

monitor

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Education: Schools chief confident in St. Paul

College Possible program prepares Como Park students for college

By JAN WILLMS

Chelsey Tulgren is only in her early 20s, but she is already experiencing the pangs of what it feels like to be an empty nester, a parent whose child has gone off to college.

Tulgren is in her second year as a coach at Como Park High School for the College Possible program, working with seniors who are preparing for college.

She coached these same students last year as juniors, and as her assignment with AmeriCorps draws to a close, she will be ending her working relationship with them. All coaches are recent college graduates themselves and members of AmeriCorps.

"I can't imagine what parents go through," Tulgren said. "I am going to miss them so much."

College Possible was founded in 2000 in St. Paul as "Admission Possible" by Jim McCorkell, as a program to assist low-income students to attend post-secondary training, and is transitioning to its new name this month.

"That first year St. Paul had 35 students in the program," said Anna Rockne, communications coordinator for College Possible. "We are now serving 7600 students in the Twin Cities in 19 schools." Ninety-one per cent are students of color. The program is currently in Nebraska and Wisconsin, as well as Minnesota.

McCorkell, a low income student himself, graduated from Carleton College and was inspired by his professor at the time, the late Sen. Paul Wellstone.

Statistics show that by age 24, 82 per cent of upper income students are in college, compared to only 8 per cent of low-income students. Based on his own circumstances, McCorkell wanted to raise that number.

To qualify for College Possible, students must have a 2.0 GPA, apply for the program at the end of their sophomore year, go through an interview process and do an essay and meet the poverty guidelines.

"There are high-flying achievers, and those who struggle and maybe a four-year degree is not for them," said Tulgren. "We try to reach those in the middle."

Tulgren said the coaches work really hard with recruitment.

"We now have 60 juniors in the program at Como Park," Tulgren said.



Como Park High School student Wah Wah has been working with Chelsey Tulgren to prepare for college through the AmeriCorps' College Possible program. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

"It's so exciting to get a phone call at night from a student who has received an acceptance letter. They are so happy they are jumping up and down."

- College Possible Coach Chelsey Tulgren

She added that College Possible wants to make sure every sophomore is aware of this opportunity.

"We go in all the home-rooms and classrooms and make announcements and put up posters," Tulgren explained. "We get a list of every student in this income level and get in touch; we ask for student referrals and pull students aside in the hallways."

She said that in their junior year on the program, students focus primarily on the ACT test.

"The higher the score they earn, the more choices of schools they have," she noted.

The students take four practice ACT tests, according to Tulgren, and take the real thing twice.

She works with them after school two days a week for two hours. "We review everything in all subjects," Tulgren said. "I had one student who doubled her score on the ACT test from the first time she took it."

She said the students have lots of resources to study from,

and they also start talking about colleges and start researching them, making at least one college visit. They also do volunteer work during their junior year.

During their senior year, the students fill out a whirlwind of applications.

"We don't just do it online, but they are packing envelopes with two teacher recommendations, a resume and copies of their ACT scores. And they write a special circumstances essay, explaining their individual situations," Tulgren said.

The students continue to receive advice and support once they are in college from the program.

Tulgren, who also qualified as a low-income student, is a 2010 graduate of the University of Minnesota with a degree in agricultural education. She said she was the first of her whole family to graduate from college.

"It's so cool to share my experiences with my students," she said. "Many of them are the first in their family to graduate from high school, much less college."

The passion in her voice is evident as she continues to talk about the students she has coached.

"I am so close to my students, and I am very proud of them. They are definitely my inspiration," Tulgren said. "They have taught me the value of family and of forgiveness. When I am having a bad day, I think about the things my students have been through."

The intense work has definitely paid off. Overall, 98 per cent of College Possible students have earned admission to college, and 80 per cent have completed college degrees.

Tulgren said all 40 seniors she is working with have applied to at least five schools. Half have already been accepted. She posts their acceptance letters on her office door. "It's so exciting to get a phone call at night from a student who has received an acceptance letter," she said. "They are so happy they are jumping up and down."

"The growth I see in my students is amazing," Tulgren claimed. "They may have been shy and quiet, but now we're like a family, and they make friends easily and reach out to one another."

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Como Park sees increase in auto thefts, home burglaries

By DEBORAH BROTZ

If you're planning to park on the streets near Como Park or in the parking lots, there's something St. Paul Police want you to know. Be careful out there. There has been an increase in thefts-from-auto. At the next Community Council Meeting on Jan. 17, St. Paul Police Sgt. Charlie Anderson will be there to talk about the recent activity in the neighborhood, what you can do to help, and to answer any questions you might have.

Since December 1, 2011, there have been 14 thefts-from-auto in District 10, most of which have occurred in or around Como Park and the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.

With the exception of four thefts which occurred in the surrounding residential areas, all thefts have been committed during daytime hours between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. on park streets or in the parking lots. Most victims are exercising or visiting the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory and Black Bear Crossing building. All incidents involve a vehicle window being broken. Common items being stolen are purses, cash, and laptops.

The Western District has also seen a recent increase in burglaries, including in the Como Park Neighborhood. During 12/23/11-12/28/11, there were four reported burglaries: one night residential, two night garage, and one day garage. There was also an attempted burglary that happened on the 900 block of Idaho Avenue on the morning of Dec. 28.

In addition to keeping your doors locked at all times, other crime prevention tips are: Never leave items such as purse, wallet, briefcase, lap top case, in sight of windows where someone might



Parking in Como Park? Be careful and use common sense when securing your parked car.

see them. If you do not have sufficient lighting on your property, consider installing motion lights or dusk to dawn lighting. If you have a security system, use it even if you are leaving for a short time. Have model and serial number of your belongings kept in a safe place.

Jon Knox, board chair for the District 10 Board, says Sgt. Anderson will speak during the community section of the meeting.

"It's strictly informational from the police department to affected residents," he said. "Sgt. Anderson will be there just to talk about the increased break-ins. He will talk over the steps they're taking and about the vigilance of neighbors."

Knox is leaving any talk of patterns with these break-ins up to the police department because they have the numbers on that.

"There must be a little bit

more than we're used to seeing or they wouldn't bring it up," he said. "The Western District Police wanted to come to the meeting to talk about the increase. Anytime you have this type of thing, you want to get it out to the neighborhood as a whole. Neighbors can be watching."

While Knox doesn't know why there have been more break-ins recently in Como Park, he feels weather might have something to do with it.

"I can only guess there have been more during these months because the weather has been warmer," he said. "When there's frigid weather, break-ins decrease. The amount of people going to the park and the culprits out are less."

While talk of break-ins does make people fearful, the police department is taking steps. Sgt. Anderson has requested the

Mounted and Parking Enforcement Unit, which will be bringing resources into the area. He has also contacted Park Security and requested that they increase visibility and pro-active control.

Here are a few tips to not become a victim of theft-from-auto: Never leave laptops, wallets or any personal property in your vehicle, even for a few minutes. If you do take items of value with you, place them in your trunk before leaving home. If you have not placed items in your trunk and decide to park somewhere, stop along the way, place them in a trunk and then continue to your parking destination. Record the serial numbers of all property, especially electronics. This will make it more likely for you to get items back if police recover your property. Keep your vehicle doors locked.

It's important to let neighbors know about the break-ins so they can help to be the "eyes and ears" for the community.

"If the police feel it's important then it's important for us to think it's important," said Knox. "It's important neighbors are aware. We need to have as many people as we can keep their eyes open and be aware of what's happening in the neighborhood."

After the Jan. 17 meeting, Knox hopes people will do for their neighbor as they would like them to do for them.

"We hope that they would pay attention to what's going on and take an active role in being part of the neighborhood," he said. "We hope for an increased amount of vigilance to get neighbors to help each other."

The Community Council Meeting will be on Tuesday, Jan. 17, at 7 p.m., at the Historic Streetcar Station.

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MIDWAY/COMO/NORTH END Monitor in a Minute



Tin Cup's assessed fine for grilling outdoors

Tin Cup's Place, 1220 Rice St., must pay a \$500 fine for serving food outside of its building without a proper permit. The St. Paul City Council imposed the fine December 21.

The restaurant grilled hot dogs outdoors without a special event permit. Assistant City Attorney Kyle Lundgren said that even though the business has a restaurant license, that doesn't cover special events.

Restaurant co-owner Gidget Bailey objected to the penalty, saying the business owners had contacted the Minnesota Department of Health to ask if any special permissions were needed to grill outside. She said state officials told her nothing was needed. But in St. Paul, permits and licenses for food service are issued by the city, not the state.

"Do you understand the difference between the city and the state?" said Council President Kathy Lantry.

"Now I do," Bailey replied.

Others from the restaurant said they grilled outside, but didn't serve food outside. No alcohol was allowed outside. Tin Cup's has a small outside area with tables but doesn't use it as a customer dining patio.

Ward Five Council member Lee Helgen said he, too, was concerned that the business owners didn't check with the city before grilling outdoors, and recommended that the penalty be imposed.

Java Train gets upgraded license

Java Train, 1341 Pascal St., can have licenses to sell wine and malt on-sale, and serve alcohol on its patio as a result of St. Paul City Council action January 4. The council approved the licenses after a legislative hearing this fall.

The council also upgraded Java Train's license from 13-50 seats to 51-150 seats.

A legislative hearing was required for the license request because of neighborhood objections. At the hearing in October 2011, concerns were raised about spillover parking, noise, traffic problems and litter generated by business patrons. The request does have support from other neighbors and from the Como Community Council.

The restaurant was unable to get 90 percent of adjacent neighbors to sign a consent petition for the patio license; 63 percent did sign.

City staff did place conditions on the license. One is that beer and wine only be sold with food. The business must have its gross receipts checked annually. Sales must be at least 60 percent food; otherwise that is a license violation.

Business hours will be 5 a.m.-10 p.m., with no alcohol sold before 10 a.m.

Also, Java Train cannot make any changes to its interior floor plan without city approval.

1664 University used as Corridor parking

A lot at 1664 University Ave. will continue to be used for parking by businesses affected by Central Corridor light rail construction. The St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), approved a plan December 22 that will allow for lot use for another nine months. The lot will be leased for \$1,350 per month.

The city is working with the St. Paul Federal Credit Union, which plans to locate a facility nearby, and businesses at the northwest corner of University and Snelling, to provide parking. A parking lot is to be created for businesses at that corner, through a city program meant to provide parking. Many businesses have already lost their on-street parking as a result of last year's light rail construction project.

The new lot was to be built last year but didn't get completed, so the lease of the property at 1664 University needs to be continued so that businesses have parking.

No one appeared at an HRA public hearing to speak against the parking plans.

Griggs Street bike improvements

The proposed Griggs Street bike and pedestrian improvements will be the topic of a St. Paul City Council public hearing at 5:30

p.m. Wednesday, January 18 at City Hall. The project affects property owners in the Hamline-Midway and Lexington-Hamline neighborhoods, and was the focus of community meetings last fall.

Improvements would be made on Griggs between Summit and Minnehaha avenues by improving the pedestrian and bicycle environment along the corridor. The project also includes traffic calming with traffic circles and bumpouts, bicycle specific pavement markers and destination/directional signs, dynamic speed display signs, bike/ped signal detection technology, and improved street lighting.

Properties abutting Griggs between St. Anthony and University will be assessed for street lighting improvements. (File No. 19128, Assessment No. 125100). For further details contact lynn.moser@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Permits and rezoning for Walgreens OKed

With little opposition at recent city meetings the needed conditional use permit and rezoning for a new Walgreens store in the Como neighborhood has passed. The St. Paul Planning Commission approved the needed conditional use permit for the drive-through window December 2 and recommended approval of a needed property rezoning that same day. The St. Paul City Council approved the rezoning December 21. Those two steps allow the project to move forward.

No one appeared at a City Council hearing to speak against the rezoning.

The existing MGM Liquor store will make way for the new pharmacy. The project went through many months of discussion with neighbors and the Dis-

trict 10 Como Community Council. MGM owns houses on California Avenue south of the current liquor store. A portion of the rear yards will be split off and an alley reconfigured to accommodate the new store and a relocated alley, as well as the store's drive-through lane. The back yards of several California Avenue properties were rezoned from residential use to community business use as part of the project.

The Planning Commission approval was for the drive-through window, with a modification of the distance requirement from residential property. That decision could have been appealed to the City Council had there been community opposition but no one filed an appeal within the required 10-day window.

The next steps for the project include changes to the alley and plat changes. The project gets underway this year.

Snelling dance hall fined for alcohol

A Snelling Avenue dance hall has been fined after city officials discovered that the business served alcohol to a minor and operated in violation of its license. The St. Paul City Council voted Dec. 21 to fine Jonah Ogamien for the violations at his rental hall at 508 N. Snelling Av.

The hall is on the second floor of the building. It is to be rented for private events. City licensing staff found violations in July and August last year. A hall renter sold liquor in violation of the hall's operating license and allowed an underage person to be present without a parent. On one occasion police found an intoxi-

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GROW YOUR BACKYARD HOMESTEAD

City Council adopts 5 percent levy increase for 2012 budget

By JANE MCCLURE

Months of budget review and an eleventh-hour skirmish with Mayor Chris Coleman ended December 14 as the St. Paul City Council adopted its budget and property tax levy. Last-minute changes resulted in a 2012 levy increase of 4.98 percent, down from the 6.5 percent proposal made by Coleman in August.

The amount levied for city services is \$99.3 million, or about \$4.7 million more than levied in 2011. The original budget proposal called for a \$100.7 million levy. The levy will support a \$556 million budget.

Last week Coleman proposed cutting the increase to 5.5 percent. But some of his administration's budget changes, including the elimination of Rescue Squad 2, met objections from the City Council. The council made its own changes to fire, police, library and safety and inspections budgets.

Whether those council changes stick remains to be seen. Under St. Paul's form of government, the mayor and department heads can choose whether or not to spend money the City Council allocates. While conceding that is the case, council members said they believe their budget protects public safety and key services, while

holding the line on spending.

No Monitor area facilities, such as recreation centers or libraries, will be closed as a result of the budget. But patrons should look for changes at recreation centers, such as less frequent cleaning. Library hours could also change.

Coleman and the council agree on some changes, such as library hours and police spending. But they disagree on fire. Coleman defended his budget changes by saying they represent a balanced approach to cuts in city services. Funding for the changes was found from excess tax increment financing dollars, refunding of bond issues and other budget shifts and changes.

Council President Kathy Lantry said the 2012 budget process "is one of the longest and most painful I have been through." She cautioned that not everyone will be happy with the results. There will also still be about half a dozen layoffs.

"Did everybody get everything they wanted?" added Lantry. "No, but that doesn't happen in life, and it won't happen in the budget, either."

"This budget has been difficult, no question about it," said Ward Three Council Member Pat Harris. Harris and Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark said

they were pleased that the budget restores funding to public safety and other services, while reducing the levy. Property taxes have been a huge concern in St. Paul. At the council's truth-in-taxation hearing December 7 more than a dozen people testified about high property taxes and the difficulties they are facing.

More than 100 members of Firefighters Local 21 packed the council chambers to show their objections to the loss of the rescue squad. The unit serves neighborhoods including Highland Park, the West End, Macalester-Groveland and Summit Hill. It is one three rescue squads. Earlier this year Fire Chief Tim Butler said the department can safely operate with two rescue squads and that public safety won't be compromised. The Coleman administration indicated after the vote that it would let Butler make the decisions for the fire department.

Another sticking point in the budget debate was fire department overtime, which was originally eliminated in the 2012 budget as part of a \$1 million cost savings. One key debate during the budget review was over so-called brownouts, where rigs go idle for as long as a day.

The council added \$111,033 for Rescue Squad 2, and \$78,934 and \$282,999 for the overtime

budgets to the fire budget.

Other points of the budget were less contentious. The council and mayor agreed on a \$2.4 million affordable housing trust fund, to be created with excess Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) dollars. That project will be reviewed by the Neighborhood STAR Board and council in the weeks ahead. An additional \$2 million goes back to the board for review and allocation to other projects.

The budget also provides \$75,000 to programs for the homeless, and \$40,000 for a study of regional employment disparities. It also restores a Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) code inspector post at a cost of about \$67,000.

For the police department, the budget restores three vacant officer positions (\$289,184), preserves the motorcycle unit (\$95,634) and preserves vehicles for police who serve the public housing agency buildings (\$13,814).

The council made some changes by taking funds from the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and Planning and Economic Development (PED). The PED media spokesperson post was eliminated at a savings of \$94,000. The council also reallocated \$300,000 in HRA funds to

cover its own staff time and costs associated with HRA projects

Another key point was restoration of 12 of 40 library hours Coleman chose to eliminate. That means 6.8 library full-time equivalent positions will be retained. It's not clear where the added hours will be implemented. The council meets as the Library Board this week. Coleman had said the hours would be restored to the busiest libraries, including Rondo. This adds \$376,580 to library spending.

With the 2012 levy the owner of a typical St. Paul home (\$149,300 value) will pay \$34 more in taxes next year. The council also adopted right-of-way maintenance fees, water and storm and sanitary sewer fees for 2012. The fee increase brings the total for that typical home to \$108 in additional taxes and fees over 2011.

Yet another part of the budget that was adopted was the 2012-2013 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB), at \$37.18 million for next year. One area project was added to the CIB. Completion of the Marshall Avenue median project, which received no funding from the mayor, is penciled in for \$510,000 for 2014. That is subject to final review and approval through the 2014-2015 CIB process.

Get cozy at the Fireside Reading Series: A Hamline Midway tradition

The Fireside Literary Series returns for its 18th year at the Hamline Midway Branch Library, 1558 West Minnehaha Avenue. Warm up the winter nights with a little mystery, some verse and memoir, fiction and history, as some of Minnesota's best writers share their works during fireside readings sponsored by The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library. The programs begin at 7 p.m. and are accompanied by coffee, cider, cookies and book signings.

Growing up with Swedish



Eric Dregni

and Norwegian grandparents with a dash of Danish thrown in for balance, Eric Dregni thought

Scandinavians were perfectly normal. Who doesn't enjoy a good, healthy salad (Jell-O packed with canned fruit, colored marshmallows, and pretzels) or perhaps some cod soaked in drain cleaner as the highlights of Christmas? On January 18, go along for the ride as Dregni tracks down and explores the significant—and quite often bizarre—historic sites, tales, and traditions of Scandinavia's peculiar colony in the Midwest in a reading from Vikings in the Arctic.



Mary Rockcastle

Don't miss Mary Rockcastle's new novel on January 25. Told from the alternating per-

spectives of a husband and wife, Mary Rockcastle's *In Caddis Wood* explores the competing rhythms of romantic love, family life, and professional ambition, refracted through the changing seasons of a long marriage. Beneath the surface, affecting their collective future, beats the resilient and endangered heart of nature. Library Journal states the book is "a strong and insightful novel this reader was reluctant to see end."

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In a minute
Continued from page 3

cated 17-year-old who had been at the hall. The juvenile's blood alcohol content was .232.

Fights, litter and late-night noise have also been problems at the hall. The council imposed two \$1,000 fines on the business and added more conditions to its licenses. The hall now must close at midnight. Public dances must not be held there. The council also reminded Ogiemien that alcohol is not to be sold there.

Ogiemien objected to the additional conditions and denied that an underage person was served at the hall. He rents primarily to African groups and has operated since 1994 without problems, he told the council.

He strenuously objected to the change in closing time, saying that would not work for his clientele. But Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark said the violations are serious and sanctions are needed.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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Central Corridor progress continues with onset of warm winter weather

By JANE MCCLURE

A wimpy winter has helped construction crews working on parts of the Central Corridor light rail line into early 2012. The Central Corridor Management Committee heard a project update December 14. The continued work is good for those wanting to see the project move ahead but has been a frustration at times for motorists.

Major construction on University Avenue ended November 30 with the opening of the street to two lanes of traffic from Hamline Avenue to Emerald Street. Some cleanup and minor work have continued since then, said

Dan Soler, Central Corridor Director of Transportation Systems Design and Construction. Workers have been removing materials and doing some cleanup. That has meant some temporary lane shifts and closures. Lead contractor Walsh Construction has also been providing security for the area.

Private utility work will continue throughout the winter.

But the biggest changes have been to traffic and pedestrian crossings, as several signals now have left turn arrows. Those are activated by vehicles stopping behind, not on the crosswalks.

Crosswalks themselves now



A wimpy winter has helped construction crews working on parts of the Central Corridor light rail line into early 2012. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

have APS or audible signal technology to assist people are visually impaired.

The \$957 million light rail project, which extends from downtown St. Paul to downtown Minneapolis, should be almost 40

percent complete by year's end, said Soler. "It's been a good year for the project."

"Some work on University Avenue may continue if the weather cooperates," Soler said. Work could continue in the state

areas. Motorists may encounter short-term lane closures in December but nothing like the closures and long delays experienced over the past several months.

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What's Cookin' ...

By COLETTE MULLENMASTER

Tin Cup's Gidget Bailey & Joan Knippenberg

These days, foodyism is an easy trend to become a part of, cuz hey, we all gotta eat, right? If you aren't someone whose kitchen comes standard with a TV to watch the latest cooking shows, (or "Dancing with the Stars™") as well as a library of cookbooks and some pretty cool gadgets, you probably know somebody who does. WHAT'S COOKIN' is our way of acknowledging our community restaurants and those who run them, while providing you, our readers, a glimpse into the kitchen, along with a recipe from the chef to try for yourself. Bon Appetit!

CM: How did you happen to become an owner of a restaurant?

GB: It was always my dream to be bar owner. I was a bartender for many years and just loved it.

CM: What made you choose this community as a location?

GB: Joan (Knippenberg) and I heard from a friend that Tin Cup's was closing its doors again. We decided to have a meeting with the previous owner and 4 hours later we walked out as owners. The best part about this location is we grew up in this area. I'm an '85 graduate of St. Bernards and Joan is an '80 graduate of Como. So this community has a lot of history for us. As the saying goes, "Once a Rice Streeter, always a Rice Streeter."

CM: What is the best thing about running a restaurant in this community?

GB: Everyone knows everyone here. This community is a hard working community with a lot of dignity and pride. This community has welcomed us with open arms. They have embraced us for all our hard work and accomplishments and they have showered us with love and shown us great respect. We couldn't have picked a better community to have a business in. It's all about community in our eyes. We feel Tin Cup's is a real live version of Cheers, where everybody knows your name!

EGGCELLENT LUCY

Ingredients you will need:

- 2 1/4 lb. hamburger patties
- 2 slices of Swiss cheese
- 2 pieces of fried and diced bacon
- 1 piece of American cheese
- 1 egg
- Sauteed onions
- Texas Pete Hot Sauce



Left to right: Beau Bailey, Mike Schally, Joan Knippenberg, Gidget Bailey

Put 1 patty on bottom, take 2 slices of Swiss cheese and the diced bacon and put in center of patty. Take 2nd patty and put on top, pinch the whole outer rim of patties together. Do not squeeze the patty. Put Juicy Lucy on the grill. Grill approximately 10-12 minutes, flip patty over and grill another 10-12 minutes until medium. Fry egg. Add a slice of American cheese to the top. Grill the bun, place the Juicy Lucy on bun, place sauteed onions on top of cheese, top with fried egg and add Texas Pete Hot Sauce. You have just made one of Tin Cup's FAMOUS Juicy Lucys! Enjoy!

Go to www.MonitorSaintPaul.com to see video of the Eggcellent Lucy being made!
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School chief confident St. Paul is headed in the right direction



St. Paul Public Schools Superintendent Valeria Silva is confident that the district is headed in the right direction.

By JAN WILLMS

Citing her confidence that Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is moving in the right direction, Supt. Valeria Silva spoke of transforming lives and learning in the school system at a recent breakfast December 8 sponsored by the SPPS Foundation and Greater Twin Cities United Way.

"When the School Board unanimously approved Strong Schools, Strong Communities, we knew we had just passed the most comprehensive reform SPPS had seen in more than 40 years," Silva said.

She said the plan featured a very student-centered framework and put in place the conditions to break a predictable pattern of

lower achievement for African American and American Indian students.

Silva said that in the course of planning and data review, two

surprising things were revealed. First, students of color do as well or better in St. Paul's community schools as they do in magnet schools, and second, St. Paul's

neighborhoods are far more naturally integrated than most cities.

"We are in Year 1 of a three-year journey to deliver the best education possible in every classroom, without exception or excuse," Silva stated.

She said people are living in what some call the Decade of Transformation.

"The futurist David Houle predicts that the next 10 years will be a level of transformation like no other," Silva continued, "and the Internet and our use of mobile devices have created connections that on a global scale are starting to feel like a global brain."

"Can you imagine what that means for our teachers and the tools they use in the classroom?" she asked.

Silva said she is encouraged by the progress SPPS is making on several fronts. Achievement and enrollment are both up, in numbers that have not been seen in years.

"On the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs), there was a four per cent gain in reading. This is the largest single year gain since 2008," she noted, "and we saw a consistent pattern of gains across all grades and all student groups."

Silva added that the State's adoption of the Common Core State Standards for reading and writing will also help to transform SPPS. She said that in partnership with the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, the Minnesota Department of Education and the Council of the Great City Schools, SPPS is nationally leading the way in developing and field-testing Common Core assessments in preparation for statewide implementation next year.

"The Common Core will result in shifts in instructional practice through rigorous reading, writing and questioning to increase the career and college readiness for all students," she said.

Silva said the Math MCA that students took last spring is a new and more rigorous test to ensure students are prepared to handle more demanding math coursework. Currently, 10 schools in the district now exceed statewide math proficiency.

"We are helping students excel, no matter where their starting point is," Silva explained.

One of the factors Silva sees as accounting for the jump in reading this year by SPPS students is a result of the investment in pre-kindergarten.

"We know that many of our children begin kindergarten already behind some of their peers," she said. "This preschool learning gap is being addressed by our robust PreK program."

Silva cited a study done by Wilder Research in which data showed that in the year before kindergarten, SPPS PreK children made progress more quickly than children nationally.

"When the School Board unanimously approved Strong Schools, Strong Communities, we knew we had just passed the most comprehensive reform SPPS had seen in more than 40 years."

- St. Paul Schools Superintendent Valeria Silva




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CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

St. Paul schools

Continued from page 6

"But when we go deeply into the data, the achievement gap between white and African American PreK students in Alphabet Knowledge has a 26 per cent gap," Silva acknowledged. "That's a learning gap that exists before these children even start school."

Regarding this gap, however, Silva said that by Spring 2011, after less than a year in the PreK program, the gap between the African American and the white PreK students had decreased by more than half to 10 per cent.

Silva said that because of this progress, SPPS was invited to partner with Dr. Arthur Reynolds from the University of Minnesota in a five-year federal grant studying the effectiveness of comprehensive services in learning in PreK through 3rd grade. Five other districts across the Midwest will join in this partnership.

Silva said that enrollment showed its first overall increase in 12 years this fall. There are currently nearly 39,000 students in grades PreK through 12.

"This is the second year in a row where our actual enrollment beat our projections," Silva claimed.

Working to continue to increase enrollment, Silva said the "One Thing I Love About Saint Paul Public Schools" was adopted, funded entirely by private donations.

"This gives voice to our community in a very grassroots and personal way," Silva said. She



Superintendent Valeria Silva said that before reversing the trend of declining enrollment in St. Paul, SPPS was faced with the dilemma of keeping strong academic programs alive in small schools.

said SPPS has received hundreds of hand-written submissions from the community telling about their one "love."

Looking at this stable environment which produces stable revenue, Silva stressed the importance of doing more than business as usual with the budget.

"Finances must become more student-centered," she said. She emphasized that making across the board cuts undermines the academic achievements of students.

"We are putting our money into proven practices that benefit students," Silva said.

Silva said that before reversing the trend of declining enrollment in St. Paul, SPPS was faced with the dilemma of keeping strong academic programs alive in small schools.

"Since 2010, we have co-located six school programs that continued to offer a full academ-

ic program," she explained. "School communities remain intact, and these co-locations are thriving."

Silva said that in examining 10 years of SPPS achievement data by race and income, it was determined that African American students, regardless of their family income, were not being reached "This disparity must be confronted and courageously met" she avowed. "We are committed to eliminating racial disparities through transformation of policies, practices and systems."

Silva also addressed fair and equitable state funding for SPPS.

"Schools can no longer be used as lending agencies to address the state's budget shortfall," she said. "That is not a long-term solution for education or for Minnesota."

She said SPPS will be asking for renewed support next November. "Like almost every other school district across the state, local support is essential to continue our progress," she said.

Reflecting on the transformation of lives and learning in SPPS, Silva said it is as much about giving each and every child a compass for critical thinking and character as it is about providing access to the most rigorous AO calculus classes and exposure to the most celebrated musical works.

"As our world becomes more global, it's important to look beyond the numbers and do more than just measure a child's reading and math abilities," Silva said. "Success may continue to be measured in statistics, but it will be defined and sustained in broader human terms."



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Kinder Story Hours

Thursday, January 26
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Friday, February 10
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.



Hamline Library offers winter programming

Career Solutions, community-based nonprofit dedicated to providing hope and help to people in career transitions since 1974, will be in the library on Wednesdays, January 25 and February 8, 1-3 p.m. to provide drop-in cover letter and resume-writing assistance.

The annual Fireside Author Series kicks off on January 11 with author Larry Millet reading at 7 p.m. A different local author will read each Wednesday evening at 7 p.m. through Febru-

ary 15. Check the library calendar or call for more details. Hope to see you beside the fireplace! This event is sponsored by the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library.

Join Colleen Dooley, CMT-RYT, for a yoga class at the library on Tuesdays at 11 a.m. Beginners are welcome! This free class is open to the public and there is no registration required.

Does your child love dogs? Paw Pals will be at the library on Saturday, January 21 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Call the library to reg-

ister your child for this opportunity to build reading skills while reading with a therapy dog. Open to ages 6-12.

Join our Kids Book Club on January 6 at 1:30 p.m. as they discuss books, participate in reading activities, and eat treats. Open to readers ages 8-12. New members are welcome!

Teen Book Club meets on January 6 at 2:30 p.m. Call or ask at the desk for the latest selection.

Saturday Club meets January

21 at 1:30 p.m. Take a break to remember the feathered neighbors and make a pinecone birdfeeder. Free and open to all school-aged kids.

The library will host an open lab on Wednesdays January 11 and 25 from 4-5:30 p.m. Patrons will be able to ask questions, get one-on-one computer help, and assistance with basic computer operations. This is a drop-in lab and patrons will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Hamline Midway Li-

brary Association meets Monday, January 23 at 6:15. Join them to support our neighborhood library.

Toddler and preschool storytime is offered every Friday at 10:30 a.m. Bring your child to share in the joys of reading!

Call 651-642-0293 or stop by the library at 1558 W Minnehaha Ave, near the intersection of Snelling and Minnehaha, to sign up for events that require pre-registration. All events are free.

Letter's to the Editor

Tin Cup's thanks NEBA for help

Tin Cup's just returned from the monthly NEBA (North End Business Assoc.) meeting held on January 4th at the Klub Haus. Much to our surprise, the Tin Cup's hot dog fine from the City of St. Paul was discussed. (Tin Cup's received a citation and a fine for grilling food outside this past fall. See story on page 3.) NEBA took up a collection for the \$500 fine and a number of businesses contributed to cover the cost.

Words cannot express the gratitude that Tin Cup's has towards our business neighbors. The support of this community is overwhelming. We are very honored to be included in this family! Our sincerest thanks to the community.

Gidget Bailey
Joan Knippenberg
Tin Cup's

The Vikings stadium and the State Legislature's actions

Dec. 20th's Ramsey County Board meeting was chock full of vitriol aimed at the State Legislature. Chair Victoria Reinhardt said, "It's high time they make a decision...if they had taken on that responsibility as they should, we wouldn't be in this spot. My irritation is with the State (Legislature) in not doing their jobs." Commissioner Ortega then offered he and Commissioner Bennett (a former legislator) were

also "irritated" by the strung-out process to get approval to raise taxes in Ramsey County for a stadium.

It isn't the legislature's job to address every idea that comes through the door. Over 3,000 bills are handled each session; few of them get a hearing and still fewer are passed into law (typically less than 150). State law dictates that the legislature cannot meet year-round, so its time is limited.

The legislature's system is quite different than that of a local government body. The county board, with only seven members, can vote an initiative up or down immediately and put the matter to rest.

Bills in the legislature are

constantly in play, in a revolving smorgasbord. If there are enough legislators interested in giving a bill a hearing, the bill is advanced. If not, it stays on the revolving smorgasbord.

Up to now, the legislature has chosen no action on the stadium issue because it has yet to receive something concrete to vote on. In essence, their non-action is a "no" vote and that is a message Ramsey County staff and county board members refuse to accept.

Bryan Olson
Falcon Heights

Fireside

Continued from page 4

On February 1 Ed Bok Lee looks toward a global future, one where the dividing lines between state, religion, race, history, and culture have been blurred to the extent that the very idea of difference requires a new understanding. His new poetry collection *Whorled* strives to give a voice to those left out with words of loss and longing,

confrontation and celebration. From gambling Buddhists at a Midwest Native American casino, to a Russian rave, Lee's ever-wandering cultural and spiritual nomads struggle to make sense of what it means to be a citizen of an increasingly homeless world.

For Peter Smith, the unavoidable mistakes and embarrassments in life—our lesser horrors—are not without their humor, and a healthy dose at that. In *A Cavalcade of Lesser Horrors*, a series of funny, honest, and moving pieces,

Smith explores a few messy episodes from his own life and uncovers a simple reassurance we should take to heart: we're all on this wild ride together. Take a seat and enjoy the trip on February 8.

Diane Wilson closes the Fireside Series on February 15 with a reading from the moving book, *Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life*, in which she explores the work of several modern Dakota people who are continuing to raise beloved children: Gabrielle Tateyuskaskan, an artist and poet;

Clifford Canku, a spiritual leader and language teacher; Alameda Rocha, a boarding school survivor; Harley and Sue Eagle, Canadian activists; and Delores Brunelle, an Ojibwe counselor. Each of these humble but powerful people teaches children to believe in the "genius and brilliance" of Dakota culture as a way of surviving historical trauma.

The Fireside Series is sponsored by The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library, a non-profit organization that supports the

work and programs of the Saint Paul Public Library, and co-sponsored by Micawber's Books. For more information, contact The Friends at 651-222-3242 or visit www.thefriends.org.

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Ed Bok Lee



Peter Smith



Diane Wilson

IN OUR COMMUNITY

In Our Community

Viking Toastmasters returns to Rice St.

Viking Toastmasters returns to the Rice Street Library, 1011 Rice Street. We will be meeting weekly on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. starting January 11. Toastmasters is for you if you like to share ideas, work on your communication skills and give a boost to your self-confidence. Come and meet friendly people who care about each other, help each other and have fun doing it. Visitors are always welcome. For more information see our Web Site <http://591.toastmastersclubs.org/> or call Les or Nancy Anderson 651-735-3953. You may attend three meetings without charge.

Study of Gospels continues thru Feb. 26

Jehovah Lutheran Church at 1566 Thomas continues its sequence of Bible studies on The Gospels and the Jesus Story According to Mark Sundays at 9:30 a.m. The sessions, which continue through Feb. 26, are based on DVD presentations by Bible scholar Luke Timothy Johnson of Emory University in Atlanta. Coffee and treats are provided and all are welcome to the free sessions.

Horticulturist talk on butterflies on Feb. 19

Come hear Heather Holm, noted horticulturist and landscaping blogger, share her ideas for creating gardens that help butterflies and moths flourish. Holm's presentation, free and open to the public, is scheduled for Sunday, February 19 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the North Dale Recreation Center, 1414 Saint Albans St. No. "Attracting beautiful moths and butterflies to our landscapes requires more than providing nectar sources," Holm says. She'll focus on 20 moth and butterfly species whose caterpillars require specific native plants to feed on before becoming flying adults.

She'll also discuss the lifecycles of butterflies and moths and their amazing adaptations and survival strategies.

Holm maintains the popular "Restoring the Landscape with Native Plants" blog. Her presentation is the first of a three-month Sunday Series sponsored by the Como Community Council.

Women's Bible Study continues February 1

Women's Bible Study Continues through Feb. 1 on Alternate Wednesdays

A women's Bible study continues from 6:30-8:30 p.m. on al-



On February 9 Café Accordion Orchestra will be performing "Berets and Bongos" at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory. A loungey, eclectic mix, full of French flare, Latin heat and Bohemian attitude.

'Music Under Glass' At Como

Escape the winter chill to comfortable confines of the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory for a free "Music Under Glass" series featuring a perfect blend of musical styling ranging from a variety of genres. Zydeco to Cello & Gypsy to Jazz, the two acre tropical garden under glass will showcase live, local musicians from 5pm -8pm beginning January 12, and again on January 22, February 9 & 19, and March 8 & 18. Food, cocktails, beer and wine will be available to purchase.

January 12 - Chris Koza - Chris Koza is a Minneapolis-based singer-songwriter has been recording and releasing albums since 2004. His song-writing carries a strong emphasis on the lyrical and poetic elements, with stylings and textures rooted in folk and americana traditions. With guitar player Peter Sieve, Koza has toured the U.S. a handful of times.

January 22 - Rhizosphere - an improvisatory quartet that explores the fertile territory where the roots of music from around the world come together. Sounds from Europe, Asia, and the Americas interact spontaneously in an aural environment held together by the great American traditions of Jazz, Folk Music, and the Blues. Rhizosphere features Bobb Fantauzzo on Native American and Chinese flutes, Gabriela Sweet on Slide Guitar and Accordion, Mike Bruns on Guitar, and Sean Egan on clarinet.

February 9 - Café Accordion Orchestra - "Berets and Bongos" describes the Café Accordion Orchestra experience. A loungey, eclectic mix, full of French flare, Latin heat and Bohemian attitude. The heart of the Café Accordion repertoire is the romantic, gypsy-influenced valse-musette. The group complements the musettes with swing, ballads, tangos, cha chas, rumbas, and cumbias to create a wonderfully varied show. They inject their music with good humor and expressive abandon. Their high level of musicianship and passion for performance makes them an entertaining concert act as well as a great dance band.

ternate Wednesdays through Feb. 1. The Bible study is based on author Beth Moore's book Breaking Free.

The Bible study focuses on the Old Testament book of Isaiah to help participants discover the transforming power of Christian freedom.

Remaining dates are Jan. 4, Jan. 18 and Feb. 1 — no class Dec. 28. More information is available from the church office at 651-644-1421 or Bridget at bridgetkrukowski@comcast.net.

All are welcome. Jehovah Lutheran is in St. Paul at Thomas and Snelling.

Luncheon features local writer/professor

"Remembering Mimi: Recipes, Family and Cooking Across

Generations" will be presented at a luncheon for seniors on Tues., Feb. 14 at 1514 Englewood Ave at 11:30 a.m. Neighborhood resident and Hamline University Assistant Professor, Kim Johnson, will address the love of a granddaughter for a grandmother through a delightful history of recipes. A \$4 free will donation is asked for the meal but there is no cost to attend the program which begins at 12:15 p.m. Reservations preferred but not required. For more information 651-209-6542.

The Breastfed Baby discussed February 14

The Baby Arrives: The Family and the Breastfed Baby is the topic of the meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group on Tuesday, February 14. All expectant and

nursing mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information.

Joint friendly exercise classes to begin

A new session of Joint Friendly exercise classes begins Feb. 7 and will run every Tues. and Thurs from 2-3 p.m. for eight weeks at 1514 Englewood Ave. Instructors have been trained by the MN Arthritis Foundation and are CPR certified. Past attendees noticed increased strength and range of motion as well as reduced pain. There is no cost for the series. Call HM Elders, 651-209-6542 to register.

Hamline Midway CONNECTS to meet

Beginning Jan. 19, 10:30-11:30 a.m., CONNECT, a new networking group for persons 50+, will meet at the Hamline Library, 1558 Minnehaha Ave. The group is scheduled to meet every third Thursday of the month thereafter. CONNECT's purpose will be:

To share information with other members including new or existing resources, what's happening in the Hamline Midway community, and updates about volunteer and work projects. To provide support by offering suggestions and/or help with problem solving if asked.

CONNECT may provide opportunities for community action to be taken, but this is not the primary purpose. For more information, contact Stephanie Digby at 651-642-1288.

Free community breakfast at North Emanuel Jan. 22

A free community breakfast will be offered at North Emanuel Lutheran Church 301 Hatch Ave, at Matilda Street on January 22, 2012 serving 8-9:30 a.m. Every 4th Sunday of each month.

We welcome all to come to North Emanuel, where we are working to offer Help and Hope to the North End community, one meal at a time. You may call Pastor Kisten .. 651-489-5611 or Larry at 651-373-5797 or Sandy at 651-490-1449 for directions or information.

Saint Mark's School information event planned January 23

Saint Mark's School, 1983 Dayton Avenue is hosting a preschool and kindergarten information night on Monday, January 23, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

New and prospective preschool and kindergarten families are invited to join members of the Saint Mark's School, current students and administrative staff for refreshments and a presentation featuring the Preschool and Kindergarten Programs at Saint Mark's.

School tours will follow the presentation, and families will have the opportunity to meet the teachers in Grades Pre-K through 8, as well as the Specialist teachers for Computer, Spanish, Music, Art and Physical Education.

Reservations are encouraged by January 18. Contact Barb Sonntag, Administrative Assistant, 651-644-3380.

Planning Commission approves conditional use permit for Apex Auto

By JANE MCCLURE

Apex Auto, 198 E. Minnehaha, is on the road to making changes to its business. On December 2 the Planning Commission approved a needed conditional use permit and recommended approval of a rezoning request for the business. The commission's decision on the permit is final; the rezoning will be finalized by the City Council.

Apex has been located in the neighborhood for more than 20 years. The business has expanded over that time, demolishing a house in 2009 as part of the expansion. At that time it came to light that the business needed to rezone one parcel and to seek a conditional use permit to make its continued use of the property conforming.

Apex's property is already

zoned for light industrial use. But auto salvage use requires a heavier or more intensive type of industrial use. Also, motor vehicle salvage use requires a conditional use permit with modification of distance requirements. That is because the business is less than 300 feet from residential property.

No one appeared at a November Planning Commission Zoning Committee hearing to speak against the permit or rezoning requests.

City staff recommended approval of both requests. The permit is with conditions, making approval contingent on the companion rezoning request. Also, outdoor storage on the property needs to be moved. Auto storage and outdoor salvage must occur in areas specified on a new property site plan.

City studies parkland dedication ordinance

By JANE MCCLURE

Since 2007 St. Paul has required developers to follow a parkland dedication ordinance, setting aside park area or paying a fee to the city for park purposes. In five years the ordinance has generated \$296,351.50. But it hasn't resulted in large park spaces that some advocates had sought. Possible changes to that ordinance will be studied in 2012, with a public hearing before the city's Planning Commission at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Feb. 3 at City Hall.

Changes could affect park and open space in several pending redevelopment projects including sites along the Central Corridor light rail line.

The St. Paul Planning Commission launched a study last fall of whether the parkland dedication requirement is working and what changes are needed. Results of the study, which will include public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council, will shape the ordinance changes.

Planning Administrator Allan Torstenson said the current ordinance applies to new developments and to new plats. Records show that in many cases developers have opted to pay fees rather than create parkland. Developers

that have created open space have set aside small pocket parks, seating plazas or playground areas.

Two possible ordinance changes suggested by city planning staff are:

*Basing the amount of required parkland dedication at the time of platting on the total acreage of the new lots being created for new residential, commercial or industrial development that would create a need for new parkland. Parkland would not have to be created for lots for which the use would be unchanged or for uses that would not create a need for additional parkland. This is seen as being more consistent with state and federal law, and with recent city variances.

*Removing the regulatory link between the current parkland dedication requirements from the number of parking spaces in a development. Instead, a different measure of density could be used to determine parking need. Even if a new development had no parking, there would still be a parkland dedication requirement.

Changes to the ordinance are sought by parks advocates including the Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County. Advocates say the current ordinance isn't working, in part

because the amount of parkland to be dedicated is linked to the number of parking spaces in a project. Pending redevelopment of the Ford Motor Company plant and sites along Central Corridor, where less parking will be required, would be affected by the current regulations. Recently adopted changes to city parking regulations, meant to encourage less off-street parking, also affect the parkland dedication ordinance.

At the time the parkland dedication ordinance was adopted, advocates said that using parking spaces to determine park land dedication amounts was an easy measurement. But now that the city is trying to encourage more dense redevelopment and less off-street parking, advocates question whether the parkland dedication ordinance needs changes.

"Tying parking land dedication to parking doesn't work," said Friends Executive Director Peggy Lynch. "It won't work for Central Corridor and it won't work for the Ford site." She said the current ordinance hasn't created the amount of parkland advocates had sought.

Lynch also noted that the ordinance was adopted as the city's Housing 5000 Program was winding down. Had the ordinance

been in place during all of Housing 5000, more parkland would have been created.

Changes to the current ordinance are also sought by some developers, who consider the parkland dedication requirement to be onerous and at times impractical.

Torstenson said another issue is legality. The current ordinance has to be weighed against state law provisions that don't allow cities to require dedication of parkland beyond a reasonable portion of the buildable land that is proportionate to a need for additional parkland created by the development itself. That is, a developer couldn't be forced to create more parkland than his or her development can actually use. Some developers have questioned whether they would have to create park and open spaces that would be shared by neighbors, and not just be for their tenants.

The city is also eyeing state and federal Constitutional issues that prohibit the taking of private land for public use without just compensation.

In two of eight replatting cases the City Council has heard since the ordinance was adopted, the City Council waived the parkland requirement because no new open space could be added.

Platting is where the parkland dedication ordinance has been tripped up. Eight plans have been approved by the City Council since 2007 adoption of parkland dedication regulations. In two cases the council found that basing the parkland dedication ordinance on the acreage of the total plat would have been unreasonable. Either the use of some of the new lots was unchanged. Or there was not a need seen for new parkland.

One of the two cases was the platting of Carondelet Village, a senior citizen housing complex at Randolph and Fairview avenues. The new plat subdivided an institutional parking to create two institutional lots and an outlot. New senior housing was proposed on one lot, with the use of the other lot unchanged. That was seen as not creating a need for additional parkland.

The second case was in the West Midway, in the Update Company's addition at 2340 Capp Road. There a large industrial parcel was subdivided into three smaller lots for new industrial development. The existing industrial use on a large parcel was unchanged. According to city staff and the City Council, the platting didn't create a need for additional parkland.

Central Corridor

Continued from page 5

As the work winds down the Central Corridor Project Office will be issuing less frequent updates. Updates had been issued weekly or more frequently as construction moved ahead this season.

The appearance of University Avenue has been a concern for residents and business owners, said District Councils Collaborative leader and Merriam Park resident Anne White. Not everyone was prepared for the fact that the center of the street, where track was laid and boarding platforms are located, would be as torn up as much as it is. That is also a concern for some members of the coordinating committee, who have heard comments from the public.

"But they claim to have com-

pleted what had to be completed," said White. Community groups will be watching closely to make sure crossings are accessible, especially for pedestrians. Temporary crosswalks have been installed to help pedestrians cross University.

As construction communications committees wrapped up their meetings, White said one of the issues citizens will bring forward is that of lessons learned and how changes can be made during construction in 2012. Uni-

versity from Hamline east to the Capitol will be a key focus of work.


Soler said that some work in downtown St. Paul will continue into early 2012. Work on the operations and maintenance facility in Lowertown will continue through the winter months.

Motorists downtown will see construction on Cedar settle down in mid-January. Parts of that street are either closed or reduced to one lane. Seventh Street downtown has also been reduced to one lane in each direction. Sidewalk closings and detours have been changing regularly downtown as construction. Bus stops have also been relocated as construction continues. Go to www.metrotransit.org/construction or look at bus stops for posted changes due to construction.

On the University of Minnesota East Bank and West Bank campuses, there have been permanent changes to bus stop locations. University of Minnesota Campus Connectors and Circulators stops on the West Bank and East Bank have also been relocated.


Work continues on the Minneapolis stretch of the light rail line. Major work was recently completed in the Stadium Village area as traffic lanes are open and crosswalks are open. New sidewalks have also been installed there. Washington Avenue opened east of Walnut Street November 30, as did the Oak and Walnut intersection. The south deck of the Washington Avenue Bridge opened in mid-November. Work continues on the north deck.

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Como Park students

Continued from page 1

One of those students is Wah Wah, who found out about College Possible when she was a sophomore and is now in her senior year at Como Park High School.

"I'm so proud of myself," Wah said, her face beaming. "I am the first one in my family in this program. My little brother is in it now."

Wah is not yet certain what school she will attend, but she has a specific goal in mind. She wants to become a doctor and join Doctors without Borders.

"This program has changed my life," she said. "I was really quiet, and now I talk more. I tell everyone about myself. I do a lot of volunteer work, and a lot of people know me now."

Explaining that she is much more outgoing, Wah goes down

the list of all her activities.

"I teach Sunday School, I tutor kids all week and work with the Karen people. I am a Big Sister with the Big Brothers and Sisters program, and Monday and Wednesday I work with College Possible," she said. "Friday I take my day off."

Wah said she had never been on a college visit before and did not know how to apply for schools.

"I wanted to become a doctor, but I didn't know how," she stated. "Now I know. I have applied to eight colleges." She has already been accepted at one.

"If it weren't for Chelsey, I wouldn't be so active," Wah noted. "Everything she does is fun, not boring. She made this program fun. She has made me keep going because of her attitude. I am busy like her now."

Tulgren smiles at Wah like a proud mother, and keeps preparing for the day when her AmeriCorps assignment ends and her charges will be off to college.

Classifieds

Monitor Want Ads are now \$1 per word with a \$10 minimum. Send your remittance along with your ad to Monitor Classifieds, Iris Park Place, 1885 University Avenue, Ste. #110, St. Paul, MN 55104. Classifieds must be prepaid via cash, check, or credit card. Classified ads can be e-mailed to denisw@aplacetoremember.com. Want ads must be in the Monitor before January 30 for the February 9 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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Next deadline: Jan. 30

Registration begins for spring classes at Northwest Como Rec Center

Registration began Dec. 5th for Winter & Spring Classes and Activities at Northwest Como Recreation Center. Adult Activities Include: Mens Soccer, Womens 30+ Basketball and two field trips.

Youth Activities include: Clinics in softball, soccer and volleyball, Artist Workshop, Orchestra Jam, Babysitting Training, Archery, Get Set To Be A Vet, Techno-Crazy Science, Amusement Park Experience, Tae Kwon Do and Skating Lessons.

A Teen Dance is planned for Feb. 3 and a Youth Jam Session is scheduled for Jan. 20.

Senior Game Time for ages 55+ (Tues. 1-3 p.m.)

Family Events: Open Gym (Jan.-March on Sundays from 3-5 p.m.), Movie Night (Feb. 17), Skating Party (Jan 21) and Spring Clean Up (April 7).

Register online at www.stpaul.gov/parks, in person at Northwest Como or call 651-298-5813. You may also contact Darcy Rivers at darcy.rivers@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Northwest Como is currently open Mon.-Thurs. 3-8 p.m., Fri 3-6 p.m.

Skating Rink times will be when building is open once there is enough ice.

In January additional building hours for skating will be Saturday from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and Sundays 3-7:30 p.m.

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Some vehicles almost 20 years old...

Public Works discusses snow emergency changes with district councils

By JANE MCCLURE

St. Paul has dodged the snow bullet this season but winter is far from over. St. Paul Public Works has been meeting with district councils to discuss snow emergency changes for winter 2011-2012. Public Works is also planning changes to its truck fleet that are meant to improve snow plowing and replace vehicles that are almost 20 years old. The fleet changes are part of the 2012 budget, which the St. Paul City Council approved December 14.

The snow emergency changes will be implemented when the first emergency is declared. Kevin Nelson, who heads city street and bridge maintenance, and engineer Matt Morriem outlined the changes.

"We learned a lot last year," Morriem said. "We have no problems with three to 10 inches of snow, but with the two big storms we had we had to make changes."

Snow plowing drew complaints last winter after two very heavy snowfalls that left streets rutted and curbs piled with snow. Area neighborhoods have focused on snow plowing for several months in light of those problems. In some area neighborhoods, segments of streets were missed during one heavy snowfall.

Changes also planned along University Avenue where Central Corridor light rail construction is underway. Off-street parking has been lost in much of the area west of Hamline Avenue, and the city will have to work with business

owners to keep snow from piling up on curbs.

St. Paul typically declares snow emergencies when three or more inches of snow falls, or when there have been accumulations of smaller amounts of snow over several days. Snow is cleared from arterial streets and sand and salt applied when smaller amounts of snow fall, or when streets get icy.

The city is doing more to pre-treat arterial streets with salt brine before precipitation falls, to inhibit snow and ice buildup.

During a snow emergency, major arterial streets and night plow routes are plowed starting at 9 p.m. Night plow routes are on one side of north-south residential streets. These routes are posted with red and white signs.

Day plowing starts at 8 a.m. and includes east-west residential streets and the other side of north-south streets. Day plow routes aren't posted. A snow emergency doesn't end until after the night and day routes are cleared.

After the streets are plowed, crews return and do pushbacks as needed, clearing intersections and removing windrows of snow left by parked vehicles. The pushbacks usually take two to three days.

One change that is helping track which areas have and haven't been plowed is an automatic vehicle locator system, Morreim said. More is also being done to step up tagging and towing efforts. About 3,000 vehicles are tagged during an average snow emergency, with

about 1,000 towed.

Snow emergencies are announced in several ways – via the city's website at www.stpaul.gov, text messages, through an email listserve the public can sign up for, and by television and radio stations. Several Twin Cities television stations also allow viewers to sign up for snow emergency alerts.

The public may also call 651-266-PLOW (7569) for snow emergency information.

Changes are also being made to the city's Public Works vehicle fleet. Residents will see more, smaller trucks out clearing snow with front end blades, as a result of changes proposed by Public Works administration. The smaller trucks would help with cleanup of street corners and other areas that get clogged by snow, said Public Works Director Rich Lallier.

"We know there are areas that can be improved on," Lallier said.

Planned is a five-year fleet investment that adds approximately \$1.2 million per year to the equipment budget for replacement of the winter plowing fleet. In 2012 the amount is \$1,210,000 and it goes down slightly to \$1,185,000 for each of the years from 2013 through 2016.

This will allow Public Works to purchase nine new vehicles each year. It also allows the city to cycle out an additional three units on average each year due to purchase of equipment that has more use in the fleet. One goal is to have more vehicles that can be used year-round.

For example, in 2012, Public Works will be buying six vehicles that have specific plowing related uses, but will also buy three units that will allow good summer utilization as wells. These dual uses include changeable rear box attachments such as dual flusher/dump box trucks and an intermediate range dump truck that allows good weight and horsepower for plowing as well as more maneuverability and lower height for pothole patching applications. For the nine vehicles purchased, 12 older vehicles can go out of the fleet.

Over the long term, Lallier said that using smaller vehicles, which can be used year-round for other needs besides snow plowing, is seen as providing savings in fuel and hours worked. "Getting snow removed correctly the first time will provide savings," he said.

It will also make streets safer for emergency vehicles and improve their response time. Fire and police personnel also raised concerns last winter about street conditions after heavy snowfalls, Lallier said.

Efficiency of the trucks is also an issue that Public Works would like to address with smaller trucks. Although large snowplows would continue to be used, smaller trucks could be more nimble to clear cul-de-sacs, narrower streets and areas needing more attention, such as bike lanes. Lallier said larger snowplows have gotten stuck in cul-de-sacs and other tight areas, wasting time and re-

sources when they have to be pulled out.

Lallier said it is critical to replace some of the city's oldest trucks, used for snow plowing and the spreading of sand and salt. Council President Kathy Lantry has said that some of the trucks look like they are from a "World War II boneyard." Lallier has jokingly objected to that description.

"We have 36,000 pound vehicles in our fleet that average 18 years of age," he said. "That is Desert Storm-era equipment." Some of the attached plow blades and sand and sale equipment, is even older, dating back more than two decades.

But the age of trucks is no laughing matter, especially when those trucks break down when they are out plowing city streets. Not only are vehicles old, many sit outside in the elements. "We're calibrating our sand trucks with hammers half of the time," Lallier said. Public Works would also like a pole barn for equipment storage, to keep equipment in better condition. That may be a longer-term issue. A plan for building replacement and consolidations was presented to the council last month.

Better equipment would help with clearing the streets. But Lallier said that the best way to improve snow plowing is to get people to move their vehicles before the plows go through. Plowing around vehicles, and having to go back and clean up after "snowbirds," creates some of the biggest problems.

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