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Monitor



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TCGIS likely to tear down former St. Andrew's Church

Church closed in 2011, and the building has been used by the school since 2013 as an auditorium and gymnasium

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

The Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) is likely to tear down the former St. Andrew church building and replace it with a new addition.

The school has been evaluating solutions to its space needs for about a year as it realized it was outgrowing the buildings on site.

When the school moved to 1031 Como Ave. in 2013, it added a building to connect the existing classrooms and church, and converted the former church sanctuary into a multi-purpose gym and auditorium. The updated space is referred to as Aula or the auditorium.

However, a study of various alternatives concluded that replacing the 1927 Aula with a new, three-level structure is more cost effective than retrofitting the existing Byzantine-Romanesque structure. That building needs at least \$1.2 million in repairs and upgrades, including a new roof, boiler, windows, doors, insulation, and tuck-pointing.



A study of various alternatives concluded that replacing the 1927 Aula with a new, three-level structure is more cost effective than retrofitting the existing structure. The former church building needs at least \$1.2 million in repairs and upgrades, including a new roof, boiler, windows, doors, insulation, and tuck-pointing. (Photo submitted)

doors, doors, insulation, and tuck-pointing.

The school's facilities task force also explored the possibilities of renting space across the street in the long-term and



A very preliminary sketch of the possible expanded Twin Cities German Immersion School campus. (Graphic submitted)

acquiring the Mission Orthodox Presbyterian church property, neither of which proved possible. Members also studied moving into other school buildings.

Loss of Aula 'not taken lightly'

Although she says she will miss the Aula, TCGIS school parent Linda Alhaus says that the re-

moval of the Aula to construct a new building designed explicitly for TCGIS students seems to be the most logical option.

"The loss of the Aula is not taken lightly," remarked Alhaus, who lives in Minneapolis. "I love that building and have many pictures of my children in front of it. I'm slowly coming around to the idea that spending over a million dollars in the next couple of years to save a building that is not energy efficient doesn't make sense."

She added, "Adding a third layer in that footprint is a better option than giving up treasured outdoor space."

School leaders began meeting with potential contractors in March and intend to lock in plans within a month, begin construction in summer 2019, and finish by the end of that year.

At an estimated \$4 million, the new addition will have about 23,000 square feet on three levels, and would offer space designed specifically as a gymnasium and cafeteria. It also is likely to add eight classrooms and additional office space.

The plan does not significantly increase the existing building footprint.

According to the District 10 website, plans initially included purchasing the single-family house at 1042 Van Slyke, tearing it down, and using the lot for "outdoor space" or additional off-street parking. Facility Chair Nic Ludwig, the parent of two TCGIS students and a seven-year resident of the neighborhood, told District 10 on March 28 that the school has since cancelled that contingent purchase agreement.

The plan also included examining the possibility of using the Como Pool parking lot for staff parking. The pool option would need city approval, but could reduce the need for parking lots adjacent to the school and nearby homes.

After District 10 posted the plans to their Facebook page, a discussion began with opinions ranging from a desire to keep the old church building to a recognition that the school needs more space.

"I understand the local community appreciates the beauty of the building, as do I," said Alhaus. "We are a public school, with a public school budget, so we have

Marathon man still running strong at age 70

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Long distance runner John Concannon is on a mission. The resident of Lyngblomsten Apartments, a retirement community in Como, plans to run a marathon in every state before he dies. A marathon, for those who don't know, is a 26.2-mile foot race. This year, between his 70th and 71st birthdays, he plans to complete four.

Last October, Concannon ran the Baystate Marathon in Lowell, Massachusetts (his 45th). In January, he traveled to Baton Rouge and ran the Louisiana Marathon (his 46th). In a couple of weeks, he'll lace up for the Hogege Marathon in Fayetteville, Arkansas (his 47th). In September, he'll travel to Nebraska for the running of the Omaha Marathon (his 48th). Next year's destinations haven't been finalized, but Concannon knows this. He'll return to Ireland, the country of his birth, to run his 50th marathon in 2019.

Concannon was born in the village of Timree, Ireland, in 1947. "We grew up poor, on a farm that had no running water or electricity," he said. "I was the oldest of six kids. I had to quit



school at 13 to help support my family by going to work for a blacksmith. I was never a natural athlete, but I've been physi-

Concannon said, "Physiologically, we're supposed to be moving—that's what we're built for. I don't think we need to stop exercising just because we're growing older." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

cally active all my life. As a kid, I loved playing two of Ireland's national sports: hurling and Gaelic football."

"When I was 16," Concannon explained, "one of my aunts sponsored our family's immigration to Boston. Although I hadn't been formally schooled for three years, I tested into the 11th grade and was the strongest student in American history, geography, and political science. The teachers didn't quite understand me, but they could tell that I knew my stuff."

Concannon has learned some stuff about the sport of running along the way too. He said, "Running has been a vital part of my recovery from alcoholism and my overall health. I decided to quit drinking in April 1994 and ran my first marathon, the Twin Cities Marathon, in October of that same year. When I crossed the finish line, I felt so

great that I knew I'd never drink again. I limped away, and every muscle in my body hurt for a week—but I decided then and there to keep running marathons until the day I drop."

"I didn't know much about running or how to train when I ran my first marathon," he said. "If somebody asked me now, I'd tell them to start with 5K races. Work your way up to half marathons, and take your time. See if you can cover 20 miles in a walk/run combination once a month for a while before you even think of running a marathon."

"At the age of 70," Concannon said, "I don't worry about my time at all; I focus on distance, not speed. If I feel something pull or tweak in my legs or back, I just start walking. I train year round because I love running. I don't own a car, so I walk two miles each way to the gym to run on the treadmill several times a week. If somebody asked me what my philosophy of exercise was, I guess I'd say just to keep moving. If you don't use something regularly, whether its brains or muscles, you're going to lose it."

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Hamline-Midway mom writes a book on homeschooling

'Homeschoolers Are Not Hermits' supports families as they make the transition from conventional schooling

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

Hamline-Midway resident Kathy Oaks has just released a book to help new homeschoolers get started.

Oaks wrote "Homeschoolers Are Not Hermits" to support families as they make the transition from conventional schooling to something completely different, bringing fun, mindfulness, and flexibility to the adventure of homeschooling.

"Homeschoolers Are Not Hermits" includes the history of both homeschooling and compulsory schooling, how to talk to naysaying relatives, how to keep your patience, how to make learning fun, and why homeschoolers generally are not hermits and are not worried about the "socialization" question. It also includes things like covering sex ed, finding free or inexpensive resources, and why many colleges like homeschooled students.

Oaks uses an informal and easy-to-read style as she shares about the educational format she knows so well.

One of her best friends at university was homeschooled, so Oaks



started out with a good impression of homeschooling. When her oldest son was a baby, Oaks read lots of books on child development.

"Then I read John Taylor Gatto's 'Dumbing Us Down' essay, based on the speech he gave for his New York City Teacher of the Year award. That made me think very differently about the education I had received, especially since my husband and I were both overachievers in school,"

Hamline-Midway resident Kathy Oaks has recently released a book titled, "Homeschoolers Are Not Hermits," a guide for hesitant homeschoolers to give them the confidence needed to take the leap and see why so many people love homeschooling. (Photo submitted)

commented Oaks.

"The more I read, the more I felt that homeschooling was the way I wanted to go."

What they enjoy about homeschooling

Oaks moved into the neighborhood in 2006 to be near Hamline University, since her husband teaches chemistry there. In 2011, she earned the Neighborhood Honor Roll Helping Hands award for hosting the Hamline-Midway Barter Market for several years.

The family has grown to three children, and all are homeschooled: Michael age 14, Benjamin age 11, and Simon age 6.

"I most enjoy watching the kids learning with gusto, choosing their interests, and being motivated to learn all about them," remarked Oaks.

"I can learn at my own pace, as fast or as slow as I want, and don't have to get up early to go to school," said Michael. "There is more time to do other fun stuff like playing piano and doing things with my homeschool groups like book arts, board games, and woodworking."

"It gives me time to do what I want with who I want," stated Benjamin. "I can learn about Greek mythology or the Crusades whenever I want to."

Simon said his favorite thing is all the good books. He enjoys being able to do electronics in kindergarten, and he loves being able to take

road trips when other kids are in school.

Each of the kids sees homeschool fitting them as students in different ways. For Michael, it's having a really small math class where he feels comfortable asking and answering complicated questions. Benjamin appreciates being able to learn at his own pace and deciding what alleys of learning to go down, such as the Punic Wars, and finding YouTube channels that actually make the Punic Wars interesting.

just starting out as homeschoolers:

- Relax. Do your best and don't stress about it.

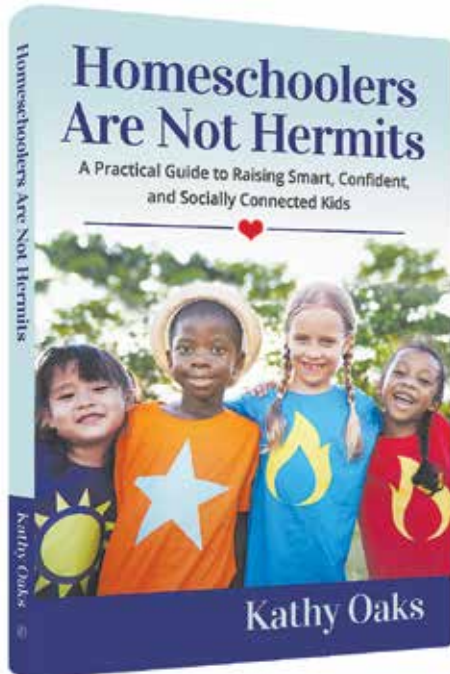
- Trust yourself and your kids. If you feel homeschooling will be best for your family, don't let naysayers stop you.

- Don't try to recreate school at home. Instead, create together what will be the best way to learn for your family.

- Keep your long-term goals in mind. What kind of people do you want your kids to be and what kind of relationship do you want to have

Tips for those starting out

Oaks offers these tips to families *Continued on page 5*



"Homeschoolers Are Not Hermits" is available as a Kindle book now and will be in paperback in May.

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German Immersion

Continued from page 1

to be mindful of making smart financial decisions. Our utmost priority is educating students and making decisions that are in the best interest of these students."

School over capacity

Now in its fifth year on the Como Ave. site, TCGIS is experiencing its first year of being over its designed capacity, according to TCGIS Executive Director Ted Anderson.

The Como Ave. site was built for 23 individual class

sections and 560 pupils. This year, the school has 24 class sections and more than 525 pupils. TCGIS projects enrollment to top out between 615 and 630 in the next three to four years.

The tuition-free, K-8 German Immersion School opened its doors in the fall of 2005, and moved its 370 students to the former St. Andrew's church and parochial site in 2013. The St. Paul parish had closed in 2011, and its convent and rectory were demolished.

"Our need is to create space for both current programs and a very defined in-

crease in enrollment—from our current level of roughly 550 to our projected capacity of 615-630," said Anderson. "We are not adding any grade levels."

TCGIS intends to add three additional sections in grades 6-8, but the school is not expanding beyond three classes per grade. Nearly all of the new students at TCGIS are kindergarteners.

Anderson says the growth is primarily the result of unusually high retention rates; in other words, once families enroll in the school, they don't leave.

TCGIS is a public school, but it is not part of St. Paul Public Schools.

"While TCGIS serves students from throughout the Twin Cities, around 250 are St. Paul residents. Add Falcon Heights and Roseville and over 300 of our kids come from pretty close by," pointed out Ludwig. "Around 130 kids are from Minneapolis."

Other local school projects

The German Immersion School plan is only one of several school expansions going on in Como. According to the District 10 Como Community Council:

- Como Park Senior High School is in the second year of a three-year project that includes extensive renovations inside and outside the school, plus a 21,000-square-foot addition to its campus on Rose Ave.
- Hmong College Prep Academy is in the final year of a project adding 98,000 square feet for classrooms and other academics on its Brewster Ave. campus. It also is adding 441 more parking spaces, an outdoor athletic field, and an 85,000-square-foot seasonal sports dome.
- Great River School is building a 19,000-square-foot addition on Energy Park Drive. It expects the new space to be available for the 2018-2019 school year.
- Metro Deaf School plans to purchase and renovate a new, larger location along Lexington Pkwy., just north of Energy Park Drive. It intends to move from its current Brewster Ave. location in 2019.

Upcoming meetings planned

"As they consider how to accommodate the growing number of interested students," said Ward 5 Council Member Amy Brendmoen, who lives nearby, "we must work together and wade through the com-

plex issues involved. I'll be listening and working closely with my neighbors and members of the school community to help find a mutually beneficial solution."

Her office has received calls from citizens regarding the proposal to tear down the church.

"In addition to concern about the loss of the church building, there are concerns about growth in the school including noise and increased car traffic during drop-off and pick-up times," she pointed out.

District 10 Community Council's Land Use Committee anticipated hearing about the project at its Wed., May 2, 7pm meeting. Check the District 10 website for further details.

"I believe we can find a mutually beneficial solution to the school's space needs if both neighbors and the school are willing to work together," stated Brendmoen.



The preliminary plan also called for replacing a parking lot with possible green space. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

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Letters to the Editor

Video available of Town Hall meeting

Thank you to everyone who joined me, Rep. Hausman and Rep. Lesch at our recent Senate District 66 Town Hall meeting at the Cameroon Community Center. We enjoyed the chance to provide an update on the bills we are working on during the legislative session and to have a conversation with constituents about the issues that are important to you.

Nearly 100 people joined us for a discussion of important topics including health care, gun violence prevention, education, immigration, tax policy,

and campaign finance reform. We greatly appreciated everyone who attended and were glad to hear the many thoughtful comments, questions and ideas that were raised. If you weren't able to join us, you can view a recording of the meeting at: <https://bit.ly/2pOsQXb>.

Sen. John Marty

Support for candidate Shirley Erstad

On Aug. 14, Ward 4 residents will be electing a new councilmember to represent us as a result of the appointment of Russ Stark to Mayor Carter's adminis-

tration. I am supporting Shirley Erstad to represent Ward 4 on the St. Paul City Council.

As a 29-year resident and active community member in Hamline Midway, I care deeply about the issues and opportunities in our neighborhoods and city from sidewalk safety and block clubs to a healthy environment and livable neighborhoods, place-based community building and quality of life, diversity and inclusion, small business success, and safety and justice for all.

Shirley is also a longtime resident of Ward 4 for over 25 years, as a renter and homeowner. I've come to know and respect Shirley as a passionate advocate for residents of St. Paul because she has been selflessly taking action on many matters as an inclusive and experienced leader who listens, learns and leads tirelessly on behalf of all residents. She strives for open, equitable and transparent government. She understands the issues with current systems, sees the opportunities to create change, and works collaboratively to "get stuff done" in the Hamline Midway, Ward 4 and beyond.

I am supporting Shirley Erstad for Ward 4 City Council because she is an authentic leader and advocate who will work for and with all of us!

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Spring Bike Sale in Progress

Monitor In A Minute

By JANE MCCLURE

Midway Peace Park is the park's new name

It's official—Midway Peace Park is the name of the new park in the Lexington-Hamline neighborhood. On Mar. 21, the St. Paul City Council adopted the name for the park on Bigelow Ave. between Griggs and Dunlap streets.

The naming is a key step in a years-long process to create a park in the area between Interstate 94 and University Ave. The park is likely to serve many residents of the nearby Skyline Tower high-rise apartment building.

The property served as auto storage for many years for Midway area motor vehicle sales businesses but has sat largely vacant for more than a decade. Students at nearby Gordon Parks High School were among the first to call for the area to become a park.

The city has worked with the nonprofit Trust for Public Land to help fund the land purchase and park planning. The name itself has been in the works for more than a year and was win-

nowed down from a list of five park names.

More than 500 people voted on the park name, which has support from Lexington-Hamline Community Council, Union Park District Council and the city's Parks and Recreation Commission. All the participants worked with the city's Department of Parks and Recreation to follow a city-approved naming process.

After joking about the possible name "City Council Park," Ward One Council Member Dai Thao said he is pleased with the community process that led up to the name choice. Lexington-Hamline, Skyline Tower, and Trust for Public Land representatives thanked the city for its help with the naming process.

Noise wall is planned in 2022?

A noise wall on the south side of Interstate 94, between Fairview and Prior avenues, won a vote of support Mar. 7 from the St. Paul City Council.

The project is being planned and built by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). The state is respon-

sible for the freeway as well as for noise abatement along it. MnDOT controls the study, design, and building of the wall.

Construction is tentatively eyed for the year 2022. MnDOT held a meeting on the project in fall 2017. Property owners who would be directly affected by the wall could vote on the proposal to both MnDOT and the city. Votes were in support of the noise wall, so the work will proceed.

The city is supporting the project and will participate in the costs of engineering and wall construction. The costs aren't determined yet but would be covered through the MnDOT Metro Division's Highway Noise Abatement Program and the city's Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget Process. The cost split is 90 percent MnDOT and 10 percent city.

Changes for Interstate 94?

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Metro District Corridors of Commerce has several potential projects that could change Interstate 94

in the future.

The St. Paul City Council Mar. 21 approved those and other state highway projects suggested in St. Paul. More than a dozen projects are proposed city-wide. Choices will be announced later this year.

More than half a dozen projects in the proposal are along I-94 from the downtown area to the west city limits with Minneapolis. One change would be to add a MnPASS lane between the I-35W junction in Minneapolis and the I-35E junction in St. Paul. MnPASS is an electronic toll collection system operated by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

A second local request is to reconstruct the I-94 and Highway 280-Franklin Ave. interchanges. This would include southbound Hwy. 280 access to the Cretin Ave. exit, eliminate/replace left side I-94 ramps and revise the Franklin Ave. interchange for better freight connections.

Not all projects can be funded through what is a \$400 million pool statewide. Support from cities and counties gives projects extra points as they compete.

Restaurant wins licenses

A new restaurant in the West Midway has received St. Paul City Council approval for needed licenses. Liquor on-sale and on-sale Sunday licenses were among those approved Mar. 21 for Hodges Bend, 2700 University Ave. W.

The application had the support of the St. Anthony Park Community Council, but a letter of objection from a neighboring property owner sent the request to a legislative hearing officer. The business is in an area that has many adjacent condos and apartments, and concerns were raised about patron noise. A legislative hearing was held in Feb.

The licenses were approved with several conditions. One is that Hodges Bend operates as a restaurant and not as a bar. Another is that closing is at midnight, with all patrons out of the premises by 12:30am.

Hodges Bend cannot add outdoor seating or allow liquor consumption outdoors until there have been additional approvals.

The Hamline Midway Library, 1558 West Minnehaha Ave., is your neighborhood spot to connect with your community, enjoy great programs, access the Internet, and stock up on books, CDs, and DVDs, all free with your library card. This April and May, the library will host a wide range of programs to help you make the most of spring.

News from Hamline Midway Library

By CARRIE POMEROY

Programs for kids and opportunities for adults

Programs for families and kids

Preschool Storytimes in English happen every Fri., 10:30-11am, with upcoming events on Apr. 13, 20, and 27 and May 4 and 11. 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 is also offering Evening Storytimes on Tuesdays this spring from 6-6:30pm, with storytimes on Apr. 17 and 24 and May 1 and 8.

On Sat., Apr. 14, 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 Science Saturdays theme for April will be Optical Illusions. To add to the STEM fun that day, Math and Science Day will also be happening at the library on Sat., Apr. 14, 11:30am-5pm. The focus will be on hands-on math and science activities for school-aged children and their families.

The Start a Series Book Club will meet on Mon., Apr. 23, 4-5pm, and the book under discussion will be "Lumberjanes, Volume 1: Beware the Kitten Holy" by Noelle Stevenson. This book club is recommended for grades 5 and up, and each month will focus on discussing the first book in a series.

The Show and Tell Book Club for grades 1-3 meets on Sat., Apr. 21, from 1:30-2:15pm.

On Sat., Apr. 28, 1:30-2:15pm, the library will host The Way of the Monarch Puppet Show, which tells the story of the amazing life cycle and migration of monarchs. Also on Sat., Apr. 28, the Bee Real Bike will visit from 2:15-3:30pm, with bee education activities led by the MN Green Corps staff.

The library will ring with the magic of song as the Minnesota Opera presents Stories Sing! on Wed., May 2, 1-2pm as part of the Kaleidoscope performing arts series for preschoolers. Preschoolers and their families or caregivers are invited to join a professional opera singer during this interactive hour, as a book comes to life through the power of opera. On Wed., May 9, 1-2pm, Kaleidoscope presents Young Dance, an interactive program for preschoolers to discover the joy of movement through music, stories, and games. Registration is required for Young Dance and is open now; you can call the library at 651-642-0293 to sign up or stop in at the library.

The final Kaleidoscope program in May at the Hamline Midway Library will be the Lakeshore Players Theater group on Wed., May 16, 1-2pm. Sing songs, make puppets, and play as you explore cultures around the world, no pre-registration required.

Learning for adults

On Apr. 19, 6:30-7:45pm, Metropolitan State University social science professor Matt Filner and Clean Elections Minnesota member Gil Gustafson will present Elections and the State of Our Democracy. This non-partisan look at the current state of voting rights and representative democracy will focus on gerrymandering, the impact of big corporate money on elections, and the erosion of voting rights, and will include information all citizens should know to help protect our democracy. Light refreshments will be served at this event co-sponsored with the library by the Hamline Midway Library Association.

On Wed., Apr. 25, 1-3pm, Jody's Documentary Film Series will feature "The Principal Story," directed by Tod Lending and

David Mrazek. The film tells the story of two school principals, one in Springfield, the other in Chicago. Be front and center in the drama of two women who love being principals—no matter how tough the job gets. Come 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.

Also on Wed., Apr. 25, 6:30pm, the library presents More Than a Single Story: Visions of the Future For Men of Color. In this conversation, author David Mura will discuss with Art Coulson, Ezekiel Joubert, Shinaah That, and Michael Torres their views on how men of color see the future. How can men see the future for themselves and their communities? How do they critique and discard toxic models of masculinity and take into account intersectionality? Light refreshments will be served. This event is a co-presentation of the Friends of the St. Paul Public Li-

brary and the Hamline Midway Library Association.

The Novels at Night Book Club meets on Thur., Apr. 26, 6:30-7:30pm. This book club aimed at adult fiction enthusiasts will discuss "Dear Committee Members" by Julie Schumacher.

Seated Chair Yoga starts up again on Thur., May 3, 10:30-11:30am and continues on May 10, 17, and 24. All movement is done while seated or standing while using a chair for balance. The class is taught by Nancy Giguere from the Hamline Midway Elders Association.

On Sat., May 5, 1-2pm, the Saints and Sinners Book Club meets to discuss good mysteries. Contact volunteer G. Balter for book lists and more information at gerribalter@gmail.com or 651-224-5570.

The library will be closed on May 7 for an all-day staff development training.



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Local mom authors homeschooling book

Continued from page 2

with them?

- Be flexible. Things often don't go the way we expect them to, and kids grow and change. Being ready to change with them will help.
- Look for help. Join groups online and find local groups that suit you. Veteran homeschoolers are happy to offer advice. The Homeschool Adventures site is a great place to start—HSAdventures.org.

Oaks has volunteered for several years with Homeschool Adventures, a homeschool support group that offers information on group activities and events, plus field trips and homeschool groups. She also helps organize classes for homeschoolers, including chemistry labs taught by her husband Tom Anderson and math classes taught by Judy O'Neill.

Misconceptions

The biggest misconception out there about homeschoolers, according to Oaks, is that homeschoolers are hermits, doing school-at-home, and sitting around for eight hours at desks with nobody else to talk to or play with. That's not what it actually looks like, she said.

"We take classes, both with other homeschoolers and those that are open to anyone," remarked Oaks. "We go on field trips and take museum tours and have play-

groups. Our two oldest boys have been involved in theater productions for the past two years with our secular homeschool co-op, Planet Homeschool."

Another big misconception is that people homeschool only for religious reasons. "Plenty of people homeschool for educational reasons, health reasons, even social and emotional reasons," explained Oaks. "The homeschool community is seeing more and more people who are pulling one child out of school because school just isn't working for that child, even when it's working fine for the siblings."

School on the road

Kathy Oaks and family are among those who enjoy schooling on the go, commonly called "roadschooling," and Oaks recently presented a workshop on roadschooling during the Minnesota Homeschoolers Alliance annual convention.

Oaks learned to love travel with her parents, who owned a VW camper van and took the family camping all over the United States. They also lived abroad when her parents took sabbatical leaves from university.

"I had a great time taking road trips as a young adult, but was very intimidated to take small kids on the road," admitted Oaks. "It was my mother who proposed a road trip with just me and the boys (we had two at the time), and showed me that it wasn't as hard as I thought it would be."

The family has been taking



Kathy Oaks and her family at the Grand Canyon National Park. Left to right: Kathy Oaks, Tom Anderson, Simon, Benjamin, and Michael Anderson Oaks. They enjoy roadschooling throughout the country. (Photo submitted)

road trips every year since then, at least one and sometimes two.

"My best tip is not to overdo it," recommended Oaks. "Lots of people think about road trips and imagine 12-hour days and screaming kids. We often stop, checking out free rest areas, visitor information spots, and parks. We also stop early, only driving 250-350 miles a day, and get a hotel with a pool or a camping spot with hiking available."

The family takes advantage of their science museum membership, which gets them into other museums all over the country. "Last year we also made sure to get our fourth grader his free National Parks pass from everykidinapark.gov and took two trips to the four corners states

to see 17 national parks and monuments," said Oaks. "We were determined to get every ounce of value out of that card!"

Simon likes listening to music on trips, sleeping in different beds in hotel rooms, and trying new foods.

Benjamin observed, "It gives me the opportunity to see what life is like in other environments."

Michael agreed. "I like discovering all kinds of interesting places that I didn't know existed until we went there," he said.

Book available on Kindle

Oaks' book is currently available on Kindle and will be available in paperback by mid-May. A free ho-

meschooling resource kit for new homeschoolers, including road trip resources, is available online with every purchase. It includes her roadschooling talk transcript and video, plus car trip activities, a packing list, and a camping packing list.

More at HomeschoolersNotHermits.com/book.

Next up for Oaks will be the "Homeschoolers Are Not Hermits Online Resource Guide," a compilation of the family's favorite websites, YouTube channels, games, learning activities, and resources such as the science museum membership benefits, educator discounts, and the Every Kid In A Park pass.

Stop for Me campaign finds only 31% stop for pedestrians!

By JANE MCCLURE

Stop for Me, St. Paul's annual pedestrian safety campaign, is on the move. The 2018 effort gets underway in April, with events in neighborhoods around the city

through the summer and fall. This year's work will not only include the familiar banners and community activists promoting pedestrian safety awareness, but it will also include a Universi-

ty of Minnesota and Western Michigan University-led study of pedestrian crossings and ways to keep people safe. The effort, which St. Paul City Council members heard about Mar. 21, includes studies of selected crossings as well as research on driver behavior.

Stop for Me starts Apr. 18 with St. Paul Police Department officer training. The first enforcement activities are Apr. 18-May 1. This phase, in which motorists will receive warnings, is when school and media engagement ramps up. The follow-up phases, when motorists could receive tickets are June 4-18, Aug. 6-20 and Oct. 1-15. Neighborhood locations haven't been announced.

Last year St. Paul had 60 enforcement events.

Stop for Me is getting underway at the same time city Public Works staff are rolling ideas for a citywide pedestrian plan. A plan open house Mar. 22 at Arlington Hills Community Center drew a large crowd. One goal of the plan is to ensure that the City adds sidewalks in places where there are none and makes it safer for people to walk.

Stop for Me focuses on getting people safely across streets.

"High-visibility enforcement sends the messages that we care

about pedestrians," said Nichole Morris. It also sends a message that the city is serious about law enforcement. Morris is the director of the HumanFIRST Laboratory in the University of Minnesota Department of Mechanical Engineering. She describes her work as a mix of engineering and psychology.

This year's Stop for Me enforcement includes the option for police to evaluate circumstances and check a box indicating if a motorist is endangering life or property. Checking that box means the driver automatically goes to court and cannot simply pay the fine, said Sgt. Jeremy Ellison.

Morris reviewed recent research conducted at several St. Paul intersections without signals. Teams worked at the intersections, with one person crossing the street and a second making notes of driver behavior. A wide range of two-lane and four-lane streets were studied. Some have pedestrian refuges or medians and others don't.

In the recent tests vehicles did 1,581 crossings. The average test had about 67 vehicles per period, and 20 pedestrian crossings during that time. On average, only three in 10 vehicles stopped.

"We have a driving culture

problem in St. Paul," Morris said. "It requires a cultural solution." While education enforcement and street engineering can provide some help, Morris said safe driving needs to be reinforced through other cues. One idea is to post signs during Stop for Me, to indicate the percentage of drivers who stop for pedestrians.

That percentage was only 31 percent during the recent data collection, a statistic Morris said, "is nothing to smile about." Posting the percentage and encouraging drivers to change behavior "could become a community rallying cry. This is what St. Paul does. We stop for pedestrians."

Morris is not sure why St. Paul has such a low percentage of people who stop. One issue is four-lane streets or wider two-lane streets.

One dangerous situation, which has claimed the lives of some St. Paul pedestrians in recent years, is on four-lane streets. One motorist will stop for the pedestrian, while another flies through. Ellison said that's one reason why it is important to stop father back for pedestrians, to give them better sightlines.

Pedestrian fatalities and injuries represent a growing number of all traffic fatalities and injuries nationwide. Between 2004 and 2013, the percent of traffic deaths for pedestrians rose from 10.9 percent of the total to 14.5 percent.

The uptick in motor vehicle-pedestrian accidents is also being seen in St. Paul, said Morris. In 2015 the city had 146 vehicle-pedestrian crashes, with six being fatalities. 2016 had 188 crashes and four fatalities. 2017 ended with 193 crashes and three fatalities.

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Mosaic speaks volumes of how new Mayor sees St. Paul

By JAN WILLMS

In the mayor's office newly occupied by Melvin Carter III, a circular mosaic is soon going to find a home on one of its walls. Sent over by Mosaic on a Stick, a local business in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood, the mosaic spells out a message, "St. Paul For All Of Us."

A fitting message for St. Paul's first African American mayor and one of its youngest ever elected. Carter said he had met with Lori Greene at Mosaic on a Stick (1564 Lafond Ave.) and asked her to design a mosaic.

"Over the course of a year, we had conversations with people, and then asked them to take a piece of broken tile and put some glue on it and glue it on," Carter said. "This is the result of people in this city, who don't know each other, who speak different languages at home, who live in completely different parts of the city and in completely different walks of life." With all these diverse factors coming together, the broken pieces of tile created something beautiful, according to Carter. "That's our vision for this city," he added.

Carter, 38, comes from a family that understands the responsibilities and challenges of public service. His mother, Toni, has served on the school board and is currently a Ramsey County Commissioner. His father, Melvin Carter Jr, is a retired policeman. "My parents are probably my closest mentors, both of whom I see as incredible leaders for our city in different capacities. I think I learned from them at an early age just how inter-related people are."

Carter said his family would quote Paul Wellstone, who said, "We all do better when we all do better."

"That's a powerful phrase that could be a throwaway line if we don't realize we really are all inter-related," Carter continued. "We, in a community, have to be a whole together...and so I have learned that from them. Also, I have learned from my mother how to listen and to learn from people. That is something I have always admired about her. Any conversation I have ever seen her in, she has learned to listen and take some policy implication from it—something she can use in her work—and that's something I aspire to do."

Carter said there are a number of people he has learned from over the years, including former mayor Chris Coleman. "For a long time, I have learned a lot from him," he said.

One of the areas Carter wants to address is education, and he has put together a College Savings Plan. "We are working on cross sectors, the public sector with non-profit leaders, with higher education leaders of foundations and with private sector businesses in our community to create a college savings account that puts \$50 in the bank to start every child born in our community on the track to college," he said. "It's something I am really excited about."

Carter noted that research shows that if children from low to moderate income families have a small amount of money put away for college, anything from \$1 to \$500, they are more likely to go to college. "And when they do, they are four times more likely to graduate," Carter added. "So planting



St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter III with the mosaic designed by Lori Greene at Mosaic on a Stick, 1564 Lafond Ave. "Over the course of a year, we had conversations with people, and then asked them to take a piece of broken tile and put some glue on it and glue it on," Carter said. (Photo by Jan Willms)

those seeds are seeds that we expect to water in the form of a bright future for all of our children. And securing a bright future for all of our children, that's securing a bright future for our city."

Carter recalled a mentor who always says, "Instead of helping kids beat the odds, let's get to work in changing the odds." Carter reflected on disparities that he considers some of the worst in the nation, not just in education but in housing, healthcare, and wealth. He said they are all inter-related. "To change the odds means not just isolating one and saying we're going to work on the education gap while housing and health gaps remain," he said. "That won't actually get us out of where we are. The idea is to find something that works not just with the children, but with the families right now. I see the college savings account as an odds-transforming proposal that is also pretty cost-efficient."

Carter said he is also committed to signing a higher minimum wage into law this year. "We are going to raise the minimum wage in St. Paul so no one who works full-time will ever have to live in poverty. We are going to continue to push that forward."

Another commitment Carter made in his inaugural address was to revise use of force policies with the St. Paul police chief. "We

have done that now," Carter said. "Tension between citizens and the police force seems to be a national conversation we are having that is renewed over and over again with videos we see on social media and in the news, with unarmed black men being shot by police. It is really disturbing." He added that he believes a lot in the current police chief. "We are making progress that started before my election," he said. "Our police force has worked hard to build our practices and transparencies around 21st-century policing models."

"We are working hard through our Community First Public Safety Plan. Public safety isn't just about what happens after something bad occurs or after someone has called 911. It's about building safe environments; it's about connecting people to opportunities; it's about investing in the critical trust that has to exist between police officers and our neighbors."

Carter said his administration is already about three months into that. "We have already revised our police use of force policies, so we are all on the same page about when officers are and are not allowed to use force," Carter explained. "We did that in an unprecedented community engagement process....We spent two months gathering feedback, and the feedback we got subsequently changed

what the final product came out to be. So we're going to continue to train officers and push the ball on our Community First Public Safety strategy and work closely with the police department and neighbors to ensure we are on the same team to make our neighborhood safe."

Considering the national political scene, Carter said that right now he sees it as very adversarial. "It's one that a lot of people, myself included, have a real distaste for." He said he believes in the saying that all politics is local. He stressed the importance of how we take care of each other on a local level, how we ensure that every person in every part of our city has access to a great school, has a great job and an affordable home where they can live with dignity. "I think some of that can speak a lot more loudly than anything that happens in Washington, DC, does," he stated. He said the focus of Serve Saint Paul, a new initiative that will be launched at the upcoming State of the City Summit, is an invitation for residents to build sweat equity in the city through service. "It's so important that people have a need to be part of something right now," he said, "something that is not just watching Washington, DC, as it gets worse and worse."

Considering the years ahead of him as mayor, Carter said he

realizes there will be many challenges. "One of the greatest right now is to figure out how to harness all the energy that exists in this city. There is so much, and so many people who want to help." Carter said the mayor's office wants to do community service projects and offer opportunities for people to interact with each other.

"That's why we are doing a State of the City summit instead of just an address," he said. He said he hopes people will come and join the summit on Sat., Apr. 14 at Johnson High School from 9am to noon. "The hope is to hear not just from me but to really engage with city leaders about the direction we are taking this city," he added.

Carter paused for a moment. "It's in many ways the honor of a lifetime just to have the opportunity to sit in this office and to lead the city I grew up in," he said softly. "I find myself reflecting on the amazing conversations I have had with people who have held this office over the course of the years."

Carter said that St. Paul has every ingredient needed to move forward. "St. Paul is a thriving, vibrant, multilingual, diverse space." He said that's what is needed to start building a future.



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One organization helps those who recruit and manage volunteer staff

By STEPHANIE FOX

There was a time when charitable organizations could count on volunteers to put in long hours and stay at their posts for years. But, societal changes—women in the workplace, the increasing demands on time for families and for both young and older people—have drastically changed the face of reuniting volunteers. For people whose job it is to find and retain these people, the new reality is challenging.

MAVA, the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration is a statewide non-profit organization based at 970 Raymond Ave. Its mission is to educate and advocate for those whose job it is to find, recruit, and organize volunteers for non-profits, charitable organizations, and governmental entities. Their social mission, they say, is to create partnerships building on resources to serve all of Minnesota.

Currently, MAVA, the largest professional membership organization in the state representing professionals involved in volunteerism, works with a variety of non-profits and governmental organizations. They partner up with, among others, the City of St. Paul, Dakota and Hennepin Counties, the Girl Scouts of River Valley, Habitat for Humanity. Members say that it is a leading resource for people involved in volunteerism to exchange ideas and information.

"We have upwards of 700 members representing hundreds of groups," said Karmit Bulman, MAVA's director. "We are keeping them apprised of the new trends and giving them the tools to adjust their strategies accordingly."

But, she said, these professionals are working with some serious disadvantages.

"This is a hidden profession with a lack of job equity," said Bulman. "This is the same type of job as a corporation's development director, a program director, or a



Exec Dir, Karmit Bulman, Executive Director of Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration. (Photo submitted)

human resource director. But, they are paid much less. They are the first to go when there are budget cuts. They are often not included in the executive team or strategic planning."

"They are undervalued, and their work is often misunderstood," she said. "These people are a hidden resource, and they are treated like second-class workers even though they are the secret sauce that makes these organizations work."

MAVA is here to help. The mission of MAVA, she said, is to support and to train these experts to do their jobs better and to advance their profession in the face of inequity. Founded 16 years ago as a way to bring volunteer organizers together, to help them do their jobs better and to change the face of their own profession as well.

Last summer, MAVA began a study to find the roots and the results of the problems. CEOs of 464 organizations filled out a 22-question survey to learn more about the attitudes and problems faced by organizations that use volunteers.

Bulman found that one misperception from the CEOs is that volunteers are easy to recruit and retain. "But, they are not. Without volunteers, most of these entities could not achieve their missions," she said. "I interviewed 25 CEOs, and they said they feel that this study is game-changing."

Bulman said that there are things the leaders of organizations can do to support their staff members. She recommends that they let their recruiting staff know that they are valued, to give more responsibility to staff members, to involve them at higher levels throughout

the organizations, and to invest time and resources in their volunteers and staff.

"You need education, orientation, supervision, performance evaluation, and job descriptions. You need policy and procedures so the staff can do their work," she said.

The research examined why there is a lack of understanding about the nature of volunteers and who leads them. The results showed that this inequity ultimately undermined the effectiveness of nonprofits and government organizations.

Some of the training helps non-profit organizations adjust to the changes in volunteerism. "In the trade era," she said, "people would put in many hours a week. We still see that model, but the Millennial generation and even the Baby Boomers are now more likely to be short-term volunteers. Therefore, recruiters have to change their methods."

There is also a move to skill-based volunteers, she said. Organizations are not just looking for people to stuff envelopes. They want accountants, graphic designers, and other highly-skilled occupations.

Other changes, said Bulman, is the move toward inclusion and equity. Organizations that service certain groups need to include volunteers from those groups. MAVA's study showed that volunteers aren't just people of privilege, she said. One workshop offered by MAVA focuses on engaging volunteers from diverse and immigrant communities.

Through MAVA, organizations can also become certified Service Enterprises, operations that excel and bringing out the best from their volunteers. Service Enterprises are proven to be more adaptable, sustainable and capable of scaling their impact in comparison to peer organizations. Some of the 45 Minnesota based Service Enterprise organizations include the City of Roseville, Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly, Make a Wish, Catholic Charities and Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minnesota.

MAVA also runs workshops to teach volunteer leaders to advocate for themselves, to get organizational buy-in, learn workplace negotia-

tions and foster leadership.

MAVA has its own volunteers. Anvitaa Pattani has been working with MAVA's Strengthening Service Task Force, identifying sponsors and donors for the last few months. "I also spread the word about MAVA and raise awareness about the cause," she said.

Pattani moved to Minneapolis last December and thought that the best way to meet new people would be to get involved as a volunteer. "While looking for opportunities, I met quite a few people, one who worked with MAVA. That's how I got involved."

Nationally, the volunteer rate for adults older than 16-years is 24.9 percent. In Minnesota, the second best state for volunteers, the rate is 35.43 percent.

"I have not seen volunteerism done as passionately as it is done in Minnesota," she said. "Equally important is our community's reliance on volunteers. I wanted to be a part of that."

Ann Fosco, the Community Impact Director with Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly, one of MAVA's Service Enterprises, has worked with a number of non-profits and finds MAVA to be invaluable. "With the past three or four organizations I've worked with, I have made sure that they are members of MAVA," she said. "The opportunity to connect with other non-profits and to engage that community helps us better do our mission. We learn from each other; we share materials, ideas, and research. This wouldn't happen without MAVA."

The days of organizations automatically having a professional volunteer coordinator is fading, she said, so she has signed on as one of MAVA's trainers to help staff without this kind of experience understand their new assignments. "For some, this is an extra responsibility," she said. "We talk about the different things they can do to support their volunteers."

"Volunteers change the world," Bulman said, "from civil rights to the anti-gun violence movement. It's volunteers who put their passion into action. MAVA is here to support the people who find and guide those volunteers so they can do the work that needs to be done."

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Midway-based AuSM works to improve lives in Minnesota

Autism Society of Minnesota offers education, support groups, events, convention, and more

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

Under the helm of a new director, the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) is working to improve the lives of those on the spectrum and educate those around them.

Based at 2380 Wycliff St., AuSM was started by parents as a grassroots organization in 1971. The initial goals were to make sure their kids were understood and recognized in school and all facets of the community.

Today, that's expanded to represent a broad spectrum and a wide age range. In addition to providing education to parents, AuSM is also committed to connecting people to strategize about autism. Classes are offered for parents, teachers, emergency responders, doctors, business owners, community members and more. Last year, 2,200 people were trained by AuSM.

"We have a very broad and rich diversion of services," stated AuSM Executive Director Ellie Wilson. "We want to be there for families, but we also want to be out there changing the landscape."

"It's a great organization and why I'm trying to give back as a board member," stated Paul D'Arco, who has a son with autism.

Why work in this field?

Thirteen years ago, Wilson worked as a camp counselor at Camp Knutson in Cross Lake, MN. When the camp for kids with autism began, "it was a like a light bulb went off," recalled Wilson. "Everything has been about autism since that day."

She has considered going to medical school like her parents but changed her career plans to focus on autism, disabilities, and public health, learning everything she could about this disorder. As the pieces began to fit together, she realized her place belonged in advocacy work so that she could focus on the big picture.

Wilson was hired as the Executive Director of the Autism Society of Minnesota in October 2017.

"It's been an incredible privilege for me," she said.

What is autism anyway?

"Autism is what we call a developmental disability," observed Wilson. "You have it from the time you are born, and it affects how your brain develops."

She added, "All of us develop a little differently anyway. What seems to happen with autism is that development has even more variation."

Differences show up in how people process information and what their perceptions are.



Ellie Wilson was hired as the Autism Society of Minnesota's Executive Director in October 2017. "We're committed to being a good resource for people across the state," observed Wilson. "We're really a catch-all." (Photo submitted)

"Because of these differences, we see differences in behavior, specifically how people contribute and how they interact socially," said Wilson.

April is National Autism Month. Autism is estimated to occur in as many as 1 in 68 individuals, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Autism is five times more prevalent in boys than in girls and knows no racial, ethnic, or

social boundaries. Family income, lifestyle, and educational levels do not affect the chance of a child having autism.

Autism is a "spectrum disorder," which means that characteristics and level of support needed are unique to each autistic individual.

While more boys than girls are diagnosed with autism, that doesn't necessarily mean that fewer girls are affected, observed Wilson. In fact, it could be that girls are exhibiting the same signs, but because of what society expects girls to be (more shy, for example), it doesn't send up the same flags as with little boys who are supposed to be boisterous.

"Cultural biases are affecting the pattern," said Wilson.

Misconceptions

One of the oldest myths out there about autism is that people on the spectrum aren't interested in social interactions and prefer isolation, pointed out Wilson.

"I have never known anything to be less true," stated Wilson. "It's more like wanting to play a game, but not necessarily being able to understand the rules."

She pointed out that the behavior of those who aren't on the spectrum is dictated by social conventions that develop early. Children have a natural instinct to mimic others. Kids and adults on the autism spectrum can't do that.

"Everyone I know with au-

tism wants relationships, wants to be successful," said Wilson. "But it's like they're not reading the same playbook sometimes."

Another misconception about the disorder is that everybody needs to present the same way.

AuSM is working to promote more acceptance of the "neurodiversity" in people, or the idea that not everybody is the same.

"We all think and process in a different way. That's ok," said Wilson. "And often, that's good."

In some ways, autism can be an invisible disorder, pointed out D'Arco. His son has no real visible disability, so they've experienced some misunderstandings and negative comments by others.

D'Arco thinks that sometimes others don't give his son the opportunity or stretch him to the extent he could go because of his autism.

"It's really our job as parents, and his as he self-advocates, to give him opportunities," stated D'Arco.

He hopes that other people focus more on what his son can do rather than his disability.

What sets AuSM apart?

AuSM works to support people with autism throughout their lifespan. Many get diagnosed these days when they are between 3-5 years old, and many programs focus on early intervention and support up through

Continued on page 9



St. Paul Police Department members attend an autism training event led by AuSM in February 2018. (Photo submitted)



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Autism Society of Minnesota

Continued from page 8

age 20. There are fewer programs available as a person with autism ages.

"Adults on the spectrum have existed forever, but we just haven't paid attention until now," observed Wilson.

However, sometimes they go undiagnosed, and their issues aren't recognized by co-workers or families. "Employment issues are quite complex," pointed out Wilson. Workers with autism have a lot of intellect, perspective, and skills valuable to employers, but because of social differences can find it hard to get and keep a job.

Among the AuSM programs offered are support groups for those with autism, as well as caregivers and parents.

AuSM provides a community for those on the spectrum. They organize a Dakota County Book Club, Monthly Birthday Celebration and Game Night, Skillshops Tailored for Adults on the Spectrum, and Art On the Town. Other

sponsored activities include Minnesota Zoo Classes for Adults with Autism, Advanced Filmmaking with Film North, ComedySportz Improv excursions, On the Town Adventures, and more.

"We're committed to being a good resource for people across the state," observed Wilson.

AuSM is not a traditional service provider and doesn't focus on offering behavior or speech therapy. The organization does offer a small mental health department to facilitate things like support groups and to help people understand a diagnosis. But mostly AuSM helps connect folks to the many service providers in the state and isn't attached to one provider. Because of that, when they receive a call, "we're attuned to listening to individual needs," said Wilson, and providing a recommendation based on those.

What does AuSM offer?

There's so much on the website (aasm.org) that some find it hard to navigate. Wilson encourages people to look under the Who Are You tab to tailor information to their needs. Or, give the office a call 651-647-1083.

"We're really a catch-all," said Wilson.

AuSM hosts an annual walk, The Steps of Hope, on the first Sunday of each March. Over 1,000 people attended the indoor walk this past year. This free event is also a resource fair.

Their largest annual event is the Minnesota Autism Conference, now in its 23rd year. Set for Apr. 25-28, this year's conference features four keynote speakers, 35 breakout sessions, exhibitors, and the AuSM Bookstore.

New this year is Julia's AuSM Autism Celebration on Apr. 25, 3:30-5:30pm at the DoubleTree

by Hilton Hotel Minneapolis Park Place. All families are invited to meet Julia, Sesame Street's new character with autism, and to participate in lots of sensory-friendly activities offered by many organizations in the Twin Cities, including TPT, Walker Art Center, Children's Theatre Company, Children's Minnesota, and more.

This year, AuSM is offering nine sessions of summer camp at three different locations for students as young as seven and as old as 40. About 300 people experience camp sessions each summer. Some are overnight experiences while others are day camps.

In 1995, D'Arco's son Tony was diagnosed with autism. One of the first things he and his wife did was attend the AuSM annual convention. "It was a tremendous first step in dealing with autism," observed D'Arco.

When Tony was about eight,

he began attending summer camp in Cross Lake and continued that until about age 19.

"For him, it was the opportunity to have the traditional camp experience that any typical kid would have," said D'Arco. He enjoyed campfires, boating, swimming, fishing and more—learning social and practical skills. "He built some life-long relationships," D'Arco added.

"For Sharon and I, it was a vacation. When you have a kid with autism, it's a full-time job. It's difficult to have time for yourself." The couple sometimes went away themselves and used the time to recharge.

D'Arco joined the AuSM board four years ago and is currently board vice president. He's trying to give back to the organization that supported him and his family on their journey.

"They were life-changing experiences," said D'Arco.

Jennings students participate in the March for Our Lives Rally in Washington DC

By BILL ZIMNIEWICZ

Three students from Jennings Community School traveled to

Washington DC to attend the March for Our Lives Rally held on Sat., Mar. 24. The three students, Chavarious Harwell, Kemonie Roan and R'elle Robinson, were among hundreds of thousands who were present at this historical event.

People from across the nation were present to hear the speeches by young people from Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. There were other speakers too—all were young people. Not one adult approach the speakers' podium.

One articulate young girl who addressed the packed crowd was Naomi Wadler. She is just eleven years old but demonstrated that she is very determined to end gun violence.

Martin Luther King's granddaughter, Yolanda Renee King, who is just nine, also spoke and expressed she dreams of one day having a gun-free world.

Eighteen-year-old Douglas High School student Emma Gon-



Our Lives Rally Mar. 24 in Washington DC. (Photo submitted)

zalez's speech was highlighted by a six-and-a-half-minute moment of silence. Her classmate David Hogg appealed to a call for action for young to vote out politicians who are not committed to ending school shootings. Kemonie Roan, answering Hogg's suggestion, stated, "I'm not oldest enough to vote,

but when I can, I'm going to have prior knowledge on who supports what and who's allied with whom."

The Jennings Community School students believe that this was a life-changing experience and that their generation can have an effect to change the world for the better.

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Vertical Endeavors opens bouldering site in new Midway location

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Vertical Endeavors held a grand opening for their fourth Twin Cities indoor climbing facility on Mar. 17. Located at 2550 Wabash Ave., Vertical Endeavors - Twin Cities Bouldering (VETCB) will be one of the largest bouldering facilities in the country. The new gym has 18,000+ square feet of boulder climbing wall surface, a dedicated "crack wall" with a variety of crack widths, a climbing treadmill, a yoga studio, a pro shop, multiple training and fitness areas, state-of-the-art locker rooms, a community space (with fireplace), and a large exterior patio with in-floor heating.

The Grand Opening kicked off with a ribbon cutting celebration followed by free climbing, a membership sale, and an opportunity to meet the VETCB staff.

Facility manager Gabe Olson said, "We're aspiring to be a community gathering place. If you have a membership at one of our climbing gyms, you're welcome



Head climb team coach Alexandra "Alex" Johnson is a Hudson, WI native who has made numerous first female ascents. She is a five-time United States National Bouldering Champion and two-time Bouldering World Cup gold medalist. Johnson has been climbing professionally for more than a decade and will lead the Climbing Fitness Training and Competitive Team Training at VETCB. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

to use any of them. We have three other climbing gyms in the Twin Cities: in Uptown,

Bloomington, and East St. Paul, but this new location is the only one that focuses exclusively on bouldering."

Bouldering is rock climbing that's been stripped down to the bare essentials. It's rock climbing without ropes, but the person doing it isn't usually more than 20' off the ground. There's a thick, soft "crash pad" underneath the climber to cushion any falls. Bouldering makes up for its relative lack of vertical distance with technical difficulty. A boulder "problem"

is like a puzzle that you solve with your body. Using climbing techniques, upper and lower body strength, as well as finger strength, you try to reach the top of the boulder without falling.

With ceremonial ribbon cutting scissors in hand, Vertical Endeavors owner Nate Postma said, "We looked at a lot of sites before choosing this one. Located in an old warehouse space that borders Interstate 94 near the 280/University Avenue exit, the facility couldn't have better proximity to both Minneapolis and St. Paul. Ours is the most westerly address in St. Paul and the most easterly address in Minneapolis. The Twin Cities are divided down the middle of Emerald Street, which borders the edge of our parking lot."

"Bouldering is a very social sport," Postma explained. "Usually a bunch of friends come to boulder together, so we were intentional about having enough mat space underneath each of the boulder

climbs to accommodate groups. We gutted this building and, partnering with Yaeger Construction, worked for a year on the project. What we ended up with is something really special: soaring hardwood ceilings, skylights that run the length of the gym, and indoor bouldering challenges that are second to none."

VETCB offers a free pass for first-time climbers on the first Friday of each month from 6-9pm. Otherwise, a day pass costs \$18, a ten punch card costs \$135, month-to-month and annual memberships are available, and all gear can be rented or purchased on site. There are discount days for homeschool and scout groups, fitness training opportunities for youth and adults, and a range of yoga classes to choose from. VETCB is open Monday-Saturday from 10am-10pm (members only from 8-10am) and Sunday from 10am-6pm. Visit their website at www.vertical-endeavors.com for more information.



Vertical Endeavors Twin Cities Bouldering as seen from the front. An extensive parking lot is to the left. Easy access from the LRT is just two blocks to the north. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

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Tickets: \$30; \$10 students
Online: musicaloffering.org

SUNDIN SPECIAL EVENTS

DANCES FOR TWO PIANOS

Friday, April 6, 7:30 p.m.

Four concerts pianists from Korea present a program of music depicting various dances written for two pianos, including works by Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Infante, and Korean composer Young-Jo Lee.

Tickets: \$16; \$8 students
Online: uhands.bpt.me

CELLO SOLO DEBUT

Thursday, May 17, 7 p.m.

Cellist Patricia Ryan of the Artaria String Quartet presents a selection of chamber music.

Tickets: Goodwill offerings accepted



For more information, visit HAMLINE.EDU/SUNDIN.

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In Our Community

Monitor

Send us your news! When you submit your press release it will be considered for the next print edition of the Monitor. You can also go to our website, MonitorSaintPaul.com and enter your information in the online Event Calendar.

Wednesday church dinners resume

Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Ave., resumes its Wednesday night fellowship meals from 5:30-6:30pm, Apr. 18 and 25 and May 2, 9, 16 and 23. Suppers are free and open to all. A free-will offering is welcome.

Following the fellowship meal Apr. 18, the women's Bible study group concludes its current series on the Gospel of Mark beginning at 6:30pm.

Information on dinners and the Bible study is available by calling the church at 651-644-1421.

Nature Challenge scheduled at Como

On Apr. 28, anytime between 9am to 4pm, come and put your citizen science knowledge to work. Take part in the 2018 City Nature Challenge and help document what lives in the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom located in Como Park at 1221 Wynne Ave.

The City Nature Challenge is an international effort to find and document plants and wildlife in cities across the globe. It's a bioblitz-style competition where over 60 cities worldwide will compete to see who can make the most observations, find the most species, and engage the most people.

Human populations worldwide are increasingly concentrated in cities. But there is nature in every city and the best way to study it is by connecting community members and scientists through citizen science. The data that is collected through the website and mobile app iNaturalist can help us make the informed conservation decisions that will enable us to coexist sustainably with the plants and animals living in our neighborhoods.

The third annual City Nature Challenge calls on current and aspiring citizen scientists, nature and science fans, and people of all ages and science backgrounds to observe and submit pictures of plants, animals, and fungi to the iNaturalist website.

Como Woodland volunteers will be on hand for the 2018 City Nature Challenge at the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom on Apr. 28. Visit the Woodland to explore this diverse natural area and learn how to share your observations with scientists across the world.

Drum workshop scheduled Apr. 14

There will be a Co-ed Intro to Hand Drumming Workshop on Sat., Apr. 14, 10am-12pm at the Women's Drum Center, 2242 University Ave. W. This introduc-

tory workshop will teach basic techniques that make the drum come alive. Drums provided, and the fee is \$30. Get more info and register at www.womensdrum-center.org.

Local student receives Gold Award

Emma Wallisch, a senior at Como High School, recently finished her Gold Award for Girl Scouts. Her project involved working with Ms. Gardener's 4th-grade class at Como Elementary. Wallisch went into their classroom a few times a month and did science projects with the class. "The purpose of this project," she said, "was to promote engagement in STEM fields from a young age since in my science classes I have noticed that people are less interested than they were in elementary school. I did some research and realized that this disinterest begins in middle school, so I wanted to help kids see that science is fun from a younger age."

Some of the activities Wallisch did with the class included making slime, a walking water experiment, and a 3M Visiting Wizards demonstration about magnetism.

Central students organize march

Mar. 7 saw approximately 2000 students gather at Central High School, 275 Lexington Pkwy. N., to march over to the State Capitol. The police estimate that they met up with approximately 3000 other students to demonstrate against gun violence in the schools and to support gun control.

The event was planned after 17 students and staff were killed, and 17 more were wounded, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, on Feb. 14.

The march was conceived by a group of Central High School friends who came up with the idea while watching the news of the mass shooting at a birthday party.

The marchers did not call for any specific gun laws but were asking legislators to consider any and all proposals that would enhance safety at schools.

Como High student with gun arrested

A Como High School student was arrested on Mar. 21 after he was found in the school with a loaded handgun tucked into his waistband.

There was no report of a threat by the student, and no other Como School staff or students witnessed the search by of-

ficers after the student was called out of his classroom that was ongoing at the time.

A school staffer had earlier seen the student and told a school resource officer (SRO), who called for another officer to assist in conducting the search of the student.

The school did not go into lockdown, nor were any students evacuated during the incident. Automated calls went out to parents at 11:30am, and the school website posted information on the incident by 12:45pm the same day.

The student was not publicly identified because he is a minor. It was not clear whether or not the student gave a reason for having the handgun at school.

Spring Marketplace scheduled Apr. 21

The Hamline Church Spring Marketplace is 10am-4pm on Sat., Apr. 21 at Hamline Church United Methodist, 1514 Englewood Ave.

Come in and buy crafts and products from your favorite vendors, just in time for Mother's Day, and graduation gifts. Meet neighborhood business owners. Lunch will be available for purchase. A bread sale, used book sale, and Grandma's Attic are also planned.

Tables are still available for the Marketplace, so call 651-646-3473 (do not call the church) or email hamlinewomen@gmail.com if you are interested in being a vendor.

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.

La Leche League meets May 8

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

Emotions Anonymous meets Wednesdays

Do you often feel nervous, anx-

Raymond Auto Body reduces emissions



Raymond Auto Body, 1075 W. Pierce Butler Rte., voluntarily installed new equipment that will reduce harmful emissions, save money, and protect public health, with grants provided through the Clean Air Assistance Project.

The shop switched from a solvent-based paint system to a waterborne one. These solvents are also called Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs.) When these VOCs are released into the air, they mix with other pollutants and cause ground-level ozone, also known as smog. The result from the switch to waterborne systems is a 45-65 percent reduction in emissions.

The Clean Air Assistance Project is part of Clean Air Minnesota, a 15 year-old, public-private coalition of air quality leaders convened by Environmental Initiative who are working voluntarily and proactively to reduce air pollution.

ious, 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).

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.

Refugees need seasonal clothing

Jehovah Lutheran Church is gathering spring and summer clothing and household goods such as bedding, cookware, and dishes for refugees from the Congo.

The church partners with CEEDS, the Center for Employment and Education Development Services (CEEDS), which helps refugees from the African nation enduring years of civil war.

Donors can leave items at the church's Donation Center, indoors to the left of the entry at 1566 Thomas Ave. Bring items before or after worship at 10:15am on Sundays, or call the church at 651-644-1421 to set up

another drop off time.

Events at Merriam Park Library

The Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave, is planning several events in the coming weeks.

Family Storytimes are planned on Fridays, 10:30-11am. Spend time sharing stories, songs, and rhymes with your child while building a foundation for reading success. Preschoolers, toddlers, and babies are welcome!

"You Can Build IT!" is scheduled for Fridays, 3-4:30pm. Drop-in and build with a kit. Shadow puppets, Legos, PVC pipes or a surprise! For youth 6-11. Ages 8 and under need a grown-up to help.

Open Lab for Writers meets every Thursday, 10:30am-noon. There is no instructor. This is an opportunity to meet, discuss, or work on whatever you're writing. All styles welcome!

Tablet/Smartphone Help Clinics are scheduled for Thursdays and Saturdays, 11:30am-12:30pm. Help Clinics are for all tablets and smartphones. Bring your questions, problems, and concerns. If we can't answer the question, we'll find resources or organizations that can! No registration required.

Merriam Park Book Club meets Mon., Apr. 23, 6:30-7:30pm. The book this month is "The Forgotten Garden" by Kate Morton.

Continued on page 12

In Our Community

Continued from page 11

Como Park Carousel to open May 1

Cafesjian's Carousel opens for its 19th season in Como Park May 1. Its hours are May 1-Sept. 2, Tues.-Fri., 11am-4pm and Sat.-Sun., 11am-6pm; and Sept. 3-Oct. 31 on Sat.-Sun., 11am-4pm. Infants under age 1 ride free; tickets for all others are \$2.

The historic carousel that graced the Minnesota State Fair for 75 years (and was in downtown St. Paul for a few years) has operated since 2000 in a pavilion next to the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory and the new Visitor Center at Como Park.

The carousel's 68 horses and two chariots have been fully restored to the way they looked when new in 1914, and a fully restored band organ plays waltzes, marches and popular tunes. About 100,000 people ride the carousel each season.

The carousel is owned and

operated by Our Fair Carousel, the non-profit community group that saved it from being auctioned to collectors in 1988.

More volunteers are needed to operate the ride, assist riders, and sell tickets and merchandise. Volunteer shifts are 3 hours on weekdays (May 1-Labor Day) and 4 hours on weekends (May-Labor Day), 3 hours on weekends (Labor Day-Halloween) and volunteers work two or more shifts a month.

For information, or to volunteer, call 651-489-4628, email ourfaircarousel@outlook.com

and see their website at www.ourfaircarousel.org.

Citywide tree sale now underway

The annual tree sale is underway at Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County.

The sale offers 15 locally grown, hardy selections of trees, shrubs, roses, and vines. Prices range from \$30-\$75; all proceeds benefit parks and trails in the city and county. Go online at shop.friendsoftheparks.org/annual-tree-sale to place your order.

al-tree-sale to place your order.

If you truly want to eat locally, the selection includes options such as two blueberries, a thornless blackberry, a cherry tree, and a grapevine. New this year is columnar serviceberry, selected to fit smaller urban yards.

You can order for yourself, as a gift, or as a donation to a park. That final option is especially important when public land is losing so many trees—ash and otherwise. They're taking orders now through Apr. 20. Pick-up is May 5 at the county fairgrounds in Maplewood.

- Eight Como AP Macroeconomics students spent Mar. 13 at the Federal Reserve Bank in Minneapolis. Two teams of four students each represented Como in the Urban Regional Invitational Econ Challenge. Participants worked both individually and collaboratively to demonstrate their knowledge of economic concepts and theories, culminating with the top two teams going head to head in the quiz bowl final. Additionally, students enjoyed breakfast and lunch at "The Fed" and toured the facility, learning more about the Federal Reserve's role in our banking system.

With a total of 14 teams competing in the Urban Regional, Como's teams both finished in the top three. The team of Mario Sanchez-Lopez, Keleenah Yang, Eli Pattison and Jackson Kerr qualified for the quiz bowl and emerged as the regional champions. With the victory, they advanced to the State Econ Challenge on Apr. 11 at The Fed, against five other regional winners from across the state.

- Twenty-six seniors currently studying AP Government and AP Macroeconomics recently returned from a busy week of action and touring in Washington D.C. The participating students were part of the national Close Up program, which promotes education in democracy and uses the capital as a living classroom. Como student highlights included visiting the House of Representatives in session, the Supreme Court, Senate committee meetings, a U.S. Capitol tour, national monuments, memorials, Smithsonian Museums and prominent Washington neighborhoods.

The students had policy meetings on Capitol Hill with Senator Amy Klobuchar, Senator Tina Smith, Congresswoman Betty McCollum and Congressman Tim Walz. Throughout the week, Como students were also in policy discussions and simulations with peers from across the nation. The Como students examined issues from multiple perspectives, listening to alternative points of view, and developing a



News from Como Park High School

Compiled by ERIC ERICKSON, Social Studies Teacher

Econ Challenge, JROTC, Washington D.C., and AP Exams



Como AP Econ students Mario Sanchez-Lopez, Keleenah Yang, Eli Pattison and Jackson Kerr teamed up to win the Urban Regional Econ Challenge at the Federal Reserve and advance to state. (Photo courtesy of Paula Keller, Minnesota Council of Economic Education)

greater sense of political efficacy to make a difference in their community and country.

- Cadets in the Como Marine JROTC earned a spot in the National Academic Bowl Finals for JROTC programs. William Farley, Joseph Newman, Anderson Xiong and Francisco Dominguez advanced to the championships in Washington D.C. which will take place in June. This is the second consecutive year that a Como MJROTC team has achieved the opportunity to compete on the national level. The cadets diligently studied and prepared to try and master fundamental ACT and SAT knowledge that is base of the contest. It certainly served them well!

- The JROTC Drill Team also had success in its most recent competition, which was held in Sioux Falls, SD on Mar. 24. Como's cadets took home the championship trophy. A dozen schools from across the re-

gion participated in this annual event. It's the second time in school history that Como has earned the top prize.

- The AP Exam season is rapidly approaching. Hundreds of Como students will be studying and reviewing their class content in preparation for the Advanced Placement tests in May. Como will administer over AP 550 exams in total, to hundreds of students who are completing their college-level coursework

this academic year. AP courses are instructed by Como teachers and regulated by the AP College Board.

- St. Paul's Regional History Day event was held on Mar. 17 at Johnson High School. Como students earned the honor of advancing to the State History Day at the University of Minnesota in two different categories. For individual exhibits, state qualifiers were Caitlin Jones for the Integration of College Basketball, Emma Mueller for The Lavender Scare and Kayla Selbitschka for Hela Cells. For Group Website, Kao Nou Lee, Lee Thao and William Farley qualified for state with their work on the Secret War in Laos. Earning honorable mention at regions were Pany Thor, Trinh Nguyen and David Amobi for their website on the Kent State Massacre, and Roa Lay and Naw Sei for their group exhibit on the Chinese Exclusion Act.

- The Como Park High School Booster Club recently announced the 2017-2018 Grant Awardees from Como's extracurricular clubs, teams, and programs. Award winners were BEASTBot (Robotics), Cougar Journal, Close Up Washington D.C., Student Council, MCJROTC, Youth in

Government, Technovation Apps Club, Boys Soccer, Choir, Instrumental Music, and the Pan African Student Union.

Booster Club grants are made possible with funding from the Give to the Max campaign and Como fundraiser donations. Many thanks to the community members who support Como Park High School and the many wonderful programs that help serve students.

- Como hosted an Opportunity/Career Fair in the school commons during the lunch periods of Mar. 29. Twenty-five vendors came to promote programs, internships, scholarships, and potential career paths for Como students. Companies and organizations represented a wide range of the local economy and business community including Warners' Stellian, 3M, Renewal by Anderson, Aveda, Dunwoody College of Technology, the Hmong American Partnership and even the St. Paul Saints.

- Also on Mar. 29, during the last hour of the day before spring break commenced, the bleachers were packed inside the Como Gymnasium for the annual Student/Faculty Basketball Game. Students were highly entertained by the staff trying to play basketball against the squad of seniors representing the Class of 2018! The fun-filled event also included the halftime performance by the teacher dance troupe. To no one's surprise, the final score of the game favored the students, and everyone shared some laughs, starting spring break with a smile.

Hamline Elementary School

By JESSICA KOPP

Snelling Connection publishes winter edition

After months of hard work, fourth and fifth-grade student journalists at *Snelling Connection* published their winter edition in March. Under the direction of two Hamline University student mentors, ten student journalists wrote articles highlighting activities and people in our school communities.

Snelling Connection writers meet twice a week to learn the art of journalism including interviewing, research, writing, revision, and collaboration. Student journalists recently met with staff from The Oracle, Hamline University's school paper, to learn more about the inner-workings of a college paper and the value of a free press.

The *Snelling Connection* staff



Hamline Collaboration, all ten student journalists will attend the Young Author's Conference at Bethel University later this spring.

Find out more about *Snelling Connection* and other Hamline to Hamline Collaboration programs here: <https://www.spps.org/domain/14131> or contact the Collaboration at hhcollaboration@gmail.com.

Save the Dates!

- May 3 - STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) Fair
- May 8 - Hamline Collaboration Hike & Field Day @ Klas Field
- May 9 - Walk & Bike to School Day



Como AP Government students participating in the national Close Up program had policy meetings with their elected officials on Capitol Hill last month. The students are pictured with Senator Amy Klobuchar in the Hart Senate Office Building. (Photo by Klobuchar staff)

Como Community Council Corner

By MICHAEL KUCHTA, Executive Director

Eight open positions on the Como Community Board

You live here ... vote locally!

Residents of District 10 can vote on Apr. 17 for eight open positions on the Como Community Council Board. Any renter, homeowner, or other resident of District 10 who is age 18 or older, is eligible to vote. So are authorized representatives from a business or nonprofit located in District 10.

Up for election this year are vice-chair, treasurer, one representative from each of the four geographic sub-districts, and two at-large representatives. Elections take place at the beginning of the community council's annual meeting. The meeting is Tues., Apr. 17 at 7pm at the Como Park Streetcar Station, which is at the northeast corner of Lexington and Horton.

To find out more election details, including a rundown of candidates on the ballot, see the article on District 10's website: www.district10comopark.org. Under the council's bylaws, nominations also can be made from the floor on the night of the election.

Hostile vegetation is just the beginning

What you plant and where you plant it, the fencing you choose, and how you let your lights shine—all can be tactics to keep your property safer. Pick up advice in these areas and more during "Crime Prevention through Landscape Design," the next presentation in District 10's Sunday Series. Patty Lammers, crime prevention coordinator for the St. Paul Police, shares tips in natural surveillance, territorial reinforcement, access control, and even hostile vegetation.

This free presentation is scheduled for Sun., Apr. 15 from 1-2:30pm at the Como Park Streetcar Station.

Get your gardening off to a great start

The Como Community Seed Library holds its 2018 May Mosaic on Sat., May 5, 11am-2pm at the Como Park Streetcar Station, 1224 Lexington Pkwy. N. The free event is a great opportunity to swap seeds, plants, and perennials; swap stories; get advice from garden experts; and more. For details, see <https://comoseed savers.geopoi.us>.

A rain barrel is a bargain—advice is even better

District 10's Environment Committee and the Capitol Region Watershed District hold a Rain Barrel Workshop on Sat., May 19 from 1-3pm at the Twin Cities German Immersion School, 1031 Como Ave. Participants can get a rain barrel for the unheard of price of \$29 (plus tax), and learn how to set it up, so it works the way it's supposed to. (If you already have rain barrels at your home, you can show up and learn to use them correctly—for free.) Space is limited, so register now at www.bit.ly/d10-rainbarrels.

Fairgrounds drop-off is June 9

The annual Citywide Drop-Off at the State Fairgrounds is much earlier than usual in 2018: It's Sat., June 9 from 8am-1pm. The Drop-Off, organized by St. Paul and District 10, is a great chance to get rid of the junk you can't throw in the trash (for a reasonable price). If you volunteer to help staff the event, you can get rid of a load of your junk for free. Sign up to volunteer at www.district10comopark.org/volunteer_form.html

Other things to look forward to

- Sat., Apr. 21: Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Spring Clean-up, 9-11:30pm, Como Lakeside

Pavilion.

- Sat., Apr. 28: 2018 City Nature Challenge, 9am-4pm, Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom. Track what lives in the woodland, part of a competitive "bio-blitz" in 60 cities worldwide.

- Sun., June 3: Block Party in the Park, 4-7pm, Orchard Park, 875 W. Orchard Ave. Neighbors hanging out with neighbors. You don't have to live in South Como to join the fun.

- Sat., June 16: Como Neighborhood Garage Sale. By popular demand, it's later than usual this year (cross your fingers for better weather).

- Sat., June 23: Como Lake Rain Garden Workshop, 9am-noon., Streetcar Station. Capitol Region Watershed District leads a hands-on workshop to identify locations for the next wave of boulevard rain gardens in District 10. These are among the most cost-effective ways to collect and filter polluted street runoff before it reaches Como Lake. The best part is the selected locations will get rain gardens installed at no cost.

Upcoming District 10 Meetings

- Como Community Council Monthly Meeting: Tues., Apr. 17

- Environment Committee: Wed., Apr. 25

- Neighborhood Relations and Safety Committee: Tues., May 1

- Land Use Committee: Wed., May 2

All meetings begin at 7pm, typically 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.

St. Paul Art Crawl announces Midway/Como artist locations

The 2018 Spring St. Paul Art Crawl takes place throughout the city on Fri., Apr. 27, 6-10pm; Sat., Apr. 28, 12-8pm; and Sun., Apr. 29, 12-5pm. This is the 27th year for the Art Crawl, and over 400 artists are showing in 34 locations.

Here is a list of artists showing, and their locations, in the *Monitor* distribution area:

Burning Brothers Brewing, 1750 Thomas Ave.

Goblets of Fire, Hand-blown Glass Art
Holly Oehme, Fluid Abstract Art
Kasasagi Designs, Original, Beaded Jewelry & Accessories
Michael Egan, Functional Stoneware Pottery
Tooling-A- Round, Hand-turned Wood Accessories
Wendy Egan, Sterling Silver Jewelry
Wildlife-n-Wood, Wood Burning & Cribbage Boards

2281 Hampton Ave W, 2nd Floor

John Vieno, Abstract Paintings, Drawings & Sculpture

Carleton Artist Lofts, 2285 University Ave. W.

155C, The Studio Project, Hand-made Journals & Paintings
361C, Catherine Hedberg, Benches, Small Tables, Trays, Clocks
454C, Liz Lang, Acrylic Paintings
Dance Studio, Reiki Laughter

Carleton Artist Lofts, 2285 University Ave. W., Hallway

Stacie Braford, Multimedia painting/fiber art on wood & canvas
Megz Makes, Crochet Critters, Recycled Fiber Jewelry & Art
The Cover Lady, Designer Pillowcases & Jean Fashions
A.K. Hed Vincent, Abstract Expressionist Paintings
J Sterling, Engravings and Creations using Wood & more
Defiant Beauty Photography, Wall Art, Postcards, Greeting Cards
Dancing Jems by Brenda Paulson, Jewelry
Renee Petersen, Hand Beaded Jewelry
RobynsWear, Whimsical Sculpture for Costume and Home
Samantha Steine, Abstract Drawings/Paintings, Mixed Media
Katie Streitz, Acrylic Paint on Mixed Media
Valkyrie Design Studio, Multidisciplinary Collective
Zimbel Healing Dolls and Tarot, Healing Dolls & Tarot Readings
Blue Sage Bees, Artisan Soaps, Salves, & Beeswax Candles
Amelia Lawrence Books, Original LBTQQA Novel for Sale
Outa Torch Glasswerks, Lampworked Marbles
Mayfaire, Mixed Media
Lady of the Lake Silks, Hand-dyed Silk Scarves, Wraps, & Veils
Travis Wycislak, High-flow Acrylic Paintings

Dow Building, 2242 University Ave. W.

150, Kevin Caufield, Stone/Porcelain Pottery, Dinnerware
150, Pig's Eye Pottery, Functional Ceramics
217, Therese Abbott Pedersen, Acrylic/Mixed Media Painting
B-4, Erik Pearson, Paintings, Sculptures, Music & more!

Dow Building, 2242 University Ave. W., Dow Art Gallery

Richard Dillon, Studio Painter
Linda Ricklefs Baudry, Painting/Mixed Media
Robert Delutri, Theoretical Aesthetic Research™
Don Dickinson, Twin Cities Urban Watercolors
Kelly Doyle, Outdoor Photography & Digital Art
Mary Gross, Mixed Media, Life-sized Automaton Sculpture
Galina Haakenson, Landscapes in Acrylic Painting
Umbreen Hasan, Mixed Media, Fine Jewelry, Mosaics
Julie Kolze Sorensen, Enamel Glass Fused to Copper Relief
Patrick Augustine, Oil Painting, Watercolor, Framed Prints
Denise Minkler Marych, Oil Paintings on Copper
Nathan Renken, Abstract
Andrew Sjodin, Paintings and Drawings
Linda Snouffer, Botanical Printmaker
Marcia Söderman, Abstract Acrylic & Watercolor Painting

Midway Triangle Building, 2500 University Ave. W.

A3, Rock Johnsen, Functional Ceramics, Crystalline Glazes
A9, John McLoone, Handcrafted Furnishings & Relief Carvings
B2, Matthew G.G. Holm, Large-scale Abstract Acrylic Paintings
B2, DeAnne L Parks, 2D & 3D Art on Hope and Community
B2, Greta Sandquist, Acrylic Paintings, Prints, & Jewelry
C2, JHDesigns * Judy Hornbacher, Coats & Jackets
C7, Wendy S. McCarty, Oil Painting
E2, Zahnworks Studio, Bronze Sculpture, Prints & Photography
E5, Artsy Images Fine Art Photography, Fine Art Nudes & Nature
F5, Marisa Martinez Jewelry, Metal & Stone Artisan Jewelry
F5, Amy Sabatier Designs, Metalsmith/Adventure Jewelry

Vandalia Tower, Vandalia Glassworks, 550 Vandalia St.

Bryce Borkhuis, Hand-blown Glass
Steven Weagel, Hand-blown Glass with Applied Color

Front Avenue Pottery, 895 Front Ave.

Andrew S. Howard Inc., Wheel-thrown Stoneware
Brett Monahan Pottery, Functional, Wheel-thrown Porcelain
Fiber Art by Miranda, Functional & Decorative Modern Macrame
Front Avenue Pottery and Tile Co., Functional Stoneware
Jenny Levernier / jmml designs, Sterling Silver & Stone Jewelry
Jim Gindorff Landscape Photography
Ryan Ball Pottery, MN-made, Wheel-thrown, Functional Pottery

Interact Center, 1860 W. Minnehaha Ave.

Art in all mediums and styles from over 60+ visual artists.
Make and take activities and more. Fun for the whole family!

Prior Affair, 756 Prior Ave. N.

Attend the 3rd Art and Craft show as they exhibit and support over 50 local artists.

Hamline University, 1495 W. Taylor Ave.

There are 4 artists in the pottery studio.

Hamline Midway Coalition

By MELISSA CORTES, Community Organizer

An Update from the Hamline Midway Coalition

A new Community Engagement Committee

Are you passionate about Outreach and Community Engagement? Do you feel that we can do more as a community? Then, this may be the spot for you!

Hamline Midway Coalition is looking for people with a passion for the Midway and the desire to work toward connecting with, and in, our community. The hope is that those who respond would be willing to work with our neighbors, businesses, and city on the ever-present issues in and around our coalition area. We are currently accepting applications for committee members.

Please send your interest to communityengagement@hamlinemidway.org or visit www.hamlinemidway.org/commu-

nityengagementcommittee for more information.

(NOTE: No meeting date has been set. If you are interested in the work of this committee and want to stay in the loop, please send us your name and email to be added to our newsletter.)

Environment Committee

The Environment Committee members are currently working to respond to the state legislature's exemption bills for sustainable-to-go packaging and plastic bag ban. This bill would preempt all Minnesota cities from passing their own ordinances on any single-use bag free and recyclable, reusable, or compostable-to-go food containers. Not only is this a step backward for the environment and human health, but also for residents to engage in the democratic process with their

local representatives.

Also, the Environment Committee members have committed to mobilizing for stormwater adopt-a-drain community engagement—see www.adopt-a-drain.org. If you'd like to participate or want to weigh in on this work, contact environment@hamlinemidway.org.

Garage Sale

Mark your calendars for Hamline Midway Coalition's annual neighborhood Garage Sale Weekend, May 4-6, 8am-3pm. With this event gaining popularity every year, we have decided to make it a Garage Sale Weekend, for three days, May 4-6! To sign up visit www.hamlinemidway.org/garagesale or visit us in person in the Hamline Midway Library at 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave.

It's an all-Monitor area agenda at the St. Paul Planning Commission zoning committee at 3:30pm, Thur., Apr. 12 at City Hall.

A rezoning from traditional neighborhoods (TN) 2 to TN3 is eyed for 2330 Long Ave., at the southwest corner of Long and Bradford avenues, in South St. Anthony Park. The developer is 842 Ray LLC. The change in zoning would allow for a higher-density building to be erected there. The area is occupied by townhouses and some single-family homes.

A second request is for Larpenteur Crossing at 1330 Larpenteur Ave. and 1672 Hamline Ave. Sarin Development is seeking a conditional use permit for drive-through sales, with conditions. The project would mean redevelopment for the corner anchored for many years by Mac's Fish and Chips and Midtown Cleaners.

The third request is for BP Gas and Convenience, 1347 University Ave., where a conditional use permit is sought for replacement of a convenience store and car wash. They are seeking modification of maximum setback requirements so that pump islands may be placed between the building and Hamline; and a variance of minimum floor area ratio.

Changes for old Baker School?

Changes are coming to the former Baker School property in the West Midway. The St. Paul Planning commission Apr. 6 recommended rezoning the property for traditional neighborhoods use. That request goes on to the St. Paul City Council for final approval. No date has been set.

Baker East Partners applied for 821 Raymond Ave. and 2421 Territorial Road. The properties are currently zoned for commercial and parking uses. It's a larger property of more than 74,000 square feet.

The application states that while there are no changes planned for the school-turned-offices, TN3 neighborhood zoning would accommodate potential future changes. The zoning change would be consistent with zoning changes made nearby, in conjunction with Green Line light rail redevelopment. Several new and building conversion projects are in the area.

Baker School was built in 1890 and added onto in 1910. It served as a school into the 1970s

Development Roundup

By JANE MCCLURE

Three Midway-area redevelopment projects eyed

and was later converted to office and restaurant use. Architects Ron Ankeny and Duane Kell successfully bid on the school in the 1980s and paid \$60,000 for it, according to past newspaper accounts. They rezoned the property in 1981. Ankeny and Kell also converted the former St. Paul Fire Station 14 on North Snelling Ave. into office uses.

Humane Society buys warehouse on Kasota Ave.

The Animal Humane Society has purchased a multi-tenant warehouse at 2565-2575 Kasota Ave. The purchase took place last month for \$7.3 million. The warehouse is in a largely industrial area.

Long-term plans call for a shelter at that location. The Animal Humane Society has facilities in St. Paul at 1115 Beulah Lane, and in Coon Rapids, Woodbury and Golden Valley. Its headquarters are in Golden Valley.

Met Council announces grants

St. Paul projects met mixed results in the most recent round of Metropolitan Council grants. The St. Paul City Council in March accepted several grant applications.

The projects approved recently were submitted in late 2017. The Ain Dah Yung housing for homeless youth on Sherburne Ave. in Frogtown was awarded \$350,000 in Metropolitan Council Livable Communities Demonstration Account grant funds.

But a request for 700 Emerald St. wasn't approved. Nor did the Emerald Street project win Tax Base Revitalization Account (TBRA) Program funding. Other area projects shut out from TBRA were the new Junior Achievement headquarters at 1745 University and Willow Reserve development projects on Maryland Ave.

The Ain Dah Yung project was among half a dozen in St. Paul that were approved. More than a dozen projects had been submitted.

Neighborhood STAR changes encourage business ideas

Efforts to promote more business applications for St. Paul's Neighborhood sales tax revitalization (STAR) program appear to be paying off. The Neighborhood STAR Board's deliberations are underway, with 42 projects competing. Of those, 29 are business-related requests. Decisions will be made later this year by the St. Paul City Council.

The uptick is being attributed to changes in the program guidelines to encourage more small business development. "We've seen more business apply," said Bruce Corrie, director of the city's Department of Planning and Economic Development.

The number of applications is up ten from 2017. The requests this spring total \$5,470,694. Of those, \$3,029,434 are in grants and \$2,441,261 are in loans. Matches proposed total \$28,493,242. The program typically has less than \$2 million available.

Changes approved in time for the 2018 cycle allow small for-profit businesses to apply for 100 percent grant funding. Priority is provided to proposals filling vacant commercial storefront space. The city has also eliminated the need for matching dollars on the first \$50,000 of a loan request. Larger for-profit entities can still be eligible to apply for a loan or loan/grant combination. Grant requests still require a \$1 to \$1 match.

Several Monitor area businesses are in the chase for funding.

Black Hart Properties, owner of Town House at 1415 University Ave., applied for a \$50,000 grant to make restroom accessibility improvements, and facade work. A \$51,770 match is proposed.

Can Can Wonderland, 755 N. Prior Ave., is asking for a \$44,976 loan to make lighting improvements for the entertainment venue. No match is proposed.

Sabrina's Café and Deli, 518

N. Snelling Ave., applied for a \$10,000 grant with \$10,000 match. This would help pay for a new awning and interior work.

Nearby at 641 N. Snelling Ave., the Little Africa Ready for Soccer 2019 Project seeks a \$42,000 grant and \$28,000 loan for improvements to that building. A \$42,000 match is proposed.

Snelling Coffee, 638 N. Snelling Ave., seeks a \$10,000 grant and a \$10,000 loan, to improve its parking lot, signage and make other improvements. A \$10,000 match is proposed.

The guild842 co-working space at 842 Raymond Ave. applied for a \$50,000 grant and a \$50,000 loan, with \$50,000 match, to make improvements to a coworking space.

Jobs Foundation, which runs the Tech Dump and Tech Discounts businesses on Prior Ave., is seeking a \$130,000 grant and \$170,000 loan with a \$3.42 million match to make improvements at 860 Vandalia Ave.

Three groups are seeking city-wide program funds to encourage ethnic business development. The African Development Center seeks a \$100,000 grant and a \$300,000 loan, with a \$400,000 match, for a small business revolving loan fund. African Economic Development Solutions seeks a \$200,000 grant with \$305,000 match to provide loans for African entrepreneurs. Asian Economic Development Association seeks a \$250,000 grant with \$250,000 match for small business improvement loans.

One of the area's two nonbusiness applications is from Hamline Midway Coalition, which is seeking a \$32,500 grant, with \$32,500 match, for a handball court at Clayland Park. The park is at 901 N. Fairview Ave.

The other is St. Paul Fellowship, 868 Sherburne Ave., which seeks a \$23,500 loan to make interior and exterior improvements. This application is made with Frogtown Neighborhood Association. A

\$23,500 match is proposed.

Snelling-Selby area eyed for two developments

More change is coming to the neighborhoods around Selby and Snelling avenues, as the iconic O'Gara's Bar and Grill makes way for a new mixed-use development later this year. More than 100 people attended the Mar. 19 Union Park District Council land use committee meeting to discuss ideas for redevelopment. If all goes as planned, work could start in the fall and new development could open in spring 2020.

Also, Dunkin' Donuts and Red's Savoy Pizza could open their doors at Snelling and Hague avenues, where a Dairy Queen stood for more than 65 years. Grand Real Estate Advisors and Collage Architects presented preliminary plans Mar. 19. That project could also move ahead later this year.

Committee members and neighborhood residents have mixed feelings about the developments. Some wanted to see mixed-use development on the old DQ site at 143 N. Snelling Ave. Others lament losing the longtime commercial buildings that make up the O'Gara's complex. There are also fears about both developments increasing traffic and parking.

A new, smaller O'Gara's with four stories of apartments above it would be the biggest change for a neighborhood that saw 2.3 acres at the northeast corner of Selby and Snelling redeveloped a few years ago. Residents and business owners are braced for more change as a Major League Soccer stadium is preparing for a 2019 opening, just a few blocks to the north.

O'Gara's owner Dan O'Gara and Tony Barranco of Ryan Companies said they're mindful of the changes the area has been through in recent years. They told those present Mar. 19 that they want to work with the community to mitigate impacts of redevelopment.

Redevelopment is a way to ensure that O'Gara's can continue to operate in the future, O'Gara said. He and his wife Kris are third-generation owners of the business, which got its start in 1941. "We need to do something drastic to stay here."

North Snelling fire station to be converted to a single-family home

By JANE MCCLURE

It could become St. Paul's hottest new residence. A decommissioned firehouse at 1290 N. Snelling Ave. could be converted into a single-family home, with variances approved Mar. 13 by the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).

Most of the work planned is inside the building, to convert the old firehouse into loft-style housing. And no, there is no longer a fire pole for the new homeowners to slide down, much to the disappointment of some BZA members.

The only exterior work is to add an attached three-vehicle garage at the rear of the building.

The conversion does require several variances to bring the building into compliance with single-family residential standards. A front yard setback of 30 feet is required, and a 9.7-foot setback is proposed, for a



1290 N. Snelling Ave. was a fire station until 1976. (Internet photo)

variance if 20.3 feet. A side yard setback of four feet is required, and 2.9 feet is proposed, for a variance of 1.1 feet. A minimum rear yard setback of 25 feet is required, and a setback of 7.8 feet is proposed for a variance

request of 17.2 feet. The maximum lot coverage is 35 percent of the lot and the current firehouse and proposed garage would cover 42 percent. That is a variance from 2,342 square feet to 2,838 square feet for a vari-

ance of 496 square feet or seven percent.

The zoning code allows a maximum building height of up to 30 feet for single-family homes. The existing building height to the top of the old hose tower is 33.4 feet for a variance of 3.6 feet. The zoning code also requires that a primary entrance for the home be delineated with features such as an overhang or recessed entry. The old fire hall doesn't meet these requirements, so that requires a sixth variance.

The William Turner family is working with architect and area resident Tom Betti to convert the old fire hall into a single-family home. They told the BZA of their plans to create a unique residence in the old fire hall. The building will retain many of its remaining exterior features while becoming a home inside.

The fire station was built in 1922. It housed St. Paul Fire De-

partment companies until 1978 when it was replaced with a new fire hall on Como Ave.

The building was used for fire department storage for several years and then became part of the Sholom Home nursing home and senior care campus. Sholom used the old fire hall building for storage for many years before it left its longtime home at 1544 Midway Pkwy. in 2009. The Sholom campus is now on West 7th St.

Various developers have looked at renovating the former nursing home, but none of the proposals have materialized. The larger Midway Parkway complex faces an uncertain future. The old fire hall has also been eyed by several prospective office and residential users, but none of the past ideas ever got to City Hall.

The BZA decision has the support of Como Community Council.

Hamline Midway Library mosaic mural is made by many hands

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

More than 100 people gathered at the Hamline Midway Library, 1558 W Minnehaha Ave., Mar. 22-24 to create a colorful tile mural designed by community mosaic artist Lori Greene. Once complete, the 3' X 7' mural will be permanently attached to the library's east-facing fireplace wall.

Library manager Shelly Hawkins said, "The Hamline Library is a community library in every sense of the word. We wanted to fund a community engagement project that would be accessible to everybody. The Hamline Midway Coalition donated funds to hire Lori Greene; the Midway Men's Club contributed, and our library had money for the project also. The theme of the mural is nature in the urban world."

During February, library patrons were asked for their input about how to portray nature in the city. They contributed words, photos, and drawings, and Greene translated all that information into an urban landscape outlined on mesh backing. She cut the material into several smaller sections, and mosaic makers as young as three helped to glue cut pieces of tile onto it—making bees, dragonflies, rabbits, birds, and plants come to life.



More than 100 participants helped build the mosaic one tile at a time, over the course of three workshop days. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

"We're what's called a Nature Smart Library," Hawkins explained, "so this project felt like a natural extension of our library's values. Our philosophy is that you can learn about nature wherever you are. As part of our Nature Smart mission, we've assembled several backpacks for families to check out. The backpacks contain books, toys, equipment, and other supplies on a variety of themes including birds, trees, frogs, urban animals, and more. Sun Ray, St.

Anthony, Riverview, and Merriam Park are also participating Nature Smart Libraries."

Melissa Cortez is the community organizer/communications specialist with the Hamline Midway Coalition, one of the project partners. "Shelly and I worked together on this project," she said. "Shelly had done something similar when she was at another St. Paul library. She knew it would be a great way for staff to interact with the Hamline Library patrons, and for the pa-

trons to connect with each other in ways that they wouldn't normally get to do. You could see that happening at the work tables during the mosaic workshops: there were teens working alongside senior citizens and little kids, and people were sharing their ideas about how everything was coming together."

"As the Hamline Midway Coalition community organizer," Cortez said, "my part in this project was to get input from community groups like the Hamline Midway

Elders, families using the nearby Hancock Recreation Center, neighborhood businesses, staff, parents, and students at Hamline Elementary School. We recently partnered with Hamline Elementary School on their fence weaving project along Snelling Avenue, so neighbors were already excited about participating in a public art project. The inspiration for what should be included in the mosaic came from all of them."

Community mosaic artist Lori Green lives in the Hamline Midway neighborhood and her business, Mosaic on a Stick, is there too at 1564 Lafond Ave. She said, "I've done more community art projects than I can even count any more, and it's amazing—they always work. I made a decision early on not to be at the library during the building days. After all the ideas came in, I laid out how the project would flow. I don't believe in micro-managing. With community art-making, you have to trust the process and give people a chance to figure things out. They create a community within themselves, rather than relying on being told what to do. That's a beautiful thing!"

The mosaic mural should be up and ready for viewing by the end of April.

Classifieds

Monitor

Want ads must be received by the Monitor by April 30 for the May 10 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 Apr. 30 for the May 10 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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Como family happy with the decision to go with solar power

By JAN WILLMS

Como resident Nick Perez and his wife were looking for ways to improve the environment and also for different energy profits. "We always try to be conscientious about environmental concerns," Perez said, "but we also wanted to see where we could get the most bang for our buck."

He said they started looking at all the solar energy companies in the city and ended up selecting All Energy Solar.

"With the political climate we are in, we knew there might be a limited time we could get the maximum amount of rebates," Perez noted. "If we were going to do it, we needed to do it now."

He got on the phone, called the company and said he would like to get an estimate done.

"They looked at our house online, the slant of our roof, the amount of tree coverage, and gave us an estimate," Perez continued. He said he had already cut down some trees, so he knew he had more sunlight coverage.

"We set up an appointment for a representative to come out, and I was rushing around, picking up laundry," Perez said with a chuckle. "We have three kids, and there was laundry all over."

As he answered the knock at the door, Perez was pleasantly surprised. The woman who came out from All Energy Solar was someone Perez had attended high school with 20 years earlier. "St. Small is what we call that," Perez said. "She did a quick estimate and said we could probably compromise our electricity by 43 percent, and that



Como resident Nick Perez takes a look at the app that helps him monitor the energy usage in his home after the installation of solar energy on the garage roof. (Photo by Jan Willms)

was just putting solar panels on our south-facing garage roof." They decided to go ahead with a full inspection, go through all the steps and get the project started.

Perez said he did put on a new roof because to install solar panels the roof must be in good condition.

The project started at the end of last summer, and by Dec. 17 Xcel was at the Perez residence doing a test. "The guy scraped a little snow off the roof, went up there and found we were making energy," Perez said.

Perez has 14 solar panels on his garage, which is about 80 feet from his house.

"They dug up my backyard and put underground piping from

my house to the garage. They added a couple of breakers to my breaker box," Perez said. "That process took two weeks. Everything was almost 100 percent seamless."

Perez said only one minor glitch happened, which was not the mistake of the power company. "One day my refrigerator was not working because one of the wires got disconnected. It was replaced, and we were done."

Perez said one of the main benefits of going solar was supplementing some of the electricity the family uses. "My house is mainly electric," he said. "Adding more electricity makes sense." He said that the process removes a certain amount of carbon from the ozone

and at the same time saves money.

"You are under construction for a time, and you have to have your permits pulled. Everything had to be 100 percent up to 2018 code. I had my basement renovated, so I knew my house was up to code."

He said it was possible the panels could be an eyesore, depending on where they are located. "Since ours are on the back end of our alley, you don't even see them."

Perez said he is in a 10-year contract with the energy company, which could be affected if he wants to make changes or move. "That could be stressful, but you get rebates every year," he added.

Perez said tree coverage is a big factor in installing the solar panels, but once they are up on the roof, the sky's the limit.

Perez said his total project cost \$17,000, but with the rebates he will get, it only cost him \$7,000.

"Over ten years, that's not that much," he noted. "Winter is my high energy time," he explained. He said the summer is when money is made on energy savings. But he has already started saving on his energy bills. "This winter I have used \$500 worth of energy, but bought only \$414 worth, so I have saved \$85," he said.

Perez said he also uses apps to track his energy usage and savings. "One of the greatest apps I have ever seen is a website All Energy Solar connected us with," he said. "I can see exactly how much energy is being used in my home. I can see when the kids put something in the microwave."

Perez said he found another

app on his own that lets him measure the amount of energy he makes through using the solar panels. For example, in January he made over 200-kilowatt hours.

"It all comes down to how the sun hits your roof," he said. "You need a south-facing angle where the sun comes in. And your roof needs to be up to date." However, even if your roof is not at the right angle, solar energy companies can work around that, placing them in yards or on carports.

"There are also programs where they do a bunch of solar panels out in a field. They call them farmings, and the panels absorb the sun all day," Perez said.

He said that employing solar panels for energy use can change one's lifestyle. "You make yourself conscious of it," he claimed. "It makes you think about how much energy you are actually using. I can check my app and see how much I used, how much I made and how much I netted. It has changed how we live in our house." He said the family tries to unplug computers or toasters or television sets when they are not in use.

Perez said he was very pleased with the responsiveness of the solar energy company he used. He liked the ability to take power into his own hands. "I'm an off the grid kind of person, and being bound to Xcel is just another thing that grabs you," he said. "You can try to save some money."

Getting other people to try and use solar energy is a goal Perez strives for. "I can give the elevator speech in 30 seconds as to why they should do it," he said.



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