighborhood recreation centers provide this."

Parks and recreation completed a vision plan in 2008 to outline goals and objectives for the parks system. That is guiding the system plan. An inventory of all facilities was recently completed. Part of the process underway will match needs with demand.

One of the findings so far is that three areas of the city could be considered underserved, when it comes to recreation facilities. One

gap was found in a circle just south of Interstate 94, between Marshall, Snelling, Randolph and Cleveland avenues. Another is bounded by Minnehaha, Victoria, Marshall and Hamline. The third area was near the Highway 61-Interstate 94 area.

Another part of the process is

a community survey, asking why people visit recreation centers, what activities are missing and what activities are important to them. Participants are also being asked to submit comments and to mark maps to show which facilities are important to them and

which need work.

Efforts are being made to each out to many communities and groups or parks and recreation uses. Persons who cannot go to a community meeting can take the survey online at www.stpaul.gov on the parks and recreation page.

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Cool off at Hamline Midway Library this June

Come cool off in Hamline Midway Library this June! We have lots of exciting new things happening: the start of our summer reading program, special outdoor storytimes, and Movie Matinee Tuesdays. There's always something fun happening at the library!

Our popular Anusara Yoga classes, provided by instructor Chris Gordon of Big River Body-Works Yoga Studio, continue to

be offered Tuesday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Please bring a yoga mat and a firm blanket (Mexican style or wool yoga blanket) and wear comfortable clothing.

As the school year ends we are keyed up to kick-off our Summer Reading Program! Summer Reading Program. Performances will be held Wednesdays at 2 p.m. starting June 16th when we kick off the summer with Music

with Ross Sutter.

On Friday, June 18th, the library is pleased to host a special event put on by the MacPhail Center for Music: Sing, Play, Learn! MacPhail's early childhood music specialists will explore the world of music and play with parents and their children. Through hands-on musical play activities families will experience music's impact on learning and reading readiness. To-

gether we will sing, rhyme, read, move and create! Please call the library at 651-642-0293 to register.

The library will continue to offer toddler and preschool storytimes Fridays at 10:30 in June, as well as two special outdoor musical on our front lawn on June 21 and 28 at 6:30 p.m. Bring your blankets and bug spray!

Join us on June 22 at 2 p.m.

for a family movie matinee showing of Disney's The Princess and the Frog.

On June 24 from 2 to 5 p.m. there will be a party for teens..with pizza!

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

June events at Rice Street Branch Library

The Rice Street Branch Library has many fun and educational programs planned in June. Please stop in and visit us!

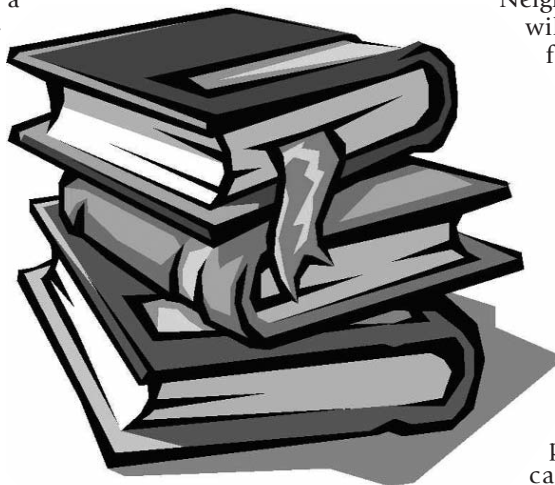
Jazz with an Attitude! will be offered on Saturday, June 12 at 2 p.m. Join vocalist Lee Engle, guitarist Reynold Philipsek & their friends as they perform a mixture of hip jazz, swing, flamenco and Latin music.

Wendy's Wiggle Jiggle and Jam will perform at the library on Tuesday June 16; the Brodini Comedy Magic Show will entertain on Tuesday, June 23; and the Science Museum of Minnesota will visit on June 30. All programs begin at 10:30 a.m. and are part of the St. Paul Public Library's Summer Reading Program.

Family story times will be offered on Tuesday mornings June 1 & 8 and on Friday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Join Rice

Street's storytelling experts for stories, finger plays, rhymes, and songs.

The Runescape Club will meet on Tuesdays from 3:30-5 p.m.



Teen Time will be offered Wednesdays from 3:30-5:00 p.m. Join us for a rotating roster of activities each Wednesday! Video games, board games, and crafts are just a few of the activities teens can do.

The Collector's Corner Neighborhood Trading Post will be open Wednesdays from 4-7 p.m. and Saturdays from 1-4 p.m.

Bring a tradable natural object to the library and volunteers from the Science Museum of Minnesota will help you learn more about it.

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

The North End Book Club will be discussing The Shack by William Young on Monday June 28, from 12:45-2:30. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8733. This group is offered in partnership with the Community Education Senior Program.

The Community Education Senior Program will offer computer classes beginning Friday, June 11 from 10:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8733. There is a fee for each class.

A series of classes on Swedish Embroidery on Monks Cloth will begin on Wednesday, June 30 from 12:45 to 2:45 p.m. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8733 p.m. This group is offered in partnership with the Community Education Senior Program

Practice giving speeches and making presentations in Spanish with the Los Lagos Toastmasters

on Mondays from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Contact Ralph at 651-730-9817 for more information.

Free Foreclosure Counseling will be offered by the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development on Wednesdays from 12:30-6:30 p.m. No appointment is necessary.

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

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Hours are Monday and Wednesday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.; Tuesday 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The library will be closed July 4 and 5 in observance of Independence Day.



Follow us to summer CLASSES & FAMILY EVENTS!

- Girls and boys ages 6-16 design and build imaginative science, art, engineering and technology projects at Leonardo's Basement. LEGO robotics, giant cardboard structures, computer animation, stilt making and more!
- Half-day classes at a new workshop located at Griggs Park, 1188 Hubbard Ave in Saint Paul and the existing shop in south Minneapolis. Sliding scale class fees from \$0-165.
Families living in the 55104 zip code are eligible for scholarships provided by the Midway Men's Club.
- Check the web site for weekend family events with food, music, building and lots of fun. Bring your friends and neighbors!

Summer class schedule at www.leonardosbasement.org
Contact Leonardo's Basement at 612.824.4394 or info@leonardosbasement.org with questions.

MGM site

Continued from page 8

exceed 14,000 square feet. Furthermore, the Action Item calls for MGM and Walgreens (Semper Development) to continue to work with the Land Use Committee and the community on the design details and further plans for the site.

On May 18, the District 10 Community Council voted 8 to 6 in support of the MGM Land Use Action Item. A community vote was also taken, and of the eligible registered voters the total vote resulted in 30 supporting the action and 35 against.

Because of the results of the community vote, the Board felt it was important to capture the community concerns in a letter, which is posted at the Council's website: district10comopark.org. In the May 25, 2010, letter to John Kohler at Semper Development, John Knox, board chair of District 10 Como Community Council, stated the community's concerns.

"The main issues of trepidation, for both the community and council board members, are centered on maintaining the stability and residential character of the neighborhood," he said. "Community members feel re-

zoning of residential property for commercial use is something that could threaten said stability. Increased traffic levels and safety issues also worry residents and some board members. Additionally, as with any major real estate venture in a residential neighborhood, stability of property value is a major item of concern."

Also at the May 10 meeting, the Land Use Committee accepted the Node Study and submitted an Action Item to the Board, which was voted on at the May 18 meeting.

The Board voted unanimously to adopt the entire Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee as a Development Guide Appendix/Amendment to the 2006 District 10 Land Use Plan and Summary.

The next step in this process with the MGM/Walgreens redevelopment will be for Walgreens to submit three-dimensional drawings to show what the building will look like and to do a traffic study.

"It's pretty tight for them to be ready for the next Land Use Meeting on June 7," said Knox. "Things are still in the very early stages. At this point, we have not given any type of recommendation to the City."

Como area Tree Appreciation drive underway

The Como neighborhood has a great community asset that many of us take for granted—the trees in our yards and boulevards. These gentle giants clean our air and reduce rain runoff, save on heating and cooling costs, reduce noise pollution and increase our property values. Trees also beautify our landscapes, support wildlife—especially birds—and make our streets seem more livable and healthy.

To encourage Como area res-

idents to value existing trees and to plant more of them, the District 10 Environment Committee is sponsoring a Tree Appreciation Program. Each year, several stand-out trees will be selected in the Como neighborhood for recognition. Trees will be chosen based on criteria such as size, type of species, historical significance, health, location, aesthetic value, wildlife value or other characteristics.

"We'd like to encourage all

District 10 residents to provide good care to the trees on their properties and to plant more trees, where possible," said Chet Mirocha, member of the task force that developed the recognition program. "Trees are a trust left to us by the previous owners of our homes and one that we should leave to those that come after us."

The Tree Appreciation Program's winners will be announced in late May. Homeown-

ers sharing their properties with winning trees will earn a ribbon to tie around the trunk and photos of the tree and property will be featured on the District 10 web site. In addition, winners will be featured at a short program at 9:30 a.m. on June 12 at the Historic Streetcar Station at Horton and Lexington. Free trees will also be given away at this event.

"We hope to inspire a great deal of tree planting," said

Mirocha, adding that he'd like to see a new tree put in place of every one cut down on private property. "With so many trees being lost to invasive pests like the emerald ash borer and Dutch elm disease, we lose more of the urban forest every day."

The District 10 program dovetails with the City of St. Paul's new Landmark Tree Program which recognizes special trees on public or private property.

Lori Fritts

Continued from page 6

"They'll get to know each other, how they can contribute and lean on each other," Fritts said.

She said the Chamber also plans to start informal lunches twice a month, starting at restaurants at one end of University and going to the other end.

"They're going out to lunch, anyway, and we'll get people into different restaurants and build a customer base," Fritts said. "It will be small groups, creating energy and making it fun. The potential is enormous."

Fritts said the past years have not been without their challenges.

"There are times there was a target on your forehead in leadership," she acknowledged. "I have been a big advocate to get the LRT done, and sometimes I

was portrayed as not feeling the impact it would have on small businesses. That was tough, because I did understand."

Fritts said she knew what it would take: a lot of hard work, constant contact with merchants, and many, many meetings.

"I felt LRT was in serious jeopardy many times along the way," she admitted. "To get so close and not get it done would have been tough."

She said her job has changed a lot over the years, and the future duties for the Midway Chamber president will be much different.

"With the whole Central Corridor thing, the planning is done. Now there's a need to look at where it's going to go. The new person will learn what he or she has to as things move along," Fritts said.

She said there would be less of an advocacy role and more working with construction litigation and marketing.

A farewell luncheon will be



"I have been a big advocate to get the LRT done, and sometimes I was portrayed as not feeling the impact it would have on small businesses. That was tough, because I did understand."

- Midway Chamber President Lori Fritts

held for Fritts June 17, as she prepares to leave for her new position with Data Recognition Corporation, headquartered in Maple Grove. She will be director of government affairs, team-

ing up with some former employers she worked with in Washington, DC.

"I'm very excited to have this new opportunity," she said. Reminiscing one more time

about her position as Midway Chamber president, she said the most unexpected part of the job was that you could work that hard and still have that much fun.

Crossroads Elementary holds fundraiser at Famous Dave's to rebuild after arsonist damage

Crossroads Elementary School's Playground sustained \$112,000 worth of arsonist damage in September last year. The school at 543 Front Ave., is holding a fundraiser at the Famous Dave's Restaurant at 1930 W. 7th St. on these dates: June 17, July 1, 15 and 28 from 4-9 p.m. Simply pick up a ticket at the table on your way in and present to the cashier when you make your purchase. A percentage of purchase will be donated to the Playground Fund.

Bethlehem Church hosts Lawn Party June 26

Bethlehem Lutheran Church in the-Midway will host a Neighborhood Lawn Party "Reaching Out with God's Love" on Saturday, June 26, from 11 a.m. -

2 p.m. There will be live music, free hot dogs, chips and ice cream, free giveaway items and crafts and activities for kids. The church is located at 436 North Roy Street, across from the Spruce Tree Center, one block south of the Snelling and University Avenues intersection. Please call 651-646-6549 for additional information. All are welcome.

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Enterprise moves to Como-Dale-Front intersection

By JANE MCCLURE

A vacant auto sales lot at the Como-Dale-Front intersection will become the new home of Enterprise. The vehicle rental business is moving there from a location on University Avenue in Summit-University neighborhood to avoid potential parking problems that will be caused by the Central Corridor light rail project.

The St. Paul Planning Commission voted unanimously May 21 to approve a conditional use permit and setback variances needed for Enterprise. Those decisions are final unless appealed to the St. Paul City Council within 10 days. As of Monitor deadline no appeal had been filed. An appeal isn't expected because the proposal didn't generate any opposition.

The District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council recommended approval of the permit. No neighborhood residents or business owners have spoken out against the new business at a May 13 public hearing of the Planning Commission Zoning Committee.

All auto-related uses in St. Paul area required to have conditional use permits, to regulate issues including hours of operation, number of vehicles on a property at any one time, types of services offered, outside storage and other facets of a business operation.

The variance is needed for a setback along Como Avenue, which is a designated city parkway. A 25-foot setback is required and a zero-foot setback is proposed for the new building. The building is being located closer to the corner to provide a more

pedestrian-oriented feel for the area.

The Enterprise proposal is one of two redevelopment plans eyed for the property in recent months. Another prospective owner obtained a conditional use permit from the Planning Commission in January, to set up a used vehicle sales business on the property. But that never materialized and the property is being sold to Enterprise instead. Planning Commission members questioned what would happen to that permit. According to city staff, the previous conditional use permit is rescinded with approval of the new permit May 21.

Work on the former St. Paul Auto Sales location at 605 Como Av. will include tearing down and replacing a building on the site, redoing the parking lot and installing new signage. Enterprise should be able to move onto the site later this year. The rental vehicle company is in the process of buying the property from a bank.

Enterprise's current location at 900 University Av. is one of the area where on-street parking will be lost after light rail is built, said company spokesman Rick Mendlik.

The property is about 22,991 square feet in size and has frontage on Como and Front. A home and garage are on the Front side of the property.

The new site plan shows 27 off-street parking spaces, for rental vehicles, customer vehicles and staff vehicles. That is more than enough parking as required by the city.

University Avenue will lose about 85 percent of its on-street parking when light rail is built,

which has sparked worry among businesses in affected areas. A handful of businesses have announced they are moving from University, rather than lose on-street parking.

The current building at the Como site was one of several in

Second Debut 2

Continued from page 9

Goodwill Easter Seals is a non-profit charity that assists people with barriers in education, employment and independent living, and all profits from its stores go to support that mission.

"What sets us apart from the typical consignment store is that we have a unique building," Lewis said. "We maintained the historical integrity of the original garage, including the sliding doors (now incorporated into walls and windows) and shape of the building, as the restaurant did. But there's no grease on the floor - everything is now hardwood and we've added chandeliers!"

Lewis added that customers are thrilled to hear that, unlike a for-profit consignment store, Second Debut 2's proceeds support a charitable mission. "We offer top-notch service from experienced retail and apparel professionals, the latest styles of women's clothing and accessories, and are open daily," she said. "Offering what for-profit consignments have but in support of our mission is the real reward for us."

Sales Associate Siobhan Ditty said that the store's opening days

the Como-Dale-Front area targeted for improvements several years ago by North End Area Revitalization (NEAR), which is now part of Sparc. The building was extensively remodeled, the parking lot redone and a new sign put up. The area was target-

ed for extensive building façade improvement and revitalization plans not only because of its role as a business node but also because of efforts to develop the Great Northern Corridor business and light industrial area to the south.

were so busy they had to get rush deliveries of inventory from the GES warehouse. "Within two weeks of opening, we already had repeat customers," she said. "Every day is like Christmas here....each daily delivery of donations brings new packages or presents. I think that's why I see many 'regulars' now."

All items sold at Second Debut 2 are determined by GES' clothing and accessories selector at another site, who seeks out appropriate items likely to sell and that are consistent with the store's niche. While the store sells only women's clothing and accessories, the St. Louis Park Second Debut carries men's clothing as well.

Amy Heuberger, another sales associate, sees support of GES' mission manifested in observing her customers. "A couple weeks ago, a woman pulled a Columbia tank top off the rack and said, 'oh my God, this is the piece I donated to the Goodwill.' She didn't buy it back, though," she said with a laugh.

Lewis said she is amazed at the generosity of donors in the items that are delivered. "Lots of pieces arrive with new tags on them."

Before opening Second Debut 2, Lewis managed a Golden Valley art gallery for 10 years and was a costume designer for the Plymouth Playhouse. She also

was an alteration fitter at the old Dayton's Department Store's Oval room in downtown Minneapolis after completing a degree in Apparel Design from the University of Minnesota. Another of her store's associates ran a designer boutique in Toronto for 20 years.

"I believe our staff bring great consulting experience to help our customers find an item they may be seeking for a certain occasion, or to pick out an appropriate style or accessory that might match a need they have," Lewis said. "I've heard from customers that our store is so much nicer than the typical consignment shop...that it's bigger, more organized, brighter and more creatively decorated. I've also heard our items are more 'trend forward' than they've seen elsewhere."

The store's official grand opening takes place June 17-20 and will include refreshments and a free drawing for a \$500 wardrobe makeover and a \$100 SpaFinder message gift card. Specialized sales are planned in July and at other times during the year.

Second Debut 2 is open weekdays from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. (Saturdays to 6 p.m.) and on Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, call 651-645-5048 or visit www.seconddebut.org.

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Continued from page 15

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Hamline-Hoyt Playground and beautification project and fundraiser

Chelsea Heights School is partnering with St. Paul's Northwest Como Recreation Center and the Chelsea Heights Parent Teacher Organization to design and build a new playground to replace older, dilapidated equipment at the school/Rec center, located on the corner of Hamline and Hoyt in the Como Park neighborhood. As part of the project, the PTO is planning to incorporate a block beautification effort, bringing in additional landscaping and art, in addition to new playground equipment for the school and neighborhood families.

The cost of this project is close to \$250,000, and the PTO has been actively seeking grants and other funding to pay for new playground equipment. In addition to grant money, the PTO hopes to seek donations from both the school community and the larger Como Park community as well.

Other fundraising and beautification efforts

Community members are also invited to donate money for

the new playground by going to one of two sites: the Hamline-Hoyt Playground website at www.hamlinehoytplayground.org, or the Chelsea Heights PTO webpage at <http://chelsea.spps.org/PTO.html>. Donors should then click on the PayPal link for a secure way to contribute to the long-term fundraising efforts.

"At a time when budgets are being slashed and schools are often struggling with the shortfall, it seems more important than ever for all of us to contribute what we can to our community," said Ann Smith, a Chelsea Heights parent and co-chair of the playground committee. "Our proposed playground will be an asset not only to our school but also to the larger St. Paul community."

"Neighborhoods with active gathering places are more stable, have less crime, and foster more ways for kids to play outdoors," added Smith. "A new playground would enhance our already wonderful neighborhood."

In addition to rebuilding the playground, the Chelsea

Heights PTO is planning to beautify the grounds and transform the existing site into a neighborhood green space with community gardens, vegetation, plants and flowers. These gardens will also serve as a form of outdoor classroom, where students can learn more about the environment.

"The PTO is reaching out to our community to ask for their support in working with us to create the garden and this great community playground," said Sue Gunderson, co-chair of the playground committee. "We need and welcome financial contributions, expertise, in-kind donations, and people's willingness to spread the word about our efforts."

CONTACTS:

Elizabeth Arnstein: 612-396-4754 (c) or emarnstein@msn.com

Sue Gunderson: 651-707-7232 or

Ann Smith: 651-387-0442 or smith786@umn.edu

HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

SUMMER EVENTS

Risk Management: The Key to Health Care Plan Cost Reduction

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For additional information, visit

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Contact the Office of Undergraduate Admission at 651-523-2207 to make an appointment

Piper Golf Classic

Tuesday, June 22

12:30 p.m.

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For more information, contact Dana Johnson

at 651-523-2754 or djohnson@hamline.edu

Summer Literacy Institute, K-6

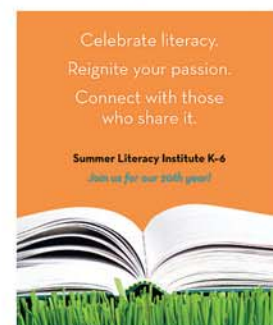
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