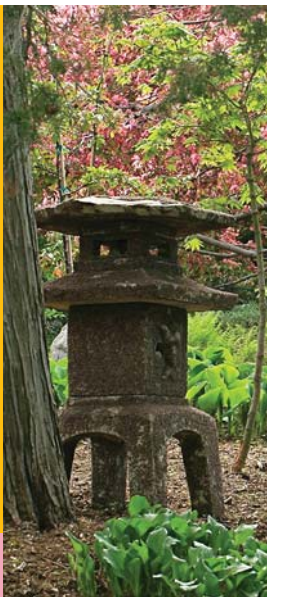




# monitor

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## Charges in triple homicide bring relief to North End

By JAN WILLMS

Calling it a real tragedy that the community has had to deal with, Ward 5 Council Member Lee Helgen expressed relief that the suspects in St. Paul's 2007 triple homicide have been charged with their crime. In March 2007 Tyvarus Lindsey and Rashad Raleigh allegedly broke into a home in St. Paul's North End and killed Maria McLay, 32; her boyfriend Othahl Saunders, 31 and her daughter, Brittany Kokedakis, 15.

The suspects were named as the killers by a federal grand jury Jan. 20 after three years had passed with the murders unsolved. They are currently in a state prison serving time for different murders, but could possibly face a federal death penalty.

"The Police Department did a good job in identifying who was responsible," Helgen said. "These folks have been held accountable for their crime and hopefully federal charges will persist."

Helgen said the crime was brutal, and the community is safer now that these individuals are no longer roaming the streets.

"Now we need the judicial system to do its work," he added.

But for the family survivors of murder victims, bringing the perpetrators to justice may not always bring closure.

Leigh Ann Olson, a counselor for Survivor Resources, an organization that is a liaison between law enforcement and families, said everyone who is a survivor of a homicide victim has different feelings.

Olson herself is a survivor of two homicides that affected her directly. Her daughter was killed five years ago by Olson's ex-husband, who then killed himself. Five months later, her mother was killed in an unrelated homicide. Her mother's killer is in prison.

"For me, it has been quite the healing," Olson said.

"It's kind of a hollow victory, even when the criminal is caught and charged," Olson said. "One of the things that can be difficult is if the person who is accused and found guilty is still denying having anything to do with the murder. That happened with me."

She said an arrest doesn't bring the family member back, but the victims can finally rest and the survivors move on, knowing the person is being held



**"People often expect getting justice is  
going to make things better."**

**- Margaret McAbee  
Survivor Resources**

accountable.

"It's also good for the safety of others in the community when someone is put away; it's good to know they are off the streets," she said.

Olson said Survivor Resources is housed at the St. Paul Police Department, working in cooperation with the department.

"We work with survivors of victims of homicide, suicide and accidents," she said. Olson said so many things can be happening when a loved one has been killed, and the organization can connect with law enforcement and follow up and see how the survivors are doing.

"They have been through a horrific event, and it's so good to have somebody there," she said.

The group meets every Monday evening throughout the year, holding meetings at 6:30 p.m. All the facilitators who work with survivors have been through the program themselves. There are separate groups for survivors of suicides and homicides. There are also groups for children, which Olson works with. The agency has an office in Minneapolis also, with groups meeting Thursday evenings.

"Having someone arrested does make a difference," said Margaret McAbee, one of the founders of Survivor Resources and its current director. "An unsolved murder leaves you wondering who did

this. Sometimes the police know, but just can't prove it. And sometimes it truly is a whodunit."

McAbee said the survivor may wonder if the person had been in his or her home, or if it is someone known or a stranger. "You start wondering about everyone you meet," she said.

"People often expect getting justice is going to make things better," McAbee noted, "but it doesn't fix anything." She said a conviction may make people feel better at first, but then they find the conviction doesn't really change anything.

"One of the things that makes it most difficult is when people are not sorry for what they did, just sorry they got caught," McAbee said. "There is no genuine remorse, and it is hard to forgive someone who is not sorry."

She said that in court the person may speak with no remorse and probably blames the victim. This can stimulate anger for the survivors.

"Working with Survivor Resources has definitely been a positive experience for me," McAbee said. "I made up my mind early on after my husband's death that if there was anything I could do to make things less difficult for another survivor, I would do that. We can perhaps head off some of the anger."

She said she believes it is important to keep families in the

loop and apprised of what is going on so that they don't hear it on the 6 p.m. news.

"I want them to know they are important enough to hear from the person who is working on the case or one who is working for them."

"You see all things," McAbee said. "A family may come together immediately, but sometimes family members will all be grieving for the same person in very unique and specific ways." McAbee said each family member is grieving for a different relationship.

That grief has been widespread in the North End community, which is so close-knit it could be considered an extended family. The shock waves reverberated throughout the neighborhood.

It was seven years ago that those feelings of shock engulfed Maggie Doran, whose son, Ben, 15, was murdered in the North End neighborhood.

"I picture the brain as putting the horribleness of it in a place where you can function again," Doran said. "It will never not be horrible," adding that the acute pain of the initial loss pales over time.

Doran said she still has moments that are difficult, but nothing like it was in the beginning.

"I'll always wonder what Bennie would be doing," she said. "It's sometimes hard to be around kids his age."

Doran said it was at Ben's funeral that a policeman came up to her and told her two people had been arrested for his murder.

She said that did not really bring her a sense of closure. "I think of closure when a parent dies," Doran noted. "It doesn't really apply to a violent death."

Doran said the murder of her child had significantly changed her personality. "There is no more innocence in the world, and I don't trust people the way I used to," she noted.

Doran has taken her grief, however, and built Ben's Foundation, an organization in honor of her son that assists others who have lost loved ones to violence.

She said she always remembers what someone once told her. "Don't let the killer of your child kill you." And that could happen, according to Doran. "You could die from the heartbreak alone," she said.



# monitor

**1885 University Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
651-645-7045**

## Publishers:

Calvin deRuyter, Tim Nelson

## Managing Editor:

Denis Woulfe

## Advertising:

Denis Woulfe  
Dennis Stern (651-452-5324)

## Photographers:

Liberty Willms  
Andrew Fossbinder

## Production/Illustrations:

Bob Wasiluk

## Contributing Writers:

Eric Nathanson, Deborah Brotz,  
Jane McClure, Krista Finstad Hanson,  
Jan Willms, Sherri Moore,



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# Monitor in a Minute

## MGM fence dispute with city continues

A dispute between MGM Liquors and the City of St. Paul will continue as the firm has sought an injunction against the city. Papers were filed last month and city officials were formally notified Jan. 13.

Until the legal dispute is resolved, MGM will not have to build a fence along the Larpen-teur-California alley. The St. Paul City Council ordered that the fence go up last fall. Neighbors are concerned that without a parking lot fence, speeding traffic has increased in the shared alley. Although MGM does own houses south of its store property, private homes and businesses also share the alley.

The MGM Liquor store and offices are at the southeast corner of Larpen-teur and Lexington Park-way. The alley fence was required in the 1980s as part of a site plan for the property. But when the fence was taken down several months ago, it launched a lengthy legal dispute between the city and MGM. That sent the matter back to the St. Paul Planning Commission last summer on an appeal of a city staff decision ordering that the fence stay in place.

MGM doesn't want to replace the fence, saying it isn't needed. Neighbors and city officials disagree, citing traffic safety concerns.

The Planning Commission ordered that the fence go back up, a decision MGM officials appealed to the City Council. The City Council then upheld the Planning Commission decision and denied MGM's appeal.

## New check-cashing businesses delayed

New check-cashing businesses

that try to open in St. Paul may see those efforts bounce, as a result of an ordinance adopted Jan. 13 by the St. Paul City Council. The council voted unanimously to place a moratorium on any new check-cashing businesses or currency exchanges, pending a study by the St. Paul Planning Commission.

The moratorium doesn't affect existing businesses but does prohibit new ones from opening.

The city already regulates such businesses, by restricting which commercial or industrial zoning districts the businesses may be located in. The uses aren't permitted in residential districts and require conditional use permits before they can open in some commercial areas. They are permitted uses in other commercial areas and industrially-zoned areas.

But in recent months city officials and neighborhood activists saw the businesses opening without permits from the Planning Commission or city licenses. That's because business owners discovered they could seek a state-issued banking license or certificate and bypass the city regulatory process. The state license is for a business called an "industrial loan and thrift."

Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune said there are problems when businesses open without city oversight, especially businesses that provide "pay day" loans. His concern is that such businesses prey on low-income people.

It's not clear how many check-cashing businesses have opened without going through city process.

No one appeared at a Jan. 6 public hearing to speak for or against the proposed ordinance. The Planning Commission has up to 12 months to complete a new study of zoning regulations and return its recommendations to the City Council.

## Ash borer efforts continue in St. Paul

St. Paul's efforts to control the spread of the emerald ash borer got some help from the City Council and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture awarded St. Paul Parks and Recreation a \$722,600 grant to help manage the infestation. The grant is part of a \$1 million response program set up by state officials.

Falcon Heights received \$77,400 and the University of Minnesota got \$200,000. The insects have been found at both locations.

The Agriculture Department also awarded \$875,000 in grants to 15 cities and agencies to prepare for infestation. Recipients include the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Minnetonka, Roseville and St. Louis Park.

Emerald ash borers were found in South St. Anthony Park in May. Since then city and state crews have cut down about 100 trees. Trees in Desnoyer Park, Merriam Park, Hamline-Midway and Como neighborhoods have been cut down in recent months.

In spring, summer and fall 2009 crews hung purple insect traps in ash trees around the city to monitor the pests. There is no insecticide that will eradicate the emerald ash borers but city officials hope to slow its spread.

Beginning in February, city forestry staff will start removing trees that have emerald ash borer, as well as other ash trees that are in significant decline. The trees will be removed. Replacement trees will be planted at a later date.

"We're still asking residents to join our monitoring effort by watching their ash trees for signs of infestation, but we've identified several areas of the city that we will begin implementing our structured removal plan," said Rachel Coyle, Parks and Recreation emerald ash borer specialist.

"From our research, it's not a matter of if an ash tree becomes infested; rather it's a matter of when. So we will try to stay ahead of the spread to ensure St. Paul's urban forest remains intact."

On Jan 13 the City Council unanimously adopted an ordinance to regulate how infested trees on private property are handled. The ordinance allows city forestry crews to go onto private property and remove the trees if necessary. Property owners will be assessed for the removal. The city has a similar ordinance in place to control Dutch elm diseases.

No one appeared at a Jan. 6 public hearing to speak against the ordinance.

Parks and Recreation will host a series of community meetings throughout the city in the next few months to help educate and promote awareness of the plan. Visit [www.stpaul.gov/parks](http://www.stpaul.gov/parks) and click on "Emerald Ash Borer Information" to learn about other meetings.

## City receives funds for vacant homes

The City of St. Paul and its Invest St. Paul (ISP) Program will receive more than \$18 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help rehabilitate vacant homes and residential properties in neighborhoods most affected by the mortgage foreclosure crisis. The ISP program covers several neighborhoods including parts of the Frogtown and North End neighborhoods. But it's not clear yet where the funds will be spent and how much will be allocated by neighborhood.

HUD's awards are part of a \$2 billion Neighborhood Stabilization Program, which is funded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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A 'Bearable' Wait...

# Como Zoo to Unveil Polar Bear Odyssey June 3

By ELIZABETH MCLISTER

What's big and white and new all over? Como Zoo's Polar Bear Odyssey, of course.

On June 3 the zoo will unveil its Polar Bear Odyssey, a new and revitalized habitat for the majestic polar bear. These improved accommodations are four times as large as the original space and will boast state-of-the-art amenities for bears and humans alike.

Senior zookeeper Joanne Kelly is eager to see the project reach completion. "I've been here 20 years and sometimes it seems like we've been talking about [renovations] for that long! Now our bears will have everything they need."

The all-season Polar Bear Odyssey was designed to emulate an arctic tundra ecosystem. All 13,140 square feet of outdoor grounds will be covered with a natural surface of gravel and soil. The spacious terrain also features three pools of varying depths, one filled with live fish; a 260-square-foot digging pit; and two separate habitats that can be joined by a corridor or divided. The two outside areas also meet in a sophisticated structure of training and holding pens that's visible to the public.

But upgrades won't just benefit animals. People of all ages will delight in the exhibit too. One outside yard is fenced while the other allows for unobstructed viewing of the impressive "tundra" setting and its inhabitants. A glass-paneled alcove bordering a cave will enable visitors to be nose-to-nose with the bears. And private parties can rent a charming pine lodge that abuts one of the scenic outdoor yards.

An interior room grants visitors a privileged outlook of both yards and the training pens. Because education is a key component of the exhibit, the enclosed space will contain three learning stations. One station will use interactive techniques to engage young children, another will be geared toward youth, and a third will be directed at adults.

The adult learning station will extend its scope to include information on global warming. In recent years the public has been inundated with warnings about climate change and its implications for a host of different species. As northern winters shorten and ice mass shrinks, global concern for polar bears is mounting. The adult learning station will call attention to these and other threats to the well-being of wild polar bears. Says zookeeper Sara Courteau, "As a public institution, our job isn't to force political views on people, but we will provide data on what's happening."

All told, the project will cost about \$15 million. The city and state have contributed close to \$10 million to the effort and all remaining funds will be generated by the nonprofit initiative Como Friends. Is \$15 million too steep a price to pay for renovations? Campus manager Michelle Furrer doesn't think so. "The Polar Bear Odyssey will truly be a world-class exhibit. Our facility not only meets but exceeds regulation standards."

Furrer's characterization of the exhibit as "world-class" is no



Como Zookeepers Julie Yarrington, Joanne Kelly, and Sara Courteau pose before one of the Polar Bear Odyssey's outdoor areas.

exaggeration. Como Zoo observed strict standards and underwent exhaustive approval methods to ensure all their bears enjoy a high

quality of life and to guarantee that breeding families can be housed there.

Their dedication paid off. Co-

mo is one of only two zoos worldwide to receive Polar Bears International's prestigious Three Diamond Award for high quality polar bear lodgings. In addition, the exhibit meets or exceeds stringent expectations put forth by Aquarium Polar Bear Standards, the Canadian Polar Bear Protection Act, the USDA Marine Mammals Act, and the Association of Zoos.

Major construction of the Polar Bear Odyssey may be finished but the polar bears themselves are nowhere to be seen. Due to the nature of the (business) beast, even zookeepers aren't sure who the dens' next denizens will be. Neil and Buzz (inhabitants of the old facility) have spent the past two years at the Detroit Zoo but they'll likely return to Como upon completion of the project. Given

the exceptional nature of the Polar Bear Odyssey, Como may also accept bears from a number of other zoos or it could even qualify to shelter a wild Canadian bear.

Please bear with the Como Zoo while it wraps up preparations for the Polar Bear Odyssey. If you're especially impatient, don't hesitate to become involved in the project's final stages. Fifty-eight brave souls are still needed for the Winter Plunge, a fundraiser organized by Como Friends. This dip into the frigid Lakeside Beach at Forest Lake will happen Saturday, February 20, 2010. Not feeling that bold? You can still sponsor a "plunger" or donate to the zoo. For more information call 651-487-8229 or visit [www.comozooconservatory.org](http://www.comozooconservatory.org).

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# Community celebrates addition of 3 stations to Central Corridor

By JANE MCCLURE

Three additional Central Corridor light rail stations will be added to the project, ending months of debate over why stops at Hamline, Victoria and Western are needed. Community activists celebrated with elected officials at a Jan. 25 press conference.

The stops will serve transit-dependent neighborhoods along University Avenue.

Numerous community groups, organized as the Stops for Us Coalition, have lobbied for the stops for the past few years. The District Councils Collaborative, a group representing district councils and neighborhood associations along the planned light rail line, conducted research to make the case for the stops.

The prospects for the three stations changed Jan. 13 when the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) announced it would de-emphasize the Cost Effectiveness Index (CEI) when making transit funding decisions. The CEI is a complex formula that factors project costs, travel time and other project aspects.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has announced new guidelines for transit funding, which also focus on livability issues. Environmental and economic development benefits can now be factored into FTA funding decisions. He has immediately rescinded the old CEI rules, although the new rules need to go through a public hearing and comment process at

the federal level.

Anne White, president of the District Councils Collaborative, a group monitoring light rail, said the prospect of more added stations is "great news." She noted that each of the station serves

disappointed that no community members were allowed to speak at the Jan. 26 press conference. That was also noted by County Commissioner Janice Rettman, who noted the "rush to the microphone."

But even with the stations, central corridor still faces hurdles. Rail project staff members are continuing to negotiate mitigation measures with the University of Minnesota. The U of M is concerned about potential ef-

also one of the defendants in a lawsuit filed by African-American community groups, business owners and residents of the Summit-University and Aurora-St. Anthony neighborhoods. Those groups are asking for a number of items to be covered financially by the project, including the three stations. (See related story.) Lawsuits could jeopardize the project.

There is also disappointment that more funding hasn't been found for parking mitigation, a concern championed by the University Avenue Business Association.

When the rule changes were announced FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff singled out the Central Corridor and noted the potential civil rights issues raised by not building the additional transit stations in neighborhoods that are largely Asian and African-American. Rogoff said the change in policy will provide better transit service for those neighborhoods.

LaHood and Rogoff were among the officials at the press conference, along with many state and local elected officials. In the days leading up to the press conference, there had been a flurry of activity to get funding for all three stations in place. St. Paul officials had committed \$5.2 million. The remaining funds will come from the multi-jurisdiction Counties Transit Improvement Board (\$1.26 million), Ramsey County (\$520,000) and Central Corridor Funders Collaborative (\$520,000).

The CEI decision proves that 'elections matter,' said Congressman Jim Oberstar. He and others at the press conference credited the Barak Obama administration for encouraging that factors beyond the index should be used in making station decisions.

Metropolitan Council officials are following the changes closely. "This has very significant implications for the Central Corridor," said Metropolitan Council Chairman Peter Bell. The CEI had served as a "pass-fail" measure for transit projects. Now it is just one of many criteria that will be used to make funding decisions.

Building an additional station or stations and adding more transit stops under the old rules pushed the CEI to a point where project funding was jeopardized, due to added costs, projections of slightly decreased ridership and increased travel time. The inability to add even one station had prompted protests and is a focus of two federal complaints and a newly filed lawsuit against the project.

One of the three stations was penciled in last year when the City of St. Paul agreed to spend \$5.2 million to pay for it. Now the FTA has agreed to match that funding if two stations are built at a cost of \$5



Three additional Central Corridor light rail stations will be added to the project, ending months of debate over why stops at Hamline, Victoria and Western are needed. Community activists celebrated with elected officials at a Jan. 25 press conference. The illustration above shows a split side platform, the same that will be built at Snelling, Lexington and Dale.

a different community and that all are badly needed. Without the added stations, transit-dependent area residents would have to walk a half-mile to get to train stations.

But White and others were

"I think we need to give a lot of credit to the community groups," Rettman said. She also praised Commissioner Jim McDonough, who chairs the county's Regional Rail Authority, for his work to get the stations built.

facts of trains causing noise and vibrations that would affect research facilities. The U of M also needs funding to reroute traffic around the Washington Avenue section of the light rail line.

The Metropolitan Council is



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Whenever my wife and I go to a party with people I don't know well we have a general understanding regarding my occupation. When someone asks me what I do, I tell them I work for the city of Saint Paul. If they pry further, I tell them I work in the customer service department. Generally, somewhere down the line, they either become disinterested or figure out I'm not going to talk about my career. Don't get me wrong, it's not that I'm not proud of being a police officer. I am. My hesitancy to get into a conversation about being a cop is due to the inevitable question that predictably follows:

"You're a cop?! I HAVE to tell you about this one time I got pulled over..."

As they delve into the circumstances of the traffic stop a small crowd gathers to listen in and interject their thoughts. They corner me into either defending or chiding the officer who made the stop. If I defend the cop, I have succeeded in making sure no one will talk to me for the remainder of the night. If I criticize the cop, I am making a judgment of his conduct without having all the information. Other than becoming proficient at citing federal and state



## On the Beat

By OFFICER CHARLIE ANDERSON

### Tips during a traffic stop

case law in support of my judgment, I don't get much benefit from these conversations. I wind up with a headache and a parched throat (which means another trip to the punch bowl).

While the above story is humorous, I tell it in order to relay a more meaningful point. We all have stories about a citation we've received or about an encounter with police. All of us know what it's like to see red and blue flashing lights in our rear view mirror on the freeway and think, "Am I speeding? Did I use my blinker?" The squad car usually rushes past us in response to an emergency. What some people rarely appreciate, however, is the danger inherent to making a traffic stop.

Traffic stops, as witnessed by recent tragic events around the country, are some of the most dangerous things cops do. Not

only must officers be aware of the surrounding traffic, but they must also entertain the possibility that a person inside the vehicle may have a warrant for their arrest or a weapon in their possession. In our profession there is a saying that "there is no routine traffic stop." Any other attitude could be potentially fatal.

'Reasonable suspicion' is the legal term related to making a traffic stop. Reasonable suspicion is more than a hunch (a feeling that something criminal is afoot), and less than probable cause (which is required for an arrest). Officers may detain and frisk a person to determine if something illegal has occurred or is about to occur. This case law is based off of the Supreme Court case 'Terry vs. Ohio'. Of course, officers can utilize their discretion when enforcing laws which may have

been broken during the course of the incident. For example, I probably wouldn't give someone a ticket for traveling over the posted speed limit down I-35 en route to Regions with their wife who was in labor. Instead I would probably escort him to the hospital, and ensure they arrive safely. On the other hand if I witnessed a driver of a vehicle physically assaulting a passenger or see a child without an approved restraint, the chances of that person facing some type of enforcement are quite good.

Here are some tips that can help make an interaction with a police officer during a traffic stop a little less awkward: If you are driving and you see those lights behind you, pull over to the right as soon and as safely as possible. Put your vehicle in park or turn the engine off. Do not exit the car.

Turn on your hazard lights. If it is dark or night-time, turn on your overhead light so the officer can see inside. Turn off your radio and hang up your cell phone. Roll down your window before the officer approaches, and have your license and insurance in your hand. Keep both hands on your steering wheel. If you need to grab something inside your pockets or in the center console or glove compartment, ask the officer if that is okay. Hands are dangerous to police officers because they must grasp a weapon for the weapon to be used. Refer to the officer formally, and wait until the officer has initiated conversation before inquiring why you were stopped.

Be vigilant. Be safe.

(Editor's note: Officer Charlie Anderson is a member of the Saint Paul Police Department's Central District GRID Unit. GRID (Getting Residents Involved Daily) utilizes problem oriented policing to address crime and quality of life concerns within certain geographical sectors along the Rice Street corridor that have historically experienced higher levels of criminal behavior. You can reach Officer Anderson at 612-751-4423.

## Central Corridor stations

Continued from page 4

million, said Bell. If all three stations are built, the FTA would pay half of the cost of the third station or \$2.5 million.

Nancy Homans, senior policy aide for Coleman, said city officials would explore other

funding options so that all three stations could be built.

Previously the Metropolitan Council had only committed to installing the infrastructure for the three stations when light rail construction starts this year. Environmental studies for the three sites began last year and were completed in mid-January. Public hearings to comment on the environmental findings drew more than a dozen community activists last month.

News of the rule change had community activists and local elected officials wondering if more than the infill stations could be added. St. Paul city of-

officials are struggling with how to pay for desired streetscape improvements, as well as replacement parking for businesses. Businesses have also pressed for mitigation funds, to ease the impacts of rail construction.

But Bell indicated that a federal rule change doesn't mean the CEI and fiscal responsibility should be abandoned. Even if the federal government is willing to pick up a greater share of the Central Corridor project, it's questionable whether additional local and state money can simply be added to help meet all of the outstanding requests.

"The prospects of the three stations have bumped upwards but the prospects of the other demands have not," Bell said.

But officials note that changing the rules doesn't mean more money is automatically available, even if it is possible for the federal government to provide a greater match for local and state dollars. Homans said that while funding could be found for a station match, the city has already dug deep to find funds to help pay with streetscape costs and parking needs for businesses that will lose on-street parking when light rail is built.

Homans and City Council members have praised the rule changes, although they are still cautious about what the changes could ultimately mean. Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark said the very narrow focus placed on what the changes could mean for Central Corridor probably means that the communities won't see many more project additions beyond the three stations.

"Still, those stations are something community members really want and it's important we do what we can to make sure all are built," Stark said.

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# University Ave., downtown merchants to be assessed for Central Corridor improvements

By JANE MCCLURE

University Avenue and downtown St. Paul property owners will be assessed for Central Corridor streetscape improvements, but won't have to pay for that work until trains begin running in 2014. The St. Paul City Council unanimously approved the assessments plan Jan. 27 following weeks of debate.

The council's decision does add about \$40,000 in financing costs for the project. But more importantly it provides some short-term relief to businesses and industrial property owners in a tough economy.

The St. Paul City Council agreed to lay over a vote on the assessments last month for University Avenue, capitol area and downtown streets where the light rail line will travel. The council and city staff members continue to look at ways to ease the costs to affected property owners.

Ward Four Council Member

Russ Stark said city officials will continue to seek ways to reduce the assessment amount, through use of outside funding. The deferral of the assessments gives city officials more time to seek money elsewhere. A \$10 million request is pending before the 2010 Minnesota Legislature. But that request failed to make it into Gov. Tim Pawlenty's bonding bill proposal.

The Central Corridor project's \$941 million budget doesn't include streetscape improvements sought by the city. City officials have proposed paying for the work through a combination of Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR), Long-Range capital Improvement Budget (CIB) funds, tax increment financing (TIF) and assessments.

But more than dozen people testified against the assessments at a Jan. 6 public hearing, saying that assessments on top of a tough economy and potential loss of business due to light rail construc-

tion is too much to bear. Since then the City Council has received additional calls, letters and emails objecting to the assessments.

On University, property owners would be assessed \$54.39 per foot for lantern-style street lights,

sidewalks, boulevard pavers, special crosswalk paving, trees with structural soil and irrigation, median landscaping, street furniture, parking improvements and mitigation, and an upgraded overhead contact system to run power to the

trains. The assessments would also help cover the costs of one of the three infill light rail stations at Western, Victoria or Hamline. The annual operating and maintenance assessment would be \$1.70 per foot for commercial properties and 34 cents per foot for residential properties.

In downtown St. Paul, assessments of \$22.56 per foot would pay for new globe streetlights. Another \$19.70 per foot would pay for sidewalks, pavers, and trees with structural soils and irrigation. The annual operating and maintenance assessment would be \$1.05 per assessable foot.

Since the Jan. 6 hearing the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) announced that the Cost Effectiveness Index (CEI) a formula used to rank transit project and allocate funding, would be de-emphasized in future project review. Some City Council members had questioned if that provided a way to have the federal government pick up some of the tab for the streetscape work. Metropolitan Council officials have indicated that's not likely.

Another issue that city officials had to look at was whether property owners on the north side of University between Aldine and Fairview should be assessed at all.

That's because the strip of street frontage in front of their buildings is actually Dickerman Park, which is city-owned.

In the early 20th century the land was donated to the city for park purposes by the Dickerman family. The park is a long, narrow strip of land and in most places appears to be the street frontage or yard area of businesses. There is play equipment on parts of the property. In front of the Griggs Midway Building at Fairview and University, the park land is paved and used as a parking lot.

The park had faded from public notice until recent years when area district councils, University UNITED and parks advocacy groups began lobbying for its preservation and improvement. Over the long term, park advocates would like to see private improvements such as play equipment and parking removed from Dickerman Park and the green space restored.

Midway YMCA Executive Director David Dominick is among those questioning the legality of the assessment. He is questioning the assessment to the YMCA, noting that the YMCA's building and grounds don't abut University - the park does. Because the city owns Dickerman Park, the YMCA and other property owners contend the assessments would be the city's responsibility - not theirs.

But Stark said he is seeking a legal opinion on the issues the property owners are raising. "It's something we absolutely have to look at. Technically, those properties don't have street frontage."

But Bruce Engelbrecht of the city's Real Estate office said the properties abutting Dickerman Park can and will be assessed for the Central Corridor streetscape improvements. Legally, the properties are seen as benefiting from the work on University even though they do not direct abut it.



University Avenue and downtown St. Paul property owners will be assessed for Central Corridor streetscape improvements, but won't have to pay for that work until trains begin running in 2014.

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# Some District 6 residents seek to secede, annex to District 10

By JANE MCCLURE

Some residents in the western end of St. Paul's citizen participation and planning District 6 feel the need to secede, saying the issues of concern to them aren't what District 6 is focused on. But their quest to leave North End-South Como and be a part of District 10 Como met a sharp response from the District 6 Board Feb. 1 and its Land Use Task Force in January. The district council's executive committee and Land Use Task Force both rejected the request.

Under city policy, if a district council is to change boundaries that change has to be agreed upon by both district councils involved. District 10 has discussed the issue in the past, under an agenda item headed "District 6 Orphans" but has taken no action. Without consent from both district councils, the boundary request will languish.

South Como resident Mary Warwro and Art Oglesby addressed the District 6 Board Feb. 1.

Both said they and their neighbors are more interested in Como Park issues and identify more with District 10 than District 6.

The request would affect about 220 to 225 homes in the area south of the park and east of Lexington Parkway. Even the residents involved don't have a firm idea of how many blocks of homes should be shifted. "The issues that District 10 focuses on, the development of the park and the traffic are issues that have a high impact on me and my neighbors," Warwro said.

Warwro said it is a "geographic anomaly" that she lives in District 6. She described part of the area as a "peninsula" and a small part as a "thumb." She said railroad tracks through the neighborhood are also a barrier to involvement, prompting some District 6 Board members to make wisecracks about they are on the "wrong side of the tracks."

The proposed change in boundaries has irked some District 6 Board and Land Use Task

Force and angered others. Some were unhappy at the suggestion that District 10 acts on issues more effectively than District 6 does, and disputed Warwro's claims that the district council is only interested in Rice Street issues. Others said that while District 6 does work on Como Park issues, the focus of district councils needs to be on more than one part of the neighborhood and one issue.

District 6 Board Member Paul Kammuehler represents South Como. "It's kind of like I've been told I've been wasting the last seven years of my life, sitting on this board," he said.

At one point, Warwro said to the District 6 Board, "Why is it so important to you?"

"Why is it so important to you?" replied District 6 President Ray Andreson

"What needs do you feel are not being met by District 6?" said District 6 Board Member Daniel Ward. "This is the first time I've ever seen you."

Others cited District 6's years

of involvement in park and park-related issues, ranging from fights over Metro Transit bus rerouting to the Hmong Sports Festival parking overflow issues. In the past the two councils worked on issues ranging from redevelopment planning at Dale and Maryland to plans for North Dale Recreation Center. They noted that the recently appointed Warwro as an alternate to a committee looking at transportation issues centered on Como Park.

Oglesby wanted to be the District 6 representative on a community task force that designed the planned Como Park Pool, saying he was opposed to a proposed lazy river feature. He complained that the appointed representative didn't attend the first meeting of the group. But District 6 Board Member Christa Sullivan said that Oglesby's strong feelings about the park issues may not have served the best interests of District 6 and that a balance was needed.

Requests for South Como to separate from District 6 have been

heard before. There have been at least three requests in the past 15 years. But city officials don't often allow councils to change boundaries.

Three years ago the three councils in District 13 – Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline and Lexington-Hamline – were ordered to merge by the City Council, citing long-term funding concerns. That was the only St. Paul planning district with three councils. The councils began as neighborhood associations and predated the district council system.

Boundary changes for district councils are rare – one of the last took place almost 20 years ago, when a portion of the District 15 Highland neighborhood asked to be placed in the West End's District 9.

Changes in boundaries shift the number of residents from district to district, affecting population – which is factor in the amount of funding councils receives under a funding formula hammered out several years ago.

## In a minute

Continued from page 2

Minneapolis, Brooklyn Park, and Hennepin County were given a joint award of \$19.4 million. The St. Paul and Minneapolis awards were the only two in Minnesota.

Mayor Chris Coleman said this award will go far to strengthen neighborhoods, put trades professionals to work, and create home-buying opportunities. "Our neighborhoods are strong, and in the middle of a foreclosure crisis, this will provide some relief to a complex problem. With our partners in President Obama's administration, we can acquire hundreds of vacant buildings and put people back to work making these properties an asset for our community again," he said.

This is the second round for the federal NSP funds. Minnesota communities received \$28 million out of a nationwide total of \$4 billion last year. St. Paul received \$4 million in that round.

St. Paul had applied for \$68 million in this round of the federal program. But the competition nationwide was fierce, according to city officials, as every state has been hit hard by foreclosures and abandoned properties.

St. Paul's money will be used to buy what could be hundreds of vacant properties. Some properties will be demolished, while others could be rehabilitated for new homeowners.

Part of the money could also be used to create programs to attract new homebuyers. City officials haven't announced yet how they'll allocate the funds by program or by neighborhood.

Other neighborhoods that are part of ISP include Dayton's Bluff, the northeast area of the East Side, Payne-Phalen, West End, Summit-University and the West Side.

## New ordinance aimed at gas explosion

The threat of natural gas explo-

sions at vacant properties could be eased as St. Paul began enforcing a new city ordinance in January. The ordinance, which was described at a Jan. 12 press conference in Hamline-Midway neighborhood, requires property owners to install excess flow gas valves.

The valves are required for properties classified under property code requirements as Category II or III. These are the buildings that need the most rehabilitation before they can be sold or re-occupied. Turnkey buildings in good condition don't have to be brought into compliance with the ordinance.

If a property has open build-

ing permits and rehabilitation is underway, the owner doesn't have to install the valve. Nor are the valves required in properties that have been winterized and have had their natural gas supply shut off.

The excess gas flow valve allows owners to keep homes heated while still ensuring the neighborhood and fire safety personnel are safe from the potential of a gas explosion. If the flow of gas into the house exceeds a level necessary for the building's gas appliances, the valve shuts off gas to the house.

Mayor Chris Coleman, council members and St. Paul Fire Department and code enforcement

staff praised the new ordinance, saying it will keep citizens safe.

"Vacant houses can fill up with gas without anybody knowing it until it's too late," said St. Paul Fire Marshal Steve Zaccard. "There's a very serious risk of a vacant building exploding when firefighters are just arriving. This ordinance will undoubtedly prevent serious injuries and deaths to firefighters and nearby residents."

"We're taking this step now so we don't have to explain in the future why a vacant house has exploded and caused great pain and suffering for the immediate neighborhood," said Bob Kessler, director of the Depart-

ment of Safety and Inspections (DSI).

This is the first known ordinance of its kind to go into effect in Minnesota. The ordinance had input from real estate associations and contractors. This allows properties to stay heated while they are being marketed, yet keeps properties safe.

Letters notifying property owners began going out in mid-January. Properties found not to have the valves will have the work done by the city. But that will bring a minimum \$375 charge for the installation, as well as additional assessments.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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# New book recalls colorful history of Como Conservatory

By JAN WILLMS

For Bonnie Blodgett, becoming one of the authors of "Jewel of Como" was a stroke of luck.

She had been asked by Afton

Press to write a book about the history and development of the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory in Como Park because of her experience as a garden writer. Blod-

gett is a regular garden columnist for the Pioneer Press and Midwest Home and has written books on gardening.

"I had just started the research for the Como book when I was offered a project I could not turn down," Blodgett said. "I told Afton Press I would turn over everything I had done, and Leigh Roethke started working on the book."

Roethke is the author of two books and teaches art history at St. Paul College.

"Leigh got into it, but she was in grad school and got bogged down with work," Blodgett said. "We passed the book back and forth. She did most of the research, and I did a lot of the writing. I had the easier job."

The project was started in 2005, and the resulting book that has just been published combines historical facts, anecdotes



and spectacular photos from the Como archives and current times.

Blodgett said the book was designed and laid out by Patricia McDonald and her daughter, Mary Susan Oleson.

"Her daughter was going around the country singing, and she would e-mail her mother. They went page by page," Blodgett said. McDonald, the owner and founder of Afton Press, engineered the whole project, according to Blodgett. "She did a lot of

fundraising and made the whole thing happen."

The book recalls the early beginnings of the gardens at Como and the difficulties often encountered in funding the gardens and the conservatory, originally built in 1915.

"They had some tough times in the beginning," Blodgett said. "It's amazing they did not close Como at some point, but the gardens were always recognized as something people needed."

A portion of the book reflects on the glass palaces that were popular across the world by the turn of the 20th century. Blodgett said she had done research on these "glass houses" for another book, so she had a good background on the glass palaces.

"It was fun to revisit that," she said. She added that Minneapolis and St. Paul had such a close connection to what was going on everywhere with plants and conservatories.

"It was a real eye opener for me to put the world history of horticulture together," Blodgett said. "Little old St. Paul was right in the middle of everything." She said that, in spite of the lack of technology such as the Internet, people seemed to have a sense of what was going on elsewhere and caring about other parts of the country.

In 1873, the city of St. Paul bought up all the land around Lake Como and hired Horace Cleveland, a landscape architect from Massachusetts, to design a public park similar to New York City's Central Park. Although initially the artwork and statuary for the park was recommended to be objects suggesting woods and nature, statues of politicians and playwrights soon graced the park.

"Jewel of Como" describes these early days of Como, the arguments over funding and the direction the park will take. Around 1891 German-born Fredrick Nussbaumer became superintendent of Como Park, a post he would hold for 30 years. His influence on the gardens and his pursuit of his dream of a conservatory are well-documented in the book, culminating in the opening of the Como Park Conservatory in November 1915.

"Pieces of the conservatory were brought in by train," Blodgett said. "It was like a giant kit house."



Lighted paper lanterns recall Japan's annual Obon holiday, when families pay respects to their ancestors. The Japanese Lantern Lighting Festival is an annual event each summer. (Photos courtesy of Afton Press.)

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 9





Above left, workmen pose in front of the Como Park Conservatory, which they built in 1914-1915. At right, The Como Park Conservatory viewed from across the Frog Pond in 1916. (Photos courtesy of Afton Press)

## Como book

Continued from page 8

Under Nussbaumer's direction, Como offered tropical plants, man-made outdoor ponds and floral art. But the building of the conservatory was considered to be the greatest achievement of his life.

"Big events were frequently held in the park," Blodgett said. Although the park is the scene of weddings and community events

and programs today, Blodgett said it is nowhere near as social as it once was.

"Things have changed as society and priorities have changed," she noted. "People don't put Como at the front of their mind as much today. There is so much else in the community that draws their attention, and it is easy for things to get neglected if they are not the latest thing."

Blodgett added, however, that she had no idea how central to the

community Como Park and the conservatory are.

"Residents are so proud of it, and all of them had stories to tell," she said. "Everyone in the community seemed to have worked there when they were young, romantic and idealistic."

"There are millions of love stories there, too," she said. "A lot of history and anecdotes."

Today, Como provides extensive educational opportunities as well as providing an abundance of

plants and botany. The conservatory was renamed the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, to honor a woman who had an incredible passion for flowers and gardening. Her family donated \$7 million to construct a new wing of the conservatory.

Como Park also contains the Como Zoo, Como Town amusement park, the Cafesjian Carousel, Como Lake, a golf course and pavilion, a pool and picnic shelters.

"The park maintains its old traditions," Blodgett said. "Many things have been added to the park, but few things have been eliminated."

Blodgett said she thinks it is always important to know the history of something.

"Learning the history behind this building totally transformed it for me," she said. "Now it's come alive. I can just see Nussbaumer riding around in his little locomobile on his daily park rounds."

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# IN OUR COMMUNITY

## In Our Community

### Community meeting on Emerald Ash Borer

The fight against the Emerald Ash Borer infestation continues and the city of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department will begin to replace public boulevard Ash trees on identified blocks as part of the City's Structured Removal Plan in Ward 5 in early March. There will be a community meeting at Rice Recreation Center on March 1 at 6 p.m. to explain next steps and to answer resident questions.

For maps of affected trees and more information visit [stpaul.gov/parks](http://stpaul.gov/parks) and click on "Emerald Ash Borer Information."

### District 6 Council moves meetings

Beginning February 23, for the Land Use Task Force meeting, District 6 Planning Council will be holding both the Board of Director's meeting and the Land Use Task Force meetings at the University Academies for Boys and Girls and North End Elementary, 27 East Geranium. Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. and will be in the library. You must use the main doors under the new bridge on Geranium. This entrance is also handicapped accessible. Call 651-488-4485 if you have questions.

### Chili feed at Zion Feb. 19

Heart of Winter chili feed at Zion Lutheran Church, Lafond and Aldine, Friday, February 19, 5-7 p.m.

Chili with toppings and beverages. Adults \$5, kids under 12 \$2.50. Free will offerings and can goods for food shelf. Bring friends and neighbors. For more information call 651-645-0851.

### February fun at Rice St. Library

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

Sowah Mensa and Friends will bring drums, xylophones and other instruments that define African music to the library for a special Black History Month program on Saturday February 13 from 11 a.m.-12 noon.

Family story times will be offered on Tuesday and Friday mornings from 10:30-11 a.m. Join Rice Street's storytelling experts for stories, finger plays, rhymes, and songs.

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.

Teen Time will be offered Wednesdays from 3:30-5 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 Runescape Club will meet on Thursdays from 3:30-5 p.m. Play or learn to play Runescape. All skill levels welcome!

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.

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.

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

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Hours are Monday and Wednesday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.; Tuesday 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The library will be closed Monday February 15, for Presidents' Day.

### Choir Concert performs February 26

Three local high schools and Concordia University, St. Paul, (CSP) offer music for the community to enjoy at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Avenue, on Friday, Feb. 26 at 7:00 p.m. CSP's Director of Music, Dr. David L. Mennicke, will conduct Concordia University's Christus Chorus, and each of the high school choirs from the Concordia Academy of Roseville, the Hmong Academy of St. Paul and the Lion's Gate Academy of Bloomington will sing selections. The finale includes two massed choir numbers. The concert is free and open to the public.

### Tax Help at Jehovah through April 12

Free tax assistance is provided every Monday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. through April 12 at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Avenue. Volunteers are trained by the IRS and the MN Dept of Revenue. Please bring a copy of last year's return and your social security card(s) with you. No appointments are taken; this is a walk-in service only. Please enter at



*The Oratorio Society of Minnesota (OSM), directed by Matthew Mehaffey, will celebrate a remarkable legacy of music with a pair of 30th Anniversary Concerts in February. (Photo courtesy of Dan Norman Photography.)*

### Oratorio Society performs concerts

The Oratorio Society of Minnesota (OSM), directed by Matthew Mehaffey, will celebrate a remarkable legacy of music with a pair of 30th Anniversary Concerts in February 2010. The program will feature a wonderful selection of OSM favorites including operatic pieces, stories drawn from Old Testament sources, and sacred songs from varied traditions. OSM Founder and Conductor Laureate George S.T. Chu will join as a special guest. The performances will be held on Friday, February 26 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, February 28 at 4 p.m. at Sundin Music Hall on the campus of Hamline University. A special reception will be held following the February 26th concert. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students and are available online at [www.oratorio.org](http://www.oratorio.org).

the Thomas Avenue door and follow the signs to the Tax Assistance room.

### FREE Community Breakfast

Starting February 28th, the breakfast will be served 8-9 a.m. every 4th Sunday each month. Free to the community of the North End. Come one come all to our fellowship hall.

North Emanuel Lutheran Church, 301 Hatch Ave. at Matilda Street.

"Bringing hope and help to the North End 'Emanuel means 'God is with Us'. May He be with you also as we share this FREE Community Breakfast with your North End neighbors.

Directions to North Emanuel are easy when you know where the Rice Street Library is located. Then go west 5 blocks on Hatch Ave. and stop at Matilda Street.

Pastor Kisten Thompson, and the members of North Emanuel welcome all to this event. Church ph. 651-489-5611.

### Downsize your paper

"Downsizing the Amount of Paper in Your Home" will be the topic at a luncheon for seniors on Tuesday, March 9 beginning at 11:30 a.m. at 1415 Englewood Avenue (lower level, Hamline Methodist Church). Lorene Roste from Senior Moves will address what kind of paper you should keep, how to keep it, what to recycle and how long to save it. She'll also offer organizational suggestions. A freewill donation is asked for the meal. Call the of-

fice of Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 to make reservations, request free transportation for the luncheon and/or grocery shopping or medical appointments.

Seniors who would like to receive instruction for Healthy Moves, gentle, in-home exercise instruction are asked to call Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542. Participants receive a one hour, one-on-one teaching by trained staff and weekly check-in for three months. Healthy Moves helps maximize strength, increase flexibility and reduce risk of falls.

### Breastfeeding topic for March La Leche

The Art of Breastfeeding and Overcoming Difficulties is the topic of the meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group on Tuesday, March 9. All expectant and nursing mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information.

### Knox Church holds luncheon February 14

Please join us on February 14th at 11:30 a.m. at Knox Presbyterian located at the corner of W. Minnehaha Ave. & N. Asbury St. We will celebrate the Chinese New Year and enjoy great food and fellowship. All are welcome. For more information please e-mail [knoxpres@comcast.net](mailto:knoxpres@comcast.net) or call 651-645-6488.

### Fish dinner at St. Bernard's

A fish dinner will be held every Friday during Lent (except Good Friday) at St. Bernard's Parish Center, Rice and Geranium. The cost is \$7 for adults with children 12 and under \$3. The cost includes beverage, dessert, and bottomless cup of coffee. For more information call 651-488-6733.

### Women's Bible Study

Beth Moore's study on the Psalms of Ascent, "Stepping Up," runs through April 28 on alternate Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the lounge of Jehovah Lutheran Church, corner of Snelling and Thomas Avenues. This in-depth look at Psalms 120-134 models how women can voice their own petitions and praises to God. Leader Bridget Kruchowski says "During this 7 week study we'll also worship together, discuss the video teachings and homework and spend time in prayer." Call the church office at 651-644-1421 to register. Check the calendar at [www.jehovahlutherana.org](http://www.jehovahlutherana.org) for dates.

### Ash Wednesday soup, service offered

The community is invited to worship services on Ash Wednesday, February 17, at Jehovah Lutheran Church, corner of Snelling and Thomas Avenues, at 11:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Pastor Bob will trace the sign of the cross with ashes on the foreheads of those who wish to receive this mark. On each of the following five Wednesdays of Lent, worship and a simple bowl of soup are offered as follows: Wed noontime 11:30 worship and noon soup; Wed evening 5:30 soup and 6:30 worship. The prayer services have the theme of "Waiting" and are based on Bible readings from the previous Sunday, mostly from the Gospel of Luke. All are welcome to these times of reflection on Jesus' work on earth as we prepare for the festival of Easter. More information at [www.jehovahlutheran.org](http://www.jehovahlutheran.org)

### Memories sought of Como Park Dutch Oven

Memories Wanted: The Joyce Kilmer Fireplace Rededication Committee is looking for your memories of this Como Park fireplace, also known as the "Dutch Oven," for possible inclusion in a booklet being published for a 75th anniversary rededication ceremony in May 2011. The restoration of this 1936 fireplace will begin in Spring 2010. Please send your memories to [mn.sls8@gmail.com](mailto:mn.sls8@gmail.com).



# Neighbors turn out to talk about farming on former Wilder site

By JANE MCCLURE

On a cold winter night, at one of St. Paul's busiest intersections, almost 150 people jammed into a meeting room to discuss urban farming and green space. Two Frogtown couples' proposal to convert the former Wilder Foundation campus into a garden demonstration project, green space and has captured the imagination of many people.

Many pieces would have to fall into place before the idea could become a reality, the project backers said at the Jan. 14 meeting at Rondo Community Outreach Library. One huge potential hurdle is raising the money needed to buy the site, which Wilder Foundation officials say they're not ready to sell yet. Another is how such an ambitious project would be launched. But even the seed of such an ambitious urban farming idea is generating considerable excitement.

The group that met Jan. 14 has started discussing the formation of subcommittees and the need to organize around the project. They have a web site and a Facebook group.

Patricia Ohmans and Tony Schmitz, and Seitu Jones and Soiyani Guyton are longtime friends and Frogtown gardeners. The two couples were active in the Frogtown Garden Tour, which was held for several years. "Collectively, we have 88 years of living in Frogtown," Guyton said.

While they love their neighborhood, the four see one huge



The old Wilder site centers on a hill. One slope east of Victoria has been a popular sledding spot for generations. But it also has flat areas good for gardening and many mature oak and cottonwood trees. (Image by Seitu Jones)

shortcoming as Frogtown's lack of green space and other amenities that would improve residents' health and quality of life. Other neighborhoods have large park spaces but Frogtown only has a few small neighborhood parks, which are dedicated largely to organized sports and recreation.

Guyton said that having such a large site open for redevelopment presents opportunities that the community may never see again.

The old Wilder campus, bounded by Minnehaha, Victoria, LaFond and Chatsworth, is almost 13 acres in size. Wilder moved out of most of the buildings there when it opened a new headquar-

ters at Lexington Parkway and University Avenue. The vacant buildings were razed last year. The child development center remains at the site, on LaFond.

Wilder occupied the Frogtown site starting in the late 1960s. Before that it was occupied by the Home of Good Shepherd, a Catholic institution for "fallen women" and girls who were pregnant out of wedlock. The large site has remained intact for about 130 years. Wilder does plan to keep its child development center on the property.

Jones said the vision to redevelop the site is "very general" right now. The backers are seeking suggestions as well as ideas for fi-

nancial support.

The old Wilder site centers on a hill. One slope east of Victoria has been a popular sledding spot for generations. But it also has flat areas good for gardening and many mature oak and cottonwood trees.

"Some of this land is so beautiful, it should be preserved just as it is," said Jones.

But much of the property could be dedicated to uses promoting urban farming, demonstration gardens, food preparation classes, urban chickens, beekeeping and arts classes. Gardens reflecting foods enjoyed diverse cultures could be featured.

Having the Frogtown Farm in

place could also spur smaller gardens throughout the community. The neighborhood already has many flower and vegetable gardens on private property. The mortgage foreclosure crisis means homes have been torn down in Frogtown, opening up some vacant spaces for smaller community gardens. Frogtown's planning district, District 7, has more than 200 registered vacant properties.

Schmitz noted that the neighborhood has no shortage of vacant lots. "I know what happens to vacant lots here," he said. "They grow garbage and they grow weeds." The Frogtown farm backers would like to see the vacant lots, some of which are too small to build on under current building codes, sold at reduced rates for garden and open space use.

One huge step would be to acquire the old Wilder site. County records place the land value alone at \$3.45 million. Wilder spokesperson Teri Davids said the foundation won't be ready to sell the property for a couple of years.

That could give the backers time to raise funds for the purchase. County Commissioner Janice Rettman said Ramsey County has applied for a \$4 million grant to help with property development as it relates to public health. But that money couldn't be used to buy the site. Rettman and Ward One Council Member Melvin Carter III have told the Frogtown farm backers they would help look at other ways to find property acquisition funding.

## Northwest Como Recreation Center program and registration information

### Spring Sports Registration Feb. 1st-12th

NW Como will be taking registration for the following sports: Indoor soccer (ages 3-14), Floor Hockey (ages 5-10), and Volleyball (ages 9-14). Registration is taken on a first come basis. Payment is due at registration time. To register call (651-298-5813), drop by or online at [www.stpaul.gov/parks](http://www.stpaul.gov/parks)

Registration has begun at Northwest Como Recreation Center. Most activities and classes have limited space and are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Register on line at [www.stpaul.gov/parks](http://www.stpaul.gov/parks), at all recreation centers in person, or through the mail for all classes and activities. No registration is complete until fee is paid. All refunds are subject to a \$10 administrative charge, unless program is cancelled. All refunds must be initiated through the Recreation Center Director or Assistant Director.

### Family Open Gym every Sunday from 1-4 pm for families thru March 21st.

The Mannerly Manners Club: It is never too early to begin to teach your children the ground rules of proper manners. Mannerly Manners® has designed a program specifically for early learners. During these 3 sessions students will learn; why it's important to be respectful of others. They come to understand what it says about you, how it helps in making friends, and getting along. With the use of role-play activities, music, and puppets,

we help students understand the importance of being respectful and using Mannerly Manners®. This 3 week class begins Feb., 28 from 2-3pm for a fee of \$65.

Volleyball Warm-up is for youth ages 9-14 who want to prepare for the upcoming season or learn volleyball skills. This 2 time activity begins Feb., 20 from 10 am - noon for a fee of \$20.

Computer: Digital Animation is for grades 2-6 who will work in teams to explore the exciting world of digital animation and photography. Our cinematographers / photographers will create their stories & unique projects using our special computer graphic and editing software. They will make a stop-motion animation movie from beginning to end: storyboarding, creating backgrounds, making props, filming the movie & downloading it to a computer, and adding special effects and transitions. Using the same tools used by today's best known animators, this course will spark their imaginations and then give them the tools to bring their ideas to life! Student groups' final movies will be available online for all to see, or students may bring a USB jump drive the last day to take home their films immediately. This class runs for 4 Mon., from 4-5:30 pm beginning March 1.

Southwest Area Spring Party is Sat., March 27 from 11am-1pm at Hillcrest Recreation Center. Activities will include: carnival games, jump castle, egg basket and craft. Meal deals will be available for \$3/person. The fee for this family activity is \$2 for youth ages 2 and older/parents free.

Multi-Sport Spring Break

Camp is an introductory program for boys and girls ages 9-12. The multi-sport atmosphere helps children explore soccer, baseball/T-ball, flag football and non-contact LACROSSE. No pressure, just lots

of fun while these athletes participate in all four sports through unique Sports Unlimited games. Please bring a baseball mitt, water-bottle and two snacks. We might be going outside so please dress

your camper accordingly. Camp runs March 29 - April 1 from 9am-noon for a fee of \$70.Fee: \$70 Ages 9-12 Sessions: 4

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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Gary Raines, owner



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# Assisted living building may be constructed near existing North End nursing home

By JANE MCCLURE

An assisted living building could be erected adjacent to a longtime North End nursing home, if the St. Paul City Council approves a needed zoning change. Elim Care, the parent company of New Harmony Care center, won St. Paul Planning Commission approval Feb. 5 of a needed conditional use permit. The commission also recommended approval of changing the project site zoning from single-family to multi-family residential use.

The Planning Commission did deny two parking variances for the project, saying they weren't needed. One variance was for the number of units in the facility; the other is tied to the location of new parking to be created for the project.

The City Council will hold a public hearing on the zoning change, most likely in March or early April. The Planning Commission decisions on the permit and variances are final unless there is an appeal to the City council within 10 days.

But an appeal isn't likely. District 6 (North End-South Como)



An assisted living building could be erected adjacent to a longtime North End nursing home, if the St. Paul City Council approves a needed zoning change. Elim Care, the parent company of New Harmony Care center, won St. Paul Planning Commission approval Feb. 5 of a needed conditional use permit.

Planning Council has recommended approval of New Harmony's requests. No one from the community attended a St. Paul Planning Commission Zoning Committee public hearing Jan. 28 to speak for or against the requests.

Many people outside of the North End may not even know about New Harmony, even though it has been in the neighborhood for many years. The care center is in a corner of the neighborhood

near the Trillium Nature Preserve.

The three-story care center is at Rose and Agate; the proposed 48-unit assisted living building would be on Geranium just northwest of the care center. The buildings would be linked at-grade. The planned assisted living facility would be more than 49,000 square feet in size. It would be four stories tall with 32 underground parking spaces and eight parking spaces in an adjacent lot. As part of the project Elim would

also reconfigure an existing 21-space parking lot for the care center. The surface parking will be on the eastern part of the property. The site will have entrances on Rose and Geranium.

Part of the property eyed for the new assisted living facility is vacant. A house on Geranium would be demolished to make way for the project.

The project meets requirements for zoning, said City Planner Penelope Simison. In fact, it

would provide more off-street parking than is required. The Zoning Committee did discuss parking needs. Residents of the care center typically don't have vehicles and not everyone who lives in the planned assisted living facility is likely to own a vehicle. But New Harmony representatives said that providing parking for residents, staff and guests means people don't have to park on neighborhood streets.

Jeremy Bork of WAI Continuum explained the project to the Zoning Committee. The St. Paul-based architectural and engineering firm worked with Elim Care to design the new facility. He said the design was changed to provide adequate off-street parking as well as plenty of green space for residents.

"We don't want to force visitors to park on the street," Bork said.

The design is in keeping with city zoning as well as Minnesota Department of Human Services regulations, Bork said. One challenge in developing the new assisted living facility is that there is a drop in grade of about 1-1/2 story on the entire site.

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## St. Paul Preparatory School announces generous donation toward local student scholarships

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SPP is an international college preparatory school where students from 25 countries around the world engage in a rigorous academic curriculum. Qualifying scholarship students should be interested in a private, quality education where they can succeed in a challenging academic setting and interact with students from around the world. The mission of SPP is to prepare each of its students for the reality of a global world: post-high school, college, and beyond.

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# Rondo screams 'foul' on Central Corridor plans

By JANE MCCLURE

The cries of "Remember Rondo!" could now be heard in a courtroom. Saying that the concerns of the African-American community aren't being addressed, a group of citizens, business owners, faith-based groups and community organizations are filing a federal lawsuit over the Central Corridor light rail project. The St. Paul NAACP, the Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Community (PBHRC) and other groups announced the lawsuit Jan. 19 in St. Paul.

The lawsuit against the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), Minnesota Department of Transportation (USDOT) and Metropolitan Council was filed in Minneapolis, said attorney Thomas DeVincke.

This will be the second lawsuit against Central Corridor, a planned 11-mile light rail line connecting the downtown areas of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Much of its route is on University Avenue. Both the African-American and Asian communities have also filed federal civil rights complaints against the project.

In the past FTA officials have told Metropolitan Council that the U of M lawsuit must be withdrawn before the light rail project can obtain full federal approval. The federal government must provide at least half of the project funding but may be providing more under proposed changes to federal regulations.

The plaintiffs in the latest case said they are tired of having their issues ignored by Metropolitan Council and federal authorities. Their fears include gentrification, increasing property taxes, loss of business and residential street parking and lack of access to transit after rail is up and running. They are questioning the project's failure to include additional transit stations sought at Hamline, Western and Victoria avenues. They also are alleging violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and environmental justice laws. They are also citing the cumulative impacts of decades of community disruption and question why that history isn't being addressed in the current light rail project.

"There's more than 50 years of history here," said DeVincke. "We want that and the history of urban renewal looked at."

One frustration voice by several people is that federal and Metropolitan Council officials have appeared to be more willing to address light rail related concerns raised by the University of Minnesota and Minnesota Public Radio over rail noise and vibration effects. "We have not been provided with that opportunity," said St. Paul NAACP President Nathaniel Khaliq. He said the groups are not only not at the table, "we're not even under the table."

"We haven't seen the mitigation to the degree that the U of M and MPR have," said Aurora-St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation Director Nietta Presley. ASANDC and Community Stabilization Project are among the lawsuit plaintiffs. "We know there's going to

be a lot of interruption and it will be yet another barrier to our community," Khaliq said of the rail project. The construction on Interstate 94 caused the demolition of much of the old Rondo neighborhood. In the 1970s, urban renewal uprooted community members again.

PBHRC Organizer Veronica Burt said the FTA has approved a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the light rail project without considering the direct and indirect cumulative impacts of the rail projects and past projects. "It would be a shame to have another large project with such negative impacts," PBHRC is not a plaintiff in the case but has led the community organizing efforts around it.

"At one time this was a very vibrant community for the African-American community," Khaliq said. He and several other speakers were either displaced or had family members and family businesses displaced.

Metropolitan Council Chairman Peter Bell released a statement after the press conference. He grew up in the Rondo neighborhood and has often spoken of how his own family was displaced by the construction of Interstate 84 in the 1960s. Bell indicated that while Metropolitan Council staff is working to address concerns along the lines, he doesn't see how the project's \$914 million budget could address the many issues being raised.

Bell said, "I am very disappointed that these groups have chosen to file a lawsuit against the Met Council and the Central Corridor LRT project. I am firmly convinced that the project will help spur the revitalization already occurring in the corridor and provide improved access to employment, educational and economic opportunities for its residents."

A call to USDOT wasn't returned. An FTA spokesperson said that agency doesn't comment on pending litigation.

City Council Member Melvin Carter III, Ramsey County Commissioner Toni Carter and Mayor Chris Coleman weren't available for comment last week as they were traveling to Washington, D.C. to meet with FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff Jan. 19.

Nancy Homans, who has led Coleman's efforts on light rail, said the lawsuit is disappointing. She said city officials have worked hard to mitigate the impacts of light rail, through land use planning and allocation of funding for streetscape improvements and parking. She said the city is continuing to seek additional funds to help the community.

Several people spoke Jan. 19, most with the message that they don't wait to repeat of what happened to their community in the 1960s and 1970s. The fear is that it could happen again. Rev.



Charles Gill of Pilgrim Black Church and the Black Ministerial Alliance, said his church is

threatened by the light rail project. The church is almost 150 years old. "Much of my membership is going to be put out of their homes," he said.

Arnellia Allen, owner of Arnellia's nightclub and restaurant on University, said her business is the only Black nightclub in St. Paul. She has been open for 18 years. "If I lose my parking, it would kill my business," she said.

Allen is one of eight business owners and residents named as plaintiffs in the lawsuit. Another is former Ward One Council Member Debbie Montgomery, who couldn't be reached for comment. Several home owners said they fear losing their homes due to rising property taxes.

The concerns raised in the lawsuit mirror many of those

spelled out last year in a federal complaint against the project. The lawsuit does carry more weight legally than the complaint.

The plaintiffs are seeking the additional stations, as well as property set aside to create new affordable housing. They are also asking for mitigation funds to help businesses that will lose customers and parking during construction and after light rail begins operations.

Burt and Khaliq said African-American leaders are frustrated with the response they have received from federal and local officials. "Nobody's putting sense of urgency on our concerns," Khaliq said.

They have also been frustrated by Metropolitan Council staff who has dismissed their requests as pleas for "handouts." "We're not looking for a handout as some have mentioned," said Khaliq.

"We're looking to restore the economy engine for our community," Burt added.

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# Como ski and snowboard Instructors: Hardheaded about Safety

Instructors with the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation downhill ski and snowboard program are modeling the latest in hip helmets for the slopes thanks to The House, a sporting goods business in Little Canada. The House Boardshop donated helmets for instructors on Mount Como.

The downhill ski and snowboard program, headquartered in the Como Park Ski Center just off of Lexington Parkway, has about 650 participants enrolled this year, most of them children. According to program director, Paul Nakanishi, "We recommend that program participants wear

helmets. Our instructors show students how to have fun on the hill safely—helmets are one way to do that. We are really grateful to The House for the generous donation."

From Colorado to Como, helmets have become a more common piece of equipment for skiers and snowboarders. According to the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA), a helmet can make a difference in reducing or preventing injury and nearly half of all skiers and snowboarders in the United States now wear helmets. In addition, the NSAA has set a goal of having nearly all

children under 14 wear helmets by 2012.

The House is on board with that. Louie Bina, spokesperson for The House says, "It's important to be safe." He also says that there are lots of cool styles in helmets from which to choose

For more information about the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation downhill ski and snowboard program call (651) 488-9673 or visit <http://www.stpaul.gov>.

Mount Como ski instructor Kate Vinson shows off her new custom-painted helmet.



## Reading by the Hearth: Hamline Midway tradition continues

The Fireside Literary Series continues its 16th season this February at the Hamline Midway Branch Library, 1558 West Minnehaha Avenue. Warm up the winter nights with a little mystery, a little verse, a lot of fiction and some armchair traveling, as some of Minnesota's best writers share their works during fireside readings sponsored by The

Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library. The programs begin at 7 p.m. and are accompanied by coffee, cider, cookies and book signings.

On February 11, Sarah Stonich, the bestselling author of *These Granite Islands*, reads from *The Ice Chorus* – newly issued in paperback – a novel about love, memory and what we discover

when facing the truth about ourselves. Don't miss the opportunity to hear excerpts from the novel Booklist says is "a subtle, lovely evocation of the transforming power of love."

J. C. Hallman's quirky collection of short stories, *The Hospital for Bad Poets*, is full of twists and fabulist turns which shine an intuitive light on the human condition. Hear him read on February 18. Hallman is the author of *The Chess Artist*, *The Devil is a Gentleman* and the forthcoming *In Utopia*.

The Fireside Series closes with another fictional outing on February 25, as Marisha Chamberlain, the internationally known screenwriter and playwright, reads from *The Rose Variations*. This debut novel, which centers on a young cellist who takes a temporary professorship in St. Paul circa 1975, was called "[An] enthralling first novel ... graced by a profound re-



The Fireside Literary Series continues its 16th season this February at the Hamline Midway Branch Library, 1558 West Minnehaha Avenue. Among those reading will be Marisha Chamberlain (left) and Sarah Stonich.



spect for the humble particulars of life" in the New York Times Book Review.

The Fireside Series is sponsored by The Friends of the Saint

Paul Public Library and Micawber's Books. For more information, contact The Friends at 651-222-3242 or visit [www.thefriends.org](http://www.thefriends.org).

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### Como resident performs with Sonomento Feb. 13

Sonomento, MacPhail Center for Music's 25-adult chamber choir, will be in concert Feb. 13, 8 p.m. in Antonello Hall at MacPhail. Singing with Sonomento this year is Como resident Suzanne Zander.

The program features two intensely beautiful 20th century choral works: Gabriel Faure's "Requiem" and "Cantata Misericordium," a new musical collaboration between Sonomento and

MacPhail's Chamber Music program, scored for chorus, soloists, piano, strings, harp and timpani.

Desserts and beverages will follow the performance. Admission is free. For more information call 612-321-0100.

### Store To Door holds informational meeting Feb. 23

Store To Door will hold an informational meeting for people interested in finding out more about the program on Tuesday, February 23, 2:30 p.m. for regis-

tration, 3 - 4 p.m. program.

Store To Door office (located in the Griggs Building in Suite S-112). The presentation is in Suite S-127, 1821 University Ave West.

Do you know a homebound person who is not able to shop for groceries? Learn how Store To Door can help. We are the only non-profit grocery shopping and delivery service in the metro area. This is a free, no-obligation meeting offering basic information on what we do and how we do it. For more information and to RSVP, email [susan@storetodoor.org](mailto:susan@storetodoor.org) or call 651.642-1892 ext 130.

## Rec news

Continued from page 11

American Red Cross Babysitting Training will be held Thur., April 1 from 9:30-4:45pm for a fee of \$60. Students will develop skills in leadership and professionalism; basic care; safety and safe play; and first aid. Please note: Students MUST be age 11 years or older by the class date. Students need to bring a bag lunch and beverage.

Orchestra Jam will teach the students building blocks of music through improvisation, composition, and conducting. They will write and perform their own pieces, learn to take "solo", and use conducting cues to arrange group improvisations. OJI is for string players (violin, viola, cello, and bass) who are currently partic-

ipating in an orchestra program, taking private lessons or have some experience on their instrument. The class is for grades 1-6 and begins Tue., April 6 from 3:10-4:10 pm. The fee for this 6 week class is \$30.

Artist Workshop taught by Barb McIntosh will have the children using watercolor, oil pastels, soft pastels and acrylic paint. Students will be introduced to the masters, Van Gogh, Monet, O'Keeffe and Picasso. The fee for these 6 session classes is \$40 and runs from 3:15-5 pm. Mon., April 12 for grades K-2 Wed., April 14 for grades 3-6

Salsa - Parent & Child where children and parents learn basic steps and movements. The class begins Thur., April 15 for 5 weeks at 6pm. Cost is \$25 for parent/child together.

Salsa / Latin For Adults begins April 15 at 6:45 pm. The fee for this 5 week class is \$25

Winter Chill Dance is for youth in grades 5-8. The dance runs from 7-9:30 pm for a fee of \$5.

The City of Saint Paul has great places to visit and fun activities for the whole family to enjoy. Included among its facilities are more than 170 parks and open spaces, the Como Park Zoo and Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, a 9 hole and three 18 hole golf courses, over 100 miles of trails, indoor and outdoor pools, a public beach, sports and aquatics facilities, and wonderful rental facilities for weddings, picnics, and corporate events.

For more information about Saint Paul Parks & Recreation visit [www.stpaul.gov/parks](http://www.stpaul.gov/parks)



# Classifieds

Monitor Want Ads are now \$1 per word with a \$10 minimum. Send your remittance along with your ad to Monitor Classifieds, Iris Park Place, 1885 University Avenue, Ste. #110, St. Paul, MN 55104. Classifieds must be prepaid via cash, check, or credit card. Classified ads can be e-mailed to [denisw@aplacetoremember.com](mailto:denisw@aplacetoremember.com). Want ads must be in the Monitor before March 1 for the March 11 issue. Call 651-645-7045 for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at [www.MonitorSaintPaul.com](http://www.MonitorSaintPaul.com)

## ADOPTION

Loving family looking to grow through adoption. Please contact Emily at 480-227-1377 or [growing-clovers@gmail.com](mailto:growing-clovers@gmail.com)

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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# Photo exhibit features the Como Ordway Memorial Japanese Garden

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory proudly presents "seen & unseen," a photo exhibit featuring dramatic seasonal images of the Como Ordway Memorial Japanese Garden by St. Paul artist Peter Leach. The exhibit will open to the public on Friday, February 5. Over 40 color prints will be on display. The images portray both familiar views of the Garden and images few ever see. The Ordway Memorial Japanese Garden is open from May 1 through September 30, thus very few people

have had the experience of seeing the Garden blanketed in sparkling snow.

After volunteering as a Garden interpreter in the spring of 2008, Leach, who was a well known Minnesota potter for forty years, began to photograph the Garden for his own pleasure. In September 2008, he was given unlimited access to the Garden and planning began for an eventual exhibit of his photos at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory in Como Park. Leach, a nearby

resident of Como Park, made over 75 visits to the Garden during an eighteen month period to capture these beautiful images.

When asked what his inspiration was, Leach said, "During my volunteer training for the Japanese Garden interpreter position, someone said, 'Every time you visit the Garden, it will be different,' and I have certainly found this to be true. The light changes, the foliage changes and, over time, you begin to notice beautiful views you had previ-

ously missed."

Following the Conservatory exhibit, the Saint Paul-Nagasaki Sister City Committee will send a selection of Leach's photos to Nagasaki, where they will be on

display in April as part of the 55th anniversary of the sister city relationship between St. Paul and Nagasaki, Japan. The photos will be on display through February 28, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.



Como Park Zoo and Conservatory proudly presents "seen & unseen," a photo exhibit featuring dramatic seasonal images of the Como Ordway Memorial Japanese Garden by St. Paul artist Peter Leach.



## Classifieds

Continued from page 15

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## BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

Hamline University is celebrating Black History Month with a series of public events. The theme is "Celebrating 40 Years of PRIDE, History, and Heritage," to mark the 40th anniversary of Hamline University's PRIDE Black Student Alliance.

### Black History Month Open House

Friday, February 5

4 p.m.

Sorin Hall, Rooms A&B

Kick-off event for Black History Month; games, food, trivia, fellowship, and a tribute to Dr. Carter Woodson, founder of Black History Month.

### "Black Words, Black Thoughts"

Monday, February 8

7 p.m.

Bush Student Center, HUB

Local legend and educator Mahmoud El-Kati, professor emeritus of Macalester College, leads an interactive discussion on the evolution of Black language and thought.



Mahmoud El-Kati

### "Unbought and Unbossed; remembering Shirley Chisholm"

Thursday, February 11

7 p.m.

Bush Student Center, HUB

Presentation focusing on Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to the U.S. Congress (in 1969) and the first African American to seek a major party's Presidential nomination.

### "The Future of Black Youth—A Panel Discussion"

Tuesday, February 16

6:30 p.m.

Bush Student Center Lobby

Community leaders gather to discuss educational, employment, cultural, and social issues and opportunities facing Black youth in Minnesota.

### "Keynote Address: Dr. Jane Rhodes"

Thursday, February 18

11:30 a.m.

Klas Center, Kay Fredericks Room

Dr. Jane Rhodes, dean for the study of race and ethnicity and professor and chair of African studies at Macalester College will speak on how Black identity has changed and shifted over past 40 years.



Dr. Jane Rhodes

For more information, contact the Center for Multicultural and International Student Affairs at 651-523-2423. All events take place on Hamline University's Saint Paul campus, located at 1536 Hewitt Ave, and are free and open to the public.

