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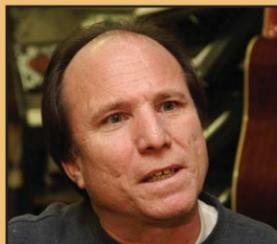
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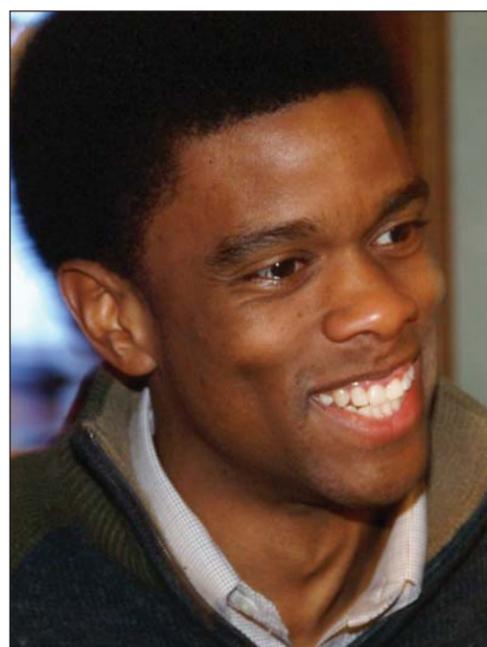
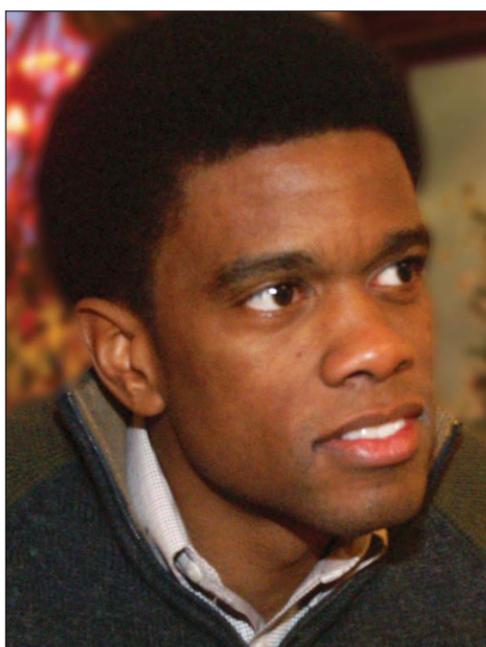
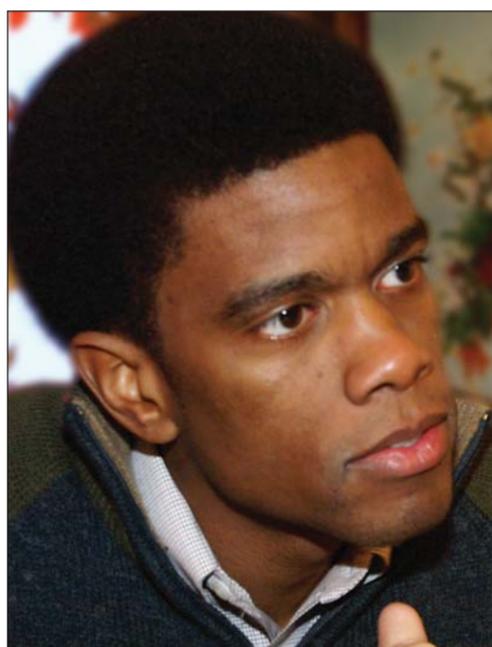
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Ward 1 Council Member Carter vows to forge new connections



Turning 29 just this week, Melvin Carter III, newly elected from Ward 1, is the youngest member of the Saint Paul City Council. (Photos by Terry Faust)

By JAN WILLMS

Turning 29 just this week, Melvin Carter III, newly elected from Ward 1, is the youngest member of the Saint Paul City Council. But what he may lack in experience, he more than makes up for in creative ideas. Carter desires to forge a strong connection between City Hall and those individuals who have not previously participated in their city's operation.

Carter, who went to college on a track scholarship, is still built like a runner. And he shows every indication of racing through a number of issues the Council will be dealing with in the upcoming months.

"When I was working in Mayor Chris Coleman's office (on the Policy Outreach Team), I got a much stronger understanding for municipal government," Carter said. "I realized the need for strong representation at the local level, especially now."

Carter said he believes we are reaching a pivotal moment in the history of Saint Paul.

"We have light rail, redevelopment, the future of the Ford Plant and Rock Tenn, and a Republican convention we will be hosting," he said. "Any one of these things is individually important, but all together they will really impact the direction our city is going to take."

Carter said he recently spoke with a group of young men from

Boys Totem Town.

"They were impressed that I was a young African American man who had gotten elected to office," Carter said. "I asked if they had been to City Hall before, expecting none of them had been. They laughed—they had all been there, to court."

He said he was sure his perspective and their perspective of

need to make a more determined effort to bring art and artists in, whether it's through art, music or the spoken word," he said.

He said a number of people may come to city council meetings who are not interested in the first 38 items on the agenda, for example. He sees the arts as a way of keeping things moving.

"I would like to see local of-

development for the city and region.

"I remember being at a meeting at the mayor's office, and we were talking about how we message around the Central Corridor," he said.

"We'll keep you comfortable and try not to disturb you," Carter said, "is too often the message (communicated by the city). If we're spending a billion dollars, we should be creative." He suggested the message shouldn't merely be about minimizing the negative impact of light rail, but go beyond that to explain how light rail can enhance the lives of the people and businesses along the Central Corridor route.

"One of my top priorities is conversation about the number and placement of stops along University Avenue," he said. He added that light rail is not about more stops, but about meeting goals.

"It's about business owners and home owners being able to participate in the economic future we are building for the city," Carter said. He said he sees light rail as an opportunity to enhance the small business community along University.

"We want to include folks whose lives and dreams are invested along University Avenue and the Central Corridor," he said.

"We want to include folks whose lives and dreams are invested along University Avenue and the Central Corridor."

- Newly elected Ward 1 Council Member Melvin Carter III

City Hall was quite different.

Carter said he thinks there are a lot of community members who have not had an opportunity to see their government in action.

"I want to get folks from the community into City Hall, and folks from City Hall into the community," he said.

He talked about having a series of open houses, using libraries and recreation centers as extensions of City Hall. "We

officials out in the community door knocking and stopping in at coffee shops and barber shops when it is not an election year," Carter stated. "They need to understand what challenges there are and share with the people how to take advantage of opportunities." Carter cited the importance of building and maintaining good relationships in the ward.

Carter said light rail transit is a means of building economic

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monitor

1885 University Ave.
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And check us out on the web at: www.MonitorSaintPaul.com

The Monitor is a monthly community publication in the Midway, Como and North End areas of St. Paul, owned and operated by deRuyter-Nelson Publications, Inc. All correspondence should be sent to the Monitor, 1885 University Ave., #110, St. Paul, MN 55104. Editorial and advertising offices can be reached at 651-645-7045. Our fax number is 651-645-4780.

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Monitor in a Minute

North Dale's new rink close to completion

North Dale's new refrigerated ice rink should be ready for skating this winter. But the project itself, and two other refrigerated rinks, hit a few bumps on the way to final approval. St. Paul City Council approval wasn't unanimous December 5, as concerns about project costs and ongoing maintenance prompted council members Jay Benanav and Kathy Lantry to vote against the project.

At the urging of Mayor Chris Coleman, the city is using Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) dollars to pay for refrigerated ice rinks at three recreation center. North Dale and Phalen are already getting the rinks in time for operations this winter. Phalen is already operating.

A third rink, which would be located in the southwest part of the city, hasn't been sited yet and isn't expected to open for this skating season.

The project received a Neighborhood STAR grant of \$560,000 and a loan of \$290,000 this fall from the City Council. Benanav and Lantry also voted against the project at that time.

The mayor and other ice rink proponents say the refrigerated rinks will provide skating options, at a time when warmer winters have made it difficult if not impossible to maintain natural ice. A small refrigerated rink near Landmark Center has been a popular attraction over the past few winters.

Benanav and Lantry have objected to the high cost of the three rinks, at a time when the city is telling other recreation centers they cannot have rinks that have been erected in the past. They also said there has not been adequate information about the ongoing operating costs of refrigerated

rinks, which will have to have their chilling equipment set up and taken down every year. The boards and concrete pad the ice will be placed on are permanent fixtures.

The council's actions December 5 do two things. The council waived a sales tax funding requirement that the funds be matched on a one-to-one basis with money, materials or sweat equity. The council also amended its 2007 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget to include the rinks.

Cost for the project is now estimated at \$1.1 million. The sales tax dollars will be supplemented by a \$250,000 internal loan from the parks equipment budget. Fundraising to repay this loan and the Neighborhood STAR loan will take place with the Herb Brooks Foundation. Donors will be asked to give \$200 for a five-year period. This will repay the loans and the grant.

Trend Bar receives approval for licenses

Trend Bar has received St. Paul City Council approval for its business licenses, including license to allow gambling and a sidewalk café. But St. Paul City Council approval December 26 comes with several conditions.

The bar is located at 1537 University Av. Its sidewalk café was approved with several conditions. It can be located on the public sidewalk next to the bar, but cannot block the sidewalk for pedestrians. A minimum clearance of 36 inches is required at all times. Tables, chairs, plant tubs and other fixtures must be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. No outdoor food or beverage service is allowed without additional licenses and city approval.

The Trend Bar's long-term plans call for seeking a city license for outdoor liquor service. That will require another round of neighborhood notification and

public hearings.

Like many Minnesota bars and restaurants, Trend Bar has had to ban smoking in its premises. Patrons have been going out the bar's back and front doors to smoke. At a recent legislative hearing, one of the bar's owners indicated that securing the back door and limiting where patrons can smoke can prevent people from leaving the bar with a drink.

Hamline Midway Coalition took no position on Trend Bar's request and one neighbor sent a letter expressing concerns about litter in the area. However, city licensing staff and bar representatives indicated that litter could be coming from Midway Center businesses across University Avenue.

The bar also received a permit to allow gambling at the bar on behalf of the Arcade-Phalen American Legion Post.

ABRA Auto gets City Council OK to operate

ABRA Auto Body will still operate at 1190 University Av., with unanimous St. Paul City Council approval of an interim use designation December 5. This decision allows the auto body repair business to remain at its current location, even though the property's commercial zoning does not allow such an intensive business use.

No one appeared at a council public hearing to speak against the interim use request, which has the support of District Council 13, the Midway Area Chamber of Commerce and University UNITED.

State statute defines an interim use as "... a temporary use of property until a particular date, until the occurrence of a particular event or until zoning regulations no longer permit it." The city rarely uses this statute to allow a new or continued land use. In the case of ABRA, city planning staff determined that the use can remain for at least five years, expiring in December 2012.

ABRA's site is along University Avenue's proposed Central Corridor light rail line, and it is in an area identified in corridor land use planning as part of the Lexington Parkway station site. This is an area that would be targeted for long-term zoning and land use charges related to the transit line. It is currently under study by a St. Paul Planning Commission task force, with a plan to be released in early 2008.

Central Corridor isn't expected to start operations at the earliest until 2014, so city staff determined it is unlikely that the property would be targeted for redevelopment before then. That means allowing the interim use is unlikely to impose additional costs to the public. ABRA representatives have stated an interest in relocating their business in the future to a properly zoned site.

Earlier this year ABRA sought a non-conforming use permit from the Planning Commission. That request was denied by city planning staff but laid over by the commission so that a solution could be found.

When it began operations 11 years ago, ABRA was classified as an accessory use to Midway Chevrolet and its sister auto dealership, Midway Hyundai Suzuki. Because both dealerships have closed, there is now no main land use. Legally, without a main land use, an accessory use cannot exist on its own.

A stand-alone auto body repair shop is permitted in industrially zoned areas, not in areas zoned for business use. The University Avenue sited is zoned B-3 for more intensive commercial uses. An auto repair shop could be there, for example. However, that use is considered less intensive than auto body repair. This spring city staff ruled that auto body repair and auto repair cannot be considered similar uses, and that auto body repair business cannot be located in a business zone.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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Hamline Midway History Corps Sharing Meeting focuses on the Winter Carnival

By KRISTA FINSTAD HANSON

Are you a fan of St. Paul's Winter Carnival? Do you have memories and artifacts to share from any past Winter Carnivals? The members of the Hamline Midway History Corps would love to see you at our next Sharing Meeting on January 20, 2008 from 2-4 p.m. at the Hamline Midway Coalition in the Hamline Park Playground building at 1564 Lafond Avenue. By the way, did you know that this lovely building, which was built in 1940 in the WPA Moderne style and was designed by architect Clarence "Cap" Wigington, was once used as a warming house for ice skaters at Hamline Park? Come to our meeting if you have memories of skating in Hamline Park too. Actually, anyone with stories or artifacts to share on any aspect of Hamline Midway's history is always welcome to join us.



Most Sharing Meetings are just a gab fest for us local history lovers. As we search out tidbits of history in our neighborhood, we're often led to connections with the history of St. Paul, the Twin Cities, or our state's history. Sometimes just talking with our neighbors leads us to stories that inspire us to research another previously unknown piece of historical information. At most Sharing Meetings we each bring some artifact or recently discovered story to share. And many History Corps members just come to listen and to be inspired.

One big story we're looking forward to sharing and adding to is Hamline Midway's involvement in the Winter Carnival. There are some great resources already available. Writer Jane McClure's previous article for the Ramsey County Historical Society's magazine tells how the Midway Commercial Club brought the Winter Carnival to the Midway neighborhood when the city of St. Paul didn't have the funds to host the Winter Carnival. Local historian and Hamline Midway neighbor, Paul Clifford Larson has written the book *Icy Pleasures: Minnesota Celebrates Winter* which details the more than 100 year history of St. Paul's winter carnival. His research in the collections at the Minnesota Historical Society and in archives around the state provides many original photos and Winter Carnival ephemera for the book, detailing St. Paul and other cities' winter carnivals in our state.

At the Sharing Meeting we'll

continue to add to the story of the Winter Carnival and the Midway. History Corps members Nancy and Steve Bailey will be

bringing their collection of winter carnival buttons to the Sharing Meeting (you may have seen their fascinating matchbook cov-

er collection of former businesses in the Hamline Midway area on the History Corps website.) When visiting and researching

the history of Henry-Holcomb-Boom funeral home, I happened

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Sides debate terms of agreement...

Council vote may allow electronic billboards to shine

By JANE MCCLURE

Electronic billboards could shine in area neighborhoods along Interstate 94, after a pending St. Paul city ordinance takes effect this month. But both billboard foes and sign company representatives are contending that the new regulations, which were adopted December 12, may not be workable for those wanting to get rid of neighborhood signs or for those wanting to add the electronic devices.

The regulations, which the City Council unanimously adopted December 12, allow a tradedown of neighborhood billboard in exchange for new electronic billboards along Interstates 94 and 35E north for downtown. But what the billboard industry sees as impractical tradedown requirements could mean that new electronic signs will be built and no neighborhood signs will come down. Changes to the ordinance have already been discussed but it's not clear when or if those would be brought forward.

It's been hard to ignore the newest in electronic sign technology, since it lit up parts of the Twin Cities in 2006. Only one electronic sign went up in St. Paul before the moratorium was adopted, on I-94 east of downtown. Many cities including St. Paul hastily placed moratoriums on the signs until regulations could be drafted to govern them. St. Paul's moratorium on the signs expires this month, which is why an ordinance had to be adopted in December 2007. The ordinance doesn't take effect until after it is published.

Advertisers like electronic signs because they are dynamic and can change message. But there are concerns that the messages can be distracting to drivers, said St. Paul Planning Administra-



The billboard regulations, which the City Council unanimously adopted December 12, allow a tradedown of neighborhood billboard in exchange for new electronic billboards along Interstates 94 and 35E north for downtown.

tor Larry Soderholm. That is why the Planning Commission suggested a minimum one-mile distance between signs. Light can also spill over into residential neighborhoods along freeways.

Some anti-billboard activists had argued that the city should simply ban the new signs, which change messages electronically. Brightness of the signs and the changing messages are criticized as traffic safety hazards, and intrusive to adjacent residential neighborhoods. Several neighborhoods close to freeways, including Summit-University, Aurora-St. Anthony, Lexington-Hamline, Snelling-

Hamline, Merriam Park, Desnoyer Park and South and North St. Anthony Park, could be impacted if electronic signs are installed.

Three district councils – Macalester-Groveland Community Council, District Council 13 and St. Anthony Park Community Council – want to see electronic signs banned, due to concerns ranging from light pollution to driver distraction.

But billboard industry representatives contend that electronic signs are no more distracting than drivers' activities including eating and talking on cell phones.

More than a dozen people at-

tended a public hearing December 5 to debate the proposed regulations.

Clear Channel Outdoor, which owns most of the billboards in St. Paul, contends the tradedown ratio is too high and isn't feasible. The company would have to take down six square feet of lit billboard space and eight feet of unlit space to be allowed to put up one square foot of electronic billboard space. New electronic signs would have to be spaced at least one mile apart, in areas that didn't shine light into adjacent residential neighborhoods.

"It's unfortunate but it just doesn't work," said Clear Channel Vice President Tim McCarver. He said the company was trying to "do the responsible thing" and remove neighborhood billboards while replacing a handful of freeway signs with new electronic signs. Clear Channel is willing to work with lower ratios suggested by the Planning Commission. "But the ratios as proposed is making absolutely no business sense for us." The Planning Commission had suggested tradedown ratios of 4:1 for lit signs and 6:1 for unlit signs.

Clear Channel owns about 400 of the city's 600 billboard faces. Smaller companies have testified that under the tradedown ratios, they could take down every sign they have in the city and still not have enough square footage to trade for even one new electronic sign.

Another stumbling block is the ordinance's requirement that signs change message every 12 seconds. McCarver said the industry's national standard of eight seconds is supported in studies of electronic signs and highway safety.

Both McCarver and Scenic St. Paul representatives held out hope that the regulations could be amended in the future. Planning Commission and City Council members have expressed unhappiness that the new regulations had to be hurried through to meet the moratorium deadline.

"It's too bad we didn't have a few more weeks to talk about this," said Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune. He and other council members would like to have seen other proposals. Thune said there are signs in his ward he'd like to see taken down as a result of a tradedown. But he questions whether that can happen under the existing ordinance.

Scenic St. Paul President John Mannillo said amendments could be brought forward in the future. "I really don't think this is the last we've seen of this," he said.

While conceding that tradedowns may not be likely under the current ordinance, Mannillo said the regulations do minimize the impact of electronic billboards that could be erected along freeways. He also praised a provision that gives the city council and community members input as to which neighborhood signs could be taken down as part of a tradedown. The final decisions would be in the hands of the City Council.

Another good point of the ordinance is that it doesn't allow new neighborhood signs to go up, if existing signs come down as a result of a tradedown, Mannillo added. But Assistant City Attorney Peter Warner has conceded that even if the city bans replacements of neighborhood signs, a property owner could still challenge the city in court.

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Tough choices may sideline additional stations, University Ave. improvements

By JANE MCCLURE

Difficult decisions for the Central Corridor light rail project could sideline hopes for additional stations at Hamline, Victoria and Western, as well as streetscape improvements for University Avenue, a tunnel on the U of M campus and the connection to the Union Depot concourse.

Debate over what should be added or deleted from the light rail project has pitted the Metropolitan Council against Ramsey County, St. Paul city officials, area district councils and the University of Minnesota.

The council, which is charged with engineering and building the line, is trying to cut project costs from \$932 million to \$840 million. Without cuts, officials say the project won't meet federal funding guidelines – and won't get the dollars to be built at all. About half of the funds needed to build Central Corridor would come from the federal government.

Decisions need to be made by the end of February so that preliminary engineering can continue. At a time when eliminating even one option can save a few million dollars in planning costs, the project planners are scrutinizing every detail carefully.

In a best-case scenario, rail construction would start in 2010 with completion in 2014.

For area neighborhoods, much of the debate centers on adding stations. The stations in the Central Corridor environmental impact statement (EIS) have been in place since Ramsey County officials chose them in the 1980s. At that time light rail was to be placed in the Interstate 94 median. A controversial plan called for using areas around some of the 16 stations as park and ride lots. The station sites didn't change when the Central Corridor plans were jump-started several years ago.

The St. Paul Midway area stations are at Westgate, Raymond, Fairview, Snelling, Lexington, Dale and Rice. Only over the past several months has there been pressure to add stations, with most at the east end of University Avenue.

More than 60 area residents turned out for the December 20 meeting of the Central Corridor Community Advisory Committee. Many were there to argue for the added stations or to ask that infrastructure for the stations be installed when the line is built. That way, stations could be added later. Others said they could be satisfied if there are assurances not to cut Route 16 bus service back further when trains start running.

Adding the stations would not only add \$5.5 million per station to project costs, it would also increase Central Corridor travel

time by about 30 seconds. Increasing the travel time in turn could decrease ridership by about 400 riders on weekdays. The rail line expects about 44,000 riders per day. The added costs, added travel time and shifts in ridership could adversely affect the federal government's cost effectiveness index for the project, said Metropolitan Council Director of Transportation Services Arlene McCarthy.

"We have to use the Federal Transportation Administration model," she said. "That's all there is to it. If we want the federal money, we play by their rules."

But many people disputed the Metropolitan Council's analysis. The District Council Collaborative has done its own analysis arguing that adding the stations would benefit area neighborhoods, both in terms of spurring economic development and providing more access to the transit-dependent.

They also said that other light rail lines have not been built through such densely populated, transit-dependent areas. "If it doesn't serve the people, maybe we should move the route," said University Avenue resident Metric Giles. Another speaker called the cuts to Route 16 "systemic racism."

"The least you could do, the very least you could do, is not cut Route 16," said District 7 (Thomas-Dale) Community Council Director Tait Danielson-Castillo. He said service frequency cuts have already been felt by bus riders.

Newly elected Ward One City Council Member Melvin Carter III said there are fears that the federal formula doesn't take into account the number of people in the area who are transit-dependent. He and others expressed concern that bus service on university would be cut when rail is built. "We'd like to see this line benefit us and serve us as well," he said.

The stations debate is just one of several cost issues impacting Central Corridor. The others are:

*The call to extend Central Corridor to the Union Depot concourse. The EIS currently calls for stopping the trains in front of the depot's head house on Fourth Street. The concourse, which is between the Mississippi River and Kellogg Boulevard, is envisioned by Ramsey County officials as a multi-modal transit hub for light rail, commuter rail, high-speed trains, Amtrak and buses.

Various alternatives to extend the tracks to the concourse have been discussed, but all would add millions of dollars of costs to the project. The corridor's management committee is expected to discuss the depot issues January 9.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



More chances for public feedback before Central Corridor LRT plans are decided

Seven meetings to provide community updates followed by three listening sessions for Metropolitan Council members to receive public feedback are planned early next year before the Met Council makes decisions on the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit project.

The Met Council must make decisions by the end of February on proposed features, such as the routes through downtown St. Paul and the University of Minnesota and reconstruction of University Avenue. This timetable is necessary so preliminary engineering can be completed to meet the Federal Transit Administration's September application deadline for permission to enter final design in 2009. Construction would begin in 2010 and revenue service in 2014.

Seven meetings between Jan. 15 and Feb. 5 will allow the public to interact with technical and outreach staff to get updates on the project so the public can be prepared to give feedback at the later listening sessions for members of the Met Council and the Central Corridor Management Committee.

The purpose for the listening sessions, which will be held Feb. 6 and 7 in Minneapolis and Feb. 11 in St. Paul, is to give the public an opportunity to voice their concerns in person to members of the Central Corridor Management Committee and the Met Council. The CCMC includes the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul, commissioners from Ramsey and Hennepin counties, some Met Council members, a University of Minnesota official, a businesses representative, a community representative and officials from several state agencies. This body advises the full Met Council on the project.

People who cannot attend the meetings may contact the Central Corridor LRT Project office at 651-602-1940 and ask for an outreach coordinator, who will pass along their comments. The outreach staff's direct contact information is at www.centralcorridor.org under Public Involvement.

Public Update Meetings

- Tuesday, Jan. 15 – 5:30-7 p.m., Hamline University, Drew Science Room 118, 811 Simpson St., St. Paul.
- Thursday, Jan. 24 – 8-9:30 a.m., Lao Family Center, 320 University Ave., St. Paul.
- Monday, Jan. 28 – 5:30-7 p.m., Buetow Music Auditorium, Concordia College, 300 Hamline Ave. N., St. Paul.
- Monday, Jan. 28 – 7-9 p.m., Prospect Park United Methodist Church, SE Malcolm & SE Orin Ave., Minneapolis.
- Wednesday, Jan. 30 – 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Downtown St. Paul Alliance Bank Center Food Court, 55 E. 5th St., St. Paul.
- Thursday, Jan. 31 – 6-8 p.m., Central Corridor Project Office, 540 Fairview Ave. N, Ste. 200, St. Paul.
- Tuesday, Feb. 5 – 8-9:30 a.m., Central Corridor Project Office, 540 Fairview Ave. N., Ste. 200, St. Paul.

Listening Sessions

- Wednesday, Feb. 6 – Time and location to be announced under Meetings at www.centralcorridor.org as soon as the information is available.
- Thursday, Feb. 7 – 5:30-7:30 p.m., Metro Transit Fred T. Heywood Offices, 560 6th Ave. N., Minneapolis.
- Monday, Feb. 11 – 5:30-7:30 p.m., Metropolitan Council chambers, 390 N. Robert St., St. Paul.

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My Apple Music Studios lets local bands crank up the volume

By JAN WILLMS

Snow covers the streets of University Avenue. The temperatures are frigid, the hour grows late, and much of Saint Paul has bedded down for this wintry night in January. But from within the old three-story building at 1549 University, muffled sounds of music can be heard.

This is the home of My Apple Music Studios, a location for local bands to practice. Scott Johnson, a musician in his own right, has been providing practice space for nearly 20 years.

"The music studios were an evolution that was never planned, but just happened," said Johnson.

He has played bass guitar himself for more than 30 years. In the late 1980s he worked as a sound engineer for a number of bands.

"Bands carried around a huge amount of equipment at that time," Johnson related. "I had a large studio to store the equipment. Some bands would

be performing for months, but never practice. I needed more space to accommodate that."

He moved to the Rossmer Building in downtown Saint Paul. Johnson opened one space, then a second, then a third.

"It evolved into my providing space, something I just do," he said. "At one point I had five different locations in the cities," he said. "But now I just have the one. I got tired of babysitting musicians," he added with a smile.

Johnson said initially, there were only about 30-40 spaces available in the metro for musicians to practice. Today there are 500 to 600.

"I feel like I was kind of the pioneer," he said.

He bought his current location in 1985.

"It has three tall stories," Johnson noted. He said an elderly gentleman would stop by and visit and tell him about the history of the building. It once housed a movie theater on the



Jonathan Franco and Joe Corbett practice in their My Apple space. (Photo by Terry Faust)

third floor.

Scott also operated a music store, My Apple Music, from 1999 until 2006.

"It's really tough for small, independent music stores to continue," he said. "Places like Guitar Center have such a big inventory. I

saw my profits go from \$30,000 to \$3,000 a month."

However, Johnson still retains much of his equipment and instrument inventory in a storeroom in the building, which he sells at reduced prices.

For now, he is kept busy keeping the historic building in good condition and working with the various bands that practice there.

"There are 27 spaces of various sizes in the building," Johnson said. "They range from very small and affordable to a space that has a loft, recording studio and private bathroom."

Over the years, Johnson has learned from his many experiences of renting spaces to set certain standards.

"I don't rent to anyone under 21, and I don't rent to certain bands," he said. "I don't rent to people who just want to jam or get drunk."

He remembers years ago getting a call from someone who asked him about the big party that was being held at the Rossmer Building.

"I knew nothing about any party, so I went down there and there must have been 250 kids there," he said. "I heard there were supposed to be three kegs, but I never did find them. I finally had to have the police come and clear the place out—they just wouldn't leave. Now I have a strict no-party rule."

Johnson said the current tenants are there to rehearse, and for the most part things have been pretty good.

"It's a lot easier when my presence is here a lot more," he said. "And I live very close by."

Reflecting upon some of his experiences, he recalls the Sunday morning call he received after getting home late from playing a gig himself.

The call was from the Fairview Building, one of his practice space locations.

"When will the electricity be back on?" the caller asked.

"I didn't know it was off. Why is it off?" responded Johnson.

"Well, the fire department turned it off," said the caller.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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Homeowners cry foul at truth-in-taxation hearing

By JANE MCCLURE

Hamline-Midway resident Robert Shrode lives in a small house with a soaring property tax bill – an 18.5 percent increase in 2008 alone. He was one of many area homeowners, rental property owners and business owners telling local elected officials that enough is enough at the recent Ramsey County-St. Paul-St. Paul Public Schools' truth-in-taxation hearing.

"I can't wait to move out of the city of St. Paul," Shrode said.

"I've had to cut my budget and it doesn't seem like you cut your budget," said North End resident Gilbert Higuera. He said elected officials "are under the delusion that Ramsey County and St. Paul are filled with rich people."

The December 11 hearing, which is mandated by state law, gives St. Paul and Ramsey County residents a chance to ask questions about their property assessments and ask questions at a public hearing. A 15.1 percent levy increase by the city, 4.8 percent by Ramsey

County and 3.7 percent by the school district are prompting double-digit increases in some neighborhoods.

For most of the 40-plus people who testified, it was a chance to vent about property tax hikes. Long lines of people met with Ramsey County Assessors' office staff to see if their taxes could be reduced.

Many homeowners are getting hammered by the phaseout of the state's limited market value program, which has held down that rate at which taxes have increased. Others homeowners and landlords questioned why their property values and taxes are rising in a depressed real estate market.

The various changes are having extremely varied effects even from neighborhood to neighborhood, said Chris Samuel of Ramsey County Property Records and Revenue. "The impact is all over the board, even in St. Paul."

The city, county and school district levy votes are the final steps in what were difficult months of budget deliberations for the county and city. City

Council members said they didn't take the vote to raise the levy lightly. "It's the worst of all possible convergences here," said City Council President Kathy Lantry.

"Peoples' property taxes are being raised and yet we're cutting services."

Mayor Chris Coleman, Lantry, County Board Chair Victoria Reinhardt and School Board Chair Elona Street-Stewart all acknowledged the difficulty property taxpayers face in 2008. They addressed a crowd of unhappy property taxpayers at the December 11 truth-in-taxation public hearing. They acknowledged the pain the property tax increases create, yet also said they have little choice.

Coleman noted the city has lost \$108 million in Local Government Aid (LGA) funds from the state since 2003. Without adequate support from the state, "we're at a crossroads."

For Ramsey County, budget increases have largely been driven by unfunded mandates passed down by the federal and state government, said Rein-

hardt. One example she cited is a decision to have the county take responsibility for monitoring of Level Three sex offenders, a shift that will cost county taxpayers more than \$1 million per year.

Street-Stewart said the school district is collecting on the first year of a \$30 million levy referendum fund school district voters OK'd in 2006. She said the district is using those funds to make progress in addressing issues of student achievement, ranging from all-day kindergarten to more of a focus on high school science and math.

The school district gets 70.3 percent of its revenues from the state, with local property taxes making up 16.4 percent and other sources making up the rest, said Street-Stewart.

Several speakers noted that in the depressed real estate market, they could not sell their homes for the market values the county has listed. That is because assessed values don't change as quickly as the county's market value estimates do.

Dianne Binns is frustrated

that her family and others moved to the Summit-University area years ago, when it was in decline. They organized against drug dealers and fixed up their homes. Her house has been appraised at \$390,000 but a real estate agent told her she'd be lucky to get \$190,000. But her taxes have risen by more than 50 percent in recent years.

"We elected you all, you've got to do something," said Binns.

Several speakers said that if they could sell their homes, they'd leave St. Paul. Others said they may have no choice but to move if their taxes keep going up. Chee Yang, a Frogtown resident who spoke through a Hmong interpreter, said "Please take the property back – take the house back."

In neighborhoods where the number of vacant buildings is soaring, there are even more concerns. "Frogtown is almost a vacant city," said landlord Leslie Lucht. "I can't even give my property away." His rental properties saw increases topping the 20 percent mark.

Light rail

Continued from page 5

*The University of Minnesota tunnel, \$155 million. The tunnel would be built beneath Washington Avenue on the East Bank campus. University officials have long pushed for the tunnel, saying it would be too dangerous to have trains running at-grade in such a busy vehicular traffic and pedestrian area.

U of M President Robert Bruinicks has asked Metropolitan Council to study the idea of rerouting light rail down University Avenue, then over either the 10th Street bridge or a former railroad bridge that serves as a pedestrian walkway. But Metropolitan Council officials have rejected that idea and are calling for the at-grade plan. Council Chairman Peter Bell has indicated that the rerouting of the line could add as much as \$40 mil-

lion to the project cost and delay Central Corridor by another two years.

*Streetscape improvements along University Avenue, \$55 million. The city's recently approved Central Corridor Development Strategy, which makes suggestions for future land uses along the light rail line, suggest revitalizing the streetscape along University. New pavement, sidewalks, lighting and other amenities would be added. City planners have argued

for this to be part of the project, saying it would make sense to make street improvements when University is already torn up for rail construction.

Could the city pay for the street improvements? St. Paul typically pays for streets and streetscape improvements through its Residential Street Vitality Program (RSVP) or its Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) project. But using street project bonds would

mean pushing back years' worth of neighborhood projects that have already been delayed for about a decade. Using CIB funds would eat up most of the city's capital budget for at least four years, meaning projects such as playgrounds, libraries, recreation centers and parks would have to be postponed. A typical city capital budget is about \$20 million per year, but much of that is funding designated for specific purposes.

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By PHIL BRONDYKE

The Rink Use By Permit Only signs on the outside of ice rinks at McMurray Fields are not meant to be threatening. Their purpose isn't to veto potential winter fun—in fact they aim to preserve it. The laminated signs are simply posted to preserve the venue of the largest broomball league in the state of Minnesota and possibly the nation.

Every weeknight beginning in late December, St Paul Parks and Rec hosts broomball players of all ages and ability from 6 p.m.-9 p.m. on the four McMurray rinks for league play on 147 registered teams. Competitiveness varies by team skill-level classification, but every player on the ice is determined to whack the equivalent of a mini-soccer ball into a 6' by 8' net, and keep a Great Northern tradition alive in the process.

Originating in Canada near the turn of the 20th Century, broomball is thought to have moved south into the United States, via Minnesota, in the 1930s. Although Minnesota boasts the highest participation (a combined 275 broomball and boot hockey teams in Minneapolis and St Paul's leagues alone), there is also a large following in Ohio, New York, Nebraska, and the other upper Midwestern states.

As the first American footprint of this foggily-historicized sport, Minnesota has taken a special place in the annals of what is known: it is home to the US Broomball Hall of Fame, hosted the 2006 World Championships in Blaine, and of course, operates two of the largest broomball leagues in the nation. The state's largest, of course, finds its epicenter at McMurray Fields.

Municipal Athletics Broomball/Boot Hockey Coordinator Andre Lanoue, the man responsible for providing a home for St Paul broomball, works diligently to keep the ice suitable for game play.

"I am in constant communication with our operations department and they do a commendable job under difficult situations," he said of Park Operations.

Lanoue also makes multiple

Greetings from St. Paul: Broomballtown, USA



Jeff Schmitt and Matt Bjostad took pre-game shots on Jeff Schmitt. (Photo by Terry Faust)

trips to the McMurray rinks during the week to visually check out the ice for quality.

"Obviously we can't be out there 24/7, but when we are out there and see people skating, we just let them know it is not a skating facility and direct them to the closest Rec Center which is North Dale. People are very respectful about it."



Broomball players weather cold temps for the love of the game. (Photo by Terry Faust)

Lanoue said that the past three seasons have been very challenging in regards to ice maintenance purely due to weather.

"It was tough, I mean, last year was practically like Northern California outside."

The soft rubber soles of broomball shoes make them especially vulnerable to choppy torn ice, and although there was a bit of grumbling amongst players on the league's opening night of December 26th, the ice was deemed appropriate for play.

Teams playing on opening night were registered as "D" league teams, and the divisions follow the same principle as softball with "A" as the top-tier teams in the state and nation, all the way down to the "D" league.

For many, broomball can be equated to the winter version of recreational softball. Activities surrounding broomball bear a striking similarity to its summertime comparison with the same types of bar-sponsored teams, friends and acquaintances getting together for a weekly competition, and having a few beers at a local bar after the game.

"It's a social thing," says Broomball Hall of Fame inductee Bill "Buzz" Evans. "Basically, at the lower levels, it's all about fun."

A legend in American broomball, Evans has served as the chief regulator for USA Broomball after refereeing a game on a whim in 1972. He is a regular at McMurray during the win-

ter, and speaks of the sport with much enthusiasm.

Lanoue also comments on the social aspect and the passion players have for the game: "I would liken it to softball since it is very much a niche sport with a passionate participation base. Obviously the numbers don't really compare to softball but I would say the enthusiasm is very comparable."

And that passion can be seen by watching league play any night of the week at McMurray. Grown men sliding, swearing, jumping in front of 60 mile an hour balls to prevent a goal, then heading off to the bar for a round of drinks; there could be worse things to do on a winter night.

Many league participants are former hockey players, and some have been pulled into playing by friends and relatives. Some teams, such as the famed Broomball Wizards, have been around for upwards of three decades.

But the graying hairs of the players should not be taken as an indicator for the sport's future, Evans says: "People say that broomball is a dying sport, but it isn't dead. The players are just getting older."

Dying or not, this Minnesota sports tradition will keep sliding and diving along at McMurray Fields, provided there is suitable ice, of course.

Information regarding St Paul broomball can be found at: and by phone at 651-558-2255.

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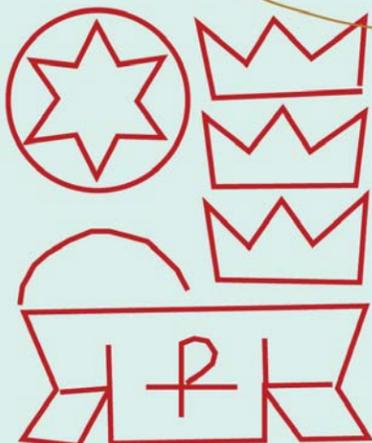
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Como Park's stock spikes with increased visitor traffic

By DEBORAH BROTZ

A sloth, an anaconda, and a tarantula may not be cute and cuddly, but let's face it: People really like to see them. Just ask Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.

As Como's Tropical Encounters Exhibit celebrates its first anniversary this past Thanksgiving, visitors to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory have spiked 12.6 percent over the prior year. And more visitors means more donations for Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. As St. Paul's most popular attraction, it has collected more than \$1 million in donations this year, making it the highest voluntary donation program by any zoo or botanical garden in the United States. Now, that's no small change.

A combination of a couple key things has helped Como Park Zoo and Conservatory to draw more visitors this year than last year.

"The first thing is the response to the recent addition of the Visitor Center with an indoor gift shop, food service, and education classrooms filled with classes," said Mike Hahm, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory campus manager. "Everything about the facility the public has responded positively to. We've had good weather. People have responded to our very deliberate attempts to engage them in more value-added activities and value-added programs."

People enjoy the zoo and Conservatory education programs.

"What we're offering is drawing them back, the education programs specifically," said Hahm. "The daily keeper talks and gardener talks are free talks every day that people take in. What we're offering is what people were asking for."

Since people have been willing to put money into the clear plastic donation boxes near the admission gates, Como's volun-

tary donation program has been able to collect over \$1 million in 2007, representing 17 percent of the campus operating budget.

"As the public comes out to participate in what we're offering, they're voting with their pocket-

The Japanese Pavilion and Garden Project will open on the same time line in 2010.

"We do things to not get bigger geographically but to get better," said Hahm. "We're providing facilities to extend a visitor's stay

Show at the Conservatory, which runs through Jan. 21, 2008, will take on an art theme with cultivars named after renowned artists.

Making an appearance at the show are DaVinci, Monet Twilight, Premium VanGogh, Premi-

exhibit," said Hahm. "It does that in a way completely immersive to visitors. The public's response to Tropical Encounters validates the principle in our plan to do things in a first-class way and highly educational way and provide a first-rate experience for visitors to learn about their natural environment. Tropical Encounters sets the standards for what's to follow."

The zoo and Conservatory plans to continue drawing visitors by making each visit special.

"What the public will see are our continual efforts to provide value-added activities and something new every time they visit," said Hahm. "We'll have additional education programs and additional value-added programming. There will be something new every day. We're incorporating elements of the campus master plan to provide a world-class experience to give additional reasons for people to extend their stay and to visit during cold months, when traditionally they haven't visited."

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory is important to the City of St. Paul because of what it can offer.

"It's the number one family destination in the State of Minnesota," said Hahm. "It's free. It's a place where people in an urban setting can learn about the natural environment through direct experience with plants and animals. They do it in a family setting that is safe and accessible to all."

Hahm hopes Como continues to provide visitors with wonderful experiences.

"Our hope is Como continues to provide exceptional visitor experiences," he said. "The public's response has been fantastic. It's motivational to us to see the response. The public is supporting the plan to be better but not bigger. It's really fantastic."



As Como's Tropical Exhibit celebrates its first anniversary this past Thanksgiving, visitors to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory have spiked 12.6 percent over the prior year.

books," said Hahm. "The public supports our mission and what we're doing to improve the facilities. It's a free Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoo and a free world class botanical garden. It's something they value and are willing to participate in with voluntary donations."

Before the Visitor Center was built in 2005, people used to either go to the zoo or Conservatory, but now they visit both with the Visitor Center acting as a bridge between the two.

"That's what's exciting to me," said Hahm. "The Visitor Center is the first step for implementing a variety of improvements that are part of the campus master plan."

What's next is the Polar Bear Odyssey Project, which will begin in spring 2008 and is expected to be completed in spring of 2010.

and to draw people out further on the grounds."

In addition to seasonal flower shows in the Conservatory's Sunken Garden, Como has also held all sorts of events such as elegant dinners, teas, and wine tastings.

"Como Park Zoo and Conservatory have something different to offer every day," said Hahm.

"The keeper and garden talks and education classes give a different visitor experience each time they're there. The ticketed events such as the dinners, teas or wine tastings give folks a chance to enjoy beautiful surroundings in a different setting. They can visit with family and friends outside of public hours."

This year's Holiday Flower

um Picasso, and Premium Miro along with Avant-garde Red and Avant-garde Marble. There will be over 1,000 plants in a red to pink palette, accented by artist series Ageratum in a blue purple hue.

Cultivars named after famous painters is what makes this year's show different.

"The professional horticultural staff have tried to introduce new elements into the show," said Hahm. "That's the fun twist they put into this year's show."

The future of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory lies in the Tropical Encounters exhibit, which is the first of many new things to come.

"This is our first exhibit which purposely combines a horticulture exhibit with an animal

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- + Kindergarten Story Hour Friday, February 8, 1 p.m.

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In Our Community

Spaghetti and meatball dinner January 26

Bethel Lutheran Church, located in St. Paul at 670 W. Wheelock Parkway, is serving a Spaghetti and Meatball Dinner January 26th at 5:30 p.m. Dinner tickets are \$8 per adult, \$4 per child or \$18 per family, and are available at the church office through Friday 25th January. Call 651-488-6681 M-F 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. or visit www.bethelstpaul.com

Winter registration began January 7

The Winter Catalogs are out for St. Paul Community Education. Winter Registration for all programs began on Monday, January 7th at 9 a.m. Find that catalog and sign up for that special program. Catalogs are delivered by the post office to all households in the city of St. Paul, are available at all Community Education Offices located in the high schools, most libraries, and many of the recreation centers.

Break up the winter doldrums and experience something new through St. Paul Community Education.

Exercise classes for seniors begin January 22

A series of joint friendly exercise classes for seniors will begin January 22 and run every Tuesday and Thursday from 2-3 p.m. for eight weeks at Hamline Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Avenue. The classes will be led by certified instructors and are sponsored by Hamline Midway Elders. Exercises are developed by the Mn Arthritis Foundation and are designed to help manage and prevent arthritis. There is no cost. For more information, call the office of Hamline Midway Elders, 651-209-6542.

Financial Resource Fair held February 12

On Tuesday, February 12 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. A Financial Resource Fair for Seniors will take place in the community space of Hamline Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Avenue. Professionals representing a variety of services will be on hand for one-on-one assistance (reverse mortgages, taxes, elder law, real estate, organizing your finances, etc.) Commissioner Janice Rettman will also make an appearance. A free will donation is taken for the meal. Call 651-209-6542 to make reservations for the luncheon, request free transportation or if you are a senior, caregiver or neighbor and would

Lindsay Concert moves to Sundin at Hamline U

In 1995, Lindsay Knutson died of throat cancer at the tender age of 12. The Saint Paul Conservatory of Music has partnered with Lindsay's family to provide the Lindsay Fund Benefit Concert for the last seven years and in doing so has raised more than \$19,000 to benefit children and their families dealing with acute illnesses.

Started in 2001 by Conservatory faculty member Kim Craig, the Lindsay Benefit Concert is a fundraiser for the Lindsay Fund of Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota. The funds raised are used to support the cure of children with cancer and blood disorders and assist with the extra-special treatment that these children deserve during the most difficult time in their young lives.

This year's benefit offers a varied musical program in beautiful Sundin Music Hall at Hamline University, 1531 Hewitt Avenue, on Friday, January 11, at 7 p.m. Conservatory faculty will present Aaron Copland's Appalachian Spring for a 12-piece instrumental ensemble. Also present will be Conservatory students featuring works by Beethoven, Chopin, Khachaturian, and Mozart. A dessert reception will immediately follow the concert. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$10 for students.

If you would like more information about the Lindsay Benefit Concert or would like to contribute to the Lindsay Fund, please contact the Saint Paul Conservatory of Music at 651-224-2205.



Lindsay Knutson

like information about our services. Visit www.blocknurse.org

Stories, chemists, crafts at the Library

Humorist and poet Bill Holm will read from Windows of Brimnes on Thursday, January 31, at 7 p.m. for the first Fireside Reading of the year at the Hamline Midway Library. Lise Erdrich will read from Night Train on Thursday, February 7, at 7 p.m. for the second Fireside Reading.

Older children and teens will be fascinated by the hands on simple science experiments provided by Chemists in the Library on Saturday, January 26, from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. Drop in and try one experiment or do them all.

Teens can now play chess every Friday afternoon from 2 - 4 p.m.

Chess (or checkers) for seniors will be held Tuesday, January 22, from 10:30-12:30 p.m.

Make a snowman magnet out of pom poms and a popsicle stick on Saturday, January 19, from 3 - 4:30 p.m.

Play and Learn Storytime will be held Saturday, January 12 from 10:30 a.m. - noon. Drop in for all or part of the session. Family storytimes are held every Tuesday evening at 7 p.m. Preschool storytimes are held Friday mornings at

11 a.m.

For questions or further information, please contact Carol Martinson or Lori Lundstrom, Hamline Midway Branch, St. Paul Public Library, telephone: 651-642-0293.

Epiphany Bible Class at Jehovah Lutheran Church

Have you had an epiphany lately, a revealing moment, an "aha!" for the day or for your life? During these weeks of Epiphany the Sunday Bible Class at Jehovah Lutheran Church, will be looking at the scripture lessons designated for each Sunday to "see" the Christ Child manifested in his ministry to us as Lord and Savior. Dr. Maynard Dorow will provide the text study and Katherine Mennicke will lead the application discussion. Starts at 9 a.m. with coffee and treats. Please enter at the 1566 Thomas Avenue door and come to the lounge. Community members are welcome.

Yinghua Academy announces info sessions

Prospective parents and students are invited to visit Yinghua Academy, the first Chinese immersion

elementary school in the Midwest. Yinghua Academy's curriculum, small school environment, and character development program will be presented along with research on how immersion education benefits brain development. In addition, families will be invited to participate in an immersion classroom demonstration led by Yinghua teachers. The school is located at: 1355 Pierce Butler Route, St. Paul, 55104. For more info: www.yinghuaacademy.org or 651-379-4112

Informational sessions upcoming dates and times: Saturday, January 12th, 3-4:30 p.m. and Saturday, February 9, 3-4:40 p.m.

Rice St. Branch plans activities for January

The Rice Street Branch Library has a wide variety of activities planned for January. Please join us!! The library will offer early-literacy-based preschool story times on Tuesdays January 15, 22, and 29 from 10:30-11:00 a.m.

Free Job Search Assistance will be offered by a consultant from Goodwill-Easter Seals on Fridays January 11 and 25 from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. No appointment is necessary.

The STARS Homework Help Center is a comfortable place for students of all ages to work on schoolwork. STARS also provides homework helpers to help students with their questions. Open Mondays through Thursdays from 3-7 p.m.

Teens in Action Club will be meeting Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5- 6 p.m. This program, offered in collaboration with Camp Fire USA, offers teens the opportunity to play crazy games, compete in challenges, plan and do projects that help our community, meet special guest speakers, and learn about different cultures. Stop in, have fun, or learn something new!

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Our phone number is 651-558-2223. Hours are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 12:30-9; Tuesday 10-9; and Friday and Saturday, 10-5:30. All Saint Paul Public Libraries will be closed Monday January 21 in remembrance of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Kindergarten Round-Up at Central Lutheran School

Kindergarten Round-up at Central Lutheran School will be held on Thursday, January 24, at 7 p.m. We have lots of fun at our Christ centered, success oriented, full day kindergarten. We have reading and writing readiness, hands on math and science, Jesus time, social studies, music, and

gym. We also offer before and after school care from 6:30 AM - 5:30 p.m. You and your prospective kindergartner are invited to join us at Central Lutheran School, 775 N. Lexington Pkwy. for our kindergarten round-up. Please call us at 651-645-8649 to let us know you are coming or to ask any questions you may have.

Central Lutheran School Open House

Are you looking for a preschool, grade school, or junior high? Would a Christian school with a strong academic program be right for your child? Then visit the Central Lutheran School Open House on Sunday, February 11, 6:30-8 p.m. Our teachers, principal, and some of our school parents will be available to answer your questions. Each classroom will have activities and small prizes for the children. We offer two and three day preschool programs, full day kindergarten, and before and after school care. Our upper grades offer band, choir, music, opportunity to work ahead of grade level in math, and an after school sports program. We are located at 775 N. Lexington Pkwy. If you have any questions please call 651-645-8649. (If schools are closed that day due to bad weather, the Open House will be on Tuesday, February 12.)

Conservatory holds Valentine's Soiree

Como Park Zoo and Conservatory will be offering a Valentine's Soiree to celebrate love and romance with something for every member of the family to enjoy.

As night falls on the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, enjoy live music and spend some time with special animal guest appearances. Spice things up by visiting interactive stations demonstrating plant uses for bath salts, spices, satchels and chocolate. Participate in an old fashioned cake walk, 50s dance party, tour Tropical Encounters or make a valentine card or flower for your sweetheart.

The Valentine's Day Soiree is Sunday, February 10 from 5 to 9 p.m. at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory in Saint Paul. Admission for this all ages event is \$3 per person.

Republicans hold caucus for House District 66B

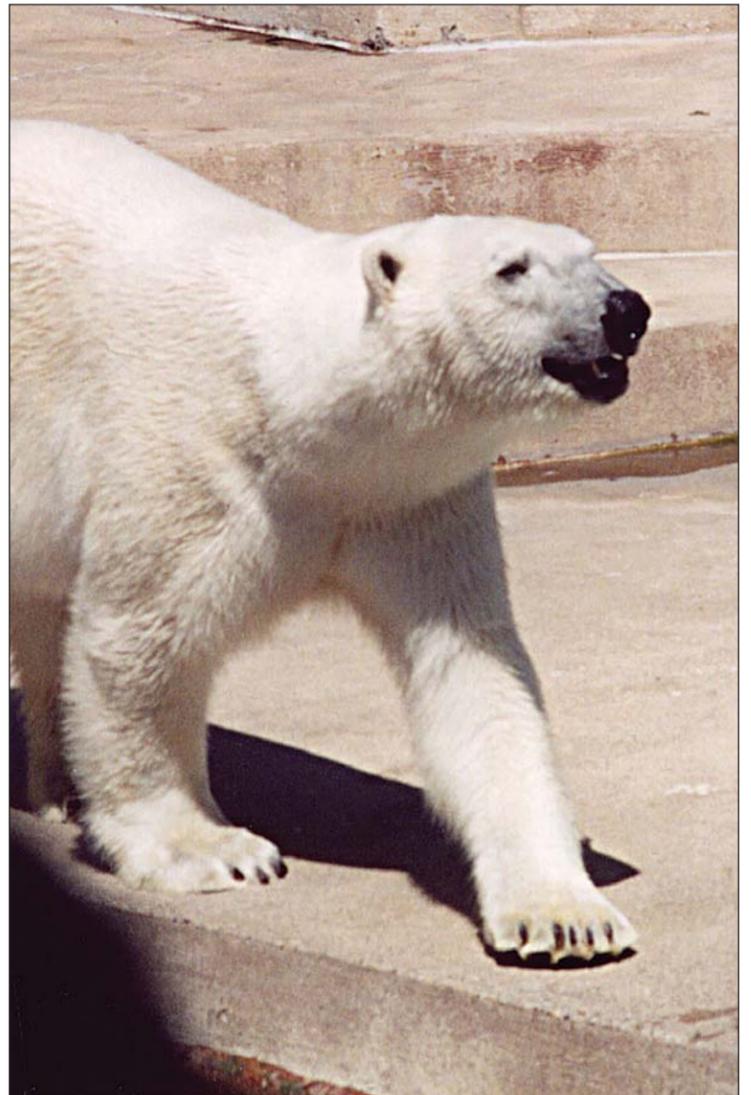
The Republican House District 66B caucus will be held on Tuesday, February 5th at 7 p.m. at Como Park High School. The Como neighborhood is part of House District 66B.

Polar Bear Party January 19-21

Say Bon Voyage to Neil & Buzz



Polar Bear Odyssey will emulate a Hudson Bay ecosystem complete with a river washed stream with live trout, rocky cliffs, natural surfaces, three salt water pools, and evergreen vegetation.



Before they go, Como Zoo will be celebrating Polar Bears and saying Bon Voyage during Polar Bear Party, January 19, 20, and 21.

As Como Park Zoo & Conservatory prepares for the construction of the new polar bear habitat, Polar Bear Odyssey, the Zoo's resident polar bears, Neil & Buzz will be going on a 2-year vacation. Before they go, Como will be celebrating Polar Bears and saying Bon Voyage during Polar Bear Party, January 19, 20, and 21.

The Polar Bear Party features opportunities to learn more about polar bears and meet the keepers that train and care for them. Watch enrichment activi-

ties that stimulate natural behaviors and partake in storytime and other family fun activities. Get a slice of the activities with a free sample of frozen oreo pie courtesy of Bakers Square, while supplies last.

Polar Bear Odyssey will emulate a Hudson Bay ecosystem complete with a river washed stream with live trout, rocky cliffs, natural surfaces, three salt water pools, and evergreen vegetation. The habitat provides a multitude of opportunities for the bears to exhibit natural be-

haviors such as digging, swimming, foraging and hunting. The \$14 million exhibit will be over 13,000 square feet, four times the current polar bear space and is expected to open in spring 2010.

For more information, visit www.comozooconservatory.org.

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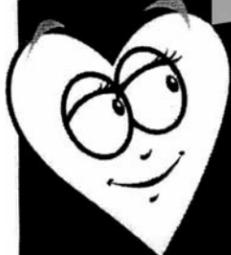
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Cares and Cures

By JANE KILIAN, M.D.

Keeping up with medical facts, myths

At the beginning of a new year many people think about their health as they make a list of resolutions to fulfill during the coming months. Most of us start out with great intentions, but become less zealous as the year progresses.

Just in case you didn't have enough to think about regarding your health, I thought I would write a quiz to help you see how much you already know. There so are many medical myths, and also new information coming out all the time, making it difficult to stay current on medical facts.

I hope this quiz is fun as well as informative. Answers are printed upside on this same page. Good luck.

Questions

1. True or False - Children who have been vaccinated once for varicella (chicken pox) don't need to be vaccinated again.
2. What is the most common cause of a bloody nose?
3. True or False - You can't spoil a baby.

4. What is a common cause of a red, swollen and tender big toe?

5. True or False - Snoring might be annoying to your bed partner, but it poses no health risks.

6. I can never remember - do you feed a cold/starve a fever or is it the other way around?

7. True or False - Giving babies a bottle of formula in their crib is a good way to help them fall asleep.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

55+ Driver Improvement Program offered locally

The Minnesota Highway Safety Center will be offering a 55+ Driver Improvement Course on January 28th (4 Hr. Refresher Course) from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., St. Bernards Center for the Community, 167 W Geranium.

The Driver Improvement course is open to the public; however, pre-registration is requested. A MN Highway Safety and Research Center certified instructor teaches this class. Driver safety, confidence and comfort are enhanced by utilizing the most up-to-date research in the field, including the latest visual scanning and steering techniques, anti-lock braking (ABS) skills, airbag information, driver distraction, road rage and new vehicle technology. The fee for the

four hour refresher course is \$18. and the eight hour course is \$20. For more information or to register call TOLL FREE 1-(888)-234-1294.

Persons age 55 and older who complete the course qualify for a ten percent discount on their auto insurance premiums for three years, according to Minnesota law. First time participants must complete two four hour sessions. Repeat persons are required to take a four hour refresher course.

Yinghua Academy students become art adventurers

The Art Adventure Program of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts is a way of bringing works of art that can't leave the museum into elementary school classrooms. Recently 149 Yinghua Academy students in K through 4th grade were

delighted and inspired by a set of eight works of art chosen around the theme "Artists' Inspirations."

During regular art classes at the school trained parent volunteers showed art reproductions and props to the students and led discussions about the art. The students were then given materials to create their own art, using the art reproductions and props as their guides.

The Art Adventure Program culminates in a field trip to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts to see the actual pieces they have studied. The goal of the Art Adventure Program is to help students gain confidence in their ability to find meaning in artifacts and art from a wide range of world cultures.

More information about the Art Adventure Program can be found on the MIA website at www.artsmia.org.

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Carter

Continued from page 1

Carter said housing is another tough issue facing the city of Saint Paul. He said the block he lives on, in Frogtown, has had 12 vacant houses. He said in the next few years, it is predicted there will be more than 2,000 vacant homes.

"We need to identify which are historic and which are rehabilitable," he said. "Many are also fire-traps and dangerous, and we need to identify those."

Carter said the city needs to gain a better understanding of the local housing market.

"People are looking for places to live, yet many houses are sitting empty," he noted. He talked about the need for affordable, dignified

"I never say affordable without saying dignified."

- Ward 1 City Council Member Melvin Carter III

housing. "I never say affordable without saying dignified," he said. He said the city does not need cheap housing, but needs to do a deliberate job of building mixed-use, affordable, dignified housing.

Another issue Carter raised during his campaign was public safety.

"Getting more police on the street is a necessary first step," he said. "We have a good chief in Har-

rington, and he said he needs more officers."

However, Carter said it needs to go beyond that.

A lot of folks are frustrated with their relationship with the officers," he said. "More problems need to be solved before they bubble over. The bottom line is, people who are hopeful about their future are less likely to act out in desperation."

Answers

Continued from page 12

1. False. The new guidelines recommend that children be vaccinated after their first birthday and again after their 5th birthday. If children have had chicken pox, they don't need a vaccine at all.

2. Nose picking is the most common cause of bloody noses. Gross, I know. But in the winter in Minnesota, dryness can also contribute to the problem. I suggest using a couple of squirts of nasal saline in your nose daily to keep it moist. This can help prevent catching colds because if your nose is moist, it can keep out invasive bacteria and viruses more easily. If your nose is really dry, you can also put a small amount of vaseline in each nostril at night before going to bed.

Frequent and/or severe bloody noses should be discussed with your doctor. They could be a sign of a more serious medical problem.

3. True. When you respond to a baby's needs by picking her up, cuddling him, responding to her needs you help the baby learn that the world can be trusted. It helps babies feel safe and ultimately helps them to trust themselves and to have good self confidence. To read more about this, there is a child raising theory called "attachment theory." Check it out, it is fascinating.

4. Aside from the obvious injury or burn, gout commonly affects the first joint of the big toe. Gout is caused by the deposit of uric acid crystals in a joint space and causes the joint to become red, swollen and very sore. There are a few other conditions that can cause the same problem (something called pseudo-gout, and even gonorrhea can cause a single joint to be infected). Gout is often triggered by excess consumption of alcohol and/or high fat foods (sounds like a problem that might be common after indulgent holiday feasting!).

5. False. Not everyone who snores has obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), but many people do. If you are excessively tired during the day, if you fall asleep while driving, and/or if you snore so loudly that others comment - see your doctor. You might have OSA. This condition can be treated. Left untreated it

can cause high blood pressure and other health problems. Not to mention that it can be very annoying to your bed partner.

6. Neither. If you are sick, you need good nutrition in order to recover. If you are running a fever, you actually need more fluids than usual, because a fever can cause you to become

dehydrated. If you are vomiting, try taking very small amounts of fluid (a few sips at a time) every 15 minutes. Drinking a lot of fluid at once could make your vomiting worse.

7. False. Babies should not have a bottle of formula or milk in bed with them. It will contribute to cavities even before

Carter, reflecting on his first few days in office, admitted that it is not a coincidence he came to the conclusions he has. He helped work on his mother's campaign to become the first African American woman to sit on the board of Ramsey County commissioners, following a stint as a school board member.

But Carter's interest in politics stems from his college days at Florida A&M University, the largest black college in the country. He was in the capital of Florida during the 2000 election, and his brother-in-law was turned away from the polls after standing in line for a half hour, holding his small daughter.

"I realized politics was something we needed to pay attention to, and I started getting involved in campaigns in Florida. I also

ran for senior class president," Carter said.

Immediately after winning the City Council election, Carter said he learned a whole lot about himself and how he was expected to vote. He heard about concerns that he might be too liberal.

"We told the truth in the campaign," he said. "I said that people need to feel hopeful about their future, and that folks who work full-time should be able to live with dignity."

Carter said he wants dignified homes and safe streets for everyone.

"That feels to me like it is not extremely liberal or conservative, but kind of the basics for a civilized community. It's the bare minimum of what we should be doing," he said.

who lives and works in the Midway Community. She believes that good medicine means caring for people as well as curing diseases. We want to address your health concerns so please let us know what topics you would like to see in future columns. If you have suggestions or questions, write to the Monitor c/o 1885 University Avenue West, #110, St. Paul, MN 55104. Or e-mail denisw@aplacetoremember.com.

their teeth are visible.

I wish you the best of luck with any resolutions you have made. And I hope that for you and those you love 2008 is GREAT (It's my new motto: Make 2008 Great! I like it because it rhymes. I know it's corny but I am easily amused.)

(Dr. Kilian is a family practice physician



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THE LEADER IN IMPROVING OUR URBAN COMMUNITY

After our last couple of mild winters, the snow is back - beautifully fragile as a crystal, yet a powerful force in nature. Gentle snow flurries started in late November, grew stronger in December, and transformed the landscape.

Even a few inches of snow on the ground can provide a safe haven for short-tailed shrews and meadow voles to tunnel through out of sight of their predators.

Besides cover for the little critters, a layer of snow can maintain a temperature range within a few degrees of 32 degrees Fahrenheit. This remarkably stable environment between the ground and the snow's surface is called the subnival zone. But for a predator like the red fox, snow is more of a hardship the deeper it gets.

In early December, I found what looked like red fox tracks in the fresh snow. A solitary fox on patrol often trots in a fairly straight line with evenly spaced footprints - no meandering and leaping here and there like a domestic dog out for a romp. The footprints went along the lakeshore, stopped at a storm drain, and then headed across Como Lake Drive to the wooded hillside (where there were plenty of rabbit tracks).

That same day, I also tried to read the tracks made by a cross-country skier who had started out to cross Como Lake. But the skier must have had a change of heart when they hit slushy ice. In herringbone fashion, they retreated back the way they came. (The lake may not have frozen solid before all that insulating snow covered the ice.)

For several days in mid-December, a sharp-shinned hawk frequented our backyard. During that same time, a noisy flock of European starlings were in the neighborhood eating the last dried fruits from the boulevard and backyard trees along Arlington Avenue.

The fierce little hawk snatched an unwary starling from the flock and consumed it on our front walk just a dozen feet from the dining room window. By the time my husband had gotten



Nature in the City

By DEB ROBINSON

Snow: the backdrop for this winter's story

his camera set up, the hungry sharp-shinned hawk was flying off with what was left of the hapless starling: a head and a bare

few drops of blood in the snow and a handful of iridescent feather. All signs of the struggle were soon concealed by falling snow.

newed. But each snowflake has its own story, and I've been trying to learn how to read them as well. This was the winter that I finally turned my magnifying glass onto the snowflakes.

How peaceful it is to watch big snowflakes slowly falling, sticking to the tree trunks and outlining every branch, and finally covering and softening the landscape. These details reveal information about the weather conditions both on the ground and in the layers of air the snowflake fell through. Humidity, temperature, and the shape of the snowflake are all part of the

earth. As it falls through different layers of air with different temperatures and different humidity contents the snowflake experiences morphological changes. The results are beautiful water crystals shaped like prisms, columns, plates, needles, bullets, stars, dendrites, and the not-so-beautiful graupel.

One snowflake can have as many as 200 crystals, and the largest flake ever reported was a whopping 8 inches by 12 inches (Bratsk, Siberia in 1971), but those are rare record-breaking examples.

Most snowflakes are very small, so a novice snowflake watcher will need a magnifying lupe (available in camera and sporting goods stores) or a magnifying glass to see the snowflake's finer details. Use a dark colored cloth item, like a mitten, as an observation surface. The cloth surface will need to be cold, and hold your breath to keep from melting the fragile



Photo by Matt Schmitt

spinal cord. I went out to inspect what I thought would be a grisly kill-site, but there were only a

Snow is the canvas on which winter's story is written, and that canvas is constantly being re-

story.

Water is an amazing substance. Water exists on earth in all its forms, and it changes readily from a gas to a liquid to a solid. To form snow, H₂O changes from a gas of supercooled droplets directly into a solid snowflake.

A snowflake needs a tiny particle of dust or salt to serve as a nucleus to freeze onto. After the freezing process starts the flake's growth follows the six-sided lattice structure dictated by the bonds between the oxygen and hydrogen atoms. And any part of a snowflake that breaks off can grow into another snowflake.

When the snowflake grows heavy enough it starts to fall to

crystals while you look closely at the snowflakes. Under magnification or from a distance across a frozen lake, snow lends beauty and depth to this long Minnesota winter - so let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.

Endnotes:

*You'll find a snowflake guide, and a blizzard of snowflake history as well as scientific information on the physics of snow crystals, at Kenneth Libbrecht's website (www.snowcrystals.com).

*For snowy weather information, visit the National Weather Service website at: www.nws.noaa.gov/

To contact this writer: dmrobinson@bitstream.net

How peaceful it is to watch big snowflakes slowly falling, sticking to the tree trunks and outlining every branch, and finally covering and softening the landscape.



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History Corps

Continued from page 3

to learn that that past owner of the business, Dennis Boom, was chosen in 1996 to be the Prime Minister of the St. Paul Winter Carnival, an honor bestowed on him due to his close connections in the St. Paul business community and his civic support.

These are the sorts of pieces of historical information that we hope to put together to form a larger story about the Hamline Midway's connection to the history of the Winter Carnival. If you can't make it to the Sharing Meeting and have some information to share, please contact us via our website: www.HamlineMidwayHistory.org. But we'll hope to see you at the Sharing Meeting and look forward to hearing your Winter Carnival stories!

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Classifieds

Monitor Want Ads are now \$1 per word with a \$10 minimum. Send your remittance along with your ad to Monitor Classifieds, Iris Park Place, 1885 University Avenue, Ste. #110, St. Paul, MN 55104. Classifieds must be prepaid via cash, check, or credit card. Classified ads can be e-mailed to denisw@aplacoremember.com. Want ads must be in the Monitor before January 28 for the February 7 issue. Call 651-645-7045 for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at www.MonitorSaintPaul.com

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My Apple

Continued from page 6

"By now I was starting to wake up fast," Johnson said. "I asked why the fire department turned off the electricity."

"Because of the fire last night," the tenant replied.

"I was wide awake by now," Johnson said. "There had been a fire, and no one had called me. I went right over, and the whole basement was under water. Guys were going down the hall with squeegees, trying to soak up water."

In his current building, he keeps the elevator locked. Musicians can ask for a key when they need to transport their equipment to a performance. This policy started when someone bent the elevator door, and it kept opening

and closing all night, ruining a \$600 motor.

But in spite of some of the horror stories, Johnson enjoys providing the space for musicians.

"Part of me loves doing this, and part of me says there are too many disasters," he said.

"When I closed the store, things quieted down and I kind of went into semi-retirement. I haven't played in a band for the last five or six years, because kids became a part of my life. After awhile performing gets kind of old, and it gets to be more of a job than fun."

He said when he had the store, however, he enjoyed interacting with musicians, exchanging stories, the impromptu jams.

"I liked to help young musicians get started," he said. He recalled one young boy who came in, and Johnson gave him a pile of broken cymbals.

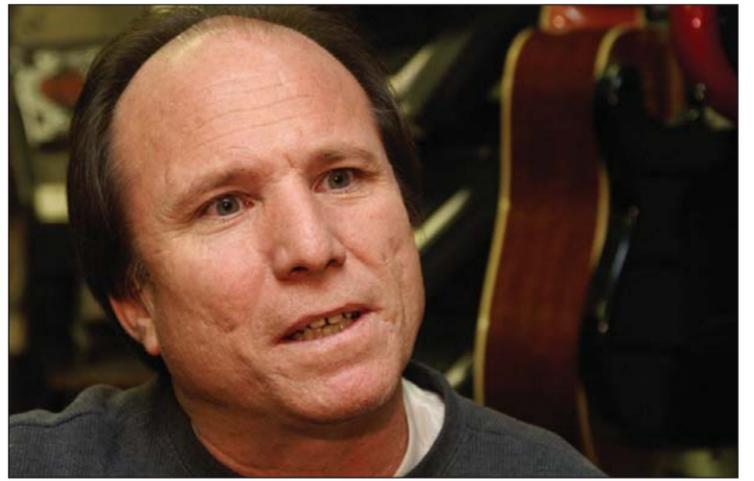
"There was still some life left in the cymbals," he said. And he added that the look on the boy's face was worth it all.

By providing a place for bands to practice, Johnson is still helping young musicians get started, according to some of his tenants.

Tristan Proza, a vocalist and one of the founders of RTD, a heavy metal band, said the private space has really helped band members to free up their minds and concentrate on creating music.

"It's something that's hard to explain, but when you can be somewhat secluded with your band, you can let the creativity flow a lot more freely."

Joe Corbett, another founder of RTD who plays guitar, agreed. "The space has helped us get to know one another as people. We actually get a feel for who we are,



Scott Johnson, a musician in his own right, has been providing practice space for nearly 20 years at My Apple Music Studios. (Photo by Terry Faust)

and it helps us write music. We also can talk with other bands, and it opens other opportunities."

Tony Ziebol, a drummer for the hard rock and heavy metal

band, Promaeta, sums it up this way.

"It's like living in dorms at college, but everyone has the same major."

Classifieds

Continued from page 15

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Thursday, January 17, 7-8 p.m.

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Friday, January 18, 7-8 p.m.

Marsha Wilson Chall and Mary Logue (faculty)

Saturday, January 19, 4:15-5:15 p.m.

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