



Former Midway National Bank at Snelling and University to be demolished

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Wonderlust Production of 'Our House' to feature local talent

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Metropolitan Regional Arts Council conducts its work from Midway headquarters

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Midway Como

Monitor



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No 'Happy New Year' for ash trees in St. Paul

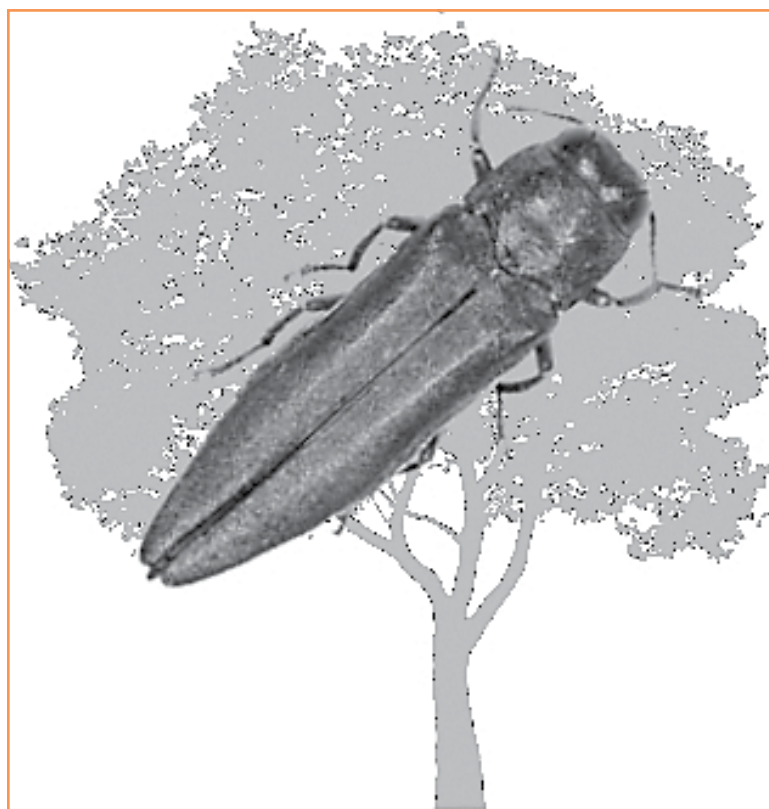
By JANE MCCLURE

The spread of emerald ash borer means that Como, Hamline-Midway, and Frogtown are among neighborhoods where trees will come down this year.

Tree removal in Highland neighborhood, which is losing more than 250 trees, is to start first the week of Jan. 8. That launches a three to four-month process around the city. Work in other neighborhoods is set for later. Neighbors will be notified before trees come down. Tree replacement will take place in the spring and fall.

A concentration of trees in the Pierce Butler Rte.-Hewitt-Taylor area will come down, east of the Hamline University campus. Stretches of LaFond Ave. in Hamline-Midway and Frogtown will lose trees, as will part of Stinson St. in the North End and Fisk St. in Frogtown.

The Como neighborhood will also lose many trees, especially along a stretch of Alameda St. between Maryland Ave. and Wheelock Pkwy., and on Maywood St. between Wheelock Pkwy. and Cottage Ave. Look for trees to come down along Ne-



braska and Arlington avenues as well.

During discussion of the 2018 city budget, St. Paul De-

partment of Parks and Recreation Director Mike Hahm expressed concern about the rapid pace at which the insects are spreading

More than 2700 ash trees are slated to be taken down in parks and boulevards in 2018. That is double the total in 2017. (Stock photo)

and killing trees. The city has been able to get grants in the past, Hahm said, but as the insects have spread statewide, that funding is harder to obtain.

The city's structured removal program in the past has focused on areas where there were concentrations of ash trees. Ash trees in decline, due to branch or root injuries, wind damage or other structural defects, were targeted for removal.

Because the borers continue to spread and affect trees throughout the city, the 2018 program will focus only on confirmed infested trees. Those trees were found during 2017 surveys of trees citywide.

Hahm said Park and Recreation's goal is to have ash tree removal completed by 2025. Parks forestry staff hopes to remove 1,613 boulevard tree removals and 579 parks trees in 2018. About 1,350 trees were removed in 2017.

How the city funds ash tree removal has changed for 2018 and future years. The costs were covered by the city's street right-of-way maintenance assessments. Those have been moved back to the property tax levy now that the assessments were deemed improper by the Minnesota Supreme Court. The court decision and the city's need to cover costs for 2017 meant that an additional \$517,155 that was earmarked for tree removal last year had to go to other right-of-way costs. That would have allowed for more than 1,600 trees to be removed last year.

Outgoing Mayor Chris Coleman's 2018 budget calls for \$1.7 million in resources, to step up the removal of trees in city parks as well as along boulevards. The ongoing spending for trees along city streets is \$892,000, with a one-time added allocation of \$798,000. The destructive insects are expected to destroy all the city's ash trees over time.

Since 2010 St. Paul has used a "structured removal" program to cut down ash trees on boulevards.

Continued on page 2

S.A.F.E. Sundays at Como Zoo focus on endangered animals

New program helps people understand what they do locally makes impact globally

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

Help polar bears this winter by turning down your thermostat two degrees.

"That amount of change in temp may seem small to us, but it has a positive impact over time," observed Como Park Zoo & Conservatory Events Coordinator Lindsay Sypnieski.

In fact, if every American adjusted the thermostat up or down by one degree each season, it would save as much energy as the state of Iowa uses in a year.

Taking action now won't result in an immediate stop to climate change, but new studies show that people could see the effects in about a decade, according to the Polar Bears International, an organization that Como partners with that is focused on how climate change is affecting polar bears in the wild.

Ways that people can help endangered animals is the focus of a new program at Como Park Zoo.

S.A.F.E. Sundays at Como

While Como has been a part

of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Saving Animals From Extinction (S.A.F.E.) program since 2015, it began S.A.F.E. Sundays last November.

The purpose of the new initiative is "to communicate Como Park Zoo and Conservatory's effort as part of this program and engage our visitors in conversations about the animals here at Como, how we help them in the wild, and what the visitor can do to help save these animals from extinction," explained Sypnieski.

Polar Bears will be the focus on Jan. 14, and orangutans, tigers, spider monkeys, and langurs have been discussed since the program began.

Palm oil affects orangutans

In early December, the S.A.F.E. Sundays program focused on palm oil and orangutans.

Orangutans are being affected by the palm oil crisis due to deforestation, habitat degradation, climate change, animal cruelty and indigenous rights abuses in the countries (primarily Bor-

"We decided to create S.A.F.E. Sundays to communicate Como Park Zoo & Conservatory's effort as part of this program and engage our visitors in conversations about the animals here at Como, how we help them in the wild and what the visitor can do to help save these animals from extinction."

**— Lindsay Sypnieski
Como Events Coordinator**

neo and Sumatra) where palm oil is harvested. A century ago there were more than 230,000 orangutans in total, but the Bor-

Continued on page 2



Use of palm oil harvested from the wild directly affects the Sumatran Orangutan, which is now critically endangered with only 7,500 known left in the wild. (Photo courtesy of Como Zoo and Conservatory)

Thomas Avenue Flats redevelopment would contain 51 apartments

After years of being vacant land, and after several doomed ideas, will this housing project finally be a winner?

By JANE MCCLURE

The long-awaited redevelopment of a shuttered private park property at Thomas Ave. and Simpson St. is finally moving ahead. On Dec. 13 the St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) approved final financing details for the Thomas Avenue Flats, a \$13.6 million, four-story affordable multi-family building with 51 units. Work is expected to get underway in 2018.

Developer MWF Properties won preliminary approval in Aug. 2017 for financing to redevelop the site at 1500 Thomas Ave. MWF is a veteran developer, with 11 developments totaling 1,500 units to its credit in Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. The company also has been a development consultant on a 529-unit Rochester project. Development company

principals include Jay Weis and Erik Weis, owners of Minneapolis-based Weis Builders, a general contractor established in 1939.

MWF has owned the Hamline-Midway site since the summer of 2015. It was owned and maintained for many years prior to that by longtime Midway developers David and Teri Van Landschoot, owners of Justin Properties.

The project needs no zoning changes or variances at this time and had its city staff site plan review last summer. The property was zoned for traditional neighborhood use a few years ago when other mixed-use streets in Hamline-Midway had zoning changes to accommodate future traditional neighborhoods, with higher-density use.

The housing development will include underground parking,

an outdoor patio, fitness center, laundry facilities on each floor, bike racks and secure entry. It is within a short walk of the Snelling Ave. Green Line light rail stop and A Line bus service on Snelling.

Outgoing St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development director Jonathan Sage-Martinson said the developers spent many months working on the project and are ready to move ahead. The HRA had given preliminary approvals in August 2017.

On Dec. 13 the HRA allocated up to \$1.3 million in HOME loan funds, in the form of a 40-year deferred loan with 2 percent interest. The HRA also approved a conduit revenue bond not to exceed \$7.2 million. With a conduit bond issue, the city isn't liable if there are problems in the future in repaying the bonds. The devel-

opers are using a mix of private and public funding to pay for the project. Units in the project will remain affordable for 30 to 40 years.

Seventeen units will have three bedrooms. The rest are a mix of one and two-bedroom units. Rents will range from \$848 for a one-bedroom unit to \$1,356 for three bedrooms.

Redevelopment by MWF Properties would cap decades of debate over the site, which was once part of the Great Northern, later Samaritan Hospital, complex. The original hospital was built in 1919. The hospital closed in 1987. It was demolished and replaced with townhouses. An office building, Hamline Park Plaza, and a parking ramp remain.

The property at the southwest corner of Thomas and Simpson St. has been open space for many

years, developed as the Garden of Poetry sculpture park. But after-dark parties, loitering, trash, and neighborhood complaints prompted the owners to remove most of the sculptures and close the park. David Van Landschoot said at a 2005 city meeting that the family lost money on the park for a decade as they battled problems there.

Different developers worked with Justin Properties on proposals for the property. A 2004 senior condo project was shelved due to lower-than-anticipated presales. A 2005 four-story apartment development, brought forward by the Hamline Park Plaza Partnership, ran up against neighborhood opposition and complaints that a four-story building on the site would be too tall. That project won needed variances but was never built.

S.A.F.E. Sundays

Continued from page 1

nean orangutan is now estimated at 104,700 based on updated geographic range (Endangered) and the Sumatran about 7,500 (Critically Endangered).

Here in Minnesota, people can help the orangutans by "making conscious choices with our buying habits and making sure that companies we purchase items from are part of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil," observed Sypniewski.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is working to transform the market to make sustainable palm oil the norm. The North American Sustainable Palm Oil Network (NASPON) was just established on Dec. 19. Founding members of NASPON include Ahold Delhaize, Albertsons Companies, Barry

Callebaut, Blommer Chocolate Company, Conservation International, Control Union, Dunkin' Brands, Fuji Oils, International Flavors & Fragrances, IOI Loders Croklaan, Kellogg Company, Kraft Heinz, PepsiCo, Rainforest Alliance, and Target.

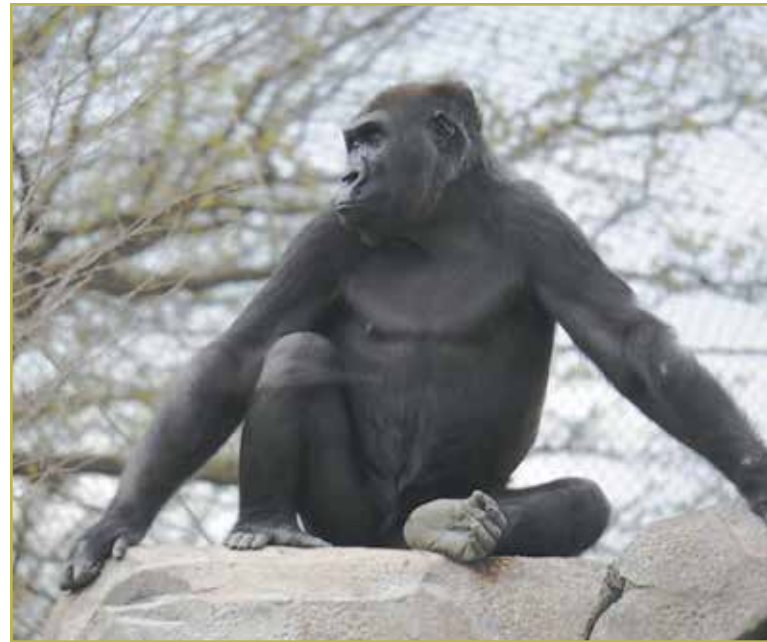
Cell phones affect gorillas

Recycle your cell phone, save the gorillas.

It may not be as simple as that, but a recycling program to collect old cell phones at the Como Zoo and other American zoos is highlighting the little-known connection between cell phone use and the survival of African gorillas.

Coltan, a mineral that is used in making cell phones, is extracted in the deep forests of Congo in central Africa, home to the world's endangered lowland gorillas.

Columbite-tantalite (col-



The habitat of the Western Lowland Gorilla has been severely affected by modern man's cell phone technology. Coltan, a mineral that is used in making cell phones, is extracted in the deep forests of Congo in central Africa, home to the endangered species. (Photo courtesy of Como Zoo and Conservatory)

recycles these types of devices properly and uses best practices regarding smelting, diversion of toxins and reclamation of precious metals.

Drop off unwanted cell phones in the collection boxes located in the Como Visitor Center and Primate Building. Collections from recycling drives can also be mailed directly to Eco-cell; contact ComoEducation@ci.stpaul.mn.us to receive shipping labels.

Upcoming programs

Plan to attend upcoming S.A.F.E. Sundays at Como. Learn about penguins on Jan. 21, lemurs on Jan. 28, gorillas on Feb. 4 and snow leopards on Feb. 11. Each program runs from 1-3pm, and you can find a full schedule online. Look for the S.A.F.E. Sundays table at the featured animal's exhibit.

Emerald Ash Borer

Continued from page 1

vards and in city parks, to strategically reduce the number of ash trees citywide. Trees are replaced with other species. Emerald ash borer causes ash trees to decline and become brittle. Branches can easily fall and cause injuries to people or property damage.

Emerald ash borers were found in the city about a decade ago. The insects, which bore under an ash tree's bark and feed on the tree's circulatory system to the point where the tree dies, have spread throughout St. Paul. They affect all species of ash trees. The city in recent years has done some targeted tree treatment and allows property owners

to treat their ash boulevard trees if they obtain permits to do so. But there has been ongoing debate as to whether treatment is a long-term, cost-effective solution. The city only treats ash trees that are between 10 to 20 inches diameter at breast height, in good health with no known defects and in areas where there are no conflicts with utility wires, street lights or street clearance.

Want to see the status of your block's boulevard ash trees? The city has an interactive map showing trees to be treated and trees to come down. The map can be enlarged to better find streets. Go to www.stpaul.gov/departments/parks-recreation/natural-resources/forestry/emerald-ash-borer.

tan for short) is a metallic ore that, when refined, becomes metallic tantalum, a heat-resistant powder that can hold a high electrical charge. These properties are ideal for making capacitors, which are used in many electronic devices, including cell phones.

Conflict, illegal mining, and the growing bush-meat trade (the hunting of wild animals for food) have all contributed to a 70 percent popula-

tion decline of the eastern lowland gorilla, according to some estimates.

Como partners with Eco-Cell, a cell phone-recycling firm based in Louisville, KY, and receives funds for each phone donated. The newer smartphones, such as the Apple iPhone and Samsung Galaxy, can usually be reused and are worth money back. Many old cell phones cannot be reused and must be recycled. Eco-Cell

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It's the end of an era in the Midway commercial community. The former Midway National Bank building is slated for demolition. A demolition permit was issued Dec. 26 for the building at 1578 University Ave. The owner is listed as RD Parent Investors Inc. of New York City. Carl Bolander and Sons will do the demolition. The building value is listed at \$160,000.

Scaffolding went up around the property this month. The upcoming demolition has prompted some protests. But past historic surveys of properties in St. Paul, and for Green Line light rail and A line bus rapid transit, have yielded mixed recommendations as to the building's historic value. It has no local or national historic designation.

According to the bank's building permit, it cost \$525,000 to build, a high sum for its day. The two-story bank building, which opened in 1960, had its main entrance on University Ave. The bank has been described as an example of Classic Mid-Century Modern architecture.

Its north and south sides were designed as glass and aluminum curtain walls. Its east and west exterior walls were clad in granite. The building was designed by the St. Paul architectural firm of Bergstedt, Hirsch, Wahlberg & Wold. Midway-based contractor J.S. Sweitzer and Sons built the building. That firm erected many area buildings including Hamline Church United Methodist.

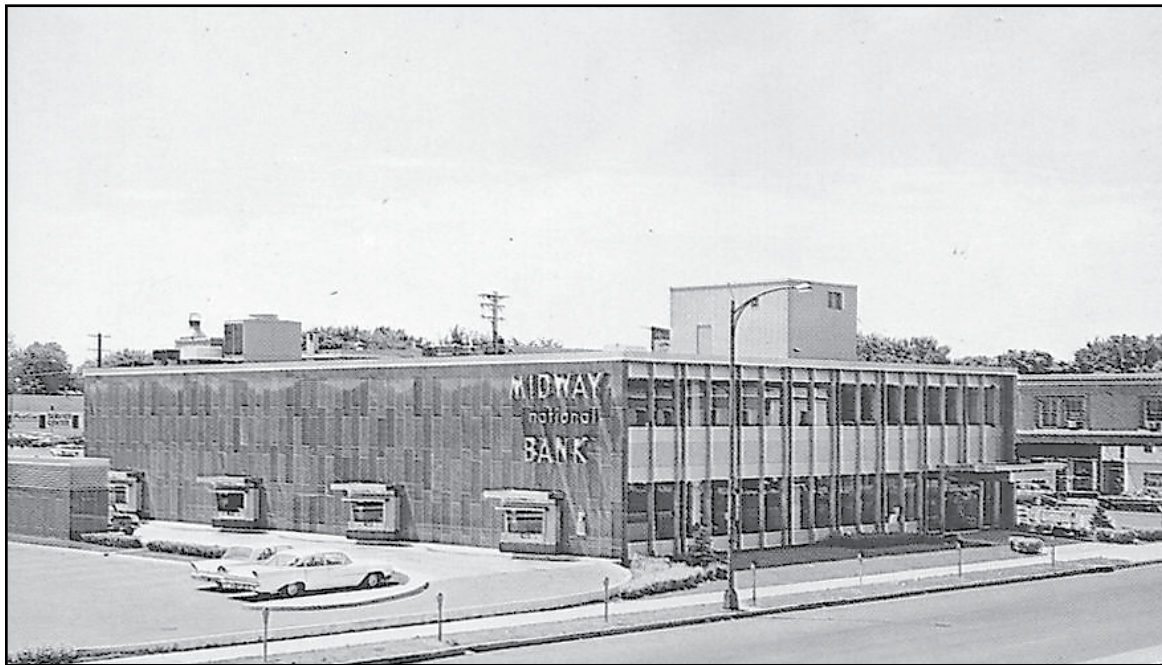
The Ritt family, longtime owners of Midway National bank, erected the building to replace its 1930-era bank at 1583-87 University Ave. The Ritts were a longtime St. Paul banking family and civic leaders. A.L. Ritt was a leader for many years in what is now the Midway Chamber of Commerce.

The Midway National Bank operated here until 2002, when it was purchased by Dakota

Development Roundup

By JANE MCCLURE

Demolition permit issued for iconic Midway National Bank building



The old Midway National Bank Building is scheduled for demolition. This image from the 1960s of the bank as it originally was built. The building was designed by the St. Paul architectural firm of Bergstedt, Hirsch, Wahlberg & Wold. (Photo from LakesnWoods.com Postcard and Postcard Image Collection)

Bancshares. It became American Bank a few years later. The bank closed to the public in late 2012. Some internal operations and storage remained there until July 2013.

In 2014 the St. Paul Planning commission approved a proposal to relocate the Midway Center Walgreens store from its now-demolished strip mall location to the former bank. Plans at that time called for creating a new pharmacy drive-through and adding about 2,800 square feet of new one-story retail space along University. The property owners presented the idea as an interim plan while the shopping center was redeveloped. But that

proposal was set aside. Just two years later the Snelling-Midway master plan for the redevelopment of the entire Midway center superblock was proposed. That plan called for the bank to be torn down and replaced, likely with a taller building.

But, it's not known yet what will replace the bank.

Developments win financing

The longtime Weyerhaeuser Lumber site near St. Paul's western border will be transformed soon. Dominion De-

velopment had financing for two projects approved Dec. 13 by the St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board.

Millberry Apartments will be a 121-unit workforce housing development at 700 Emerald St. The HRA approved conduit revenue bonds of up to \$19 million for the project. The project, led by Dominion Development, has a total cost of more than \$38 million

Millberry will have units of one, two and three-bedroom workforce housing. All units will be affordable at 60 percent of area median income for 22 years.

The HRA also approved a conduit revenue bond for a second Dominion project, the Legends at Berry Senior Apartments project. This bond issue is for up to \$38 million in conduit tax-exempt housing revenue bonds.

Dominion is proposing

to construct a 242-unit senior four-story rental building, also at 700 Emerald St. The project will include one, two and three-bedroom units, with all of the units affordable at 60 percent of area median income for 22 years. Total development costs for this project will be more than \$76 million.

For both projects, the city waived its developer fees. The projects will rely on a mix of public and private funding.

Conduit bond issues are a form of pass-through funding and don't affect the city's credit rating or finances.

Church site could be developed

A Dale St. vacant lot could become home to a Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) project. The lot at 489 N. Dale St. was recently advertised by the city's Department of Planning and Economic Development, as the NDC has sought the rights to buy the property from the city.

When a request to buy city property is made, the city announces the potential sale. That allows time for the community to respond. If all goes as planned the property would be sold to the center, which works with small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Proposed, under the name of Neighborhood Commercial Spaces, LLC, is a six-story mixed-use building. The building won't just take the former church site but will encompass adjoining private property. The private properties were not specified, but the center owns and operates from a building next door.

The property owned by the city was a church site for more than a century. Various congregations occupied the church, which originally housed Lutherans. Several years ago, the church fell into disrepair. The congregation and city officials debated its fate for months before it was finally torn down.

One of its former congregations was Church of the Nazarene, which erected a cross at the property a few years ago.

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Saint Paul city staff are recommending five infrastructure projects for the intersection of Como, Front, and Dale in 2018. The projects would be paid for with \$350,000 in Commercial Vitality Zone money authorized by the City Council in 2015.

District 10 is surveying community members to get a sense of whether they support these projects or not. Take the survey before Jan. 14 at www.surveymonkey.com/r/comofrontdale

A summary of the possible projects:

- Eliminate the dedicated right turn lane from southeast-bound Como Ave. to westbound Front St. In its place, expand the pedestrian island toward the furniture store, and shorten the crosswalk on Como.
- Paint higher-visibility crosswalks in all current locations. Paint stop bars on the pavement in front of the crosswalks; stop bars are designed to encourage motorists to stop before, not in, a crosswalk.
- Paint green lane extensions across the intersection to visibly designate the location of the Como Ave. bike lanes.
- Install landscaping and other aesthetic features, including between the sidewalk and parking lot of the strip mall on the northeast corner of the intersection.
- Relocate the bus stop on northbound Dale from in front of the strip mall to the south side of the intersection (in front of John's Pizza Café). This is designed to eliminate vehicles backing up into the intersection if they are stopped behind a bus.

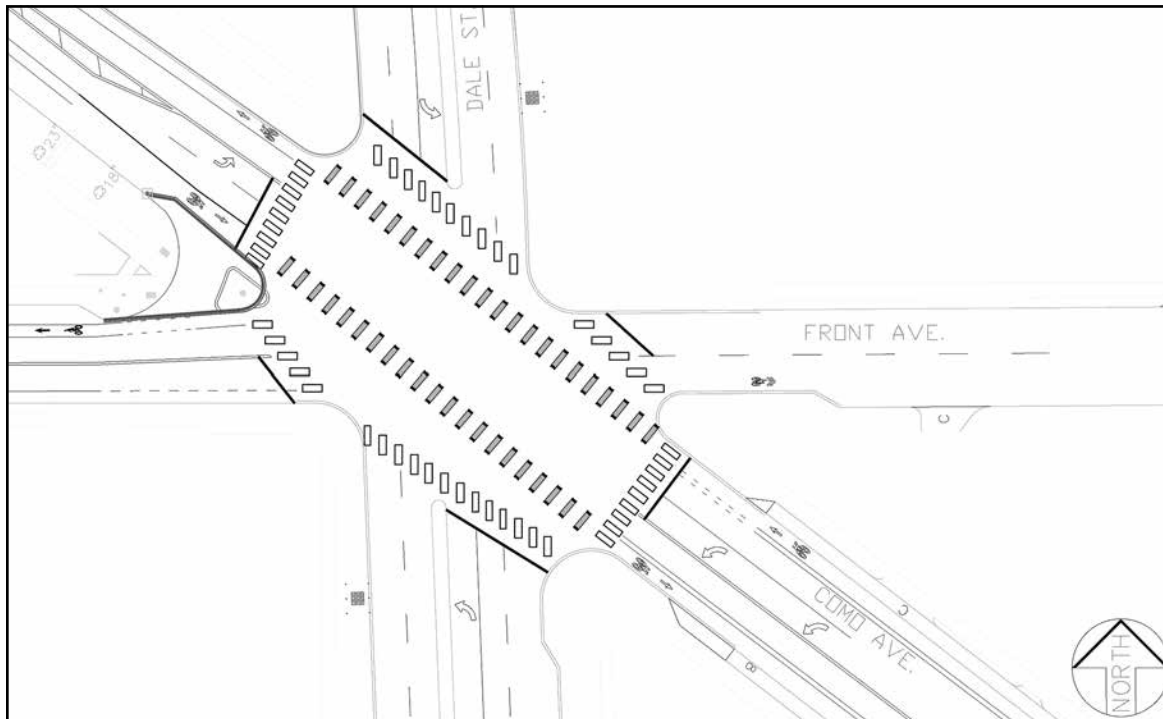
Three join honor roll

Congratulations to Mike Ireland, Frank P. Liu, and Quentin "Q" Nguyen. They are District 10's additions to the 2017 St. Paul

Como Community Council Corner

By MICHAEL KUCHTA, Executive Director

Changes coming to Como, Front, and Dale



Recommendations include higher visibility striping for crosswalks, painted extensions of the Como Ave. bike lanes through the intersection, and eliminating the dedicated right-turn lane from Como onto westbound Front.

Neighborhood Honor Roll. The board of the Como Community Council selected them from a group of 13 Como residents nominated by their neighbors. They will be formally recognized with a banquet Jan. 26, and immortalized on a plaque in City Hall.

More ash trees become history

St. Paul Forestry will cut down

nearly 60 more boulevard ash trees in District 10 beginning this month. The trees are what's left of the ash still standing on:

- Alameda from Wheelock south to Maryland
- Alameda from Hoyt south to Arlington
- Arlington from Victoria east to St. Albans
- Maywood from Cottage south to Wheelock

Nebraska near Alameda

The trees are among 995 ash citywide that Forestry has identified as infested with emerald ash borer. It will remove those trees, and perhaps hundreds more, in 2018.

The golf course is next: Also in January, Parks and Recreation expects to close ski trails in Como Park beginning Jan. 22 so it can take down about 165

trees on the golf course, including about 150 ash.

Make Sundays more exciting

District 10 has scheduled its first two Sunday Series presentations for 2018.

- State Fair History, Part 2. Minnesota State Fair director Jerry Hammer picks up where he left off last year. He'll share forgotten photos, facts, and stories about the Fair from the last 100 years—from 1920 until today. The free presentation is Sun., Feb. 25 from 1-2:30pm in the Newman-Benson Chapel at Lyngblomsten, 1415 Almond Ave.
- The Next Step: Pedestrian Safety in St. Paul. Drivers continue to run into pedestrians in higher and higher numbers. What will it take to stop that? Fay Simer, the city's new pedestrian safety advocate, and Sgt. Jeremy Ellison, who leads enforcement efforts in the city-wide Stop for Me campaign, lead the discussion. The free presentation is Sun., Mar. 18 from 1-2:30pm, probably at the Como Park Streetcar Station, 1224 Lexington Pkwy. N.

Upcoming District 10 meetings

- Como Community Council Monthly Meeting: Tues., Jan. 16
- Environment Committee: Wed., Jan. 31
- Neighborhood Relations and Safety Committee: Tues., Feb. 6
- Land Use Committee: Wed., Feb. 7

All meetings begin at 7pm at the Como Park Streetcar Station, which is at the northeast corner of Lexington and Horton. Community members are always welcome to attend and participate. Whenever possible, agendas are posted in advance in the "Board News" section of District 10's website.

Will progress on Como-Dale-Front intersection finally happen in 2018?

By JANE MCCLURE

How to improve the six-legged intersection that is Como-Dale-Front is a topic that has engaged the South Como, North End and Frog-town neighborhoods for decades. 2018 starts with a renewed effort by the St. Paul Departments of Public Works and Planning and Economic Development (PED), design consultants, and City Council Member Amy Brendmoen to make improvements.

Ideas gathered at a December 2017 meeting will be incorporated into the plans, along with feedback from an online survey that ends Jan. 14.

The intersection is expected to see new infrastructure projects in the short-term, with a push toward redevelopment in the long-term.

Some ideas on the drawing board focus on placemaking, to make what are now parking lots more attractive. That effort could include landscaping at spots that are now paved or open. Better markings are also being considered, such as high-visibility pedestrian crosswalks at all crossings, more prominent green-painted bike lane markings for Como cyclists, and white painted stop bars for motorists so that vehicles don't block crosswalks.

Relocating the northbound Dale St. bus stop near the Speedy market to a spot beside John's Pizza Café is also being considered. Another idea is to eliminate the dedicated right-turn lane from southbound Como onto westbound

Front. The pedestrian space could be enlarged, and the Como crosswalk shortened. Other suggestions include restricting right turn lanes for trucks, filling area sidewalk gaps, adding pedestrian refuges and even tearing down a building at the northwest corner.

How to improve the intersection and transform the area has been discussed since the 1990s. Those studies led to successes such as the transformation of an old foundry and industrial area into the St. Paul Port Authority's Great Northern Business Park. But other parts of that ambitious project,

including the extension of Pierce Butler Rte. to the east, stalled due to lack of funds.

The latest scrutiny began in 2010 with the completion of a University of Minnesota Design Center study. That "Rethinking the Intersection" study became part of the District 6 neighborhood plan, as North End and South Como were both still in that citizen participation district. The city awarded \$350,000 from its Commercial Vitality Fund Program to the intersection in 2015. That launched two years of neighborhood meetings, design work and a market study of

Dale St. paid for by the North End Neighborhood Association (District 6) and Como Community Council (District 10).

Why is it important to do something at Como-Dale-Front now? "When the city created the

Commercial Vitality Zone program, it was meant to set-aside funds for neighborhood economic development—local commercial corridors and business nodes that

Continued on page 10

Engage | Discover | Thrive

2nd Half with Lyngblomsten is a life enrichment center in the Como Park neighborhood for adults 50+. It is located on the Lyngblomsten campus at 1415 Almond Avenue, St. Paul. Offerings focus on:

- Education & the Arts
- Health, Wellness, & Spirituality
- Social & Outings
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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.



The Hamline Midway Library at 1558 West Minnehaha Ave. is a great place to chase away the winter blues and stay energized by programs for kids and adults, including the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library's acclaimed Fireside Reading Series starting at the end of January.

The library offers Chair Yoga with Nancy Giguere on Thursdays, Jan. 11, 18, and 25 and Feb. 1, 8, 15, and 22 from 10:30-11:30am. All movement is done while seated or using the chair for balance. This program co-presented by the library and the Hamline Midway Elders Association.

Preschool Storytimes in English happen Fridays, 10:30-11am, with upcoming events on Jan. 12, 19, and 26 and Feb. 2, 9, 16, and 23. Storytimes feature stories, songs, puppets, and more. They're a great way for caregivers to bond with children and build social skills, listening comprehension, and letter and number recognition while creating a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Children of all activity levels are welcome.

The library will also start

News from Hamline Midway Library

By CARRIE POMEROY

January is start of Fireside Reading Series

offering Evening Storytimes on Tuesdays from 6-6:30pm starting on Jan. 23 and continuing on Jan. 30, Feb. 6, 13, 20, and 27.

Sat., Jan. 13, 1:30-3pm, the library presents the popular Science Saturdays program, where school-aged participants and their families can enjoy fun, hands-on science, and art activities. No pre-registration necessary—just come by when you can. The theme will be Stability and Structures, with activities exploring what makes certain structures stable (or not!). On Sat., Feb. 10, also 1:30-3pm, the theme will be Mirrors and Symmetry. Print a symmetrical image for Valentine's Day!

All St. Paul libraries will be closed on January 15 in honor

of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

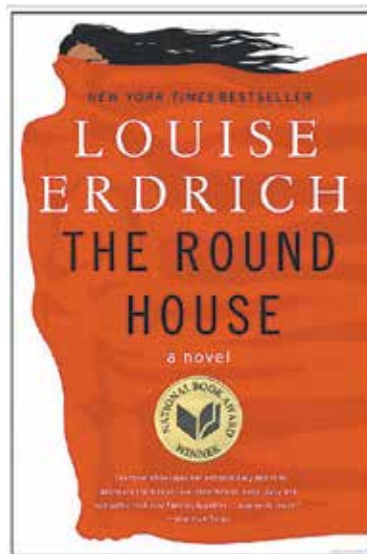
In January, the Start a Series Book Club is shifting from meeting on Saturday afternoons to meeting on Monday afternoons. The first meeting at the new day and time will be on Mon., Jan. 22, 4-5pm, and the book under discussion will be "The Iron Trial" by Holly Black and Cassandra Clare. This book club is recommended for grades 6-8, and each month will focus on discussing the first book in a series.

Word and Sound Lab kicks off again on Tuesday afternoons from 4:30-6pm starting on Jan. 23 and continuing on Jan. 30, Feb. 6, 13, 20, and 27. Poet Becca Barniskis and musician Nick Jaffe are offering this open studio workshop for youth grades 5-8. Explore the intersection of poetry, sound, and video, and experiment with making your own creations on iPads and other tech, to be provided. Participants can also bring their own phone, laptop, tablet, or notebook. This activity, provided by a grant from the State Arts Board, is free and does not require advance registration—just show up!

The library will be offering Book Art, a great hands-on activity for adults, on Mon., Feb. 12, 6-7:30pm. Participants can learn how to fold books to create eye-catching sculptures.

On Wed., Jan. 31, 1-3pm, Jody's Documentary Film Series will feature "Ping Pong," directed by Hugh Hartford and Anson Hartford. The film tells the story of competitors going

for the gold in the international table tennis championships—and they're all over 80 years old. Enjoy the free film and snacks and stay for the post-film discussion facilitated by Jody. This program is a collaboration of the award-winning POV documentary series and the Hamline Midway Elders Association.



The Novels at Night Book Club meets on Thur., Jan. 25, 6:30-7:30pm, to discuss "The Round House" by Louise Erdrich. The award-winning novel tells the story of Joe Coutz, a 14-year-old boy trying to find the person who attacked his mother, a tribal enrollment specialist on a North Dakota reservation, and destroyed his family.

The Show and Tell Book Club for grades 1-3 meets on Sat., Jan. 27, 1:30-2:15pm. Come share books and do fun literacy activities!

On Sat., Feb. 3, 1-2pm, the Saints and Sinners Book Club meets to discuss good mysteries. Contact volunteer G. Balter for book lists and more information at geribalter@gmail.com or 651-224-5570.

The Friends of the St. Paul Public Library's popular, long-running Fireside Reading Series brings some of Minnesota's most accomplished writers to the Hamline Midway Library

every year in January and February. With cookies in one hand and coffee in the other, you can cozy up next to the library's fireplace and experience great literature right here in our neighborhood.

The 2018 series begins on Jan. 24 from 7-8pm with a reading by Miriam Karmel from her book "Subtle Variations and Other Stories." Acclaimed Minnesota author Faith Sullivan has said of Karmel's collection of interlinked stories, "Reader, read this book. You will fall in love. Guaranteed."

The series continues on Jan. 31 from 7-8pm with a reading by poet Bao Phi featuring work from his second collection, "Thousand Star Hotel." His poems confront the silence around racism, police brutality, and the invisibility of the Asian American poor. This collection is both a loving history for the poet's daughter and a powerful resistance to cultural erasure. Phi, a two-time Minnesota Grand Slam poetry champion and National Poetry Slam finalist, is also the author of Song I Sing and the children's picture book A Different Pond.

Marcie Rendon reads from her debut mystery novel "Murder on the Red River" on Wed., Feb. 7, from 7-8pm. The novel introduces Cash, a tough, 19-year-old Anishinabe woman torn from the reservation as a child and shuffled through more foster homes than she can remember. Now a farm laborer and pool shark in Fargo, ND, Cash's life changes when a dead body is found on the Minnesota side of the Red River, and her friend Sheriff Wheaton enlists her to help solve the case. Rendon, a member of the White Earth Anishinabe nation, is an accomplished playwright, poet, and author of books for children, including Pow Wow Summer.

The Fireside Reading Series continues on Wed., Feb. 14, 7-8pm, with graphic designer Carolyn Porter reading from "Marcel's Letters," the story of her quest to unlock the story behind a bundle of beautifully hand-written letters she found in a Stillwater antique store.

Check the library website at www.sppl.org for information on the other readers in this six-week Fireside Reading Series, and plan on coming early to these presentations—seats go fast!

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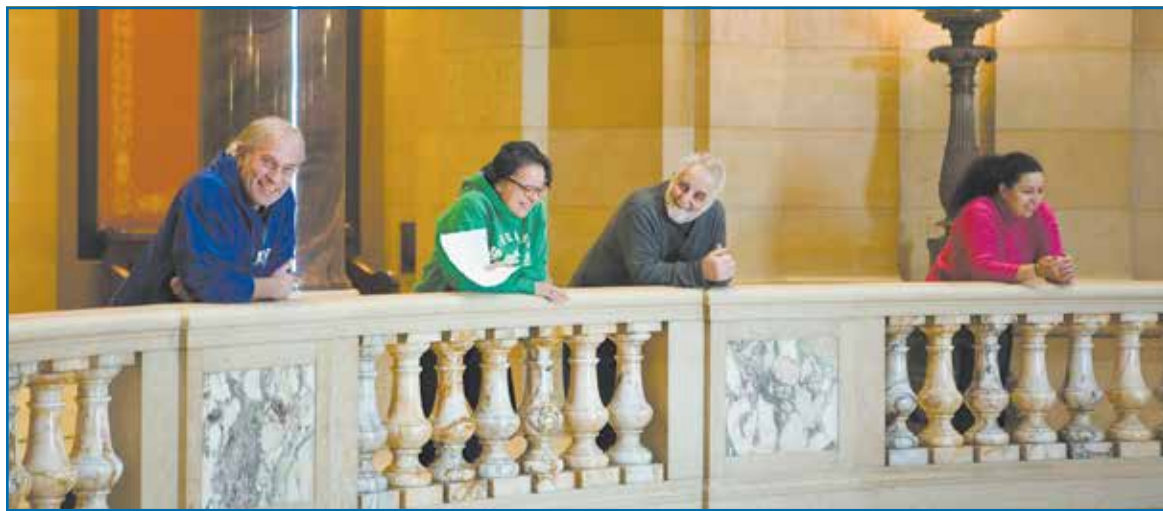
'Our House: The Capitol Play Project' will showcase local talent

Article and photos
by MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

"Welcome to the People's House!" is the opening song of the upcoming Wonderlust Production's newest work. Our House: The Capitol Play Project is a two-act play about the Minnesota State Capitol that will be performed at the newly renovated Capitol building Jan. 19-28.

The play explores the world of the Capitol through story, song, and movement. While half a dozen of the 18 cast members are professional actors, the rest are a cross-section of the Capitol community and the community at large—giving voice to stories told by politicians, staffers, civil servants, building maintenance crews, security officers, lobbyists, researchers, reporters, and citizens. In short, welcome to the people's house.

As the play opens, a wild-card governor has just been elected, and the regular order of business at the Capitol is thrown into chaos. A chorus of seasoned employees tries to get their way, while an idealistic new employee finds herself at the center of unexpected controversy. Misunderstandings and mistaken identity lead to a crash course in the realities that both constrain and inspire the people who have devoted themselves to public service. Inside the marble halls, the atmosphere is brimming with idealism, cynicism, absurdity, signifi-



Andy Dawkins (far left), retired legislator and cast member, rehearsed for the upcoming performances of *Our House: The Capitol Play Project*. Dawkins learned about the play from reading an article in the *Midway Como Monitor* last winter. Other cast members left to right are Delinda "Oogie" Pushetonequa, David Zander, and Gabrielle Dominique.

cance, and shifting power.

Wonderlust Productions has been creating plays in the Twin Cities since 2014. The method they use for crafting their scripts involves holding story circles months in advance of when the play is first performed. In the case of this play, 20 story circles were held, and hundreds of stories were collected. From those threads, an early version of the script emerged, and two rounds of auditions were held.

As with all Wonderlust Production plays, this show reflects a broad community perspective. Contributors to the story circles

spanned ages from 20 to 80 years and included voices from varied ethnic and racial communities. This project is the culmination of a three-year effort to tell, not one definitive truth of the Capitol, but an amalgam of stories that rest beneath the sensational news headlines and partisan divides.

Hamline-Midway resident Andy Dawkins came to an audition at Wonderlust's workspace in the Midway (550 Vandalia St.) last year and was cast as Cass Gilbert, the Capitol's formidable architect, and as Good Dave, a lobbyist who works hard on behalf of education issues. In real life, Dawkins is a retired, longtime St. Paul DFL legislator, and an avid baseball player.

Dawkins practiced law for many years in addition to being a legislator, and has not been in a play since the 8th grade. "I've been surprised by how much goes into producing a play," he said, "all the behind-the-scenes stuff, not just memorizing lines but remembering cues. It's a ton of work. We rehearse five nights a week and Saturdays too, but it's been worth it."

He continued, "I was an insider at the Capitol for a lot of years, and I felt like I had meaningful memories to share in the story circle I attended. There was more of a bipartisan spirit during my time as a legislator than there is now. The Democrats held the

majority for the first seven years that I was there, and we had a Democrat as governor. The next eight years that I served, the Republicans were in power. We did

a lot more talking across the aisle then; I think I had as many good friends in one party as I did in the other."

Dawkins concluded, "Seeing *Our House: The Capitol Play Project* will give viewers some insight into the way state government works. We need to be more transparent at the Capitol, to really invite people in so they can start to think about what's going on there—so that we can 'do government' better."

The Capitol Play Project will have six performances during the last two weekends in January. The play features a live four-person band and several musical numbers. All of the shows except Jan. 26 are matinees and will be performed during public hours at the Capitol. The play travels throughout the building—comfortable walking shoes are recommended. Accommodations will be made for those with limited mobility. The performance on Jan. 27 will be ASL interpreted.



Ginger Commodore, long-time Twin Cities performer and one of the cast leads, practiced the show's closing number in the Capitol rotunda.



Real-life Capitol staffers Cindy Farrell (far left) and Ned Rousmaniere (far right) watched rehearsal in "the vault." Former legislator Andy Dawkins and stage manager Kari Olk also looked on. The vault is one of the newly restored spaces in the Capitol, and will house the play's first act. The play will travel to several different locations in the Capitol during the second act, adeptly lead by three actors in the role of tour guides.



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Capitol Play Project

Continued from page 6

All tickets at the door are free but subject to availability. There are only 100 seats for each performance. To guarantee your seat, reservations are available online and cost \$25. The Fri., Jan. 19 preview is pay-what-you-can. Visit www.wlproductions.org or call 651-393-5104 for reservations, discounts, and more information. Performance times are 2pm on Fri., Jan. 19; 12:30pm on Sat., Jan. 20 and Jan. 27; 1:30pm on Sun., Jan. 21 and Jan. 28; 7:30pm on Fri., Jan. 26

Our House: The Capitol Play Project is co-written and directed by Alan Berks and Leah Cooper from the words of the Capitol community. It features original music by Becky Dale, vocal coaching by Elizabeth Grambsch, choreography by Leah Nelson, and design by Heidi Eckwall, Andrea Gross, Zeb Hults, Peter Morrow, and Abbee Warmboe.

Editor's Note: Margie O'Loughlin, the author of this article and long-time reporter for the Midway Como Monitor, is part of the cast of *Our House: The Capitol Play Project*.



Co-director Leah Cooper worked with the acoustic challenges of the play's final song—set in the Capitol rotunda. The unsupported marble dome is the second largest in the world, after Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Is Victoria Theater on the way to the \$3.2 million funding needed?

By JANE MCCLURE

Rehabilitation of the historic Victoria Theater has again stepped into the spotlight. The St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, approved two key pieces of project funding Dec. 13.

A \$200,000 grant was awarded to Land Bank Twin Cities for immediate building rehabilitation work. And, a \$412,000 forgivable HRA loan was given to the nonprofit Victoria Theater Arts Center for acquisition and rehabilitation of the old building for use as a community arts center. About \$250,000 is earmarked for the purchase price, and the rest would cover some building rehabilitation and holding costs.

HRA approval was greeted with cheers by a group of theater supporters at the meeting. The city

funds are seen as opening the curtain to additional grant dollars. The group last week got a \$150,000 grant from the Hardenbergh Foundation, which supports projects in the east metro.

Director of Planning and Economic Development Jonathan Sage-Martinson said the \$200,000 grant would pay for building stabilization needs, including a new roof. That work needs to be done quickly to preserve the structure.

The funding was welcomed by theater backers including Historic St. Paul and the Frogtown Neighborhood Association. Theater supporters have worked for more than a decade to save and reuse it. The building, which has been vacant since 2006, has been threatened with demolition more than once.

"It's taken a long time to get to

this point, but the city funding is a big help," said Aaron Rubenstein of Historic St. Paul. "This will help us gain momentum with other funding requests. City support has been critical throughout this entire process."

The theater was built as a silent movie house in 1915. It later became a nightclub and cabaret and was a speakeasy—known as the Victoria Café—during Prohibition. Featuring dancing, cabaret-style floor shows, and Chinese food, the Victoria Café was raided more than once by police.

But it was also where the historically important "Moonshiners Dance" was recorded by the café's orchestra. The song is included in the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, a six-album compilation issued in 1952. The anthology was a key part of the American folk music revival of the 1950s and 1960s.

In recent years the building had different uses, including a

lamp shop. When a previous owner wanted to demolish the theater to make way for a parking lot, historians and community members rallied to save it. In April 2011, the City Council approved the designation of the Victoria Theater as a heritage preservation site. The city's Heritage Preservation Commission suggested resubmission for further consideration for National Register of Historic Places designation, which would make the building eligible for state and federal historic tax credits.

The Land Bank purchased the property in 2014 and has been holding it so that the Victoria Arts Theater Initiative can raise about \$2 million to acquire and renovate the building. The long-term goal is to create a community space for activities including theater production and event and space rentals.

One huge challenge is the property's poor condition, according to a city staff report. Roof

replacement and building shell repairs are needed soon. The Land Bank will make the repairs to preserve the property on an interim basis until the ownership transfer and the larger rehabilitation project can proceed.

A few years ago, the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative awarded \$63,000 to the theater initiative group to create market feasibility, financial, and fundraising plans. The nonprofit Victoria Theater Arts Center formed in late 2016. The organization recently hired veteran community theater operator Julie Adams Gerth as executive director. Fundraising consultants Peter Pearson and Patrick DeWane were hired to bring in the funding needed for the project.

The city dollars are from the HRA Loan Enterprise Fund. Earlier this year the theater backers had sought funds through the city's Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget process. But the project wasn't considered eligible for federal Community Development Block Grant funds.

Rubenstein said that although not being eligible for capital budget dollars was disappointing, "the HRA grant and loan look like a better option for us."

The Land Bank and theater group must meet several conditions before the grant and loan are disbursed. The \$200,000 grant cannot be disbursed until there is a purchase agreement with the theater group. If that doesn't happen within three years, the money must be paid back to the HRA. The construction loan, however, could be forgiven over time.

City staff noted that the complete acquisition and financing structure isn't known. 2015 estimates from Miller Dunwiddie Architecture and Flannery Construction put the cost at \$3.2 million, with \$450,000 for acquisition, and \$1.34 million for construction. Other costs include construction contingency, fixtures and furniture, and professional services.

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Monitor In A Minute

By JANE MCCLURE

Noise restrictions eased?

Events in or near the Allianz Field major league soccer stadium would not have to obtain sound level variances if the St. Paul City Council exempts the arena from city noise regulations. The ordinance was introduced Dec. 20 and will be the subject of a public hearing at 5:30pm, Wed., Jan. 17 at City Hall.

The proposed change would exempt soccer matches and "other activities held in a municipal stadium" from the city's noise restrictions. It would exempt "the playing and exhibition of any home game or league event within a municipal stadium operated pursuant to a playing and use agreement in effect between the city and a team."

There would also be an exemption for "other events, activities, and operations conducted in connection with home games, league events, or other sporting events sponsored by a team or the city are also exempt within the municipal stadium or stadium site excluding, however, the following: musical performances and fireworks displays of any type; and any other commercial and entertainment events not related to home games, league events or not sponsored by the city."

The team reference in the ordinance covers the Minnesota United FC. It would cover all pre-season, regular season, playoff, and championship home games and any international soccer games in which the team participates or controls. League events refer to any home game or soccer league-related event scheduled by the team or league, including all-star games.

Neither Union Park District council or Hamline Midway Coalition has had time to weigh in on the ordinance. Noise from the stadium was a concern raised when the master plan for the stadium and entire Midway Center superblock was discussed. Many people raised concerns about fireworks and late-night noise after games.

Lead Minnesota United FC Owner Bill McGuire told neighbors there would not be concerns about concerts in the stadium because they would want to ensure that the natural turf would not be damaged. But there could be concerts outside the stadium before and after games. There was also conflicting information presented as to whether fireworks would be shot off after soccer games.



The Como Golf Course has been signed to a new 10-year management agreement with Envision Hospitality and Catering. Envision has been managing the golf course since 2014. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Golf course agreement signed

A new 10-year management agreement with Envision Hospitality and Catering, for the Como and Phalen golf courses was approved Dec. 13 by the St. Paul City Council. The agreement continues a management partnership that began in 2014 with Prom Catering. Envision is that company's name, which was changed in 2015.

While there was an outcry when the golf course and course food service management was handed over to a private operator, the new agreement was approved without comment. The city continues to own Como and Phalen golf courses, and to own and operate the course at Highland. That will not change.

The original management contract was to be for two years but Envision requested and obtained a five-year commitment in 2014 in light of the investments ultimately made in both courses and their facilities.

The new contract is for 10 years. City Council documents indicate that Envision has met all the terms of its agreement with the city. The St. Paul Department of Parks and Recreation supported extending the agreement. A longer-term agreement is anticipated to

bring more investments on Envision's part.

There are no longer city employees at Como and Phalen. Those workers were either transferred to other city operations or went to work for Envision.

Como Friends make generous donation

Como Friends have again come through for the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. On Dec. 6 the St. Paul City Council accepted \$402,558 from Como Friends for the MAC Roadmap project at the Como campus.

Since spring 2016 the Como Friends and Como Park Zoo and Conservatory have worked together to develop MAC Roadmap, an ambitious three-year initiative designed to transform Como's visitor engagement strategies for the 21st century. It is modeled after a project at the Denver Zoo. It is intended to improve visitor engagement and to be a testing ground for program enhancement and delivery.

Como will create a new learning experiences division charged with leading the development of program content standards. Those standards will be the core of a new guest interaction guide, to help everyone at the Como campus have

better and more meaningful interactions with visitors. A key goal is to improve educational outcomes and for the campus's two million visitors, to foster individual awareness about the need to care for animals and nature, and to build on the template offered by the Denver Zoo.

The Council action accepted the funding for the city's Department of Parks and Recreation and set up a budget for the years 2018-2020.

Property can become a duplex

A Hamline-Midway property can be used as a duplex again,

as a result of a Dec. 29 vote of approval by the St. Paul Planning Commission. Halima Duale wishes to convert 1508 Van Buren Ave. back to duplex use, but needed approval of re-establishment of a nonconforming use permit.

The property was in use as a triplex as long ago as 1954, according to city records. As of 2006 it was vacant and owned by a bank. Duale purchased the property in 2010 and converted the property to single-family use so that that permits could be pulled and repairs made to the building. Work on the building has continued, and Duale sought to have a duplex use restored.

The project hasn't run into any neighborhood opposition. The duplex use was approved with conditions. One is that the separate rear unit is created, with its own bathroom and kitchen. A second is that the property has three paved parking spaces installed off the alley.

The Planning Commission decision was final unless it is appealed to the City Council within 10 days.



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In Our Community

Monitor

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Meeting on history project set Jan. 22

A historic survey of properties in the Hamline Midway neighborhood is in process. A meeting about the project is scheduled for Mon., Jan. 22, 7:30-8:30pm, at the Hamline Midway Library (1558 W Minnehaha) in the basement meeting room. Learn more about what's happening, why you should expect to see consultants walking the neighborhood taking photos, and how you might be able to contribute historical information! Contact ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us with questions.

Conservatory Senior Strolls every month

Introducing Senior Strolls, a new, free program for 55 and up, offering an opportunity to experience Como Park Zoo and Conservatory before it opens to the public. Senior Strolls will take place 9-10am on the first Tuesday of each month.

Each month those 55+ are welcome to partake in active social and learning opportunities complete with special activity stations before the doors open to the public at 10am. Also available is the opportunity for a leisurely stroll through the lush greenery and warm confines of the conservatory; or, in the warmer months, a walk amongst the amazing animals and world-class exhibits on the grounds of the zoo. This program is a great way to get active and social, with a little adult learning thrown in to spice it up!

La Leche League meets Feb. 13

The next meeting of the La Leche League of St. Paul Como-Midway will be held on Tues., Feb. 13, from 7-8:45pm. The discussion will focus on breastfeeding-related issues. Please contact Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more details.

Winter Warm-Up scheduled Feb. 1

Friends, neighbors, and families exploring preK to 5th-grade school options are invited to Hamline Elementary's annual Winter Warm-Up and Open House on Thur., Feb. 1, 5-7pm. It's a good time to get to know a great Midway school. Tour the building and learn more about the people, programming, and partnerships that make Hamline one-of-a-kind in St. Paul. The Hamline Elementary community will be getting together that night, too, for activities throughout the building and snacks in the cafeteria—all are welcome to stay and join the party. Hamline Elementary is located at 1599

Englewood Ave. For information about this event or to arrange a school tour, call 651-293-8715.

Free community playtime slated

Hamline Church United Methodist, 1514 Englewood Ave., hosts regular community playtimes for free play.

Toddler Tuesdays are 9:30-11am on the first and third Tuesdays of the month, through March. Enter through the alley door and come down to the Fireside Community Room for free play with your child or children. Refreshments and coffee are served.

Make Bake Play Day is canceled in January due to a church event.

Please check neighborhood groups on Facebook or on the church calendar before heading over, at www.hamlinechurch.org, as they do occasionally cancel if another event needs the space.

Questions? Email hamline-women@gmail.com.

Rhythms with Karin Rau scheduled

Join celebrated drummer and educator Karin Rau at the Women's Drum Center for three workshops providing a comprehensive overview of West African rhythms from Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Participants can sign-up for this fun adventure by taking one workshop or all three. The Drum Center is located at 2242 University Ave. W.

"Kpanlogo Rhythms" will be featured on Sat., Jan. 27, 1-3pm, and will provide a comprehensive overview of this West African rhythm from Ghana.

"Kpatsa Rhythms" will be the focus on Sat., Feb. 24, 1-3pm, and will give an overview of this West African rhythm from Ghana and Togo.

"Gahu Rhythms" will be featured on Sat., Mar. 24, 1-3pm, and will look at this West African rhythm from Ghana, Togo, and Benin.

Rau attended Concordia College in Moorhead, to study percussion and music education. She played in the Concordia band, Percussion Ensemble, Marimba choir, Javanese Gamelan ensemble, West African Drumming Ensemble, and was principal timpanist in the Concordia Orchestra. She has also played percussion in the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony Orchestra and Heartland Symphony Orchestra. She has a Masters of Ethnomusicology from Liberty University that has allowed her to research music from cultures all around the world. She has studied drumming and dance in Ghana and Guinea, taken Indian tabla drum lessons and holds a World Music Pedagogy certificate from Smithsonian Folkways. Karin taught classroom music, directed elementary choirs,

percussion ensembles, and African drumming ensembles in Minnesota public schools for five years. Rau currently teaches private percussion lessons, and instructs the West African drum and dance classes, Zimbabwe marimba ensemble, and facilitates drum circles at the Wirth Center for the Performing Arts in St. Cloud.

Participants should parking on street, and enter the side door on Hampden Ave. (ring WDC bell). Each workshop is \$35 per participant per session.

To Register: Pay by cash or check at the event. To assure your place, register by email with your name and phone/cell number (in case of event changes) at info@womensdrumcenter.net.

For more information or before heading to event check their Facebook page for any last-minute event news or cancellations—www.facebook.com/womensdrumcenter.

'I Heart Hamline' scheduled Feb. 14

"I Heart Hamline" day is planned for Wed., Feb. 14, 9-11:30am, at Hamline Elementary School, 1599 Englewood Ave. It's like a regular Hamline Welcoming Day (tours, conversations with current families), with more treats, more activities, more time to hang out. No appointment necessary; just drop in! Children are always welcome. School tours can be arranged for any time school is in session by calling 651-293-8715.

NAMI holds partner support group

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) sponsors a support group specifically for partners or spouses of someone who lives with a mental illness. The Partners and Spouses support group meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm, at Falcon Heights United Church of Christ, 1795 Holton St. (Holton and Garden). For more information, call Melissa at 651-354-0825 or Sara at 763-350-6502.

Hamline Church hosts UMW Sunday

Hamline Church Women/United Methodist Women host UMW Sunday on Sun., Jan. 21. Service is at 10am with luncheon following.

This year's guest speaker is Rose Santos, principal of LEAP Academy in the neighborhood. LEAP High School is dedicated to serving students who are new to the United States and are learning English while earning a high school diploma. As an alternative high school, LEAP High School enrolls students up to age 20 and provides an educational oppor-

tunity for students whose needs often do not match the offerings provided in traditional high schools. This ties with UMW studies of immigration. Learn more about the school at www.spps.org/leap.

The women will serve a traditional soup and bread luncheon and have a bread and used books sale. We need women to serve as ushers and greeters, and men and women to work in the kitchen. Questions? Call Jane McClure at 651-646-3473 or email hamline-women@gmail.com.

Elders plan ongoing monthly events

A Knitting Group meets Mondays, 1-3pm at Hamline Church United Methodist, 1514 Englewood Ave. Hamline Midway Elders provides the yarn and needles along with some light snacks. The participants work on projects, such as making shawls to be donated to a local hospice or blankets for a child care center. But it has also become a nice social gathering for a group of 10-12 elders. New participants are always welcome.

The Reading Buddy program takes place on the first and third Wednesdays, 10:45-11:30am at Hamline Elementary School. The Elders' partnership with Hamline Elementary School and the Reading Buddy Program continues twice a month during the school year. The third-grade students enjoy reading to neighborhood elders, and the older adults love the interaction with the children. No experience is needed; they're just looking for older adults with a desire to interact with third-grade students.

On Wed., Jan. 31, 1-3pm, Jody's Documentary Film Series will feature "Ping Pong," directed by Hugh Hartford and Anson Hartford. The film tells the story of competitors going for the gold in the international table tennis championships—and they're all over 80 years old. Enjoy the free film and snacks and stay for the post-film discussion facilitated by Jody. This program is a collaboration of the award-winning POV documentary series and the Hamline Midway Elders Association.

For more information on any of the above items, please contact Tom Fitzpatrick at Hamline Midway Elders at 651-209-6542 or tom@hmelders.org.

Emotions Anonymous meets Wednesdays

Do you often feel nervous, anxious, lonely, or fearful? Do you suffer from mood swings? Are you suffering from depression, panic attacks or crying spells? You can find help in a 12-Step Group called Emotions Anonymous (EA).

At EA meetings, they read EA literature and share how they are coping with emotional problems and how applying the 12 Steps of EA helps them find mental health.

The meetings are open to anyone who is seeking to achieve and maintain emotional balance. EA is not a religious group, and they welcome people of any religious affiliation or no religious affiliation. There is no cost to attend meetings. Only first names are used, and everything said at a meeting is confidential. EA meets each Wednesday, 7pm, at the Hamline United Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Ave. Use the rear entrance and ring the bell to gain admittance. The meeting is upstairs in Room 7.

Gathering toiletries for the homeless

Jehovah Lutheran Church is gathering toiletries for the homeless during January and February. Items will go to HealthEast Care System's Caring Hearts program for the homeless.

The church's Care Ministry will also gather toiletries for CrossingHOME, a ministry for recently released prisoners. These items will be placed in large and extra-large socks to give to CrossingHOME clients.

Items may be left at the church, 1566 Thomas Ave. Its Donation Center is indoors to the left at the Thomas entry. Suggested toiletries include toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, deodorant, combs, shampoo, lotion, small first aid kits, children's vitamins and other items helpful to the homeless. Small or large sizes are accepted.

Toddler care openings available

Central Lutheran School has immediate openings in its new toddler program for children age 16-33 months. The pre-K-8 school, 775 N. Lexington Pkwy., offers the program for parents who want to go back to work or for other family situations. More information is at www.clssp.org. Or you can email school@clssp.org or call 651-645-8649.

Several local groups up for SPACC award

The Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals (SPACC YPro) has announced the 2018 YPro Discovered Gala award finalists. The awards honor young professionals in the Twin Cities and organizations with a commitment to support them. Winners of the awards will be named at the YPro Discovered Gala—a Night Honor-

Continued on page 10

In Our Community

Continued from page 9

ing the Brightest Young Professionals in the Twin Cities, on Wed., Jan. 24, at James J. Hill Center.

In the Young Professional of the Year category, one of the five finalists is Sara Crumrine of Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. That organization is based at 2314 University Ave. W.

In the YPro Advocate of the Year, Medium Organization category, all three nominees have a Midway-Como connection. Spire Credit Union has their administrative offices at 2025 Larpenteur Ave. W.; Sunrise Banks has a branch office at 2171 University Ave. W.; and Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity has their headquarters at 1954 University Ave. W.

Can Can recipient of Sensible Use Award

Can Can Wonderland, 755 Prior Ave. N., was a recipient of a Sensible Land Use Coalition (SLUC) Great Places Award at their 5th annual luncheon.

Can Can was noted as Minnesota's first arts-based public benefit corporation. Local artists designed 18 holes of mini golf in the former American Can Company building. Can Can Wonderland is a 2016 Round 2 recipient of the City's Cultural STAR Grant program, created to promote economic growth in Saint Paul by strengthening the arts and cultural sector.

Little Mekong Plaza, 422 University Ave. W., was also an

award recipient. It is one of the first privately-owned public spaces along the Green Line. The landmark and gathering space reflects the Hmong, Vietnamese, and other ethnic and immigrant communities that live and operate businesses in the area.

SLUC Great Places Awards celebrate public spaces in the seven-county Twin Cities Metropolitan Area and foster their further development.

Congo refugees have urgent needs

Recent arrivals from the troubled Congo urgently need winter coats and boots, blankets, cooking items, plates and Cub gift cards. Jehovah Lutheran Church continues to collect items for Congolese refugees. December arrivals include a couple with five children, another couple with four children and a mother with six young adult children and two boys.

The church gathers items in partnership with CEEDS, the Center for Employment and Education Development Services. CEEDS maintains an office at the church to help refugees from the Congo, an African nation enduring years of civil war.

Items can be left at the church's Donation Center, indoors to the left of the entry at 1566 Thomas Ave. Drop off items before or after worship at 10:15am Sundays or call the church at 651-644-1421 to set up another time.

CEEDS also accepts monetary donations. Checks can be made out to CEEDS and left at

the church office or mailed to the church, 1566 Thomas, St. Paul MM 55104.

Word and Sound Lab returns to library

After an exciting fall, Word and Sound Lab returns to Hamline Midway Library on Tues., Jan. 23 and runs every Tuesday for ten sessions until Mar. 27. Word and Sound Lab is an open studio workshop for youth grades 5-8 that explores the intersection of poetry, sound, and video. Participants make their own poetry and music in any style in an open studio format with iPads and other tech available for use. Sessions run from 4:30-6pm at the library, 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave.

iPads and other tech will be available to use, or participants may bring their own phone, laptop, tablet, or notebook. This activity is open and free for grades 5-8. No registration necessary; just show up. Participants can attend one session or attend them all.

Beat Cabin Fever workshops planned

The Women's Drum Center, 2242 University Ave. W., is offering a series of three family-focused workshops on Saturdays in January, February, and March to "Beat Cabin Fever."

These workshops are co-ed and open to children ages 7 and up accompanied by an adult. Each Workshop will include instruction for playing the drums,

learning a song to perform as a group and making a percussion instrument to take home. Materials for the percussion instrument, a light snack and beverage will be provided for a workshop cost of \$20 for one child and one adult, with \$5 for each additional child in a family. Adults must remain at the workshop with their children; one adult may bring up to three children.

Workshop schedule includes Beats from West Africa on Sat., Jan. 20, Hot Latin Rhythms on Sat., Feb. 17, and Shake That Grove Thing on Sat. Mar. 17. All workshops are from 1-3pm.

Park on the street and please enter side door on Hampden Ave. (ring WDC bell).

To Register: Pay by cash or check at the event. To assure your place, register by email with your name and phone/cell number (in case of event changes) info@womensdrumcenter.net.

Music Under Glass lists four concerts

"Music Under Glass" continues this month at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, 1225 Estabrook Dr. The Music Under Glass series allows everyone to escape the winter blahs inside the comfy confines of the Conservatory.

The concerts are held on select Sundays from 4:30-6:30pm inside the the Conservatory. Beer, wine, pop, and light snacks will be available to purchase. There will be no concert on Jan. 28 or on Feb. 4.

On Jan. 14, Astronomique will take the stage to fuse intricate dance beats with darkly beautiful waves of psychedelic synths, fuzzed out guitars, and hypnotic vocals.

Siama's Congo World Quartet will perform Jan. 21 with its traditional Congolese feel-good sound mixed with a colorful palette of musical influences.

On Feb. 11 Dusty Heart will define their lush sound with rich vocal harmonies merged with intimate layers of guitar, fiddle, and banjo.

FLOWTUS, who draws their influences from a plethora of genres that range from blues, country, punk, and folk will perform on Feb. 18.

NAMI workshop planned Feb. 3

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) will hold a free, interactive, Hope For Recovery workshop that provides families and individuals with information on mental illnesses, practical coping strategies, and hope for recovery. The workshop will be held at Loyola Spirituality Center, 389 N. Oxford St., on Sat., Feb. 3, from 9am to 3pm. For information or to register call 651-645-2948 or go to nami-helps.org.

NOTE: To have your community announcement or event considered for February Monitor listing, please submit your item before Jan. 29 for the Feb. 8 edition. Submit via email to editorial@deruyternelson.com.

Como-Dale-Front

Continued from page 9

make neighborhoods special and support local jobs. Because of the work completed in years' past, specifically the 2010 study on the intersection by the Metropolitan Design Center and District 6, we were able to secure funding for this work at Como, Front, and Dale," said Brendmoen.

"Our goal is to help improve the pedestrian conditions in the area and make it a more attractive place for shoppers, residents, and

businesses," Brendmoen said. "We also want to emphasize safety at this very busy, very confusing intersection. There are redevelopment opportunities at this node, and we hope to signal to commercial developers and small business owners that the neighborhood is ready for investment."

But the biggest challenge to redoing the intersection is Dale St., said Brendmoen. Dale is four lanes in the area and is heavily traveled as a route to and from I-94. That is a plus for efforts to bring in new businesses large and small. But the traffic volume creates the

challenge. "Crossing Dale St. feels dangerous which is a condition we must address. We need to balance the need to move vehicles along Dale St. with the needs of the residential community that surrounds it," she said.

As for opportunities, Brendmoen singled out the Galls/Uniforms Unlimited and the former Schroeder's Bar sites as the greatest potential redevelopment opportunities. Schroeder's was destroyed in a November 2014 fire, and the owners chose not to rebuild. Galls is for sale. Longtime residents may remember it as Joe's Sport-

ing Goods. Redevelopment could complement one of the area's strengths, of long-term business owners who have kept up their properties. An anchor-destination business for the area is sought, along with smaller infill businesses.

The market study tracked some interesting trends. District 10 residents, who have higher incomes than the residents of District 6, have been vocal about the desire for businesses in their neighborhood. At a meeting in November 2017 about the future of the shuttered Como Dockside

restaurant space, many people brought up the need for more restaurants and coffee shops. A grocery store has also been cited as something residents want. But the study indicated that while a drug store or smaller grocery store of about 20,000 to 30,000 square feet could be added along Dale between Maryland Ave. and Topping St., Maryland would likely be a better spot for a grocery.

Read more about the project and the business surveys, and take a survey on Como-Dale-Front at www.district10comopark.org.

Classifieds

Monitor

Want ads must be received by the Monitor by January 29 for the February 8 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

Monitor Want Ads are \$1 per word with a \$10 minimum. Send your remittance along with your ad to Monitor Classifieds, 125 1st Ave. NW, PO Box 168, Minneapolis, MN 55369. Want ads must be mailed to the Monitor by Jan. 29 for the Feb. 8 issue. Ad copy can be e-mailed to denis@deruyternelson.com. Call 651-645-7045 for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at www.MonitorSaintPaul.com

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• The Como Choirs presented a peppy Pops Concert on Dec. 18 to an appreciative and large audience in the Como Auditorium. They followed up the well-received show by going out in the community and performing at Chelsea Heights, Hamline, and Como elementary schools on Dec. 21.

Enthusiastic young students were entertained, and many of the high school choir kids enjoyed the experience of singing at their former schools. Some were even able to connect with their elementary school teachers. It was a special and festive day of community building in the neighborhood schools.

• Como counselor Molly McCurdy-Yates organized a college panel in the Como Auditorium on Dec. 20 for Como juniors and seniors. The panel consisted of five recent Como graduates who shared insight and advice from their college experiences.

Como students listened to the alumni as they discussed the college landscape and themes of time management, academic rigor, social dynamics, and proper preparation through Como's college prep course offerings. The panel then fielded questions from the audience.

The event has become a tradition during the final week of school in December, as many college students return to St. Paul and their Como neighborhood homes for their winter break after semester finals.

• State and local elected officials, school board members, and leadership from St. Paul Public Schools gathered at Como Park High School on Dec. 14 to celebrate the Grand Opening of the Hiway Federal Credit Union and its student-run Cougars Branch.

The student branch of the credit union will provide an excellent opportunity for students to learn about financial services and credit responsibility through hands-on experience. Hiway Federal Credit Union has hired Como Park students to run the branch during their lunch hours. The creation of the branch in the school dovetails with goals of financial literacy for all students and supports many of the learning objectives within Como's Academy of Finance (AOF) program.

"We are very excited to build a life-long partnership with Hiway," said Como Principal Theresa Neal. "Working together produces results and brings added value to our students, our school, and the community."

Hamline Elementary ended 2017 on a high-note with a successful book fair which saw over 70 books purchased directly for Hamline classrooms and over \$800 earned for additional book purchases. We also hosted a Family Night dedicated to literacy support programs and organizations including Reading Partners, Mid-Continent Oceanographic Institute, Hamline Midway Library, and Children's Book Express. Big thanks to everyone who participated in these events!

In 2018, we look forward to more school get-togethers, the development of new community partnerships, the expansion of existing ones, and to continue to welcome people to get to know our school community. If you're a family looking for a PreK-5

News from Como Park High School

Compiled by ERIC ERICKSON, Social Studies Teacher

Choir, College, Credit Union, Showcase and more



Como senior Donny Ventrelli accepted a scholarship to study and play football at the University of North Dakota, a Division I program. A ceremony with family, coaches, and teammates took place in the school library after school on Dec. 20, national signing day. (Photo by Eric Erickson)



Como alumni participated in a college panel in the Como Auditorium on Dec. 20. Como juniors and seniors were able to obtain advice and insight from the panel and ask questions about college life and studies. (Photo by Eric Erickson)

• The National Honor Society (NHS) students at Como are organizing a book drive to support students at Como Park Elementary School. Como's NHS is coordinating with the Children's Book Express, which is an organization that collects picture and chapter books and donates them to young, beginning readers.

Students and staff have begun bringing in books. The community is invited to support as well, so if you have any old children's books that you are no longer using, please consid-

er donating them to the cause! There is a big box in the main office where donations are being collected. NHS students will organize all deposits, and deliver what they hope will be their stated goal of 1,000 books.

• Construction of the new academic wing continues to move at an impressive pace. The structure's exterior is in place and sealed to allow indoor work through the cold winter months. The schedule for completion of the addition is the fall of 2018,

which would allow Como students and staff to start using the new learning spaces next school year while remodeling work and infrastructure improvements begin on other parts of the building. For more information on the project, readers can visit the Facilities Master Plan website at www.spps.org/Page/22920.

• On Dec. 16 the Cougar boys' basketball program had a unique opportunity to play a game in the Target Center, home of Minnesota's NBA and WNBA teams.

The Cougars' faced Abraham Lincoln High School from Council Bluffs, Iowa in the special interstate game.

Lincoln is a quality team that was looking for a competitive opponent in the Twin Cities. The assistant coach at Lincoln is Como alum Andre Smith who starred on the 2003 Como team that took third place in the state tournament. Smith played in college at North Dakota St. and had a 10-year professional career overseas. Smith contacted current Como head coach John Robinson about playing Lincoln at the Target Center, and they were able to create an event that every player from both schools will remember for the rest of their lives.

• Como senior Donny Ventrelli signed his letter of intent to play football at the University of North Dakota. At a ceremony in the school library after school on Dec. 20, Ventrelli officially accepted the offer to play Division I football and study at UND. He was surrounded by family, coaches, and teammates and enjoyed sharing the big moment with the people that helped him achieve his goal.

Ventrelli is a good student who had an exceptional senior season for the Cougars as he earned all-state honors and won the district Defensive Player of the Year award. On Dec. 17, Ventrelli was honored on the field at U.S. Bank Stadium at halftime of the Vikings game as a member of the all-state team.

• Prospective students and families for the 2018-2019 school year are invited to Como's Showcase Night. Showcase is an open house format where students and families have a chance to learn more about academic and extra-curricular activities at Como. Showcase will take place on Thur., Jan. 18 from 5:30-7:30pm.

Shadowing opportunities are also still available for prospective students. Interested students can spend a day in school with a current Como student. Opportunities for shadowing include Jan. 17 and 18, as well as Feb. 7 and 8. Parents of interested prospective students who would like to shadow may register on the Como Park High School website under "Families" and click the "shadowing and tours" link. Any questions can be directed to Dede at patricia.hammond@spps.org or 651-774-6825.

Hamline staff, and talked to current families about why they chose and continue to choose Hamline, please join our school community for our Winter Warm-Up activities throughout the building and snacks in the cafeteria. It's a good time to get to know a great Midway school. We hope to see you there!

Hamline Elementary is a proud St. Paul Public School, located at 1599 Englewood Ave., in the heart of St. Paul's Hamline Midway neighborhood. Contact the school at 651-293-8715 for more information about these events or to schedule a tour. You can learn more about Hamline Elementary at www.spps.org/hamline.

Hamline Elementary School

By JESSICA KOPP

Happy New Year from Hamline Elementary!

school or a neighbor who wants to know more about this lively and growing community, come on over. We've set aside times for you to drop in and visit. Check it out:

January Welcoming Days

Jan. 23 (9-10:30am) and Feb. 16 and 30 (1-2:15pm)
We're ready to greet the new year with Welcoming Days—a

time when neighbors and families choosing a PreK-5 school can get to know the people, programming, and partnerships that make Hamline one-of-a-kind in St. Paul. Hamline staff and current families will lead tours, answer questions, and share all the reasons Hamline is a great place to connect, learn, and grow. No appointment is necessary for Welcoming Days. Just stop by the

school's main office, and we'll take care of the rest, including something warm to drink and something sweet to eat.

Winter Warm-Up and Open House

Thur., Feb. 1, 5-7pm
This is not an ordinary Open House. It's a bit of party, too—and you're invited. After you've toured the building, met the

Ways to connect with your Metropolitan Regional Arts Council

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Long before University Ave. became a corridor of nonprofit organizations, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC) established itself at 2324 University Ave. in the Midway neighborhood.

Senior program director Greg Nielsen explained, "Our primary function is to be part of the state arts funding system. A state as geographically diverse as Minnesota would be difficult to serve with just a centralized state arts board in the urban core. The 11 regional arts councils can meet the needs of Minnesota's 87 counties more responsively, reaching into the cultural nooks and crannies of our state."

According to the 2017 Creative Minnesota Report, Minnesota is home to "an astonishing 104,148 artists and creative workers who make their home in every county." The term creative workers refers to 41 occupations including architects, curators, librarians, dancers, actors, choir directors, writers, editors and more—with an economic impact upwards of \$600 million annually.

MRAC serves the highest density of artists state-wide: those living in the seven-county metro area, and will award some 500 grants to organizations and artists in fiscal year 2018.

"Regional arts councils are the entry points for many emerging, small, and mid-sized arts organizations and groups," Nielsen said.

There are grants available through MRAC for arts activities support, organizational development, capital purchases, management consulting, and more. Most grants are publicly funded, with dollars received from the Minnesota State Arts Board.

The only privately funded grant is called the Next Step Fund, made available through a partnership with The McKnight Foundation. These \$5,000 grants are awarded to individual artists for career advancement, and the application deadline is approaching fast on Mar. 19.

"In the spirit of MRAC being as accessible as possible," Nielsen said, "work samples are not required for the Next Step Fund—and the application narrative is only two pages long. We're often the first funder for recipients of this program. The untold story of MRAC is that we're a community-directed organization. Our seven-person staff serves as the conduit of information, but we don't choose who gets any of our grants."

Grant selection for all of MRAC's grants is determined by peer review panels, who volunteer their time throughout the year. MRAC will use the services of more than 250 community volunteers in 2018. Each team of 4-10 will be assigned 25 applications to evaluate before making funding recommendations to MRAC's board of directors. MRAC is currently accepting applications from new panelists who would bring a diverse personal, professional, and artistic perspective to the process. For more information, contact community connections manager Oskar Ly at Oscar@mrac.org.

According to Nielsen, the state of the arts in Minnesota is

very, very good. "We consistently rank #1 in the country for per capita dollars invested in the arts," he said. "We owe our enviable status to the Legacy Amendment, which was voted in by Minnesota voters in 2008 and went into effect in 2010."

Six years ago, as a serious recession was brewing and opposition to tax increases was rising, Minnesota voters chose to write a 25-year tax increase into the state's constitution. That decision raised the state's sales tax by three-eighths of 1%, or half a penny for every dollar spent. Money from the Legacy Amendment, worth about \$300 million per year, or \$7.5 billion over its lifetime, is dedicated to clean water, the arts and culture, parks and trails, and outdoor habitat.

Nielsen concluded that "the Legacy Amendment has significantly broadened MRAC's reach, but we're still funding fewer than half of the worthy requests we receive. No artists are going to get rich off of these grants—they're



MRAC's Greg Nielsen, senior program director, and Becky Franklin, grants and operations manager. The two are serving as interim co-directors until a permanent executive director can be named. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

more like infusions—but they can definitely help artists get to the next level of their careers, and

arts organizations to increase access to their communities."

To learn more about the

wide range of MRAC grant opportunities, contact the front desk staff at 651-645-0402.



Alan Berks, co-director of St. Paul's Wonderlust Productions said, "For our current production, 'Our House: The Capitol Play Project,' we received an Arts Activities Support grant from MRAC, and it has been invaluable. I'm not exaggerating when I say that our theater could not exist without the support of MRAC. Theirs was the very first grant we received when we did our Adoption Play Project last year. They made that play possible, and they have other community-driven grants that are essential to arts groups of our size." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



Joyce Haselmann
Ramsey County Commissioner

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