

# monitor

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



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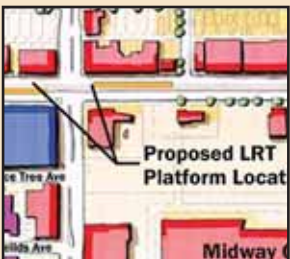
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# Central Girls win 2nd consecutive State Basketball Title



(At left) the Central girl's basketball team celebrated its second consecutive state championship after defeating Minneapolis-South 49-44 at the Minneapolis Target Center on March 15. (At top) Georgie Jones leaps for the tipoff of the second-round state tournament game against Eastview. (Photos by Tom Conlon)

By TOM CONLON

With 7 seconds remaining in the game, a silent smile broke out on the normally-pokerfaced Willie Taylor, coach of Central High School's girl's basketball team, as player Theairra Taylor was fouled on a rebound and sunk a free-throw, bringing the score to 49-44 over the Minneapolis South Tigers.

After losing twice to the Tigers during the 2007-08 season, including the Twin Cities Championship game 82-73 on Feb. 23rd, the Central Minutemen defended their 4AAAA state championship title by defeating South 49-44 at Minneapolis' Target Center. In the same arena, against the same opponent, Central won last year's title over the Tigers 81-63. Central finished the season at 28-4; South with a 30-2 win-loss record.

"Even sweeter than the win itself, was that the talking heads said we couldn't win a back-to-back championship, and certainly not with this year's team," Coach Taylor said. "We were seeded 3rd going into the tournament, and some even thought that was too high a ranking for us. I knew our team was capable of winning it all if we worked hard and avoided costly mistakes against teams that

easily could have beaten us along the way. I'm really proud for the girls."

The rest is history.

After assessing game strategy during halftime, when Central was trailing South 19-18, Taylor paused for a moment, then spoke from the heart. "For you seniors, this is the last game of your high school career," he said. "You know you are a capable team and can go out on a high if you give this your best effort. We can win this. Let's go!"

Central dominated the start

of the game, racking up a 12-2 lead with 11:56 in the first half. During the second half, a determined South team opened their lead to 24-33 with 13:24 left. But the Minutemen grinded their way back with a 12-1 run, taking the lead for good with one minute left in the game with crucial shots by Kyana "Bitty" Johnson, Kiara Buford and Theairra Taylor and good defensive play from the entire team. The game was tied 4 times and changed leads 5 times.

"This year we had a bunch of

hard working girls who wanted to win and show that we were still a good team without the star guard Angel Robinson (now playing for Marquette University)," said senior forward Megan Howard. "I had butterflies in my stomach stepping onto mid-court for the jump ball at the beginning of each tournament game. But then amazing things happened. We took a big lead opening up against South in the championship game, and it almost seemed too good to be true. And, sure enough, they came back. But I also knew if we played our best basketball, we would win."

"The state tournament is the most amazing experience ever — the whole team comes together and we just get to have fun and play basketball," said senior forward Kiara Buford. "But we'd lost to South twice and to Centennial and a Long Beach, California team, and we may have questioned if we could ever match last year's accomplishments."

Senior center Georgie Jones said she experienced the turning point when the team beat Woodbury in the Section Finals. "Everyone was talking on defense, playing good offense, and scoring — it



Freshman basketball team member Kaylyn Roberts displays her custom-made M&M cookie jacket featuring the numbers of the varsity players and the "ingredients" of the successful team: teamwork, passion, dedication and confidence.

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# monitor

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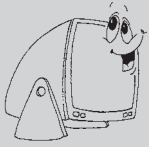
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# Monitor in a Minute

## Asian Cuisine must shut its doors

A Rice Street restaurant with a troubled past has had all of its licenses revoked. Asian Cuisine, 945 Rice St., must shut its doors after 18 months of problems.

The closing has the support of District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council and city licensing staff. The city had documented numerous license violations, according to Assistant City Attorney Rachel Tierney.

For several years Asian Cuisine operated as a restaurant, enjoying a bustling lunch crowd and a popular buffet. But city officials contended that recently Asian Cuisine operated more like a bar/nightclub than a restaurant. Patron behavior has caused problems for neighboring businesses and for residential neighbors.

Asian Cuisine's city licenses only allowed the sale of beer and wine in conjunction with meals. For the past 1 1/2 years the business has only been open Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings, with a stage and a dance floor. In late 2006 police observed that patrons buying alcoholic beverages without food, and buying

cases of beer for the people at their table. This prompted a \$500 fine against the business in December 2006.

In July 2007 city officials found that Asian Cuisine was not maintaining its video surveillance cameras, had operated after hours and didn't provide security as required. This prompted the City Council to order a \$1,500 fine.

Then more violations were observed by city officials including customers entering the premises after closing time. That brought a \$2,000 fine and a 10-day closing, which the City Council ordered in September 2007.

Police conducting an undercover gambling investigation observed more violations of wine and beer licenses in August 2007. Yet another violation was observed by police in October 2007 when an underage person was caught drinking beer on the premises.

A hearing on the latest violations was held in February 2008. The judge agreed with the city licensing staff recommendation that Asian Cuisine should have all of its licenses revoked.

The Asian Cuisine owner and manager didn't appear at the March 19 City Council public hearing and no one appeared to speak on behalf of the business.



Asian Cuisine, 945 Rice St., must shut its doors after 18 months of problems.



Luxor Lounge, 719 N. Dale St., was slated to be the topic of a legislative hearing in late March.

## Luxor Lounge may receive sanctions

A Frogtown nightclub faces city scrutiny after repeated warnings about patron behavior and violations of city licenses. Luxor Lounge, 719 N. Dale St., was slated to be the topic of a legislative hearing in late March. Recommendations from the hearing could go to the St. Paul City Council for action in April or May.

The council would then hold another public hearing before deciding to place more conditions on the Luxor Lounge licenses, impose sanctions such as closing the nightclub for several days or revoking the licenses outright.

For several months neighborhood residents have complained about loud music, loud patrons, trash in the area and public consumption of alcohol.

Last fall police and city licensing staff observed a number of violations including staying open past the legal 2 a.m. closing time, and fights and verbal altercations in the parking lot. This happened on several occasions. On one call, virtually every police officer in the city's Western District had to be summoned to get disorderly patrons to leave the area after closing time.

Police reports also note that

there have been violations of Luxor Lounge's license conditions calling for security to patrol the exterior of the building failure to stop patrons from leaving the bar with alcoholic beverages and failure to regularly pick up trash around the business.

At this point city licensing staff is recommending additional conditions on the Luxor Lounge licenses including closing the patio at 11 p.m., not letting in patrons after 1 a.m., promptly stopping liquor sales at 2 a.m. and making sure that patrons leave by 2:30 a.m. The city is also asking there be stepped up security and that police be immediately notified when there are problems. A \$1,000 fine is also recommended.

Those recommendations could be modified by an administrative law judge after the case is heard. The City Council will have the final say on any sanctions.

Luxor Lounge is the second area business recently referred to an administrative law judge for a review. On March 5 the City Council voted to send the request for city licenses for Club Mesian to a hearing as well. Club Mesian is at 1638 Rice St. That nightclub also has been the focus of neighborhood concerns, in the North End.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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# Midway in a minute

Continued from page 2

## Midway Chev could become repair shop

Part of the former Midway Chevrolet property could become an auto repair, auto specialty store and outdoor sales/weekend flea market, if a request pending before city officials is approved. Jerry

Castillo has applied for a conditional use permit for 1333 University Av. W., at the northeast corner of Hamline and University avenues.

Midway Chevrolet's move out of the neighborhood in 2006 left parcels and buildings vacant along University between Albert and Hamline. It was the last new motor vehicle dealer on the street.

All auto-related uses in St. Paul are required to have conditional use permits, which allow the city to set a variety of operating conditions on the businesses. These conditions can be very

broad and cover issues including vehicle egress, signage, landscaping, lighting and parking. The permits are not transferrable. That is, any Midway Chevrolet permit could not be given automatically to the new business Castillo wishes to open.

The conditional use permit recommendations and city staff recommendation for approval or denial was not available as of deadline for this issue of the Monitor. One issue city officials had to sort out is the parking requirement for any type of flea market.

The site is in Hamline-Midway neighborhood so the Hamline Midway Coalition has the option of weighing in with a recommendation. The Planning Commission Zoning Committee planned to hold a public hearing on the request at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, April 10 at City Hall.

A Zoning Committee recommendation would go to the full Planning Commission April 18 at the earliest. A Planning Commission recommendation would be final unless there is an appeal to the St. Paul City Council.

## Snelling Café must close for three days

Snelling Café, 638 N. Snelling Av., must close for three days this month due to a lapse in liquor liability insurance, the St. Paul City Council decided March 26. The closing is a reduced penalty from the 10-day closing recommended by the St. Paul Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI). But if there are other li-

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# Spruce Tree Centre going green, gaining new tenants



Following a period of structural improvements, including energy saving implementations, the spruced up facility has attracted two new leasers – a full-service deli and, most notably, a Banfield Pet Hospital. (Photo by Terry Faust)

By ANDY FINKEN

Amidst a recessing economy, the Spruce Tree Centre continues to thrive. How so? They are going green.

Following a period of structural improvements, including energy saving implementations, the spruced up facility has attracted two new leasers – a full-service deli and, most notably, a Banfield Pet Hospital.

“For a national credit tenant like Banfield to choose this corner is a big deal,” said Michael Koch, Executive Vice President for Metro Plains. Metro Plains is the proper-

ty management company that manages the Spruce Tree Centre, 1600 University Av. W., and a number of other office buildings and residences in the area.

“From our perspective, a national credit tenant is one that has assets, income and liquidity with an A rating,” said Koch. He said such companies are unlikely to ever default and require a very shallow background check before signing off on their lease. They are very trustworthy tenants.

Koch said there are a number of reasons why a national company such as Banfield would desire

space in the center, including the visibility and geography of such a central location within both the Metropolitan and Saint Paul areas.

“The building is easy to get to, get in to, comfortable and clean and safe,” said Senior Vice President for JB Realty Co. Judy Mueller. Mueller leases office space at the Spruce Tree Centre and also performs real estate services for the center and other local firms.

Banfield, as a veterinary clinic, will be working with the University of Minnesota’s veterinary

program, which is housed nearby on the east bank of the university. Banfield will be offering internships and training to university students. By locating at the corner of University Avenue and Snelling Avenue, students commuting from any direction can easily take advantage of the public transportation that intersects on the corner.

Koch said the building’s recent improvements played a part in attracting the new leasers; however, the major impetus behind the improvements was a need to lower monthly fixed operating costs, most notably electricity. Metro Plains spent \$35,000 updating the light and heating systems in the building. They retrofitted the entire building with the most up-to-date energy conserving lights currently available and installed a heating system that is controlled for every room by every room, according to Koch.

“Every room now has an occupied and unoccupied climate control design,” said Koch. He said that the changes were made in response to, and in anticipation of, rising energy costs. Now, while unoccupied, all rooms will revert to a cooler temperature in winter, warmer in the summer, until someone enters the room. There is also an option for every room’s occupant to set their own room temperature.

A few degrees here and there may not seem like much, but with the large size of the building, 40 individual firms rent space within the center, a few degrees adds up quickly. Koch said the annual savings measured for this year is pretty close to \$14,400. Not bad for a \$35,000 dollar investment.

One of the largest spaces, and

its most notable presence, in the 128,000 square foot building has been left unoccupied since Applebee’s departure last May. Metro Plains has sought other restaurants to replace the 5,500 square feet void, but after 75 failed attempts decided to look elsewhere.

“The year to year sales in the casual dining market are flat-lining or declining,” said Koch. “They’re just getting eaten up from competition above and below.”

He said just before Applebee’s moved out of the Spruce Tree Centre, the chain was purchased by a hedge fund company that decided to close ten facilities around the country – one of which was the University Avenue franchise. It still had over a year left on its lease contract at that time, which, according to Koch, they did not default.

“I don’t know how you can expect to save money by closing a place down when there’s still a year and a half left on a lease agreement,” said Koch. He said such restaurant chains’ expansion is currently slow, and will more than likely continue slowing as economic uncertainty continues.

There will be food in the center again, however. By the middle of April, a deli serving many varieties of soup, salad, sandwiches and specialty coffees is expected to be open for business, according to Mueller. Banfield is expected around the same time, although their entry depends on how quickly the reconstruction of the former Applebee’s space is completed.

After Applebee’s left, Mueller said she sought out Dunn Bros, Caribou Coffee and Starbucks. All passed on her offer.

“It’s strange that we couldn’t get a specialty coffee shop at this location. There is a lot of traffic in this area and the nearest coffee shop is Ginkgo’s, six blocks away,” said Mueller.

With the addition of Banfield, the center is over 90 percent occupied, quite an accomplishment considering that when Metro Plains purchased the building in 1994 it was hovering around the halfway point. Koch said he believes, especially considering the reconstruction and improvements, the center is moving in the direction it was originally intended when it was built in 1988.

“The original intention was to have retail on the first floor and business offices in the rest,” said Koch. He said the original owner, Marie Slawik, was very much an entrepreneur in environmental action and green thinking, which comes as no surprise as the building was designed to resemble an actual green tree.

“The setback of the building’s architecture actually disbursts car exhaust,” said Koch.

Many aesthetic improvements have accompanied the Spruce Tree Centre’s revitalization, including the addition of music in the parking garage and other decorative improvements within. A security guard/escort is on duty during business hours as well.

“The Spruce Tree Centre is an important building in the neighborhood,” said Mueller. “We have the only heated bus stop for some distance,” which Metro Plains pays for, “and it’s our intention that the deli will, in time, have a sales window to serve passerbye.”

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# Change is coming to Hamline Midway Branch Library



Left to right, Jennifer Hoke and daughter Isabella, along with Coralie and 14-month-old Logan, listened to Librarian Lori Lundstrom reading in Hamline Midway Library's children's section. (Photo by Terry Faust)

By JAN WILLMS

Changes are in store for the Hamline Midway Branch Library at 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave.

During a mid-February meeting with Alice Neve, the area supervisor of five Saint Paul library branches and the bookmobile, community members did some brainstorming on improving the Hamline Midway Branch.

Often the target of possible closure, the library currently seems to be holding its own, according to Jun-Li Wang, community organizer for the Hamline Midway Coalition.

"The library administration has seen that the community really values the library and is willing to put energy into it," Wang said. "That always helps."

She said six groups were formed at the February meeting,

each pursuing a different area.

An outreach group will work closely with library administration to support the library.

An exterior stewardship group will work on promotion of the Hamline Midway Library. "This group will work on everything from library signage to landscaping," Wang said, making the library a more welcoming and useful space.

A community appreciation group will also look at welcoming patrons, perhaps holding a cookies and coffee day, according to Wang.

"One group will work with the library on its storytelling program," she said. "Storytelling is already there, but volunteers may read stories."

Another group will focus on children's programming, and the way volunteers can participate.

spring," Neve said. "It will give community members an opportunity to offer input about the needs and direction they wish for the library."

Neve said the next three months will offer several changes.

"We have ordered some new furniture, and the children's section will be brightened and enlarged," Neve said. She said some computers and seating will be added, and she hopes the branch library will be recarpeted before summer.

Carol Martinson, the supervisor of the Hamline Midway Library, said furniture is in the process of arriving. "One piece of the circulation desk has arrived," she said.

"The children's area does look nice," she added. "There are two benches and a new large box." Martinson said the box has five sides, with games to play for the younger children.

"The community is interested," she said, "and things are happening."

The sixth group will look at the current craft activities program, and add some adult crafts.

Wang said the city does have \$50,000 in funding set aside for the Hamline Midway Library.

"We would like to see the funding go towards concrete improvements," she said. "That's still under discussion."

Neve, who serves as a liaison between the administration and the Hamline Midway Library, said she is delighted at and thankful for the interest the community has taken towards the branch.

She said the branch library is considered to be a part of the community, and the residents intend to do what they can to keep it beautiful and dynamic.

"The Hamline Midway Coalition and the library will be sending out a survey in the late



Isabella Hoke enjoyed the the reading at Hamline Midway Library. (Photo by Terry Faust)

Anyone interested in volunteering for one of the groups scheduled to work with the library can call Wang at 651-646-1986.



Hamline Librarian Lori Lundstrom read for kids and their moms at Hamline Library. (Photo by Terry Faust)

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# Midway Center owner given more time to redevelop property

By JANE MCCLURE

The owner of Midway Center has been given more time to redevelop 15 acres south of the shopping center. The extension, approved March 26 by the St. Paul City Council, gives RK Midway Limited Liability Corporation until June 29, 2009 to ensure that a home improvement center gets built at the northwest corner of St. Anthony and Pascal avenues. RK Midway owns that property.

The redevelopment agreement also ties in the former Metro Transit bus barn site at the northeast corner of Snelling and St. Anthony avenues. RK Midway wants to buy that site from Metro Transit and put a retail store there, but that process has stalled for the past few years. Metro Transit needs another bus facility in the east metro area and won't sell or swap the Snelling site until another property is found.

The council, acting as the city's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), also stipulated March 26 that no further extensions of the development agreement would be granted unless the developer can show a "compelling reason" to justify a further extension. The HRA would have to vote again before another extension is granted.

RK Midway representative Paula Maccabee called the council vote "very positive sign." She said there is no set timeline to get the home improvement store built, saying RK Midway wants to first build new Walgreens and Big Top buildings at Snelling and Spruce Tree Drive. The City Council approved plans for that development last year.



The owner of Midway Center has been given more time to redevelop 15 acres south of the shopping center.

Maccabee said that the plans for the home improvement store and planning for the entire site should be able to move ahead despite a challenging development economy.

How to redevelop the area south of Midway Center has been debated since the 1980s. The idea of big box retail on all or part of the site continues to be controversial, with the former Snelling-Hamline and Merriam Park community councils (now District 13) opposing that idea. In late 2006 the councils asked the city and developer to be more inclusive in planning for the area.

District Council 13 supports the redevelopment agreement extension, although Council Land Use Committee Chairperson Scott Banas said there is ambivalence about city-approved plans for the home improvement store and ten-

tative plans for big box retail at the old bus barn site. He said community members want to see redevelopment that is more oriented toward transit and the proposed Central Corridor light rail line. City officials and RK Midway have argued the home improvement store is designed with transit-oriented development and the city's Central Corridor Development Strategy in mind, a point some neighborhood residents disagree with.

There are also concerns that big box retail could generate more traffic problems on Snelling, said Banas. What tipped the district council to support the one-year extension was Ward One Council Member Melvin Carter III's commitment that there be a "substantive community process" to plan for the bus barn property.

"There are worries that there

hasn't been enough thought given to the idea of what will be built on these sites and how it affects areas streets and the surrounding neighborhoods," Banas said. District council members also don't want to see any more extensions granted.

Carter said extending the development agreement doesn't preclude RK Midway, the city and community from engaging a number of prospective tenants in the redevelopment talks. He is also holding RK Midway to the community involvement process.

Although the HRA Board vote was unanimous there was still skepticism. Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark said he has concerns about going forward with the extension, especially for the bus barn property. He said the property is "one of the best development sites in the city" and that alternatives for its use should be considered.

"This has been around for quite a while," said Ward Five Council Member Lee Helgen. He wondered aloud if it would get done during Carter's four-year term. Carter just took office in January.

Part of the site has been under some kind of HRA agreement since July 1998. That is when the HRA entered a redevelopment contract with the Midway Center owners to clear up pollution that was contaminating the Pascal-St. Anthony site and the Midway Marketplace property to the east. This agreement provided \$1.596 million to clean up the property and allow redevelopment to proceed at Midway center and Midway Mar-

ketplace. At that time the Midway Center owners agreed to build \$4.5 million in improvements on the 4.7 acre parcel.

Various developments, including restaurants and a movie theater, were eyed for the Pascal property. Then in 1999 Metro Transit began building a new east metro bus barn north of downtown St. Paul. The Snelling garage was demolished in 2002.

For several years Metro Transit wanted to build a smaller transit facility at the Snelling site. But the property is landlocked, with Midway Center owning land to the north and east. Bus access has always been limited.

In June 2001 the HRA extended the development agreement with RK Midway to provide time for the developer and Metro Transit to see if a joint redevelopment project-transit center-bus garage could be built. Those plans were later dropped.

For several years city and RK Midway officials have tried to either buy the old bus barn property or do a land swap. But Metro Transit has declined because of the need to find another 10-acre site in the area for a new bus facility. Various sites have been studied but none have met Metro Transit's needs. This meant another development agreement extension, in June 2005.

The site plan for the home improvement store on RK Midway's property won St. Paul Planning Commission approval in June 2007. That approval expires in June 2009, at the same time the latest development agreement expires.

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# Basketball

Continued from page 1

was amazing to see the team's talents peak at the right time," she said. "Coach Taylor constantly encouraged and challenged us to work just a bit harder, and we regained our confidence. He helped us believe in ourselves by understanding what we really were capable of."

Junior forward Theairra Taylor said the state tournament experience has made her a better player because you play and interact with the best of the best. "The rituals and surroundings of the tournament are a real exciting experience – the all-teams banquet, the huge arena, media, large number of fans, and, when a champion, cutting down the basketball net at the end. It's something you never forget in your lifetime, and I think it bonds you closer as team than you otherwise might in any other season."

Following the game's traditional net cutting and on-court media interviews, the team was greeted back at Central by students and fans with a brief celebratory ceremony before principal Mary Mackbee had to lock the building just before midnight.

Central Athletic Director Nate Galloway said basketball teams don't win back to back state titles without excellent coaching leadership. "Our girls' basketball coaching staff has not received the recognition it deserves from winning the City Conference, the Section and the State Tournament again this year," he said, noting despite a 2006 championship, Taylor was denied coach of the year honors from a panel of coaches. Such pressures and demands over the past 2 state championship seasons took a toll on head coach Willie Taylor, who considered resigning but stated this year's championship and players gave him the encouragement and inspiration to continue coaching the sport and team he loves.

"For the seniors, this was their reward for 3 or 4 years of preparation," said Assistant Coach Tom Gunderson. "Given low expectations, it was very satisfying to win this year. It took the coaches longer this year to ex-



Coach Willie Taylor paces the court during the state tournament opener against St. Cloud Tech. (Photo by Tom Conlon)

periment and settle into a game rotation that worked, but after the South loss in February we found it and the team took off. Last year's team was the best ever in my opinion. This year's team did not set out to top that, but did want to become the best that they could be. By winning the State Championship, they did just that."

Gunderson said next year's outlook is not as bright as it has been for the past 3 years. "The players we have returning will have to have a great summer and hopefully we will get some 9th graders who have varsity talent," he said. "I expect Central to be a favorite to win the City Conference and a top seed in the section."

In recent years, Central and other Metro-Area teams were accused of recruiting the most talented players from other schools mid-career, leading to super teams at the expense of others. Galloway and others denied this ever took place, but noted Central's successful program, strong academics and good coaching led students to come on their own. Last spring, the Minnesota State High School League adopted a transfer rule, banning mid-career transfers except in unusual circumstances or if a student moves to the attendance area of the new school. Galloway said the new rule was a good policy and has not impacted Central as its girls' basketball players, then and now, all lived in the attendance area anyway.

To qualify for the state tournament, the Minutemen defeated Henry Sibley (96-52), White Bear Lake (80-74) and Woodbury (60-30) to win the Section 4AAAA tournament championship. In the opening round of the state tournament, the Minutemen defeated St. Cloud Tech 74-47, followed by a semi-final win over No. 2 seed Eastview Apple Valley (75-59) and top-seed Minneapolis South for the championship game.

Following the tournament, Buford, Jones and Taylor were named to the all-tournament team by a panel of coaches who attended the tournament games. Buford and Taylor also were named to the Pioneer Press' All-State Girls Basketball Team; Taylor and Howard received honorable mention. Howard scored her 1000th career point during the sectional championship game.

Next season, Buford will play for the University of Minnesota and Jones for Marquette University (joining former Central teammate Angel Robinson '07); others were deciding on college choices at press time. MaxPreps.com ranked St. Paul Central 13th top girl's prep basketball team in the nation in its March 20 post-season poll.

The Central Boys' basketball team won both the St. Paul City Conference and Twin City Championship title (over Minneapolis Patrick Henry 93-81 on March 8), but lost to Tartan in the opening round of the Section 4AAAA tournament to end its season.



Fans welcome team back at Central High School. (Photo by Terry Faust)



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# University Avenue businesses strategize to weather light rail disruptions, construction

By JAN WILLMS

What do a surplus store, a restaurant, a hair salon, and an agency serving the disabled all have in common?

If they are located along University Avenue, they will soon be facing disruption, construction, cuts in customer parking and higher property assessments as light rail comes to the corridor.

Along with transportation that is quicker and less polluting, light rail will bring worrisome issues to the variety of businesses located on the Midway and beyond.

A concern about these issues, as well as seeking a common bond and a stronger voice, has drawn several businesses to form a University Avenue Business Association, which has so far held three meetings.

Spurred on by University UNITED, a coalition of citizens and Midway businesses, the merchants have come together to talk about what the corridor will look like and whether everyone will be able to survive the lengthy period of construction that will ensue.

Keith Johnson, program manager for Midway Training Services at 1953 University Ave., an agency that provides employment and life skills training to persons who have disabilities,

said he sees the University Avenue Business Association as a good source to identify the needs of the corridor.

"Personally, I don't think University Avenue looks good," he said. "There is no commonality in its theme or look. We need to see how we can make it more attractive and look better to people."

He said University Avenue needs more connectivity.

"People are more apt to know about each other by the mere presence of the association," he said. "It could also make it easier to connect with City Council members."

Johnson said he thinks that

a business association on University Avenue," he said. "It provides a resource so that we can better anticipate what the corridor will look like. If you don't have that resource, you feel a little bit left out of the planning."

"I think we're going to get a voice," said Daisy Haung, owner of Shuang Hur Supermarket at 654 University Ave.

"I think light rail gives more of an impetus," Haung said she considers parking an issue everywhere, even before any construction starts.

"After 4 pm, at the corner of Dale and University, it is getting congested right now. Light rail



Keith Johnson, program manager for Midway Training Services at 1953 University Ave., said he sees the University Avenue Business Association as a good source to identify the needs of the corridor. (Photo by Terry Faust)

**"Personally, I don't think University Avenue looks good. There is no commonality in its theme or look. We need to see how we can make it more attractive and look better to people."**

- Keith Johnson, Midway Training Services

the light rail can specifically affect Midway Training Services, providing easier access for its participants.

"I do support the presence of

will have a big impact, especially if off street parking is taken away."

Haung hopes to be part of a working group, getting the University Avenue Business Associa-

tion going.

Betty Charles, owner of Shear Pleasure, 979 University Ave., said she thinks that when people have problems, they need to bring them to an organization and see how to resolve different issues.

"It's the only way to get something done," she said. "I don't have a lot of time to put into the business association, but I will do what I can. We need some people able to deal with issues and requirements coming up. If we work together, we can get the job done."

Hai Truon, who has hosted the first and third meetings of the University Avenue Business Association at his restaurant, Ngon Vietnamese Bistro, 799 University Avenue, and will host the next

meeting April 17 that focuses on parking issues, said he wants to incorporate marketing and create a destination for food and entertainment.

"I see some strength in unity," he said.

He said it is tough for minority businesses to get to meetings, since many are family-owned and it's hard to get away. "I think early morning meetings are good, before they open," he said.

"Working together is the toughest thing for some of these businesses," Truon commented.

He said he would like to see the business association as a group that advocates for each other and businesses in the area. "I don't want it to be some networking group," he said.

Jim Segal, owner of Ax-Man at 1639 University Ave., feels it is important the business association be a low-cost group for people to join.

"I have a real vested interest in what takes place," he said. "Light rail is a hallmark issue for retailers, and I think there may be some benefit to have this organized group. I think there needs to be a voice for landowners and merchants on University. They will be affected the most."

He said some would argue that light rail would make the buildings worth more but he fears that may not be true.

"My building encompasses 100 per cent of our land, and we need parking. If you don't have parking, it could be a real negative. I don't know how to look at it all, but a lot of businesses will experience a concern for the unknown. I'm biting my fingernails right now."

Segal said taxes are a real issue.

"We have to pay for improvements, even if we are not requesting them," he said.

"But no one's sales are going up during construction."

"It is an important time for us to have a cohesive and stronger voice," he said.

Linda Winsor, University UNITED outreach coordinator, said the organization tried to assist business owners in getting organized a couple years ago.

"Every year we had a couple meetings," said Brian McMahon, executive director. "But this year we're absolutely determined to get it going. It's definitely going to happen this time, and we'll put as much energy as we can into it."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

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# Loss of parking on Central Corridor gives business owners reason to fear

By JANE MCCLURE

Ahvo Taipale and his Finn Sisu ski shop have been fixtures near University and Fairview avenues since 1978. But the possibility of losing adjacent on-street parking to the Central Corridor light rail line has the longtime Midway business owner waiting to see what the future brings.

"If I lose my on-street parking and no other spaces are provided for my customers, I'd have to move," said Taipale. "St. Paul has been very good to me but I think my days here are numbered if I don't have parking."

Area businesses, business advocacy groups, district councils and city and Metropolitan Council staff working on the Central Corridor project are grappling with the possibility that construction of the light rail line could mean the loss of up to 85 percent of University Avenue's 1,150 on-street parking spaces. The extent of potential parking loss has become more clear as light rail system design continues and the potential impacts of features including longer train platforms, pedestrian crossings and left-turn lanes are seen. The discussion extends from the Rice Street area to University-Raymond and the west city limits.

The light rail project as currently designed eliminates about 625 on-street parking spots, according to recent project presentations by project staff. But that number could climb to 985, depending on how the rail line is designed. Under the worst case scenario, fewer than 200 spaces would be left.

"Making everything fit in tends to eliminate parking," said Allen Lovejoy, a veteran city planner who has worked on Central Corridor issues for many years. Lovejoy said it will take a combined effort of city, county and Metropolitan Council staff to address the parking issues in the weeks ahead.

St. Paul city officials, the Met Council, and business leaders all say there will be a block-by-block review of University in the weeks ahead, not just to determine where on-street parking could be saved but where other strategies could be developed. Lovejoy said those strategies could include more shared commercial lots, especially in areas where lots aren't fully utilized. But he cautions that could take management of parking by the city.

Rick Beeson, president of Park/Midway Bank and a founder of the Central Corridor Partnership, said he was surprised that the amount of parking lost could be so high. The partnership, which has been one of the leaders in pushing for light rail, includes Midway Chamber of Commerce, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, Ramsey and Hennepin counties, and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Lori Fritts, Midway Chamber of Commerce President, said that group is already involved in the parking discussions and will work

block-by-block on the issue. "This is why we have participated in this process as extensively as we have," she said.

Fritts and Beeson note the complexity of the Central Corridor project and the fact that much about the street right-of-way is only coming out during actual project engineering. Both said the key will be to balance a number of needs ranging from pedestrian safety to access to businesses.

One issue Midway Chamber of Commerce is raising is the need to discuss which project features are and aren't mandatory, said Fritts. That can be done during the block-by-block analysis.

"We know we won't be able to resolve everyone's problems but we would like to save as much on-street parking as we can," she said. The Chamber is also open to discussing other parking solutions.

Beeson said business leaders would have liked more notice of the potential parking changes. "I think there needs to be a much stronger dialogue between the business community and the Metropolitan Council," he said.

Who pays for added off-street parking isn't clear. The Central Corridor has a mitigation budget of \$32 million but much of that is already being eyed as a way of addressing traffic issues at and around the University of Minnesota. That funding is also seen as a possible way to pay for adding a station along University.

The city has no dedicated grants or loans specifically for neighborhood parking. The last program, Place to Park, ran out of funding more than a decade ago. The city has paid for parking improvements through special assessments against businesses in a specific area, but those are not popular with all businesses.

If the city winds up siting shared business parking lots, those would have to be planned in a way that does not impact residential neighborhoods. For decades Sherburne residents have fought against University Avenue business parking expanding to the north.

Parking loss on University could mean business customer parking would be pushed back onto surrounding neighborhood streets, especially Sherburne Avenue. Several Hamline-Midway and Frogtown residents who attended a March 29 Central Corridor station area planning meeting expressed worries about business overflow parking in their neighborhoods, along with commuter parking. Residents could apply to have their streets designated for permit parking but that also has a cost.

Jeff Patterson of Colliers Turley Martinson Tucker has done market analysis of the neighborhoods along the Central Corridor light rail line, as part of the city's land use planning process. He has long argued that there will be a need for structured parking along the rail line, for commuters as well as for some businesses. Part of that is a function of the planning itself.

"You can't build the level of density we're talking about without some structured parking," he said.

But the loss of a large amount of on-street parking may prompt a push for more shared business parking, he added.

Area business leaders said they are engaged with University businesses and are ready to seek parking solutions. Not only are the chambers and Central Corridor Partnership involved, neighborhood-based and ethnic business groups are also stepping in. That includes the new University Avenue Business Association as well as longtime groups like Aurora-St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation.

ASANDC Director Nietta Presley said that group already has a student intern working with businesses on parking issues. "We know if customers can't find a place to park, they're going to drive to a place that has parking," Presley said. She pointed out that many minority-owned businesses will be especially hit by the loss of on-street parking.

Karri Plowman of the Central Corridor Partnership staff has also spent much of his time looking at University parking and talking to businesses about parking issues. "I know where every spot is," he quipped.

"We have to realize that in many cases, even just one or two spots can be very important to a small business," Plowman said.

That is true of Finn Sisu, which is near the Fairview Station, and Midway Used and Rare Books, which is near the Snelling Station. Bookstore owner Tom Stranksy said the loss of his on-street parking, coupled with rising property taxes, "is giving us the message that they want us out of here."

"My customers are destination customers," Taipale said. "If there is no street parking, where do they go?"

Stranksy said University-Snelling businesses have lobbied for more parking, not less, for 20 years. "If they give the businesses nothing at all, this is just going to become a drive-through area."

Ultan Duggan, a former business owner who still owns commercial property on University, was involved in the original Central Corridor studies of the 1980s and early 1990s. He remembers that the 1991 decision to put light rail down the center of Interstate 94 was driven in part by concerns about loss of parking along University.

"In those years we were told we'd go from about 1,400 parking spaces to less than 400," he said.

The city does have more recent parking studies to draw on, from about four years ago, said Lovejoy. One issue that will be looked at closely is who is using which parking. In some areas on-street parking is taken up by motorists who park all day and then take the Route 16 or 50 buses. But in other areas, on-street parking is all some businesses have, said Lovejoy.

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# Interest in Central Corridor planning draws crowds to open house

By JANE MCCLURE

Interest in station area plans along University Avenue's stretch of Central Corridor drew a crowd March 29, as people were waiting to see displays more than an hour before the Central Corridor Resource Center even opened its doors. Plans for zoning, public space and other land use changes were viewed for areas around

Ideas for future development around seven Central Corridor station areas will include Westgate, Raymond, Fairview, Snelling, Lexington, Dale and Rice.

St. Paul city staff and consultants from Toronto-based Urban Strategies were pleased with the turnout, although surprised by the high numbers. A final count wasn't available but city staff estimated more than 200 people came to the open house.

"We're very pleased about the turnout," said City Planner Donna Drummond. She said the plans should be ready for St. Paul Planning Commission review in June.

The station area plans will eventually be adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council. The plans will be used to make zoning changes, and guide public and private investment in an area around each planned light rail station.

Visitors March 29 viewed a full-length model of University Avenue, as well as copies of each station area plan. They posted comments on various maps and drawings, expressing support for or concerns about various aspects

of each area plan. Comments included support or skepticism about density, worries about spillover parking in the adjacent neighborhoods and a number of questions about the eventual fate of the University-Snelling intersection.

Many questions were asked about parking for businesses (see related story) and in the surrounding neighborhood. Others were interested in how light rail and the stations would be placed within University Avenue right-of-way. Others were curious about aspects of the project including

bike and pedestrian connections to transit stations, new green space and areas targeted for more density.

"I think people are happy to have detailed information to react to," said George Dark of Urban Strategies. He said St. Paul is ahead of other cities in terms of planning for transit, because of the time and the attention paid to details.

The city is currently on two tracks to regulate development on University Avenue and around proposed light rail stations. The goal is for the two processes to in-

tersect and result in one set of zoning regulations. Since June 2007 development around the seven station areas has been regulated by an interim zoning overlay ordinance. Through this ordinance and the seven station area plans, city officials hope to promote more dense, transit-oriented development around each station.

But because the interim ordinance can only be in place for one year, it expires in June. The station area plans won't be ready for final adoption by the City Council by then. The current schedule calls for the stations plans to not get to the Planning Commission until May, which means City Council action may not be likely until mid or late summer.

The Planning Commission voted March 21 to recommend that the City Council permanently adopt the interim zoning regulations. That recommendation goes to the council for another public hearing before it is voted up or down. No date for a council hearing has been set.

The Planning Commission is recommending that previously approved site plans and projects would be exempted from the ordinance. That would protect plans approved last year for Midway Center's Walgreens and Big Top Liquors buildings, and for a new home improvement store planned for the shopping center's southeast corner.

The idea of adopting the interim zoning overlay regulations on a permanent basis is drawing a mixed reaction, despite promises from city staff and the Planning Commission that the overlay regulations can and will be amended once the station area plans are ready. A March 7 Planning Commission public hearing on adopting the interim regulations drew about two dozen people. Area district councils, University UNITED and the District Councils Collaborative (DCC), a group monitoring the light rail project, expressed support for adopting the interim regulations. But the St. Paul and Midway Chambers of Commerce expressed disappointment that the permanent station area plans won't be ready by June. They and property owners are saying the city needs to adopt zoning regulations that promote transit-oriented development while not affecting pending developments or discouraging future development during difficult economic times.

Planning Commission members and city staff say that not having any type of permanent regulations in place also is risky, even if it is only for a short time. "Keeping transit-supportive zoning in place is critical, especially given the support the proposed Central Corridor light rail line received in February," said Drummond. That is when the Metropolitan Council adopted the latest light rail line plans, including a proposal to add infrastructure for three future stations along

University Avenue. A state bonding request for the project is pending before the 2008 Minnesota Legislature.

Metropolitan Council is building the rail line and the stations themselves. St. Paul and Minneapolis oversee land use planning along the line. Two years ago, the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) indicated that zoning and land use planning for transit are issues the City of St. Paul needs to address, said Drummond. Having transit-oriented development plans in place is seen as a way the city can help make the case for federal funding for the light rail project.

But state law only allows interim zoning regulations to be in place for one year. To keep restrictions on redevelopment in place, city staff is recommending that the interim zoning overlay regulations be adopted this spring as the basic level of transit-supportive zoning for the light rail corridor. When the station area plans are adopted this summer, the overlay zoning standards can then be amended, said Drummond.

The interim regulations and station area plans draw on the Central Corridor Development Strategy, which the Planning Commission and City Council adopted in 2007. The development strategy contains ideas for new land uses along St. Paul's section of the 11-mile light rail line. At that time it was decided to single out the station areas for more intensive study and recommendations.

The interim overlay regulations and station area plans do not affect existing land uses, but affect future development, said Drummond. That has been true since June 2007 and would not change after the ordinance is adopted permanently.

"These would only affect people building new buildings on their properties," she said.

The interim overlay zoning regulations restrict new buildings heights and setbacks, floor area ratios, placement of parking, number of off-street parking spaces provided and building design. The intent is to block some land uses, including auto sales and rental, auto repair and auto service stations. The interim zoning regulations have not blocked any projects during the past year. Although there were arguments that the interim overlay should apply to a planned new Walgreens and Big Top Liquors developments at Midway Center, the City Council ultimately rejected those arguments and instead made site plan changes to address transit-oriented development issues.

A March 7 Planning Commission public hearing on adopting the interim regulations drew about two dozen people. Area district councils, University UNITED and the District Councils Collaborative (DCC), a



Visitors March 29 viewed a full-length model of University Avenue, as well as copies of each station area plan.



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CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

# A lifetime in the Midway

By SEAN BAILEY

Hamline University alum Steve Kufus can remember the streetcars running up and down University Ave, which means, suffice it to say, he's seen the Midway change and evolve over the years.

"I remember the streetcars. My dad put my brothers and me on it and road it to the end of the line before the line was closed," Kufus said.

But Kufus hasn't just stood by and watched the Midway change and evolve. He's been part of the evolution himself. He's also been a part of the force that's made the Midway a better place to work and live.

Kufus is a general civil practice lawyer, with an office at the Spruce Tree Center, 1600 University Avenue. He describes his practice as dealing with wills, probates, guardianship, divorces and the civilly committed. Civilly committed people are those with mental health issues who have to be committed for mental health treatment. Kufus says that he makes sure that his clients receive the right treatment at the right kind of facility.

The beginning of Kufus' deep roots in the Midway can be traced back to three places: The Midway YMCA, Hamline United Methodist Church, and Hamline University.

Kufus is a life-long member of the Midway Y and recently was chair of the capital campaign—which is raising money for improvements and eventually a new building. He also sits on the board of managers at the Midway Y.

"I like the mission of the YMCA... and I play handball, and the Midway Y is a hotbed for handball in the Twin Cities," Kufus said.

Kufus' long-time friend, and pastor at the Hamline Methodist Church, Greg Renstrom, likes to joke about Kufus' favorite pastime, but in younger days Renstrom was known to play with Kufus. Renstrom says that Kufus is a very active member of the church community, serving on the board of trustees all the way down to being an usher and a reader at church.

"His ability to maintain relationships with people is an incredible gift and something that not everyone has," Renstrom said.

Right across Englewood Ave is Kufus' alma mater Hamline University. Kufus looks fondly at Hamline University as the place that defined him as a person.

"The education I received, the people I met, both faculty, administration and peers, really have a lot to do with defining who I am today," Kufus said. "I really think community service is something that was instilled in me at Hamline, and that we all have an obligation to give back."

Kufus said while at Hamline,

he lived on campus, specifically at the TKE fraternity house, and when he ran low on money he would move back to his parent's house in Highland Park. Of course, to Kufus living on campus was always a lot more fun.

Kufus' graduation from Hamline in 1968, didn't end his involvement in the institution. Betsy Radtke Associate Vice President Alumni Relations at Hamline says that Kufus was the Alumni board of directors president from 1982-84 and currently is a class agent for the alumni annual fund. The Alumni Annual Fund specifically targets recent grads and as Kufus jokingly says, pesters them to give money, no matter the amount, to Hamline. He explains that for Hamline the number of donations reflects well on the school, even if it is only a small dollar amount—which is often all recent grads can afford.

After graduation from Hamline Kufus began law school, but was forced to leave by the Vietnam War. Three years later, after serving in the war, he returned to law school. This ended Kufus' brief absence from the Midway. His first law practice was at the corner of Blair and Snelling, where he practiced for 12 years before moving to the current Spruce Tree building location.

Over the years Kufus' decided to continue working in the Midway for all sorts of reason, partly because of the location, and also because of the people.

"I'm a guy that's pretty happy anywhere I am, and people are the important thing to me, and the people I've worked with and have been around I've enjoyed. I've never aspired to work for a big law firm and make lots of money," Kufus said.

Working for a smaller firm has allowed Kufus to enjoy what he sees as more important in life. "I've been fortunate enough to make a living and raise three kids at the Saint Paul Central High School I got to watch them play baseball, I got to watch them swim, wrestle, if I had been in a big downtown law firm working 60 hours a week, working every



The beginning of Attorney Steve Kufus' deep roots in the Midway can be traced to three places: the Midway YMCA, Hamline United Methodist Church and Hamline University. (Photo by Terry Faust)

weekend I wouldn't have been able to enjoy those things."

Kufus says smaller firm work allows him to represent normal everyday people, and not "mega corporations and big companies." The central location of the Midway also makes Kufus' life easier—the commute to both downtowns and the airport are extremely short.

Kufus has been able to watch the Midway evolve over the years, and lately he's seen the community heading in a more positive direction.

"The Midway as a community, I think, has come back. There was a period of time when housing stock was getting ragged around the edges, but it could almost be considered a destination now, rather than a stopping of point for better things," Kufus said.

Part of the reason that the Midway is no longer a "drive-thru" area, according to Kufus, is that with transportation costs, people want to live in close proximity to both downtown areas—making Midway an ideal place. But more importantly, Kufus believes, more young families have moved into the area and have helped re-build the once crumbling buildings. Kufus says he's not sure if the stats back him, but he believes that these young families are also buying up rental properties and remodeling them. Not having various renters in and out of buildings also creates a more stable neighborhood.

Kufus also noticed a tremendous increase in traffic in the neighborhood, and is a bit worried about how it is going to be dealt with, particularly with the city's light rail plans.

"I'm just worried about the local business on University. If

there are only going to be stops every mile, people aren't going to be shopping. And what if they lose all the parking because they are going to be running rail lines down both sides of the street?" Kufus said.

Kufus says that he tries to shop in the area as much as possible, and frequents locally owned business before going to the big box stores if possible.

If it were up to Kufus the city

would have considered using the existing rail lines near Pierce Butler, and simply have feeder transit buses running to University Ave. But Kufus remains hopeful that in the end light rail will at least lighten traffic in the area.

Regardless of whether Kufus agrees with every change in the Midway over the years, he can feel confident, that like handball, he's remained a steadfast player in the game.

## Join Us To Celebrate Our 15th Anniversary



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**Neal & Leandra Dinner Show** ..... 7 pm

(Reservations Required)

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**Children's Activities** ..... 1-4 pm

**Pop Wagner Show** ..... 2 pm

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# In Our Community

## Como Men's Golf meets April 18

Como Men's Golf Club organizational meeting is Friday April 18th at the Como Club House, 1432 N. Lexington Ave, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. We welcome prospective members ages 18 to 90. The Golf Club offers one of the finest weekend programs of fun and competitive play anywhere in MN.

Membership application forms can be picked up at the Club House during business hours. Or call 651-488-9673 and leave your name and phone number, attn: Tim Johnson, and you will be contacted. New members can get help to find others to play with. Present handicaps range from 0 to 36. Membership costs \$120 for the 2008 season.

## Spaghetti Dinner held April 19

The Boy Scouts of Troop 13 are selling tickets for their 51st annual Spaghetti Dinner to be held on Sat. April 19 from 3 to 7 pm. Adults- \$6.00/Children under 10- \$3.50. Please help support our scouts by purchasing tickets. Where else can you get all the fixings for such a great price? Scouts will be selling tickets in the neighborhood on Monday nights or they are available at the door: St. Columba School Auditorium, 1330 Blair Ave at Hamline Ave in Midway. Takeout meals are available.

## St. Joseph's holds open house April 12

St. Joseph's School of Music, 450 N. Syndicate will welcome the community, prospective students, families, and neighbors to a school-wide open house featuring faculty performances, an introduction to summer programs, and school tours. Saturday, April 12 from 1:00-2:00 P.M. Call 651-690-4364 for further information or visit [stjoseph-schoolofmusic.net](http://stjoseph-schoolofmusic.net)

## HM Elders holds lasagna dinner April 17

Hamline Midway Elders is taking donations of new and gently used art to be sold at "Feast, Friends & Fabulous Art," a lasagna dinner & art sale on Thursday, April 17, 3:30 - 7:30 p.m. at 1514 Englewood Avenue. (See ad in this issue) The art sale will continue Friday, April 18, 9:30 - 7:30. Requested donations include: paintings & photos (framed and/or matted), textiles (cross-stitch, knitted, crocheted, quilted, sewn), sculpture, woodwork, metal, jew-

elry/beading, mosaics, ceramics, pottery, and works by children (framed or matted if flat). Professional artists who donate are welcome to have business cards and flyers promoting their work on display. To donate art or RSVP for the dinner, call the HM Elders office at 209-6542. Ticket prices: \$7.00 in advance & seniors 62+, \$8.00 at the door, \$3.00 children 6-12, children 5 & under free

Tuesday, April 8 the topic, "The Road to Health is Paved with Good Intestines: Issues Regarding the Lower GI Tract," will be presented at a luncheon for seniors at 1514 Englewood Avenue beginning at 11:30 p.m. Call the office of Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 to make reservations for the luncheon and request free transportation. If you are a senior, caregiver or neighbor and would like information about our services visit [www.blocknurse.org](http://www.blocknurse.org) "Conversations that Matter (Or, How Do I Tell My Family What I Want)," a community education event to help people plan in advance for care decisions that are common when someone is seriously or terminally ill, has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 23 beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor room of Hamline Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Avenue. The free event is a collaboration between three block nurse programs: Hamline Midway Elders, The Como Park and North End South Como and Hospice Minnesota. Please register by calling 651-209-6542.

## District 10 Council holds workshops

The District 10 Como Community Council will be holding two days of workshops where residents will learn to build rain barrels to collect rainwater. Workshops are scheduled for 12:30 and 3 p.m. on both Saturday, May 10 and Saturday, June 14 at the Ramsey County Public Works Building in Arden Hills. Rain barrels are an easy way for residents to do their part to reduce runoff into our water bodies, such as Como Lake, while also saving money on water for their gardens.

District 10 residents will be given first priority for spots in the workshops. A waiting list of people who live outside the District will be kept and if there is space they will be invited to participate.

To register, please send a check for \$25.00 payable to the District 10 Como Community Council, 1224 Lexington Parkway, Saint Paul, MN 55103. Write 'Rain Barrel Workshop' in the memo line. Please include all of your contact information and which day you would like to attend. If you have questions, please contact Mike MacDonald, Chair of the District 10 Environment Committee at: [mike@comopark.org](mailto:mike@comopark.org).



Como Park High School student Leah Roth.

## Como student recognized in art show

Congratulations to sophomore Leah Roth, from Como Park Senior High School, for having her work drawing Grand Parents accepted into the Les Farrington Best 100 Art Show at the AZ Gallery in Lowertown, St. Paul, sponsored by the Jaycees. The Best 100 is a juried show where the 'best 100' art works submitted by St. Paul area high school students are chosen. Her drawing is from a photograph of her grandparents that she made for part of her Advanced Placement 2-D Design portfolio what she will submit in May.

## Central Baseball alumni wanted

All former Central High players and their families are invited to come out for an Alumni game vs. the current Varsity team on Saturday, May 17, 11 a.m. at Dunning Stadium, Rain or Shine. You're welcome to play or just enjoy the cook-out and to meet old friends. If you can't make it, please still contact us so that we can invite you to future events. To RSVP or for more information, contact: [robin.selim@comcast.net](mailto:robin.selim@comcast.net) or call 651-270-7410.

## ALPHA comes to Midway

ALPHA will begin on April 24th at Zion Lutheran Church, 1697 Lafond Ave. This is an excellent course with a history of helping people learn some of the basics of Christianity. It will help people answer questions like, "Why did Jesus Die? And Why and How do I pray?" We really want to encourage everyone who is new to Christianity or who is just checking it out to come and be a part of this Alpha course. We'll meet Thursday evenings from 6-7:30 p.m. beginning April 24th and ending June 26th (9 weeks). Dessert will be provided each week. This course is totally free. Please begin asking your neighbors, friends and coworkers to attend this course with you. This is a very non-threatening way to introduce your friends to Christ. Alpha Preview Dinner is on April 20th on Sunday at 5 p.m.

For registration and further information contact Zion Lutheran church at 651-645-0851. Alpha's website: [www.alpha.org](http://www.alpha.org)

## Zion Lutheran holds rummage sale

The youth of Zion Lutheran Church is expanding this year's Rummage Sale to 2 DAYS: April 11th Friday, and April 12th Saturday, both days from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The sale will be in the church basement at 1697 Lafond Ave., please enter on the Aldine St. side. There will be household items, clothing, toys, books and so much more! This year you can donate items for the sale Mon-Thurs, during church office hours, the week of the sale. The funds raised will be used to sponsor our kids going to summer camp, various activities and mission projects. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans is matching funds raised. Office phone: 651-645-0851.

## Adult Forum at Jehovah asks questions

The Adult Forum at Jehovah Lutheran church will be asking these questions - and more - every Sunday morning in April at 9 a.m. in the lounge of the church: Why can't Christians stop singing? What do Christians sing about? What makes the "new song" new? Why do Christians sometimes sing old songs? When is a hymn more than a hymn? What shall I sing when I am all alone?

Discover the stories behind great songs of faith under the able direction of Dr. Victor Gebauer, retired professor of worship at Concordia University, St. Paul, and current writer in the music field. There is room around the table for you and your ideas. Enter through the 1566 Thomas Avenue entrance door. Call 651-644-1421 for more information.

## "Aunt Dan and Lemon" at Hamline University

Hamline University is excited to present Obie award-winning playwright Wallace Shawn's story about memory, murder and the quality of mercy, running April 18, 19, 24, 25, 26 at 7:30 p.m.

"Aunt Dan and Lemon" continues Hamline's 77th season as Dr. Jeff Turner directs one of Shawn's most tantalizing plays. "Aunt Dan and Lemon" tells the acerbically comic story of a young, reclusive woman, Lemon, and her charismatic and eccentric family friend "Aunt Dan." Aunt Dan's vivid stories, recreated through flashbacks, both exhilarate and frighten the young woman, leading Lemon to make a chilling argument in support of

a government's need to take whatever measures it must to selfishly protect its standard of living. This play contains mature sexual content and violence. Tickets are \$2 for ACTC students, \$7 for adults, \$5 for students and seniors, and \$4.50 for groups of ten or more. Advance reservations can be made through the Hamline University Theatre Box Office at 651-523-2905 or via e-mail at [tickets@hamline.edu](mailto:tickets@hamline.edu).

## Lyngblomsten holds Spring Rummage Sale

In the mood for some spring cleaning? Put your cleaning to good use: The Lyngblomsten Auxiliary's Spring Rummage Sale is coming up, and your new and gently used items are needed (sorry—we cannot take any electronic equipment—TV's, microwaves, etc.). Not only can you clear some clutter and get a tax deduction, but also the money raised will help Lyngblomsten serve older adults and their families in the community. Donations Accepted: April 7 - 12, from 8 AM-8 PM, at the Receptionist Desk of the Lyngblomsten Care Center (1415 Almond Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108). Call (651) 646-2941 for more info or visit .

It's time for the annual Lyngblomsten Auxiliary's Spring Rummage Sale. Not only can you find great deals, but all the proceeds from the sale will go towards serving older adults and their families in the community. Wednesday, April 16 (9:00 AM - 4:00 PM); Thursday, April 17 (9 AM - 2:00 PM); and Friday, April 18 (9:00 AM - Noon \$3/bag day!) in the 5-5-1 Club community centers (Enter off of Pascal Street - St. Paul (between Almond Ave. and Midway Pkwy) OR enter at 1415 Almond Avenue - St. Paul (Lyngblomsten main entrance). Call (651) 646-2941 for more info or visit . Matching funds applied for through Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

## GINKGO coffeehouse celebrates 15th anniversary

GINKGO is celebrating its 15th Anniversary this year. It opened in 1993, and has been offering a gathering place and music venue to the area since then. To celebrate our anniversary, and thank customers for their support, the coffee shop will be holding all kinds of activities on the weekend on May 3, including: Spring Art and Craft Fair, May 3, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Dinner with Neal and Leandra, May 3, at 8 pm.; Kids shows and Activities on May 4; and Carolyn Cruso, May 4, 7 pm.

Sponsorship of the St. Paul Saints Baseball Night Celebrating Breast Cancer Survivors, Caregivers, and Those We Have Lost, May 9 at Midway Stadium ([www.saintsbasketball.com](http://www.saintsbasketball.com))

# Rice Street McDonald's torn down to make way for new restaurant

By JANE MCCLURE

The Rice Street McDonald's, which has stood at Rice and Hoyt since 1983, will be torn down later this year to make way for a new restaurant. The St. Paul Planning Commission unanimously approved the new restaurant's needed conditional use permit April 4. That decision is final unless it is appealed to the St. Paul City Council.

Community leaders believe the new restaurant will add to a number of other business improvements in the area, enhancing its appearance as a neighborhood gateway. In recent years Long's Auto Place has expanded and beautified its business across the street, setting the pace for other changes. A new Holiday station was added to the north and Auto Zone built one of its first St. Paul stores just south of McDonald's.

The new restaurant will be similar in design to a new McDonald's recently built in North St. Paul.

The new McDonald's restaurant plans were the subject of a neighborhood meeting and have the support of the District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council. No one appeared at a March 27 Planning Com-

mission Zoning Committee meeting to speak against the plans.

But city action on the plans was delayed for a few weeks to allow for more staff review and discussions of how the new restaurant will look and how traffic will flow there. The conditional use permit requires that the restaurant plans meet a number of conditions on vehicle access, trash disposal, landscaping, lighting, speaker box noise and impacts on surrounding properties. Every St. Paul business that has a drive-through lane, be it a restaurant, bank, coffee shop or dry cleaner, has to have a conditional use permit in place. The permits cannot be transferred if a building is replaced, as is happening with McDonald's.

Approval of the restaurant's conditional use permit will not be the final step in restaurant planning. Signage plans are awaiting city approval.

The existing restaurant is 3,797 square feet in size. The drive-through window is on the south side of the building, with vehicles entering the drive-through area from the north and traveling along the building's west side.

The new restaurant, which

will be 4,687 square feet in size, will have two drive-through lanes. These will be located on the east side of the building, adjacent to Rice Street. The restaurant will have 43 off-street parking spaces.

How vehicles enter and exit McDonald's was a topic that had to be hammered out by St. Paul Public Works and planning staff. Currently McDonald's has three curb cuts onto Rice Street, two for its parking lot and one to exit its drive-through lane. There are no curb cuts on Hoyt.

The new site plan calls for two curb cuts on Rice Street and one on Hoyt. When the city issues a conditional use permit for a restaurant like McDonald's, the intent is to keep vehicles off of streets that are primarily residential, as is Hoyt. But that had to be balanced with a Public Works request that the number of curb cuts and traffic conflicts on Rice Street be reduced.

Public Works also recommended that the two Rice Street curb cuts be one-way only, one inbound and one outbound. The Hoyt access drive will be two-way. This was discussed with Hoyt Avenue property owners.

Another issue that had to be negotiated between McDonald's



The Rice Street McDonald's, which has stood at Rice and Hoyt since 1983, will be torn down later this year to make way for a new restaurant.

and the city is the [placement of the drive-through lanes. One challenge for McDonald's is the long narrow restaurant site. Drive-through lanes are supposed to be at least 60 feet from residential properties; the current drive-through is 35 feet away. So the drive-through lanes for the new restaurant were placed between Rice Street and the new building.

City Planner Allan Torstenson said that McDonald's did agree to add a window on its Rice Street side and further en-

hance the new restaurant's feel as a storefront.

A sidewalk along Rice Street will remain in place. That will help the new restaurant meet a goal of the Rice Street Small Area Plan, which calls for creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

District 6 Community Organizer Kerri Antrim said neighborhood residents are happy with the restaurant plans and the willingness of McDonald's officials to try to meet goals of community improvement.

Classifieds \$1 per word

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## New Spirit School's STAR STUDENT

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Precious Lo is a star student in many ways. Precious does extremely well academically and learns new ideas and concepts quickly. More importantly, Precious is a true PeaceBuilder. Precious has a kind heart and a friendly personality. She is helpful and respectful to all students in the class. Precious also encourages others to try their best and gives praise in many ways. She often goes out of her way to make people feel special. Because of all of her great qualities, she has become a leader in our classroom. Everyone can count on her, even teachers. If you have the chance to be friends with Precious, do it right away. She is one in a million!

Congratulations to Precious Lo and her family on her selection as New Spirit School's Star Student of the Month.

New Spirit's Star Student of the month receives a \$25 gift certificate for a local bookstore.

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## Birds of a Feather... ...Save Together!

Shop The Lyngblomsten Auxiliary's

# Annual Spring Rummage Sale!

April 16 - 18

Wed: 9 AM - 4 PM

Thu: 9 AM - 2 PM

Fri: 9 AM - NOON

Donations of new and gently used items accepted **April 7-12**.  
Please: No large electronics, including TVs, computers, microwaves, etc.  
Matching funds applied for with Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

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## Feast, Friends and Fabulous Art!

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Thursday, April 17 3:30-7:30

1514 Englewood Ave  
(Hamline Methodist Church)

Art Sale continues

Friday, April 18, 9:30-7:30

A benefit for Hamline Midway Elders

A neighborhood non profit that helps seniors live independently at home

\$7.00 in advance, \$8.00 at the door;  
\$6.00 seniors, \$3.00 children 6-12, under 5 free

Telephone reservations in advance guarantee early-bird price! Please RSVP if possible

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www.blocknurse.org

This event has been generously sponsored by The South Ramsey Chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans

# As vacant buildings increase in number, pressure mounts to get St. Paul buildings rehabbed

By JANE MCCLURE

With more than 1,600 vacant buildings in St. Paul, there is increasing community pressure to get buildings rehabilitated and reoccupied or demolished. But how that is done may not be clear for another month.

Deciding which buildings can and cannot be saved is a focus of a plan to bring buildings up to code before they are sold. The push to revise city regulations governing vacant buildings means any new regulations will not be adopted until May at the earliest.

Area neighborhoods have varying challenges. Parts of the North End and Frogtown have growing numbers of homes or apartment buildings that have gone into foreclosure. Owners have been walking away. But vacant homes can also be found scattered in parts of Hamline-Midway and Merriam Park, too.

Many have been abandoned due to the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Ward Six on the East Side has the highest number of registered vacant buildings, at 362. Ward Five has 357 buildings on the list, with 311 in Ward One, 292 in Ward Seven and 195 in Ward Two. In contrast, there are only 87 registered vacant buildings in Ward Four and 32 in Ward Three.

The challenge all St. Paul city leaders, neighborhood residents, community development corporations private investors and lenders face is how to get a record number of vacant buildings razed or rehabilitated and reoccupied again. Earlier this year Council Member Dan Bostrom introduced an ordinance that called for vacant buildings to be brought up to code before they are sold. The council was set to vote on Bostrom's proposed ordinance March 19, but instead laid it over until May. Ordinance changes will be introduced May 7, with a public hearing May 21.

Bostrom's proposal has support from neighborhoods where

vacant and deteriorated buildings are dominating some blocks. Neighbors live next to properties that are the target of vandals and thieves, or even homeless squatters. In other cases, rehabilitation work can drag on for months or even years.

"It really can bring a whole neighborhood down," Bostrom said.

But real estate professionals, contractors, historic preservationists and lenders contend the requirement that buildings be brought up to code before they are sold could have unintended consequences. Lenders could walk away from properties, leaving them to sit empty longer. Prospective home owners wanting to invest their money and sweat equity into fixing up homes could find it more difficult to buy and renovate properties.

"I don't think we want to discourage people who want to come in and put their own money and sweat equity into fixing up their homes," said Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune.

One new problem some neighborhoods are now wrestling with is that of new infill housing on sites where homes were razed. There are complaints that new dwellings are too large for small lots and don't fit into surrounding neighborhoods. That has raised the issue of developing guidelines for new housing, beyond what is already required.

Most City Council members said that while they agree with Bostrom's intent and appreciate the start of a serious discussion of the vacant housing issue, his proposed ordinance may not be the best way to address problems. For his part, Bostrom said he is glad that the ordinance has started a dialogue.

Lenders and real estate professionals said they appreciate the layover. They want to continue discussing the vacant property issues and possible solutions with city officials, and to bring in

suggestions of their own. Patrick Ruble, government affairs director for the St. Paul Area Association of Realtors, has suggested the city set up a working group between lenders, real estate professionals, contractors, city staff and community-based nonprofit developers.

"There are people out there who want to invest in properties in St. Paul and we don't want to make that more difficult," he said.

spread," he said.

Another issue that needs study is that of the truth in sale of housing (TISH) inspection and reporting process, and how that can be changed to more clearly reflect a property's condition. The TISH inspections are done by private individuals. One criticism of some TISH reports is that they don't reflect all of the corrections a property needs to meet city codes.

Real estate professionals and

vary on a case-by-case basis. He said a flexible approach is needed.

But Conrad and other local banking professionals also note that it is out-of-state lenders, not local banks, that are holding most of the city's vacant properties. Getting those lenders to meet with the city may be more difficult. Typically these lenders send attorneys to legislative hearings to try to save their properties.

Council members Thune and Pat Harris agree with said they still want to see prospective home owners and rehabbers have the chance to buy homes. Both said Bostrom's original ordinance could have precluded lenders from selling buildings to contractors or individual interested in rehabilitating their own homes.

"I would have to create a situation where we're preventing people from doing what needs to be done" to bring a house up to code, said Harris.

But that brings up an issue of financial capacity. Legislative Hearing Officer Marcia Moermond sometimes has to caution prospective property buyers that their estimates to rehabilitate a property are low. Buyers also have to post bonds, or prove they have a line of credit or an escrow account. Prospective buyers who propose putting home repairs on their personal credit cards usually raise red flags for city staff at legislative hearings.

"We don't want people to get in over their heads," Bostrom said.

If rehabilitation work is done poorly, Moermond and Bostrom said that can come back to haunt neighborhoods. One trend city officials have seen is that of vacant and foreclosed properties that have been rehabilitated poorly in the past. Those buildings can quickly deteriorate and become vacant again. "Buildings can cycle downward with poor quality rehabilitation," Moermond said.

**"There are people out there who want to invest in properties in St. Paul and we don't want to make that more difficult."**

- Patrick Ruble

St. Paul Area Association of Realtors

All of the city's wards and planning districts have properties on the registered vacant building list. The vast majority of the buildings are single-family homes and rental. But city officials note that the actual number of vacant buildings could be much higher, as not all vacant buildings are registered with the city.

One issue to be studied in the weeks ahead is how the city classifies its vacant buildings. There are three classes, with class one being buildings that could be reoccupied with little or no work, and class three buildings needing the most work. About 85 percent of the buildings are in class two. But Bostrom said the differences in that category of buildings may need to be subdivided or scrutinized. Some class two buildings need little work, while others top the \$40,000 mark. "There's really a big

those wanting to buy and rehabilitate properties could benefit if more information about vacant properties is posted on the city's web site, said Ruble. "We need more information and we need information that is more readily available." Contractors and investors become frustrated if they complete the work they thought the city wanted done, only to find that more tasks are waiting.

More consistent information from inspections is also sought, said Ruble. Expectations can vary from inspector to inspector. "We also have to ask, do we have enough inspectors, even for the short term?"

Lenders say they'd also like to meet with the city, community development groups, real estate professionals and others to look at the problems and possible solutions. Jim Conrad of University Bank said the approach to solving the problem is one that may

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Many people suffer from anxiety—either generalized or specific. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) affects people on a day to day basis. Specific anxieties can manifest as episodic panic attacks or as phobias. Phobias are fears of certain things - such as fear of heights.

Often people who struggle with GAD also suffer from depression. It can be difficult to determine which condition is the most dominant, in part because folks with lots of anxiety may feel depressed because of the toll taken on their life by their anxiety.

Luckily treatment of one condition (either anxiety or depression) often results in improvement of the other.

Generalized anxiety causes one to feel nervous or on edge almost all the time. People find that they worry a lot, or worry out of proportion to the situation at hand. Some folks have difficulty sleeping, trouble finishing tasks, and trouble concentrating. They

# Cares and Cures

By JANE KILIAN, M.D.

## Anxious about anxiety

might act crabby, be overly protective of family members, feel tired, have trouble either falling asleep or staying asleep. Headaches, muscle tension, shortness of breath, stomach aches and diarrhea can also go along with GAD.

While we don't know why some people are more anxious than others, it does seem that it can run in families. Women are more likely than men to experience GAD. An increase in life stresses (loss of work, illness, financial problems) can make anxiety worse. It is likely that neurotransmitters (the chemicals that

help your brain work) also play a role in anxiety.

Regardless of the cause of anxiety, there are many things that can be done to ease the negative feelings associated with anxiety.

Regular exercise, good nutrition, a nighttime sleep ritual, and regular sleep schedules can all help reduce anxiety. Meditation, yoga, and deep breathing can help with some of the physical symptoms of anxiety. Sometimes people turn to illegal drugs or alcohol to calm their worries, but this does not really help and can cause even more problems.

Counseling (talk therapy) can help you address issues in your life that might be causing you to feel stressed. I admit that I am quite a worrier ... and I tell myself that no good comes from worry. Worry does not change an outcome, it just makes me suffer in the process. It is not a good use of psychic energy. Cognitive behavior therapy can help you learn how to reframe your thinking about situations that you face. It can help you identify your thoughts and emotions, with the goal of giving you more control over your thoughts and feelings.

Medications can also be

helpful with both short term and long term anxiety. There are numerous medications available, and your health care provider can help you decide if medication is a good option for you. Some drugs are used just during anxiety provoking situations (flying, etc.) but the drugs used for GAD are usually taken on a daily basis.

If you can worry less, you may also be able to enjoy life more. Your functioning during life chores could improve. You might sleep better, laugh more often, and just feel better all around. Sometimes it takes more than the luck of the Irish to decrease your worry time. If you find that you are worrying more than you used to, or if your worrying is affecting the quality of your life, I encourage you to make an appointment with your health care provider to discuss your treatment options.

Stay warm and happy during the end of this somewhat relentless winter.

## Midway in a minute

Continued from page 3

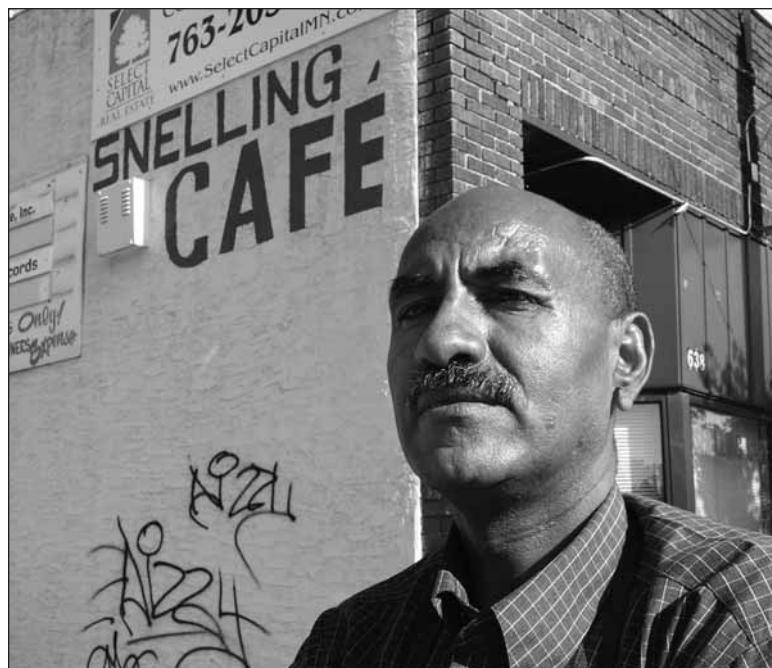
cense violations over the next 18 months, the café can be closed for another seven days.

The café serves beer and wine with meals. The lapse in coverage covered between November 17-30, 2007. That is a violation of city code and of conditions placed on all liquor licenses in the city.

Café owner Afewoki Tekle Bein contested the length of the violation, although admitting it occurred. He said there was a misunderstanding in which coverage was and was not required. The coverage was put back into place as soon as the lapse was discovered.

Bein said that a 10-day closing would be too much for his small business to recover from and asked for a reduced penalty. Both the Hamline-Midway Coalition and community development agency Sparc advocated for that reduction, citing the business's positive effect on the neighborhood. "Ten days would be a major hardship for this business," said Allison Sharkey of Sparc.

Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark supported the reduced penalty, if there are no future viola-



Snelling Café, 638 N.Snelling Av., must close for three days this month due to a lapse in liquor liability insurance.

tions. "This penalty seems harsh to me," he said, citing the business' past history with no other violations.

The penalty vote was 5-2, with Council members Kathy Lantry and Pat Harris against. Both said that while they understood the business's plight they also believe that any liquor violations need to be taken seriously.

## Open houses scheduled on comprehensive plan

Open houses on St. Paul's draft comprehensive plan chapters will be held in April. Several task

forces have been working on the plan and are ready to have the public view their own and make comments.

The open houses are:

\*11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Thursday, April 10 at Alliance Bank Center, skyway level of 55 E. 5th St.

4-6 p.m. Tuesday, April 15 at Metropolitan State University auditorium, 700 E. Seventh St.

\*6-8 p.m. Wednesday, April 30 at Central Corridor Resource Center, 1080 University Av.

For several months a number of citizen task forces have worked on various chapters of the comprehensive plan, on topics including housing, parks and recreation, public works, historic preservation and water resources. Each topic area has its own chapter. The overall plan is used to guide future city growth and development, as well as public and private investment.

A number of neighborhood plans and each district council's plan are also part of the document. Because several district plans are still in process, city planning staff is stepping up the pace to get those plans approved

in the months ahead. This includes plans for the Summit-University and West End neighborhoods.

Land use plans for the Central Corridor, corridor station sites and the Highland Park Ford Motor Company plant will also be part of the city's comprehensive plan.

St. Paul's comprehensive plan will be the topic of public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council in the future.

All cities in the Twin Cities region are required to have the plans in place and update them every decade. The draft plans underway in St. Paul and other communities are meant to cover a period that ends in 2030. Regionally the plans are used to prepare for housing, economic development and transportation projects, and to set boundaries on development.

The intent is for all Twin Cities area communities to have their comprehensive plans submitted to the Metropolitan Council by the end of 2008.

— Compiled by Jane McClure

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# Rock-Tenn future a pivotal debate in St. Paul

By JANE MCCLURE

The future of Rock-Tenn's operations is an issue citizens are talking about. So it's no surprise that many people who attended Mayor Chris Coleman's recent series of community meetings to discuss the state of the city came to debate Rock-Tenn.

How the Midway paper recycling plant generates its power is a topic that a community task force has been exploring since last summer. The Rock-Tenn Community Advisory Panel will make its recommendations this summer as it continues studying a wide range of energy options.

Rock-Tenn employees and neighbors concerned about future

plant emissions attended the mayor's meetings, including gatherings at Como Park and Macalester College. Rock-Tenn supporters say it's imperative to retain jobs and look carefully at all potential plant fuel sources before making a decision. Foes of burning refuse-derived fuel are vocal with their concerns about air quality and potential threats to public health.

Rock-Tenn is currently using an older boiler system, powered by fuel oil, to generate the energy it needs to recycle paper. Last year the plant lost its longtime source of steam power when Xcel Energy decommissioned the old coal-fired High Bridge Plant. The new

plant, which is powered with natural gas, wasn't built with the capability to generate steam.

Closing and replacing the old High Bridge plant is something Coleman describes as a "great environmental victory" in reducing air emissions from coal. But the unintended consequence was the loss of steam power.

Coleman said he understands the concerns about plant emissions as well as the fears that the city could lose 500 good-paying jobs. Those issues have to be balanced. "Right now we're going through a process" to look at all fuel sources including refuse-derived fuel or RDF, which is made from processed garbage.

"It's important that when we make a decision, it is based on facts, not fear."

Coleman also noted that the community advisory group, Rock-Tenn officials, the St. Paul Port Authority and others involved in studying different fuel sources, technologies and health risks aren't even halfway through with their work. The panel is to make its report in June but that still means many more months of study are ahead.

Rock-Tenn is the state's largest paper recycler. Coleman said whatever energy source is chosen will use 21st century technology. But he also pointed out that the biggest source of pollu-

tion in neighborhoods near Rock-Tenn is motor vehicles, not industry.

Desnoyer Park resident and NAB member John Curry cited the controversy over the now-closed Gopher State Ethanol plant and compared it to Rock-Tenn. But Coleman said a key difference between the ethanol plant controversy and the Rock-Tenn issue is that there was one question, asked at one Minnesota Legislature subcommittee, when the ethanol plant was proposed. The question was about odors. The response from ethanol plant proponents was that manufacturing the corn-based fuel would smell like "bread baking." The mayor indicated that was the intent of scrutiny of the ethanol plant before it opened in the former Schmidt Brewery. The plant closed but not after years of complaints about emissions. He contrasted that with the months of community input and study of Rock-Tenn's energy issues.

NAB leader Nancy Hone was unhappy with the mayor's responses, saying she found it "highly insulting." She was upset at the mayor's suggestion that District Energy, which provides heating and cooling for most of downtown St. Paul, is part of the solution for Rock-Tenn. Hone also was unhappy that the mayor limited questions and comments on Rock-Tenn, to allow other topics to be discussed.

"Biomass and garbage is not green no matter how you skin it," Hone said.

Several speakers said they appreciate the process being used to decide on a fuel for Rock-Tenn. "I can't thank you enough for your vision and your initiative," said third-generation Rock-Tenn worker Bob Ryan. He said workers want a safe environment just as much as neighbors do. But Ryan said RDF should be looked at, if it is can be burned in a way that is safe.

"I don't want to end up like the 2,500 workers at Ford did," Ryan said. St. Paul's plant in Highland Park closes next year.

Shar Knudson worked at Rock-Tenn. Her father put in 43 years there. "I know very well how a job at Rock-Tenn made it possible to support a family," she said.


Jerry Parizino is a Rock-Tenn steel worker and member of RCAP. He said RDF, like all of the other fuels, needs to be studied. "We're not saying it's our fuel of choice," he said. "We're looking at everything."

While some praised the citizens' advisory process, others criticized it. Desnoyer Park resident and NAB member John Schatz said he has "grave concerns" about the community advisory committee process and that neighbors have been lied to. He said citizens are losing faith in the process.

Others said the city needs to do more to promote and expand recycling options. Hamline-Midway resident Janelle Pruis said she'd like to see a drop-off site where more types of plastic can be taken. St. Paul's curbside recycling does allow some plastics recycling, but it is limited to two types. Burning plastic in RDF has raised concerns about emissions including dioxin.

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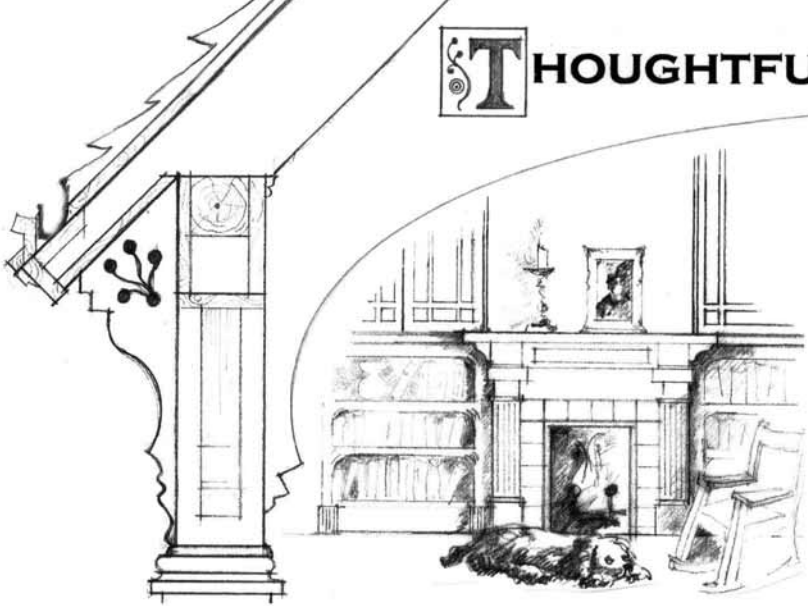
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# Rice Street Bridge reconstruction project could be pushed back until 2009

By JANE MCCLURE

Without approval of plans soon the Rice Street Bridge reconstruction project could be pushed back until 2009. If St. Paul and Ramsey County Public Works officials do not get the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to sign off on bridge plans by mid-April the project would have to be delayed for a year.

The bridge is ¼ mile north of the Maryland-Rice intersection, over the railroad tracks. BNSF must sign off of the plans but hadn't done so as of early April. St. Paul Public Works Bridge Engineer Kevin Nelson said approval is needed this month or there will not be time to get the project out for bid and built during the 2008 construction season.

"We're just waiting for approval," Nelson said. The city and county have done all they can to get the project on track, but without the railroad's approval it cannot go forward.

During reconstruction the Rice Street Bridge could be closed for up to 120 days. Ramsey County is offering incentives if the work is done in 90 days. Rice Street is a county road so the city and county have been working together on

the bridge replacement project.

Public Works originally anticipated advertising for bids in March or April, and awarding the winning bid in time for a May construction start. Work is to be completed in October. But that timeline is now thrown into doubt.

Delaying the start of the project could mean work would extend into the winter season, something Public Works officials don't want to see happen. That would add costs to the project and more delays for motorists. Nelson said that's why it would be preferable to delay the project for a year rather than risk construction during the winter months.

The delays are causing uncertainty for area businesses and residents, who have been trying to follow the bridge plans and changes in the schedule. District 6 Planning Council and North End Business Association have been following the project plans and working to get the word out about the project. But they too now must wait.

Public Works officials have spent much time planning traffic detours and temporary parking restrictions that would take place



Without approval of plans soon the Rice Street Bridge reconstruction project could be pushed back until 2009.

during the project. The Rice Street detour will be from Maryland to Jackson Street, then Jackson to Arlington Avenue.

Some on-street parking on detour routes would be temporarily banned, for example. The parking bans and detours will be posted before and during the construc-

tion period. One area where parking could become tight is near the post office on Arlington, so expect an on-street parking ban near there.

A second area bridge replacement project is still planned this season in the North End, reconstruction of two of the Maryland

Avenue bridges just west of the Interstate 35E interchange. That area will stay open to motorists during reconstruction, although there will be traffic restrictions.

All of the bridges are deteriorated and in need of replacement. The Rice Street Bridge will be 50 years old this year. The Maryland bridges are a few years newer.

The city's intent had been to do both bridge projects this year, so that the disruptions from construction would not be spread out over two years. But the delays may mean the city has no choice but to do the projects separately, said Nelson.

The Rice Street Bridge has an estimated construction cost of \$2.886 million. The cost for the Maryland Avenue bridges is \$2.215 million. A combination of funds is being used to pay for each project, with federal, state, county and city funds used for the Maryland Avenue project and city, county and state funds for the Rice Street Bridge.

Both projects required approval from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). The city will prepare the bridge plans but work closely with the county throughout the project.

## Central Corridor

Continued from page 10

group monitoring the light rail project, expressed support for adopting the interim regulations. "We consider it essential to adopt the interim regulations while the station area plans are being finalized," said Anne White, who chairs the DCC. She said the process of planning new land uses around each station is "extremely

important" and needs adequate time to go forward.

"We want to see University Avenue transformed into a transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly environment and we believe these regulations would do that," said Linda Winsor of University UNITED.

But the St. Paul and Midway Chambers of Commerce expressed disappointment that the permanent station area plans won't be ready by June. Molly Grove, vice president for public affairs for the St. Paul Chamber, and Lori Fritts, president of the Midway Chamber,

said their groups supported the interim ordinance as a compromise.

"Our hope was that it (the interim ordinance) would only be in place for 12 months," said Fritts.

Grove said adopting the interim ordinance is "procedural shortcut" and asked that there be some way to either add a sunset clause to the pending ordinance or to provide a specific timetable to have the permanent regulations adopted. She said there are concerns that the interim regulations could become the final regulations for new development around sta-

tion sites. City staff said that is not the case and that each area will have specific recommendations.

Fritts and Paula Maccabee, who represents Midway Center owners RK Midway, asked the Planning Commission to be mindful of the difficult economic times University Avenue business owners and property managers are facing.

Maccabee said the Planning Commission and others involved in station area planning must be mindful that redevelopment and change will most likely occur on a

gradual basis.

"This is a very difficult time," said Maccabee "The tax burden in St. Paul is very high." She said any regulations need to encourage, not discourage, redevelopment.

One concern Maccabee raised is for floor area ratios that the city wants to use to encourage more dense development. Floor area ratios are used to encourage more density. But Maccabee said if floor area ratios are too high, even the kind of development sought for University's street-front parcels may not be feasible.

## University businesses

Continued from page 8

"The light rail project is getting a lot of attention from business owners," said Winsor.

"I think businesses need to have a voice in their future, and having an association—it's power," Winsor stated.

She stressed the importance of being able to plan through the construction and beyond.

"There are so many issues they are going to face," she said. "Marketing is huge. What they can't afford individually, they can if they pool resources."

Winsor said the light rail could be a good catalyst to form a business association that is about more than just the light rail changes.

"The businesses can tackle things that come up," she said, "and be proactive, too."

In order to demonstrate how effective solidarity can be, representatives from business organizations on Lake Street in Minneapolis and Selby Avenue spoke at the most recent meeting held by the University Avenue Business Association.

Joyce Wisdom, executive director of the Lake Street Council, which serves and represents the Lake Street business community in Minneapolis; business owners Manny Gonzalez and Julie Ingebretsen from across the river and Jeff Gardner, president of the Selby Avenue Business Association, spoke of their experiences at the meeting.

The Lake Street area has gone through and is not quite finished with a period of reconstruction, widening streets and giving the longtime Minneapolis area a facelift.

"Communication between the business association and the neighborhood is really vital," said Gonzalez, owner of three restaurants on Lake Street. "You guys have to be proactive and try to find ways to market your places."

Wisdom suggested businesses sit down with their banker and see about getting low interest loans to see them through construction. Gonzalez said he was able to get a 2 per cent interest loan, which helped him survive.

Ingebretsen, owner of a Scandinavian gift shop and market, said that the more a business is considered a destination business,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

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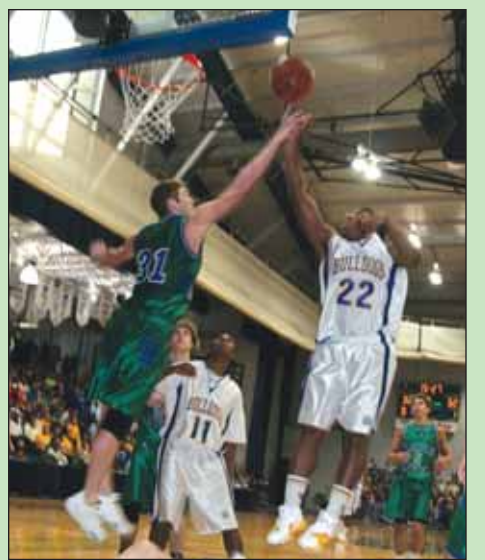
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### St. Bernard's in state play

St. Bernard's boys basketball didn't win any titles from the state basketball tournament, but did produce some exciting games. At right, Maple River defender Dan Stauffer tries to block the shot from St. Bernard's Jordan Bright at their match-up on March 29. Final score Maple River 66, St. Bernard's 50. (Photo by Lou Michaels)



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 ASST. MANAGER GREG NIPPOLDT



# University businesses

Continued from page 17

the less it is impacted by construction.

"We jumped into marketing in a big way," Wisdom said. Lake Street Council provided businesses with over 30 signs, put them up and took them down. The Council also has participated in events, such as the Food and Wine Experience at the Convention Center in Minneapolis.

"Lake Street has been a good place to do low overhead business for 100 years," Wisdom said.

"That's not true anymore. It costs as much here as anywhere, and we have to reach out."

Wisdom said the Council recommended that business owners and employees put on a smile when customers come in, and not talk about problems related to construction.

She said marketing is the key during this period. She suggested University Avenue, like Lake Street, put a name on different events or products.

"Every time something leaves your street that says University Avenue, that's marketing," she said.

Gardner, owner of Selby Dale Laundromat, said that Selby used to be known as one of the worst

streets in Saint Paul and now has some of the best dining in the area. He said the business association started about 20 years ago with a group of restaurants.

He said the business association has created a corridor and a destination, a special feeling about Selby Avenue.

Gardner said the business association was able to create a power when it came to street construction, with the ability to postpone construction until after the Republican convention.

"We were able to do that because we as a group came together," he said. The organization now has 56 members, about 60 percent of the businesses along Selby Avenue.

## Galtier ECFE holds Family Fun Night

Bring your whole family to the Galtier ECFE (Early Childhood Family Education) Family Fun(d) Night on April 18, 2008 from 5:30-7:30pm at Galtier Elementary at 1317 Charles Avenue. This family event will include pizza, a silent auction and entertainment by Leslye Orr from Dreamland Arts. The event is free and dinner tickets will be available at the door.

Proceeds from the event will be used to update materials in the children's room and parent room at our ECFE site. Saint Paul Early Childhood Family Education

(ECFE) offers parent and early childhood education for families with children between birth and kindergarten age. ECFE works to strengthen families and enhance the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children. Call Deb at 651-646-2195 for more information.

## Cub Scout Pack 243 of Jehovah Lutheran Church holds Pinewood Derby

Pack 243 held its Pinewood Derby

by March 15, 2008. The top finishers were Christian Opheim, Matthew Kolar and Thomas Daigle. Places 4, 5 and 6 were Douglas Johnson, Jonathan Menke and Lumin Johnson. These winners will advance to the District Pinewood Derby.

Other Cub Scout participants were: Mark Daigle, Keenan Horrigan, Mitchell Waugh, Ian Simon, Emmet Heck, Caleb Lindquist, Elliot Flack, Nicholas Lentsch, Jay DeRoos, Isaiah Haupt, Marcus Lake, Aram Lindquist and Eric Winter.

Winners of the Sibling Race were David Kolar, Isaac Lindquist and Emma Waugh.

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Officially, spring began March 20 on the vernal equinox, but the snow kept falling. Apparently, winter didn't get the memo. I'll celebrate spring when spring-like weather comes to stay sometime in April.

April is a fine month to get outside and rediscover your bike, your backyard, and your favorite park. I'm sure it's no surprise that my favorite park is Como Park, but my fondness is based on more than just its flora and fauna.

On March 23, I visited the Historic Streetcar Station Museum at 1224 Lexington Parkway. This beautiful fieldstone building was built in 1905 after electric streetcar tracks were laid to Como Park. While the station itself has been lovingly refurbished, the nearby 1904 Streetcar Line Foot Bridge, which served as the main entrance for park visitors until the 1920's, is left to decay. Throughout the park there are many such contrasting images between restoration and ruin.

Inside the Streetcar Station today there are interpretive signs that summarize the park's history and puts that history into a larger context. The signs reminded me that while many of Como Park's features, both natural and historic, have been saved, too many have been lost or are endangered.

I'm grateful to have Como Park, with its rich past and present, just steps from my front door. But, often with close proximity come feelings of great responsibility. No one feels that sense of responsibility more keenly than Como resident and volunteer, Rhonda DeBough-Insook.

Over the past winter, DeBough-Insook and over a dozen other Como neighborhood resi-



## Nature in the City

By DEB ROBINSON

Even Como Park needs a few good friends

dents have been meeting on a monthly basis to discuss a variety of local community concerns. It became apparent to these residents that most of their concerns were connected directly to Como Park. And it wasn't long before the idea of a Friends of Como Park organization began to take hold. DeBough-Insook has been one of the main proponents of organizing these concerned residents around this idea.

While DeBough-Insook and her family have lived next to the park since 1994, she has only recently gotten involved with Como Park issues. She confessed that, "While I was doing my own thing I watched things change over at Como Park." DeBough-Insook said, "Some of these changes have not affected me, and some have affected me quite a bit, but as a neighbor who has assumed that things were taken care of, I didn't feel like I had a lot of room to question or complain . . . as stakeholders we have a responsibility to do more than assume someone else has it covered."

An additional personal motivation for DeBough-Insook was her desire to be a positive role model for her children. She believes the time she and her family spend volunteering at buckthorn busts, park clean-ups, and com-

munity meetings, "counts as family time for us and we get the added benefit of community building."



Como resident Rhonda DeBough-Insook stands by the long-abandoned Como Park "Aquarium" Lily Pond and Bridge (built in 1895). The Friends of Como Park group, that she is helping organize, advocate for preserving Como Park's rich historic and environmental assets. (Photo by Matt Schmitt)

The Friends of Como Park is still a very informal organization, but the group has discussed the pro and cons of becoming a non-profit. At their March 15 meeting (at the Como Lakeside Pavilion Black Bear Cafe) the Friends shared the results of their membership survey, which helped

them determine the group's main goals. By the end of that meeting the Friends of Como Park had finalized their mission statement:

To preserve the park's rich history and natural environment to ensure the integrity of the park for the future through partnerships, proactive activities and education."

DeBough-Insook admitted that attracting and retaining membership while building an

all-volunteer organization is a challenge - the members lead busy lives with a multitude of demands so their time is precious. Consequently, the group is meeting for only one hour a month. However, the 15-member Friends of Como Park group feel comfortable with their slow but steady progress.

Regarding the members' motivations, DeBough-Insook said, "Nobody that has stepped up has put an agenda forth other than just general concern for the park . . . there is wisdom in the group as a whole. These people are respectful of that, and they want to be a part of making decisions that pertain to the park and our neighborhood."

Nothing lasts forever without caring attention and Como Park's vibrant history and green open-spaces are no exception. So while you rediscover your neighborhood park this April, take time to discover what you value most about this public space because even Como Park could use another good friend like you.

**Endnotes:** \*To connect with Friends of Como Park, visit their website: <http://home.earthlink.net/~comoneighborhood/> \*The Historic Streetcar Station Museum in Como Park, is open to the public every Sunday from noon to 4PM. \*District 10 Rainbarrel Workshops will be on May 10 and June 14 at the Ramsey County Public Works Building in Arden Hills - cost will be only \$25. Workshop times, registration information, and directions can be found on the District 10 website: [www.comopark.org](http://www.comopark.org)

\*To contact this writer: [dmrobinson@bitstream.net](mailto:dmrobinson@bitstream.net)

# HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

## APRIL AND MAY PUBLIC EVENTS

### Seminars and Lectures

#### Nobel Peace Prize Winner Speaks about Middle East Chaos

Dr. Shirin Ebadi, renowned women's rights activist and 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner, will share her perspective on "The Roots of Chaos in the Middle East."



Ebadi is an Iranian human rights activist. In 2003, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her significant and pioneering efforts for democracy and human rights, especially women and children's rights. She is the first Iranian and the first Muslim woman to receive the prize. A lawyer by training, Ebadi lectures at the University of Tehran. She has represented several dissidents and intellectuals and made significant contributions to family law.

Dates: Friday, April 25 at 7 p.m.  
Location: Sundin Music Hall  
Cost: Free and open to the public  
For more information: 651-523-2223

#### Life and Politics in the Middle East

The journal *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* presents its 17th Annual Symposium. Sessions include "Oriental-ism in Literature," "Re-Imagining U.S. Policy in the Middle East," and "Gender and Religion in Iran."

Date: Friday, April 18 and Saturday, April 19  
Location: University Conference Center  
Cost: Free and open to the public  
Contact: 651-523-2223 or [www.hamline.edu/critique](http://www.hamline.edu/critique)

#### The 17th Annual Kay Malmstrom Lecture in Physics

Speaker: Professor Martha Murnane, University of Colorado, Boulder.  
Date: Friday, May 2  
Time: 12:40 p.m.  
Location: Sundin Music Hall  
Cost: Free and open to the public  
Contact: Tracy Sparby, 651-523-2216

### Concerts and Theater Performances

#### The Artaria String Quartet

The performance includes the music of Mozart and Dvorak and Schubert's Cello Quintet with guest Tanya Remenikova.

Date: Monday, April 14 at 7:30 p.m.  
Location: Sundin Music Hall  
Cost: Adults \$15, Students \$5  
For tickets call 651-523-2459

#### Keyboard Conversations with Jeffrey Siegel

Pianist Jeffrey Siegel performs music by composers from Austria and Hungary including Schubert, Bartok, Liszt, Dvorak, Suk and Strauss, Jr.

Date: Tuesday, April 15 at 7:30 p.m.  
Location: Sundin Music Hall  
Cost: Adults \$17, Seniors & Students \$12  
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#### A Cappella Choir Salute to Spring!

Pianist Jeffrey Siegel performs music by composers from Austria and Hungary including Schubert, Bartok, Liszt, Dvorak, Suk and Strauss, Jr.

Date: Tuesday, April 15 at 7:30 p.m.  
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#### Theatre Festival

An annual showcase of student works, the Theatre Festival includes one person shows, student written and directed one-act plays, and short films.

Dates: May 8-10  
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#### Aunt Dan and Lemon

*Aunt Dan and Lemon* is written by the Obie award-winner Wallace Shawn. Moving forward in time to Reagan-era America, this production examines the nature of compassion, social responsibility and violence. Directed by theatre arts faculty member Jeff Turner.

Dates: April 18-19, 24-26 at 7:30 p.m.  
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