



Mychal Batson is a designer, illustrator, writer, and creative consultant with deep ties to the Frogtown neighborhood. (Photo submitted)

THE ART OF IMPROVISATION

Frogtown's Mychal Batson stirs things up

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Mychal Batson (who goes by MycDazzle, or Daz, for short) is a young artist with a bucket load of skills, and a growing resume of projects anchored in St. Paul's Central Corridor. His work reflects the diversity of the neighborhood he grew up in; his art gives young kids who look like him a chance to see themselves reflected.

Daz moved to Frogtown from suburban Wyoming, Minn., when he was in seventh grade. He said, "It was full-on, reverse culture shock, but the character of the Frogtown neighborhood made me the artist I am today."

His family settled into a new life on Sherburne Ave. and Chatsworth St. back in 1999. Daz grew from a child to a young man in the St. Paul Public Schools. He graduated from Central High School's International Baccalaureate Program, which he described as "second to none." At Central, Daz was also an active member of the Central Touring Theater group, and theater is all about stepping out, taking risks, and hitting or missing lines.

Daz learned, early on, how to improvise.

By his own description, "a wizard with words," he studied creative writing, poetry, and screen writing at Augsburg College. After graduating in 2010, Daz taught himself graphic design and illustration.

IMPROVISATION >> 7

Murray and Olive Goff have their own Sunday morning radio show - and now they've been on a billboard, too

KIDS ON THE RADIO



By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

When Murray and Olive Goff noticed the billboards for real estate agent Kris Lindahl popping up around the Twin Cities, they wanted to know how he got them.

So they invited him onto their Frogtown WFNU 94.1 radio show to ask.

Now they're up on their own billboard, thanks to Lindahl.

At the end of the radio show, Lindahl said, "I have a present for you," the children recalled.

"And so we got our own billboard," stated Murray, age 12.

Murray Goff, who has cystic fibrosis, hosts a radio show with his sister, Olive, each Sunday morning on Frogtown WFNU 94.1. After interviewing real estate agent Kris Lindahl, they got a billboard to showcase their weekly episodes. (Photo submitted)

KIDS ON THE RADIO >> 12

Tax break?

Estimated increase
in 2021 tax bill just
\$36 for homeowners

By JANE McCLURE

Some St. Paul homeowners could get a break in 2021 after years of property tax increases.

That's because St. Paul and Ramsey County are holding their 2021 property tax levies flat and St. Paul Public Schools are projecting a 5 percent increase.

Property tax estimates started to go out Nov. 10 and will continue to be mailed until Nov. 24.

Say your piece at hearings

Ramsey County will hold its truth-in-taxation public hearing at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 30, at a location to be determined. The county plans to hold in-person and virtual hearings.

St. Paul's hearing is 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 2 at the City hall/Courthouse. The city has announced an in-person hearing at this time.

St. Paul Public Schools' hearing is 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8. The board will determine whether the hearing will be held in-person or virtually.

The median-value home would see a \$36 tax increase from 2020 to 2021. Other homeowners and owners of commercial/industrial and larger apartments won't be so fortunate, with some apartment and commercial/industrial properties facing significant increases in property valuations.

TAX BREAK? >> 6

How COVID-19 is affecting youth at Booth Brown House

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The historic brick mansion on Como Ave., one block east of the Minnesota State Fairgrounds, has stood guard on its corner for more than 100 years. Designed by Minnesota state architect Clarence Johnston Sr. in 1913, it originally served unwed mothers and their babies as the Booth Memorial Hospital.

In the 1970s, it became a residential facility for girls with emotional and behavioral challenges. Services for boys were added in 1984, including a residential treatment program and a separate 10-bed emergency shelter.

Always owned and operated by the Salvation Army,

Booth Memorial Hospital has continued its mission of serving young people, almost without interruption, up until the present day. It had to close its doors for two years in 2010, due to lack of funding.

It re-opened in 2012 as the Booth Brown House (BBH), thanks to a \$400,000 gift from local philanthropist Earle Brown. BBH continues to serve youth dealing with the critical issues of the time.

Topping the list of critical issues currently is youth homelessness.

According to the most recent Wilder Foundation data, there are nearly 500 homeless youth (ages 18-21) on the streets of Minneapolis and St.

Paul every night.

BBH program director of the Emergency Shelter and Foyer Housing Program Erin Foss said, "Typically, many of those youth would be couch surfing with friends or extended family, but with COVID-19, that's not happening right now."

BBH has beds for 16 youth (ages 18-21) in their emergency shelter. Because all of the rooms are shared, that number is being capped at 13 to keep COVID-19 exposure down.

Another factor limiting availability of beds, according to Foss, is that youth are staying longer at BBH because of COVID-19 and the lack of jobs.

BOOTH BROWN HOUSE >> 9



Erin Foss, program director of the Emergency Shelter and the Foyer Housing Program at Booth Brown House, said, "The outreach of emergency housing is essential to stabilizing the underserved, homeless youth population." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



Need a job?
Get help at
a career lab

PAGE 3



Midway non-profit
ending the book famine
in Africa

PAGES 10-11



Breweries, distilleries
adjust through
COVID-19

PAGES 14-15

LOOKING FOR WORK DUE TO COVID-19?
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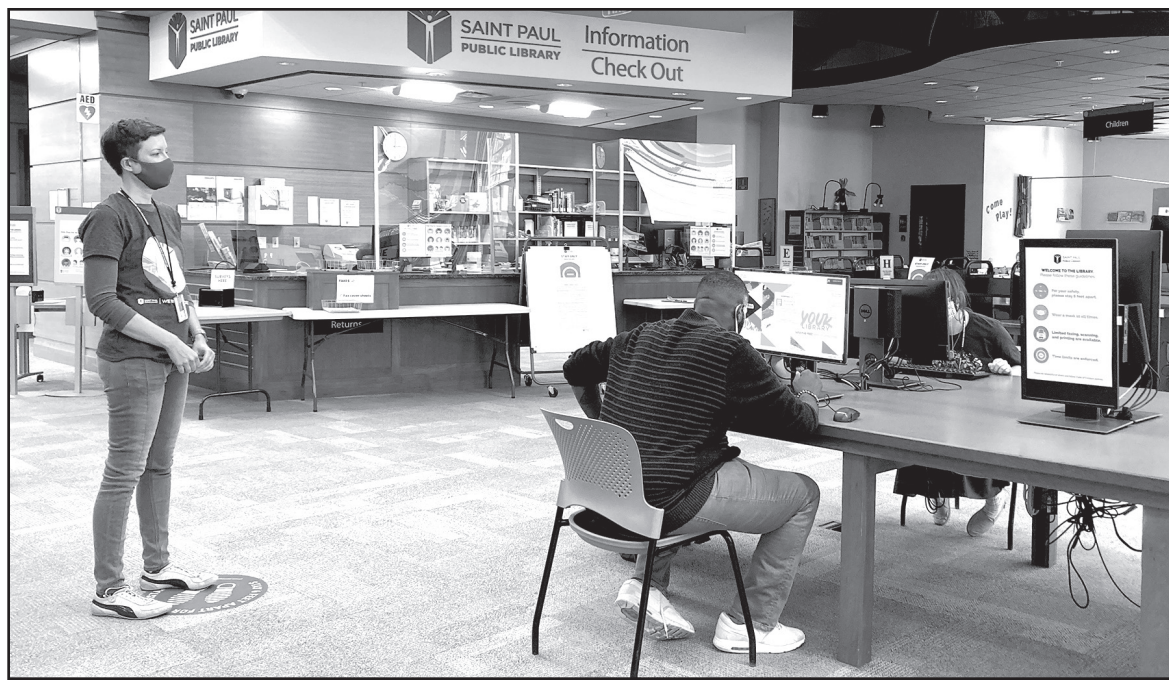
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More people in Frogtown have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 than nearly anywhere else in the state. The Career Labs have been set up to help folks get back in the workforce. (Photo submitted)

NEED A JOB? Get help at a Career Lab

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

Need a new job?

Check out a Career Lab at a library near you if you've experienced impact from COVID-19 such as job loss or loss of income.

Zip code 55104 is one of the hardest hit for COVID-19-related job losses.

Ramsey County and the Saint Paul Public Library have opened six Community Career Labs, including one at Rondo Community Library.

"Ten percent of Minnesotans call Ramsey County home, and our local economy has been hit hard by the pandemic," said Ramsey County Board Chair Toni Carter. "I encourage job seekers across Ramsey County to utilize our new Community Career Labs, whether you're ready to apply for a job, looking to brush up on skills, or just starting your job search. We're here to help."

"We're thoughtfully leveraging partnerships to invest our CARES resources and efforts where needs are the highest in our communities and Career Labs are a great example of this," said Ramsey County Commissioner and Workforce Innovation Board Member Jim McDonough.

The labs provide reservation-based computer access, printing and copying, digital literacy programs, job search and resume assistance and other workforce support programs through 2020. All sites will require face coverings, social distancing and follow public health guidelines for layout and cleaning – access is regulated and

ACCESS

- Computer access
- Printing and copying digital literacy programs
- Job search and resume assistance
- Other workforce support programs

LOCATION

- St. Paul Public Library Dayton's Bluff
- Rice Street
- Rondo Community Library
- Sun Ray
- Also at Ramsey County Library Maplewood and Roseville

available by reservation only.

"The career labs are open for anyone who is experiencing impacts from COVID-19," pointed out St. Paul Library Public Services Manager Rebecca Ryan. "The labs provide computer and internet access, free printing, scanning, and faxing for job-related outcomes, and some physically distanced help. The labs are quiet spaces for people who need to focus on resume writing, job search, and career pathways training or re-training."

She added, "We take the safety of our visitors and staff very seriously and have put in place a number of changes to make sure our labs are low risk indoor spaces."

Folks are using Career Labs to find jobs

Ryan shared a few stories of folks who have used the Career Lab.

• In August, patron Mary got a part-time job at Target after job searching at Dayton's Bluff Career Lab. She returned to the Career Lab to share the good news, and completed her hiring paperwork in the Career Lab.

• Also in August, patron Dennis got a job interview after applying to several jobs at Dayton's Bluff over a series of com-

puter reservations. He hasn't returned to the Career Lab, so staff suspect he found employment.

• In October, a patron told Career Lab staff that she had picked up a COVID-19 Relief Assistance Application form (from Community Action) from Dayton's Bluff Career Lab, filled it out for housing assistance and was able to get help. She needed support after being laid off from her job during the pandemic. She continues to visit the Career Lab for job search/application support.

• A patron came into Rondo to work on his resume with staff assistance. He returned the next day wanting to apply for a custodial job at a local college or university. Staff helped him (over two hours that day) to find an open custodial position at a university located in Saint Paul. He successfully completed the application with staff help and said he planned to stop in again for help with further applications. He had experienced job loss due to COVID-19.

"Collaborating with Ramsey County to provide these services to our community is really rewarding," remarked Ryan. "When libraries closed in response to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us were extreme-

15 MILLION IN CARES FUNDING FOR JOBS

Ramsey County received \$96 million from the federal government through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. An anticipated \$15 million is being spent on job and employment support for COVID-19 impacted job seekers who have experienced job loss, a reduction in hours, are at an increased COVID-19 risk due to health concerns, face uncertainty in their future employment opportunity, or face an increase in existing barriers to employment as a result of the pandemic and its secondary affects. The funds must be spent by Dec. 31, 2020.

Areas of focus:

«**Employment services and access:** Opened new Community Career Labs in Saint Paul Public Library and Ramsey County Library locations, and additional community based locations to provide employment support for residents.

«**Youth and young adult gap services:** Working with dozens of community-based partners to support COVID-19 impacted youth and young adults with critical gap employment services and supports. Funded programs include work experiences, training, mentoring, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and more. Most programs launched Aug. 1, 2020.

«**Community CARES job seeker program and virtual training:** Partnering with community-based organizations to provide employment and career services targeting specific populations impacted by COVID-19 including justice involved, seniors, culturally specific, veterans and people with disabilities. Funding supports areas of curriculum, coaching, career tools, engagement, job placement, training referrals and more. Funding is provided to community-based employment service providers to support virtual training programs. Programs launched mid-August.

«**Closing the digital equity gap:** Partnering with TechDump, Literacy Minnesota, Saint Paul Public Library and Ramsey County Library to provide TechPaks to COVID-19 impacted residents to support their need for access to technology and digital literacy supports. TechPaks include a refurbished laptop computer, support from a Digital Literacy Navigator and required digital literacy classes. Applications for TechPaks opened in August and will be available through December 2020.

«**Community Innovation Inclusion Fund:** Launched a new fund to support community organizations whose mission is rooted in the culture(s) and identity(ies) of individuals served, and where the services incorporate the values, traditions and worldview of Black, American Indian and other racially and ethnically diverse communities who are most impacted by COVID-19. The fund will support workforce and career readiness programs which promote and accelerate racial healing, equity and inclusion; and reduction of racial inequities and bias against racial and ethnic communities using inclusive tactics via new and advancing partnerships. Organizations are supported in a cohort model by the Center for Economic Inclusion.

ly worried as we knew how many community members relied on the library for access to the internet, technical assistance with job search, and more. While we aren't open in the same way we were pre-COVID, we have tried to fulfill high priority need in the community."

Career labs staff have gathered a wide variety of resources relating to career pathways, successful job search, and more that they share with users. "Our staff are practiced in helping job seekers with myriad technical issues," said Ryan.

The career labs also offer space for physically distanced in-person meetings for digital navigators – people working with recipients of Ramsey County's Techpak lottery.

Career labs staff collaborated with Ramsey County to offer an in-person Beginning Resume Learning Circle at Rondo Library for four Tuesdays starting in Oc-

tober. Participants left with a completed, updated resume.

The labs are one of a number of programs funded by Ramsey County Investment and Support Efforts through the federal CARES Act. (See sidebar)

"Libraries are recognized as trusted, safe spaces for learning, enrichment and community support," observed Saint Paul Public Library Board Chair and City Council Member Jane Prince. "We are proud to adapt our Dayton's Bluff, Rondo, Sun Ray and Rice Street locations as Community Career Labs providing critical job services for our neighbors and families who need it the most."

"Connecting residents to economic opportunity is vital," said Mayor Melvin Carter. "Our Community Career Labs will offer the access, support and resources to ensure no one is left behind."

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The rising Midway

Our friends on Saint Paul's East Side like to remind us the sun rises in the East, as a way to playfully tell us their neighborhood is blessed and full of opportunities. And it is fitting, as a new day has risen along commercial corridors like Payne Ave. which has many great restaurants that have opened in the past few years. Our neighbors at Can Can Wonderland also now own Saint Paul Brewing, formerly Flat Earth Brewing and in the old Hamm's site, one of the newest hot spots in town.

But the Midway is also rising up, from the ashes of burned

down buildings. In my article last month, I talked about some of the progress made along University Ave. But over the past week, there have been more signs of better days and our community reopening.

On May 28, Lloyd's Pharmacy was one of the businesses which unfortunately saw its building burn completely to the ground. The pharmacy is a long-time institution of the Midway, and no doubt offers an essential service. Since July, Lloyd's has operated in a smaller building a few doors down from its previous location, and on Nov. 9

Building a stronger Midway

By CHAD KULAS,
Midway Chamber
of Commerce Executive Director
chad@midwaychamber.com



ground was broke for their future building. The new location will be in the same site it once was and will be complete next summer.

If you have been along Snelling in between I-94 and University, you have probably noticed two new big developments on

the west side of the street. Two new apartments will open next year, The Pivot and The Pitch, with commercial space on the first floor. To the west of the Spruce Tree Centre, a Bank of America is opening soon.

The plywood also continues to get taken down along University Ave. Century Plaza's windows were damaged and are in the process of getting replaced. The work should be complete in early December and businesses inside have all reopened. The building, just west of Chatsworth, houses 18 businesses ranging from an adult daycare, an insurance agency and a grocery store.

In October, the city of Saint Paul's Housing and Redevelop-

ment Authority approved the establishment of a tax increment financing district for the Snelling Midway Renewal area, a parcel of land next to Allianz Field, near the southeast corner of Snelling and University (read details in article on page 17). While there is a plan for United Village, a mixed-use development with housing and commercial space, plans have not been finalized and construction has not begun.

Plans continue to progress to reopen more of our community, and 2021 should see many new buildings and renovated old ones. University Avenue looks different today than it did in late May, with the promise of spring bringing more than just flowers blooming.

Thanks for being an important part of our future

It was with great sadness that I read the announcement from the *Southwest Journal* this month that the longtime Minneapolis newspaper will be shutting down operations at the end of this year. Their last issue will be published right before Christmas.

The *Southwest Journal* has been without question a respected community newspaper that not only served its readers admirably during its tenure, but it also has been a great marketing vehicle for its advertisers. Known for well researched articles and well read by its readers, it also was an important part of the community fabric of southwest Minneapolis.

I wish owners Terry Gahan and Janis Hall the very best going forward, along with their talented staff of writers, designers, and salespeople. I had to smile when I read on their website about the early days of the *Journal* and how their original base of operations was the kitchen table of their Linden Hills home. It reminded me of my first internship in journalism back in 1976, when I worked for the editor of the former *North End News* in St. Paul, Lee Svitak Dean, who likewise pasted up the layout for the paper on her own kitchen table. Something tells me that many community newspapers got their start in that very same manner.

This recent chapter with COVID-19 and all the unrest in the Twin Cities has underscored the need for community journalism now more than ever before. Residents and business owners need to know what's happening in their neighborhood and they need to have a mechanism to engage in their community – and a community newspaper like the *Monitor* provides that vital link.

Inside the pages of the *Monitor* each month you read about the important work that's being done to rebuild the Midway. The stories of neighbors and other concerned citizens not only picking up brooms to clean up after the looting in Hamline-Midway, but diving in during the weeks following to figure out how to put Hamline-Midway back together again, to rebuild those businesses and lives disrupted during the tumult.

We can't deny it's been a challenging time financially for the newspaper industry. In addition to the trends in national advertising over the last few years, we also are keenly familiar with the plight of local businesses in Midway, Como, and Frogtown, who have had to shut their doors during COVID-19. Some have reopened and are back in business full strength. Others are dealing with capacity restrictions where they can only serve so many customers in their operation at one time. Others are still making

Stop the presses!

By DENIS WOUFFE,
denis@MonitorSaintPaul.com



plans to reopen their businesses at a later date.

I know the struggles these businesses face are real and they need the support of the good people of Midway, Como and Frogtown. And I see that firsthand as a member of the Midway Chamber. Residents realize that they need a strong business climate for a strong community overall. And business owners know that they need a strong residential community for their businesses to thrive and prosper.

The *Monitor*, likewise, needs the support of both residents and business owners, to continue to do the job that we're doing providing the news about what's happening in your community. We know our readers are devoted to the *Monitor*. That's why the *Monitor* continues to be one of the neighborhood newspapers that will be delivered door-to-door in your neighborhood so everyone has equal access to it.

And we know that our advertisers are committed to reaching the *Monitor* audience with their promotions because they need that continued community support.

But just know this: The *Monitor* appreciates that all of you are behind us to continue to do the important job we're doing in St. Paul. You need to know that all of you are a vital part of our operation. If you're a reader, by all means continue to share *Monitor* stories with others, either via print or digitally through Facebook, Instagram, on our website, or through word of mouth. And be sure to let our advertisers know that you appreciate their continued presence in the *Monitor*.

If you're an advertiser who's business has struggled during the pandemic and haven't been able to advertise as much as in the past, we get it: There's no question that many businesses are in the midst of trying to rebuild their client base. The *Monitor* will be there when you're ready to create that pathway for the future to rebuild your business.

But just know that we believe that for all these reasons, the *Monitor* is more important now than ever before as a community newspaper in St. Paul. And likewise, your support is more important than ever before as well. Thanks for being an important part of our past and thanks for playing an important part in our future.

Letters to the Editor

We like the Monitor

Dear Editor:

We have lived in the Hamline-Midway for approximately 40 years and have always enjoyed the *Monitor*. However, we must say that the new look/content is an improvement. Nice color photography, better looking large ads, interesting topics, excellent writing.

We are glad that you are not afraid to take on challenging topics.

Donald and Bonnie Reeder
Hamline-Midway

I look forward to supporting local business doing good work

Dear Editor:

Your October 2020 article about 2 Scoops Ice Cream was uplifting and moving to read. Thanks for sharing about a local business that is doing good work in the community.

I look forward to supporting this business and trying their delicious ice cream!

Thank you,
Alaina Gall

We want to hear from you!

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- Submit a guest column or Letter to the Editor by emailing Tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com or fill out the form at www.MonitorSaintPaul.com
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News for you!

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Story ideas always welcome.

Keep in touch with the *Monitor*. Letters to the editor under 200 words and news releases for publication can be sent via e-mail to news@monitorsaintpaul.com. Unsigned letters will not run.

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The *Monitor* is for profit and for a purpose – and we don't sacrifice one for the other. We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that

is both black and white, both/and. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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The IEP meeting from the student's perspective

School has started. For some students, the excitement of the beginning of a new school year is dampened by the dread of an Individualized Education Program, (IEP) meeting. I was one of those students.

The Individualized Education Program, (IEP), is a layout of academic goals and educational services students who have disabilities, need. It is written annually from Kindergarten to a student's senior year of high school. IEP meetings summarize a student's academic progress and goals they need to reach to be on the same level as their general education peers. The goals are based on pre-IEP test results.

An IEP meeting may have a formal and cool atmosphere. This can give staff and students a feeling of unease. IEP meetings could have a light, positive feel. This can include a relaxed, casual atmosphere and discussion of a student's strong suits.

My meetings were serious and formal. I regularly saw teachers and counselors who attended the meetings, so I was casual when I greeted them, saying things such as, "Hi. How is it going?" and, "Hey. How you doing? Good to see you." But then it was time to get down to business and things got serious. The seriousness gave the room a cold atmosphere. I think casual is a better approach to an IEP meeting. This can help students relax since the meetings are about

them.

The first time I went to an IEP meeting, I walked in and thought, "What is this? A special ed services meeting or a parent/teacher conference?" By the way it looked, I concluded it was a parent/teacher conference that included my special education usual suspects. I stuck with that observation throughout school. However, at real parent/teacher conferences, teachers tell parents what students are doing well in. That cannot seem to be done at an IEP meeting; IEP meetings are about deficits and general education teachers hardly speak, which gives a meeting a different and negative structure.

If IEP meetings were structured like parent/teacher conferences, giving general education teachers a chance to speak, that could change the feel of the meetings, making them more positive.

It is good to talk to students during their IEP meetings, so they will feel included. It is not a good approach to talk about students as if they are not in the room. When I went to my IEP meetings, I was talked about, not to even though I was sitting at the table. While I sat at the table, I would always think, "Hey. I do have strong suits, you know."

There was hardly any mention of my strengths at my IEP meetings. The only thing general education teachers contributed, was a quick summary of how I

Guest
columnist

By EMMA WAGNER



was doing in their class. However, if the teacher taught a subject I was strong in, that helped ease my discomfort. If general education teachers contribute to positive information about a student during an IEP meeting, that will improve their self-esteem, and create a more positive experience for the student.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the negative summary of my situation left me emotionally shaken by a feeling I had been robbed of my academic strengths. Including a focus on a student's strengths during an IEP meeting, would help them feel uplifted.

Bottom line: It is important for educators to look at and emphasize students' strong suits. This will help students feel they will succeed in their education even though they have disabilities.

Emma Wagner was born prematurely at 29 weeks and suffered a brain bleed three days later. It caused her to develop hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy and epilepsy. She is a graduate of St. Paul College, and lives in the Midway.

Remember the sign that looked like a rooster?

Does anybody remember the old Midway Shopping Center sign at the corner of Snelling and University, looking like a rooster until more careful study? It had no words, only bright colors – and it stood tall. Well, in a moment I'll describe it for those who need this particular by-gone favorite memory of our Midway, Saint Paul, neighborhood recalled but here's an invite to all readers to submit your favorite memories of the Midway we grew-up in – you

know, the Embers on University Ave. and Mickey's Diner on Snelling, walks to Newell Park, the bus stop bench at Snelling and Hewitt, and so on ...

OK? Here's a description of that not-a-rooster sign: [Does anyone have a picture of it? Know what became of it?]

It was maybe 30 feet by 30 feet – hard to judge because you had to look so skyward. There were two perpendicular straight black lines, one going north and south, one going east and west;

Remembering
the Midway

By ANDY DAWKINS



then a thicker, solid blue curving line that started at a gold dot on the east and ended with a gold dot on the west – the blue line making a dramatic, cul-de-sac-like trip south. Then in the center of all this a big red square.

Probably most of you long-time residents have guessed what the sign is, the Midway Shopping Center sign with University and Snelling Avenues as black lines, the Mississippi River in blue leaving downtown Saint Paul and heading out to Highland before curving to downtown Minneapolis (the two downtowns the two gold dots), and right midway between the two downtowns, at the southeast intersection of Snelling and University, a big red square. "Why a rooster looking-like sign" blew my mind for years before I figured it out!

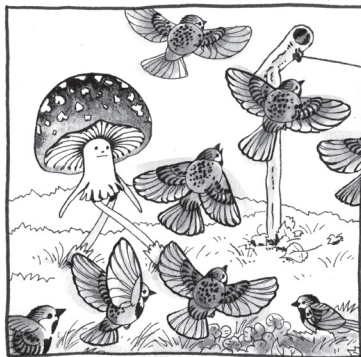
Andy Dawkins has lived in the St. Paul Midway for the past 50 years. He is a retired attorney who served 15 years in the Minnesota State Legislature followed by four years working for the city of Saint Paul as its Director of Neighborhood Housing under Mayor Randy Kelly.

Share your favorite memory with readers by emailing news@MonitorSaintPaul.com.

Frog Food by Z Akhmetova

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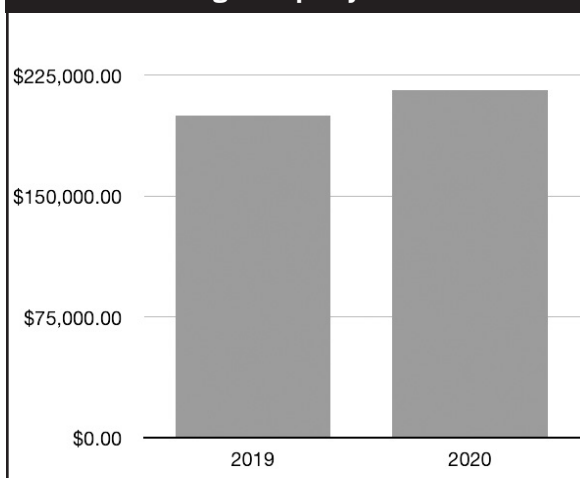
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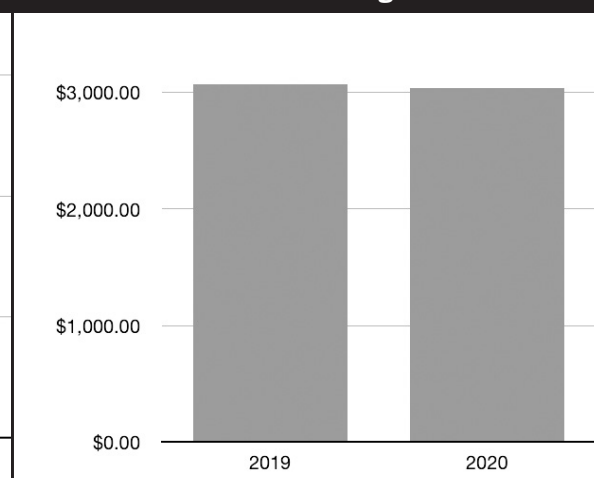


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Average Property Value



Tax Bill for Average Home



Tax break?

>> from 1

Market value at all time high

The St. Paul School Board's September vote on its 2021 maximum levy put the final piece of next year's property tax puzzle in place. Ramsey County Auditor/Treasurer Chris Samuel made the rounds in August and September with the St. Paul City Council, Ramsey County Board, school board and joint Property Tax Advisory Committee.

Samuel and County Assessor Luis Rosario explained that property assessments and valuations for 2021 payable taxes were set before the COVID-19 pandemic struck in the spring. Despite the pandemic, many types of property sales continue to be strong, likely due to high demand and low supply.

Property values continue to rise countywide, although some of St. Paul's poorest neighborhoods are still catching up from values lost during the 2007-2008 recession. Total growth in the 2020 assessed value of Ramsey County property was \$4.52 billion. Growth in value coming from residential property accounts for \$2.03 billion of that amount. The total assessed estimated market value for Ramsey County property taxes payable in 2021 comes in at \$60.49 billion.

"Our aggregated estimated market value is at an all-time high," Rosario said. Overall market values are up 8.6 percent from last year. Values are now \$5.86 billion over the payable 2008 peak.

"A part of the story, similar to prior years, is the concept of tax shifts due to market value changes," said Samuel. Market values in St. Paul are increasing in the double digits for 26 percent of homes, 77 percent of apartment buildings and 41 percent of commercial/industrial

properties.

Rosario cautioned that trend could change with an economic downturn. He cited the commercial sector, where many retail business, restaurants and offices have closed, as being vulnerable.

Impacts on individual properties are affected by sales of comparable properties, whether or not there have been improvements or damages, and other factors.

The median value home in St. Paul will see an 8 percent increase in estimated market value, from \$199,800 in 2020 to \$215,800 in 2021. 2020 property taxes were \$3,030. That amount decreases \$37 due to shifts within the property tax system which include gains in fiscal disparities and the homestead exclusion benefit.

The city and county taxes decline slightly. The regional rail levy adds \$4 and the school district adds \$66 to the bill. Special taxing districts add another \$3. But factor in property tax system shifts and the net increase is \$36, to \$3,066 for the 2021 bill.

The median value St. Paul commercial property would have a 4.9 percent increase in market value, from \$464,000 in 2020 to \$486,600 in 2021. Taxes were \$16,030 in 2020 and would actually decrease to \$15,950 in 2021. But Samuel cautioned that commercial/industrial properties vary widely in size and value.

The median value St. Paul apartment building would have a 16.6 percent increase in market value, from \$878,100 in 2020 to \$1.024 million in 2021. Property taxes would increase \$1,338, from \$17,827 in 2020 to \$19,165 in 2021.

Continued strong growth in apartment values in buildings of four or more units, and associated tax shifts, will contribute to making rental housing less afford-

able. That is contrary to elected officials' goals of addressing the area's affordable housing crisis.

Samuel noted that as rent moratoriums and assistance payments end, it's likely there will be a spike in evictions and apartment vacancies. Those challenges disproportionately affect families of color.

Como sees greatest market value changes

St. Paul neighborhoods seeing the highest residential market value increases are Como, North End, Sunray/Battle Creek/Highwood, Greater East Side, West Side and Payne/Phalen.

Citywide, SunRay/Battle Creek/Highwood would see the greatest percentage increase in market value at 10.3 percent. Values would rise from \$193,300 to \$213,250. Taxes would rise from \$2,915 to \$3,023, for a \$108 or 3.7 percent change.

Monitor area neighborhoods would see varying levels of market value increases. But because of shifts and changes in the property tax system, neighborhoods seeing valuation increases might still see lower property taxes. And of course, what is paid by property is also affected by market value trends and similar property sales, as well as any property improvements.

The greatest median market value change is in Como neighborhood, at 8.8 percent. Market value would increase from \$234,700 in 2020 to \$255,400 in 2021. Property taxes would increase \$63 or 1.7 percent, from \$3,657 in 2020 to \$3,720 in 2021.

Hamline-Midway would see an increase of 7 percent, \$187,900 in 2020 to \$201,100 in 2021. Property taxes would increase \$5 or .2 percent, from \$2,818 in 2020 to \$2,823 in 2021.

Thomas-Dale or Frogtown would see a 4.7 percent increase in median market value, from \$154,100 in 2020 to \$161,400 in 2021. Property taxes would actually drop \$46 or 2.1 percent, from \$2,211 in 2020 to \$2,165 in 2021.

Union Park's median value home increases 4 percent, from \$324,000 to \$337,100. Property taxes would drop \$185, from \$5,257 to \$5,072 for a 3.5 percent decrease.

St. Anthony Park and downtown are tied for the largest percentage drop in property taxes, at 5.8 percent. The median market value home in St. Anthony Park would increase just 1.8 percent, from \$319,700 to \$325,600. Property taxes would drop \$298 from \$5,180 in 2020 to \$4,882 in 2021.

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"I've learned that improvising leads to tremendous opportunity, and it sure keeps life interesting."
~ Mychal Batson

THE ART OF IMPROVISATION

>> from 1

He said, "One of the things my formal education taught me is that I'm a very good problem solver. I used YouTube to figure out what I needed to know, including just about everything with the word Adobe in it: Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe After Effects, Adobe Premiere, Adobe InDesign, and Adobe Lightroom."

Mastery of these technical tools led to ongoing work as a designer, illustrator, writer, and creative consultant.

A different small area plan

The most notable projects Daz has done have been anchored in his St. Paul connections. The small area plan he created for the Frogtown Neighborhood Association (FNA) is his biggest project yet, having taken an entire year to complete.

A small area plan is an urban planning document that envisions how communities like Frogtown will evolve over the course of the next decade and beyond. Once submitted, each district council's plan is absorbed into the city of Saint Paul's comprehensive plan. The current cycle runs from 2020-2030.

FNA Co-Director Caty Royce said, "In 2016, we did 10 Community Healing Meals in differ-

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OUR **DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT** WORD OF THE DAY ISSS . . . **GENTRIFICATION!**

ACCORDING TO THE HOMIE, **WEBSTER**, THE DEFINITION OF GENTRIFICATION IS: THE PROCESS OF REPAIRING AND REBUILDING HOMES AND BUSINESSES IN A DETERIORATING AREA (SUCH AS AN URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD) ACCOMPANIED BY AN INFLUX OF MIDDLE-CLASS OR AFFLUENT PEOPLE AND THAT OFTEN RESULTS IN THE **DISPLACEMENT** OF EARLIER, USUALLY POORER RESIDENTS.

WHICH IS A DEEPLY LIMITED AND HIGH KEY PROBLEMATIC DEFINITION, IF YA ASK ME.

WEBSTER'S DEFINITION IGNORES THE LONG HISTORY OF INTENTIONAL DISINVESTMENT IN NEWLY GENTRIFYING COMMUNITIES. THE LOSS OF CULTURE & HISTORY. THE INCREASED POLICING & DISCOMFORT NEW NEIGHBORS BRING. AND THE TRAUMA COMMUNITIES OF COLOR EXPERIENCE THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS.

GENTRIFICATION IS LOSS. GENTRIFICATION IS PAIN.

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The Frogtown & Rondo communities have teamed up to develop an action plan to preserve the cultural make up and identity of our neighborhood. To learn more about our effort, visit: www.frogtownmn.org/thisishome

SmaPL!
DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT

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ent parts of Frogtown to bring residents together. Mychal was involved in the whole process, and he started drawing cartoons based on those conversations. Characters emerged in his drawings, and toward the end, he said, "Why don't we do this project as a graphic novel?"

What made Frogtown's small area plan different from others, in addition to its graphic novel form, is that it was designed to be a "living document."

A living document means that while government officials consider, approve, and implement the proposed policy recommendations, the community is on the ground taking necessary steps to achieve the goals outlined in the plan.

Development without Displacement

The next big collaboration between Daz and the FNA is a project called Development without Displacement. Daz is using his tech skills to design an ultra-sophisticated PowerPoint (called a Prezi) on the issue of gentrification in Frogtown.

He said, "The Central Corridor of St. Paul is the heart of the city. There is so much vitality and artistry in Frogtown, the North End, Rondo, and Midway. I think of Frogtown as the last frontier in St. Paul. This next decade will be rough if we can't figure out how to move forward without displacing the people who make our neighborhoods great. Everything depends on how much community members are willing to be engaged in the process, and COVID-19 has made engagement a lot harder."

Other projects Daz has com-

pleted include illustrations for three children's books: "Black Boy, Black Boy," "Mr. Rondo's Spirit," and "Your Hue Looks Good on You;" an illustrated map of St. Paul's Historic Rondo Community; a terrazzo floor designed as part of a team, and a mural of his own design for the Frogtown Community Center.

He also has a secret, large-scale public project in the works for Frogtown – but the details have not yet been released. For more information on Mychal Batson's past, present, and future creative work, visit www.mycdaz-zle.com.

View the Small Area Plan designed for Frogtown at the web address above. Scroll down the left side of the screen to find the project acronym SmaPL!



Jareen Eason-Fearson is one of many Frogtown residents who helps sort and pack food items for distribution on Friday afternoons at St. Paul City School. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Frogtown food resources

The Frogtown Neighborhood Association sponsors a free food distribution every Friday afternoon from 3-5 p.m.

Pre-bagged and boxed foods are brought to people in their cars by volunteers. The distribution happens in the parking lot on Western Avenue behind the St. Paul City School Middle School. There will be a line of cars waiting, so plan accordingly for time. Foods include bread, produce, dairy, and meat.

According to Frogtown Neighborhood Association Co-Director Caty Royce, about 350 families are currently being served. She said, "We see many of the same families from week to week. People are relying on the weekly distribution as a major food source. We need more volunteer runners to help bring bags and boxes out, and also to help with packing (which starts each week at 1 p.m. in the school basement). Masks required; social distancing practiced."

Contact Caty@frogtownmn.org for more information.

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WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE A PARTNERSHIP

By MADDIE CHRISTY,
CALLIE CHASE AND
LAURA OSTERLUND

Article reprinted courtesy of the
Bethel University Clarion

Lizzy Carson, Bethel University sophomore nursing major and reconciliation minor, was recently named a 2020 Newman Civic Fellow for her community engagement on Bethel's campus and in the broader community. Carson spent last summer working with the Urban Farm and Garden Alliance in St. Paul. UFGA is a group that seeks to promote reconciliation, peace and justice through cultivating and sharing food in the Summit-University and Frogtown communities.

"I think I learned how important it is in my job as a reconciler, specifically talking about racial reconciliation, to take time to unpack the implications of privilege and whiteness with those who identify as European Americans," Carson said.

During the 2019-2020 school year she served on Bethel's campus as the Director of European Americans in Solidarity in addition to her role as a Resident Assistant. This coming summer Carson plans to work with UFGA again to continue learning about and working toward reconciliation in the FSU community.

"That whole year I feel like I was wrestling through how to be a leader when you're in a place of privilege," Carson said. "How can I be a leader so that other people can have an opportunity to be heard and be known and for their stories to be recognized? How can I be a leader without being in the spotlight?"

Service learning for students

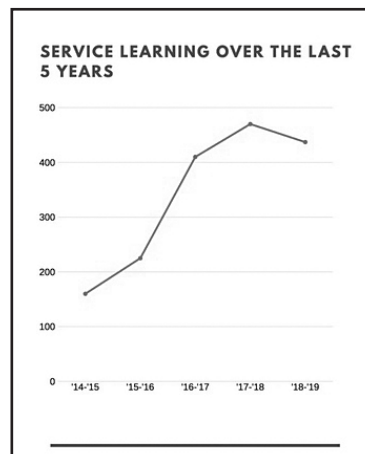
For over 20 years, students at Bethel have been partnering with the Frogtown-Summit University (FSU) neighborhood through what is known as the Bethel FSU Partnership. Through this partnership, students engage with FSU community members and take part in various service-learning opportunities.

Reading Partners allows education students to help tutor elementary students in schools. Breaking Free, an organization focused on human trafficking, is aided by psychology students who create informational resources. Journalism editing classes work with elementary students to create their own newspaper — *The Maxfield Times*. Business students assist community members with their taxes.

Data from the Bethel FSU Partnership end of year report in 2018-2019 shows the increase in the number of students participating in service-learning opportunities in the last five years.

Within the last five years, the partnership has seen immense growth in regard to Bethel student participation. The number of students involved jumped from around 150 in the 2014-2015 school year to more than 400 in the 2018-2019 school year.

A large part of this growth has to do with Tanden Brekke, the Assistant Director of Community Engagement and Ser-



ABOVE Data from the Bethel FSU Partnership end of year report in 2018-2019 shows the increase in the number of students participating in service-learning opportunities in the last five years.

AT LEFT Students and community members partner at the local community garden. (Photos submitted)



Social work professor Dr. Eydie Shypulski, Hilda Davis, and Gracie Grussing pose for a photo during a rainy tour of the Urban Farm and Garden Alliance with community partner Melvin Giles. (Photo submitted)

vice-Learning, who has been in the role for almost five years. He said that years of building relationships with the neighborhood and with Bethel before stepping into this position has helped him grow the partnership.

"With the social connections came trust," Brekke said. "Community organizations knew who I was and when I said 'here's something we should explore' or 'here's an idea I have that might work out, they're willing to lean into that. Same thing with faculty members.'"

Brekke describes the partnership as a program that is unique in its place-based approach to reconciliation and justice. His goal now is to focus on depth over breadth.

"How do you create not just the numbers but the rich engagements," he said. "This coming year we are going to put significantly more energy towards community work-study."

Students will be able to work 10 to 15 hours in a community organization instead of

just spending two hours a week as most programs do now. Brekke acknowledges that the partnership has many moving pieces and projects. It requires great flexibility and creativity from himself, community partners, professors and students.

Urban living experience

One of the newer ways students can choose to connect deeply with the community is through the Frogtown Urban Living Experience (FULE). For one school year, students living in the FULE house engage in close relationships with urban neighbors, participate in an internship in the community and learn about the implications of urban social structures.

Gracie Grussing, senior social work major at Bethel, lived in the FULE house this school year. She first became involved in the Bethel FSU Partnership during her freshman year when she did service-learning at Irresistible Grace. In the beginning, she felt uncomfortable in that

space.

"It's a black space, and they're really passionate about having a place to process emotions," she said. "And then you have two white girls from Bethel pop in. And they were very vocal about, 'We don't want you guys here,' and I was like 'Oh, my god!' It was really hard for me."

But she kept showing up. After two years with lots of processing and breaking down expectations, she grew to respect the organization and appreciate the experience. She was exposed to real diversity and learned to connect in authentic ways.

"I came from a rural, white town, and then I came to Bethel which is still majority white," Grussing said. "It is uncomfortable getting out into the community and especially for a lot of students at Bethel, we're not super comfortable with people that live different lives than us. But the more you do it, the easier it becomes."

"The things that Tanden Brekke, other professors and community leaders have brought to Bethel have definitely pushed us a lot farther than other schools. But in the grand scheme of things, I think there is a lot more to be done."

~ Lizzie Carson

"I came from a rural, white town, and then I came to Bethel which is still majority white. ... For a lot of students at Bethel, we're not super comfortable with people that live different lives than us. But the more you do it, the easier it becomes."

~ Grace Grussing

This year, as a senior, she was able to live in the neighborhood she had spent time growing and working in. As Brekke's work-study student, her responsibilities included meeting with community leaders, attending peace celebrations, participating in an urban farming group and connecting Bethel students to the community.

Present in community

The Frogtown community members have always been, and continue to be, a driving force in the partnership. Melvin Giles, community organizer and social justice leader, is a name and face you can't miss when talking about the partnership.

"I think the life of the partnership takes on an ebb and flow," Giles said.

One of the strengths of the partnership is the way it helps challenge and push Bethel in certain directions. He said right now the way Brekke models how to be present in the community — creating relational treasures rather than the superficial stuff — has deepened this service-learning partnership.

"It has a lot to do with leadership," Giles said. "Right now we have a white guy who is anti-racist leading, so it's going pretty good. It helps keep Bethel on track."

Carson said she thinks Bethel is ahead of the game in terms of community engagement, but there is always room for growth.

"I think there are lots of ways that community engagement hasn't nearly reached its full potential," Carson said. "The things that Tanden, other professors, and community leaders have brought to Bethel have definitely pushed us a lot farther than other schools. But in the grand scheme of things, I think there is a lot more to be done."

How COVID-19 is affecting youth at Booth Brown House

>> from 1

Typically, Ramsey County residents can stay up to 90 days in the emergency shelter, and residents of other counties can stay up to 30 days.

Staff provides the following services on-site to help empower youth: social services, connecting to education, job search help, budgeting, tax assistance, tutoring, case management, cultural enrichment, recreation and fun, spiritual ministries, and aftercare for former program participants.

Every one of these things would be difficult to manage, if one didn't have a home.

The second housing option for youth at BBH is called the Foyer Housing Program. This program offers stable, affordable housing to young people with rents well below the market rate. There are supportive services available on-site, and resources to help in the eventual transition to independent living. Each tenant signs a lease, and rents a furnished efficiency apartment at BBH for no more than 30% of their income.

No State Fair parking means major loss of revenue

COVID has created a new normal at BBH, just like it has everywhere.

The major BBH fundraiser comes from their State Fair parking revenue. Foss said, "Who would have thought that a parking lot would be such a huge revenue generator? We can usually count on making about \$45,000, but obviously that didn't happen this year."

Adopt a resident

What are some ways to connect with the ongoing work of BBH during the pandemic? While volunteers aren't able to enter the building right now, community members can still get involved.

Foss explained that holidays can be especially hard for young people at BBH. She said, "We try to make sure that the youth staying in our emergency shelter have a grab bag of small things like warm socks, ear buds, or a gift card they can spend nearby."

"We take a different approach



The Booth Brown House has served youth, in one capacity or another, since it opened in 1913. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

to the Foyer Housing Program, because these young people might be with us for years. Each resident comes up with a holiday wish list, and the wishes tend to be modest. We ask community members to sponsor or adopt residents for the holidays. We keep identities private, but we can provide basic demographic informa-

tion such as age and gender."

Foss said, "Sometimes I wonder what would happen if there weren't places like the Booth Brown House. If we can find young people who are struggling and get them into a program like ours, which is small and supportive – the whole community benefits in the long

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... heavy things that can't fit into a backpack. They carry the loneliness of being ignored. They carry the heartache of abandonment. They carry the anxiety of having to fend for themselves. No matter what their needs are – physical, emotional, or spiritual – we start by helping youth meet their most basic needs, and we help them identify their own long-term solutions."

~ From the Booth Brown House website

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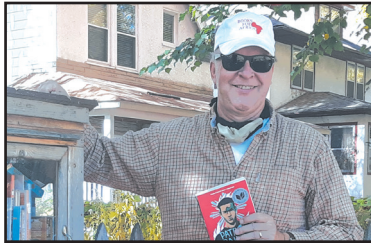
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Midway nonprofit providing tons of books overseas as requested by residents



Executive Director Patrick Plonski
(Photo by Jan Willms)

Ending the book famine in Africa

By JAN WILLMS

Books for Africa (BFA) will be shipping its 50 millionth book to Africa by the end of 2020. Quite an achievement for a Saint-Paul based organization that started in 1989 with a simple mission: End the book famine in Africa.

In 1988, Tom Warth visited a library in Uganda and saw that books were almost non-existent, and the few that occupied the shelves were tattered and worn. Returning to Saint Paul, he started BFA in an effort to provide education through books to African students of all ages.

Explaining how the organization grew to become the largest shipper of books to Africa in the world, Executive Director Patrick Plonski said that some of the growth is the result of staying at it over the years.

Plonski, who joined BFA in 2003 after working at the University of Minnesota as director of a legislative council and studying for his PhD in international education, said that when you ship a few million books here and a few million books there, it adds up. BFA has shipped books to all 55 countries on the African continent.

"We have always determined our success by the number of

books shipped – high quality books," Plonski continued. He added that some of their success and growth comes from the simplicity of the mission, and some of it is a result of the organization's efficiency.

"There were other organizations doing this, and few of them have been able to survive," he said. "They were relying on publisher books, and we were one of the only ones to find a way to go to scale with used books, with lots of volunteers and big warehouses."

"If you want large quantities of books for Africa, you have to buy them on the market or come to us."

He said there are a few places that ship books, one in London and one in Maryland, but BFA remains the big player in this niche market of getting books for schools, libraries and universities in Africa.

Books they want

BFA has its administrative headquarters at 370 Selby Ave. and its warehouse at 717 Prior Ave. A majority of its books go through its warehouse in Atlanta, Ga. "We also send some French-language books out of France and Quebec," Plonski said. BFA does some work out of

Annapolis, Md. and Los Angeles, Calif. "But our headquarters have always remained here, and the majority of our board members are from here," he added.

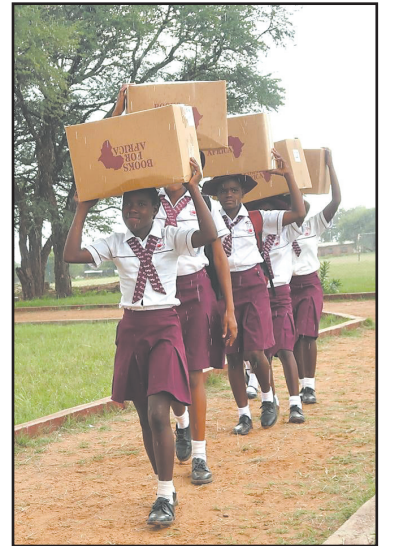
He said BFA has everything from preschool books to law books.

"Every container is packed to order to help ensure that people get what they want," he noted. "Sometimes they will want novels, sometimes children's books, or a university will want all university books. In the early days we took what was available in the warehouse, but that changed when I came in. We increased the volume and selection so people could get more of what they wanted."

Law and Democracy Initiative

The Jack Mason Law and Democracy Initiative was started about 10 years ago. "We get requests for very specific law books," Plonski said. "Some were donated but not useful, such as books on tax law in Texas. But the African colleges wanted books on contract law, for example."

BFA set up a relationship with Thomson Reuters in Eagan. "They acquired West Publishing, which is the largest printer of law books in the world," Plonski stated.



Books arrive in Africa. (Photo submitted)

Through the Jack Mason Law and Democracy Initiative, BFA has been able to do things like send a container holding a law library to the University of Tanzania. The law books are brand new and custom-printed in Eagan.

"The late Kofi Annan and Walter Mondale were honorary chairs of that initiative, and it has been very successful," Plonski said.

Needs: books and money

Plonski described BFA as having a basic program with all kinds of books. But within the BOOKS FOR AFRICA >> 11

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Books for Africa

>> from 10

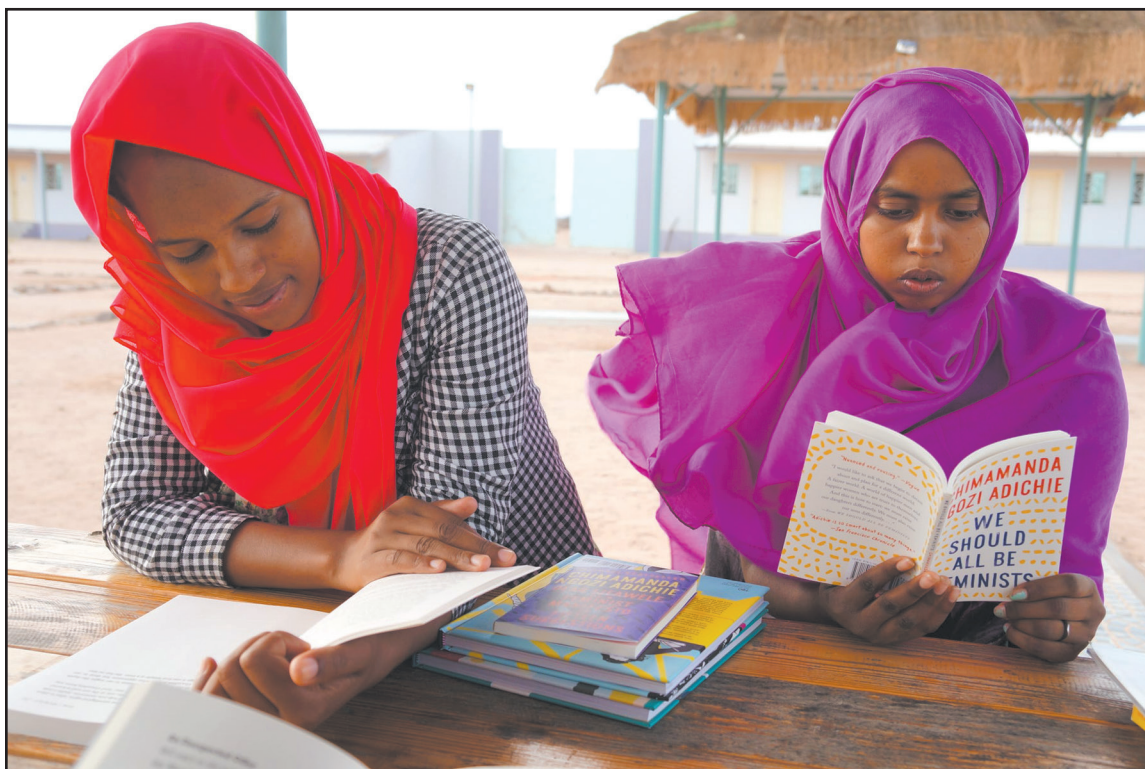
organization are niches, such as computers and digital books, agriculture books, law books and medical books. "We have a girls' empowerment program, with books about girls sent to girls," he added.

"You always have to deal with the realities of the situation you are in," Plonski said. "In Africa, there are all kinds of challenges with customs. Some countries want a list of every book in a container."

He continued, "But our biggest challenges are money and books, and you need both. If you get enough money, you can get the books and pay to truck them from Texas to Atlanta. But some books are not available at any time. We have a shortage of engineering books. And no one has agriculture books in the quantity we need, short of buying them from a publisher."

Plonski said BFA will purchase some books, such as agriculture books, and pass on the cost to the recipient. "But that's pretty rare, and most books are donated," he said. "Sometimes a publisher overstocks, and we get the books for 10 or 15 cents a book and the recipients pay those costs."

"Somebody has to pay for every container, because of the cost of shipping and storing the books. But for a university in Africa, paying \$15,000 for 20 tons of books is a great deal."



"We have a girls empowerment program with books about girls sent to girls," observed Books for Africa Executive Director Patrick Plonski. (Photo submitted)

If we ship to a small group of kids' schools, they usually have a foundation they interconnect with that pays the shipping costs."

BFA does have fundraisers and book collection drives. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Rotary clubs and other organizations collect books. Individuals can drop books off at the warehouse on Prior or mail them to the warehouse.

"We just wrapped up a vir-

tual celebration in honor of our 50 millionth book," Plonski said. "We raised \$380,000 to send books to 10 countries, and we were able to generate a lot of excitement around it."

BFA has received the Charity Navigator award nine times and is considered in the top 4 percent of charities. "That's a sign of efficiency and good governance," Plonski said.

When asked about the "white savior" aspect of a white-

led and white-founded company providing books for people of color, Plonski said that is a legitimate concern.

"To frame the perspective," he said, "we want to make sure that whatever is provided is needed and valuable. It is not about the color of the skin of our supporters, but about the quality of the product that is delivered."

"In our effort to make sure our help is valuable," he continued, "we have a lot of Africans



on our board from the Diaspora. They were born in Africa, but now live in the United States." He said about a third of BFA's board members fall into that category. "They keep us grounded," he said.

"All of the books we send to Africa are requested by Africans and distributed by Africans," he added.

According to Plonski, it is all about empowerment and helping people, regardless of race, color or creed.

He said that from a scholarly standpoint, "white saviorism" should not cause a disconnect. "We don't want it to create an excuse for lots of white people to sit on their hands and not donate or volunteer."

But people of all ethnicities and nationalities have volunteered and donated to BFA.

"I find it amazing that the world's largest shipper of books to Africa is headquartered here in Saint Paul," Plonski remarked. "We have sent books from here to every single country in Africa, and the money, the books and the volunteers have come from here. We couldn't do it without the support of the people from Saint Paul."

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Real Estate Investment Cooperative

- Hamline Midway Coalition is exploring the opportunity for community members to come together and invest in commercial real estate. We are looking to form an Implementation Committee to make key decisions around governance, membership, and operations of the cooperative. More information on the committee roles and responsibilities contact REIC@hamlinemidway.org or visit our website!
- HMC wants to increase the BIPOC representation/leadership early in this initiative and are seeking outreach ambassadors/organizers to help expand our engagement efforts over the few weeks. Stipends/honorariums will be provided. If you or someone you know may be interested, please reach out to Alec: armon@hamlinemidway.org.



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COMMUNITY-OWNED RADIO

WFNU is the product of almost four years of organizing around the idea that community-owned media can be a powerful tool to unite and empower the Frogtown community, the most racially diverse neighborhood in St. Paul.

2011 - President Obama signed the Local Community Radio Act, which opened up many LPFM (Low Power FM) frequencies for community stations across the country. Low Power FM stations have a broadcast range of about 10 miles, meaning they have a hyper-local range and focus. The FCC was not expected to open up these kind of frequencies again, so organizers from Frogtown and Phillips neighborhood in Minneapolis formed the Twin Cities Community Radio Initiative and began working to submit applications to the FCC.

2014 - After a long organizing campaign, Frogtown Neighborhood Association was granted a permit from the FCC to build a community LPFM radio station and broadcast on 94.1 FM.

2016 - WFNU had finally raised its antenna and officially became an FM broadcaster through the generous and continuous support of the community. For the first seven months of streaming, WFNU operated off of a fold-out table inside Center for Hmong Arts and Talent's (CHAT) studio. It grew to have its own live broadcast studio space inside CHAT.

2017 - WFNU moved into a new space at Faith Lutheran Church, added over 60 new volunteer DJs and now has an almost full schedule of live shows.

2019 - WFNU moved from a program under the Frogtown Neighborhood Association (FNA) to its own non-profit 501c3 organization, Frogtown Tuned-In.

KIDS ON THE RADIO



Recording the podcast looks different since March, when Olive (top) and family sat in a studio on Sunday mornings. Now, Murray, Kevin and Olive sit around their kitchen table at a laptop. (Photos submitted)

>> from 1

The billboard was up along 35E heading south into downtown St. Paul Sept. 28 to Oct. 4, and will be up again for two weeks in late October and early November.

The kids met with Lindahl under the billboard to snap a photo. "It was kinda of breathtaking," said Murray. "We were huge."

He doesn't think the billboard reflected the true color of his hair, which is brown and

looked reddish on the sign. And they both agree his hair looked a little shaggy. They took a cue from Lindahl's brand and have their stretched wide on the billboard.

"It was pretty cool," said Olive, age nine.

Their mom, Jess, went out one morning as she typically does and was surprised to see the billboard. "I shouted out in the car," she recalled. "It was so weird. It looked like them, but really big."



Olive and Murray Goff took inspiration from Kris Lindahl's pose for their own billboard. (Photo submitted)

'I was blown away'

Murray and Olive had a lot of questions for Blaine resident Kris Lindahl when they interviewed him on Dec. 15, 2019. What's his favorite color? (Royal blue) What is he trying to accomplish with his arms wide open in the ads? ("We do things different and we want to stand out.") What's a guaranteed offer?

"It was a nice conversation," said Lindahl. "They're really sharp, sharp kids."

He's no stranger to the radio himself as he's done interviews and radio ads over the years, and was impressed by their show.

He appreciated the educational aspect of the Murray and Olive Goff show, and enjoyed its format.

"I'm a fan," said Lindahl. "I was really blown away by how organized and how put together it was. I was honored to be a part of it."

A core value of Lindahl's

KIDS ON THE RADIO >> 13

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

KIDS ON THE RADIO

>> from 12

company is to be generous and to give back. He donated a billboard to Murray and Olive, and then let them pick a local non-profit organization to donate a second billboard to. Murray and Olive choose Frogtown Farm. "I saw it as an opportunity to show them a little bit more about generosity," observed Lindahl.

Kids talking about what they care about

"Our radio show is unique," said Olive. "It's just kind of us talking about things we like to talk about."

When she grows up, Olive wants to do something with animals, live on a farm and have horses. Murray, on the other hand, aims at doing something related to space, architecture or biology.

Olive is currently a student at Cornerstone Montessori Elementary School and Murray is at St. Paul Academy Middle School.

The family had joked about the kids having a radio show of their own, and when they saw an advertisement that WFNU was looking for radio hosts, they decided to apply. About a week later, they went in and talked to the studio board in their one-room studio.

The board choose three of the four applicants. "We made the cut," recalled Olive.

"The thing we most appreciate about Murray and Olive is that 'we can do this' attitude. No task or interview is overwhelming to them," said WFNU Co-manager Philip Gracia.

"They bring to the community something that's lacking from mainstream media: carefree and spontaneous actions and response. That I find so refreshing! WFNU is so proud of the work and commitment that Murray, Olive and papa (Kevin) provide to us."

Thankful for the show

They pitched the idea of the Murray and Olive Goff show in the fall of 2017, and it officially began in January 2018 when Murray was 9 and Olive was 6.

"I'm surprised it's still going today," observed Olive.

At a certain point, she said, you start to get used to being on the radio. "Maybe we talk over each other sometimes. We used to have debates on the air," said Olive. "It was a little rowdy."

Mostly, they've stopped talking over each other now.

Until COVID-19, they recorded each 58-minute session live on Sunday mornings at the studio. Now, they're at their kitchen table in the Midway, and have to be super quiet when the songs are playing because there isn't a mute function with GarageBand, the software they're using.

They had been learning the ins and outs of using the sound board at the WFNU studio, and knew how to mute their microphones during the songs.

While the shows changes

*"Our radio show is unique.
It's kind of just us talking about things we like to talk about."
~ Olive Goff, age 9*

every week, the segments that make it up don't change. There's always animal news, the week with Olive, the book I read, and deep thoughts with Olive. They've added a segment to talk about COVID-19 news updates. Their stuffed animal friends – Todd the sloth, and Wolfie – visit.

In between each segment is a song that they and their dad, Kevin, picks out that connects with what they are talking about or is one they're singing and hearing on the radio. Each episode begins with Taste of Honey by Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass and ends with "Moonshiner's Dance Part 1" by Frank Cloutier and the Victoria Cafe Orchestra. They also play "The Book I Read" by the Talking Heads, "I'm Crying" by The Animals, "Where's Your Head At" by Basement Jaxx, and "Eight Days a Week" by the Beatles.

"As a parent, I think the show helps them learn how to talk about what matter to them. Also it gives me a chance to introduce Murray and Olive to different music, which sometimes I admit they don't like," remarked Kevin. It also helps them connect with their grandparents. "It's like a weekly letter to them know what's going on in their lives and what matters to them in their own voices," he added.

Their mom, Jess, is involved, too. Pre-COVID-19, her segment was called, "Call Your Mother."

"But we don't actually call her because she's right in the house," explained Murray.

They have lots of ideas for future radio shows. They think it would be great to interview Minnesota author Kate DiCamillo, as they've read many of her books.

As the Goff children have grown, so has the hyper-local radio station that plays only Twin Cities music and reaches a radius of about 10 miles around Frogtown. Today, they are on the wall of fame inside the two-room studio WFNU occupies at Faith Lutheran Church.

Archived shows since March are available to hear on Mixcloud, and the new shows are on WFNU each Sunday at 11 a.m. Listen online at www.wfnu.org and at 94.1.

"We're very thankful for WFNU to let us have a show like this," said Murray.

Watch the full interview with Murray and Olive on the Monitor web site, www.MonitorSaintPaul.com.



"We did it!" says one sign as supporters celebrate the \$2.4 million appropriation that Victoria Theater (825 University Ave.) has just gotten through the Minnesota Legislature's Capital Investment Bill, which was passed in October. The push for the funds came through the governor's office, which focused on equity-centered projects that are led by and serve communities of color and American Indians, as these organizations have not traditionally had access to state funds. (Photos submitted)

Victoria Theater Arts Center receives \$2.4M

For over 10 years, community members have rallied around an abandoned silent movie theater at 825 University Ave. Their plans: to purchase and renovate the space into a community and arts center for Frogtown and Rondo. That project just took a major step forward, as recipient of \$2.4 million dollars in support from the Minnesota Legislature's Capital Investment Bill, passed earlier this month.

"We couldn't be more thrilled – as we watched the voting online, we were texting back and forth – Is this for real? It is! We did it!" said VTAC Executive Director Tyler Olsen-Highness "We have so many people to thank: Representative Rena Moran, Senator Sandra Pappas, Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan, and Mayor Carter – all of them stepped up to make this happen."

This coalition of support, along with countless hours of volunteer community advocacy

and lobbying over two years, including rallies, tours, and meetings with dozens of legislators laid the foundation for the project's success. The key to getting it over the finish line with full financial support was a push by the governor's office to invest in equity-centered projects. This recommendation focused on capital projects from community-based organizations that are led by and serve communities of color and American Indians, as these organizations have not traditionally had access to capital investment from the state.

"The arts bring us joy. They help us to express our values, and they build bridges between cultures. The arts are a fundamental component of a healthy community." These words from Representative Rena Moran as she spoke for the project on the Minnesota House floor, are at the heart of VTAC's work: building community power through creativity and connection.

With the \$2.4M from the state of Minnesota now a reality, and another \$1M already raised for the project, VTAC has \$1.4 million dollars left to raise. They're hoping to raise it as quickly as possible, so renovation of the space can start in late fall of 2021, with the building opening in late 2022. Between now and then, there's a lot to do for this mostly volunteer-run organization, from fundraising to arts programming to community-driven architectural processes.

"Receiving this support from the state of Minnesota is both humbling and affirming" says board chair Chris Wilbourn, (aka Felix from Heiruspecs). "It reminds us of our responsibility to our community and to empowering the voices of Minnesotans who have historically been less represented. We're eager to share the beautiful contributions of our community with all of our amazing state for decades to come."

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Despite pandemic and civil unrest, taprooms opening for customers

By STEPHANIE FOX

In 1919, as a great flu pandemic was winding down, Minnesota's representative in Congress Andrew Volstead helped pass a Constitutional Amendment, HR 6810, also known as Prohibition. After Jan. 17, 2020 the sale of alcohol was prohibited in the United States. The Amendment wasn't repealed by the 21st Amendment until December of 1933.

In Minnesota, the laws remained strict (3.2 beer became the norm) and it wasn't until 2011 that breweries were legally allowed to sell pints of beer onsite. Since then, a number of small micro-breweries have opened taprooms and welcomed grateful beer drinkers. (Micro-distilleries couldn't open cocktail rooms until 2014.)

Then, in 2020, another kind of prohibition caused by another worldwide flu epidemic, required that bars, restaurants and taprooms be closed around Minnesota. And in Minneapolis, civil unrest during the summer riots along Lake St. destroyed and damaged many beer halls. But now, a few are starting to open, with precautions such as requiring masks and social distancing.

Editor's note: This section is not meant to feature all of the breweries and distilleries in the area.



Bang, owned by Sandy Boss Febbo (shown) and her husband Jay, was only the third production brewery in St. Paul, only the 33rd in Minnesota. But, Bang Brewing was different. They wanted to brew only with organic and sustainably grown ingredients, focusing on environmental stewardship and sustainability. (Photo by Stephanie Fox)

Bang Brewing

2320 Capp Rd.
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651-243-2264

Sandy Boss Febbo and her husband Jay first opened Bang Brewing in September 2013, but the business had been in the planning stage for eight years. Jay was a software engineer and Sandy was a producer and designer at an ad agency, and they both had a love for small batch brewing.

"I've discovered that you come at brewing from either a culinary, science or engineering focus," Sandy Febbo said. "Developing recipes is what we enjoyed doing and the conversations Jay and I had while brewing was what we wanted to do in the future. The idea grew. We developed recipes, formed an LLC, bought the brewery land. It was step by step. We were entirely self-financed but we'd been planning it since 2005."

Bang was only the third production brewery in St. Paul, only

the 33rd in Minnesota, but Bang Brewing was different in that they wanted to brew with only organic and sustainable grown ingredients, focusing on environmental stewardship and sustainability. They partnered with a local farmer, Doubting Thomas Farm, just outside of Moorhead. "We get 99 percent of our grain from that farm," Febbo said. That includes Kernza, an ancient Asian grain with a malty flavor, a feature of their specialty beer, Suds, cream ale.

"We were invited to brew with it three years ago working

with a team at the University of Minnesota. Beer is made with mostly annual crops, but Kernza is a perennial so you can have multiple harvests each year, all without tilling. It has a long root and helps clean the soil and water of nitrates," she said.

Bang focused on their taproom, serving a wide range of beers. They had a patio and had bought a grain bin and surrounded it with a native prairie and wildflower garden, a permutable space of cobble stones and hand made picnic tables, working with the Ramsey Conservation District

to design a rain garden, to serve customers indoors but with a small footprint.

But then, the pandemic happened and on March 15, two days before St. Patrick's Day and before the Governor closed the bars, Bang closed the door of their taproom.

They turned their focus to what was then a smaller part of their business. "We were sending bottles to liquor stores and kegs to restaurants but mostly we served customers here," she said.

They invested in an efficient bottling system and selling to 10 liquor stores and to bars and restaurants with curbside pickup options. "Once we are through the pandemic, we will be set up for more retail accounts," she said. "But we have no designs to get big. Now, we are looking forward to next year when we will begin to expand the rain garden and add more seating with the hope we can reopen in the spring. We want to be ready when we can reopen as safely as possible."

Meanwhile, Sandy and Jay are focusing on their partnerships, including working with the University of Minnesota to help finance the Organic Brewer Alliance, a national organization working to make it easier to find and source ingredients and to market specialty organic beers.

"We are super excited about this," said Febbo.

More >> 17

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Urban Growler

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When Master Brewer Deb Loch and Co-Head Honcho Jill Pavlak met 15 years ago, they knew right away they wanted to do something together. They both had corporate jobs – Pavlak worked in commissioned sales but wanted to own her own business, but not alone. Loch's family was in the restaurant business and was a passionate home brewer. But, they wanted to bring people together through beer.

That's how Urban Growler became the first woman-owned microbrewery in Minnesota.

"I wanted to leave my corporate job. I was putting in 36,000 miles a year," said Pavlak. "What I was doing wasn't feeding my soul." The two started on their path to fulfill their dream.

She applied for a job at the Longfellow Grill. "At the interview, I told them I wanted to open a brewery some day. They taught me everything about the business – food inventory, customer service. I am very grateful to them."

Loch talked to Mark Stutrud, the founder of Summit Brewing, who told her that if opening a brewery was her goal, she needed a master's degree in brewing in addition to her degree in bioen-

gineering. The two of them (and their dog, Frankie) moved to Davis, Calif. where Loch got her degree, one of only seven women out of 35 in the program. Mission accomplished, they moved back to St. Paul where Loch again made a call to Stutrud at Summit. He hired her as an apprentice brewer.

The two also started visiting taprooms all over the country. They started to notice that there were assumptions made – about our beer drinking choices, because they were women. "Deb would ask questions about the beer and they would be shocked what she knew. And we saw art on the walls that could be offensive to women."

They knew when we opened their dream brewery, there would not be women busting out of their shirts. "It would be a family-friendly place," said Pavlak.

And there were the little things they noticed. "We got square back chairs, to hold a purse. We built a brewery with women in mind but that wouldn't exclude men."

They put together a 160-page business plan and started working to get money to open their brewery. It took six years of being denied a business loan from bank after bank.

"We got questions. 'How will you girls handle the big bags of grain,' and 'You're a lesbian cou-



Urban Growler's Jill Pavlek holds up gift cards near the take-out tent. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

ple so what if you get a divorce,' and 'How will you keep the long hours?'"

They finally got funding from a bank in Mankato. "Within a few years of success those other banks would come to us offering to give us loans to help us expand and we said, 'Nope'. We are loyal to the Mankato bank."

When they finally opened Urban Growler in July 2014, the community came to support them.

During normal times, Urban Growler makes 'approachable beers' with a moderate alcohol content, at five or six percent,

partnering with urban gardens and local farmers. "If you can get it at a farmer's market, we'll try it," she said.

They make a Blueberry Wheat Beer, Jalapeno Cream Ale and beers made with plums or with lemon grass. Their Vanilla Latte Blond beer was a huge hit at the Minnesota State Fair last year.

They also have an extensive menu, an important part of their taproom business that includes a kid's menu.

City Pages named Urban Growler as 'Best Taproom' and they won Midway Chamber of Commerce's 2019 Small Business

of the Year.

But the pandemic has brought hard times to Urban Growler. The award-winning taproom is closed until the pandemic fades. Brewers are now canning their beers, delivering them to a number of local liquor stores. Customers can still get the Vanilla Latte Blond that customers loved during last year's State Fair. But, there's an aluminum can shortage, which means that even canning beer may become problematic.

The beer garden is open (weather permitting) and there are no-contact pickups of food and crowsers of their beers. Sales of their canned beer is up 10 percent. But the future is uncertain.

"I don't know what winter will bring," said Pavlak. "Our event space is zero. Outdoor sales fell to half the amount we used to be."

"2020 was going to be our best year. We are doing all we can to keep the brewery going. We had a team of 50 people before the pandemic. We're down to 20 people, now. This is true of every business owner, now. There are more closures and it breaks my heart," Pavlak said.

We quit saying 'It can't get any worse'. We used to say, "At least we're healthy." And now the saying is, "We need help and we need hope."

Studio Distilling

2380 Wycliff St
St Paul

Unlike many local distilleries, Studio Distilling's founder Brad Rolfs decided to focus on one product – whiskey.

Rolfs had been a home brewer and while switching to making classic hard liquor might seem to be an odd choice, but it's really a natural leap, said Shelly Dailey, the managing partner at Studio Distilling.

To make whiskey you first have to make a beer, and then distill that brew into a concentrated spirit. "Whiskey in the USA has to be aged. We age in smaller barrels, five gallons and 10 or 15 gallons but it typical for distilleries to use 53 gallon barrels. Smaller means faster. You don't have to wait two or four years."

Studio, founded in 2018, has already medaled at a prestigious



Studio Distilling's founder Brad Rolfs focuses on specialty whiskeys. (Photo by Stephanie Fox)

whiskey contests, their rye malt whiskey winning a double gold medal and their bourbon winning a silver from the San Fran-

cisco World Spirits Competition in 2019.

Other specialty whiskeys include a hops and elderflower,

made by adding fresh hops and dried elderflower; a coffee and chocolate whiskey, made with fair trade Peruvian cacao nib and fresh roasted coffee; and a new masala chai where Assam tea and spices are added to their rye malt whiskey and aged in oak barrels.

"We add the flavors we like. We partnered with a coffee company that wanted to partner with us. We get to meet fun people," said Dailey. "We started with a series of avant garde whiskeys with novel flavor profiles."

Right now, with the pandemic, the while hospitality business is struggling and having a hard time, said Dailey. "And people aren't buying craft right now, being cost conscious. But, if you support the local brand, the money goes back to your neighbors."

Studio hasn't yet opened a cocktail room but they sell bottles at the distillery, limited by state law to one bottle a person a day (so bring a friend). Their bourbon and rye whiskeys are

sold in more than 100 liquor stores.

"People should know that whiskey should be enjoyed," she said. "People think whiskey is a mystery. They can take their time to explore," she said. Currently, small, private distillery tours can be scheduled, open to people age 21, ID required, with three half-ounce samples served in a Studio Distilling Glencairn Tasting Glass.

In addition to their whiskeys, Studio Distillery is doing their part during the pandemic, joining up with Urban Growler to make hand sanitizer, donated to those in the community who need it and available for purchase.

"It feels great to work together as an industry to do good," Shelly Dailey, told WCCO-news. "We all want to do everything possible to help our community during this time, and we are proud to support this life-changing effort."

Lake Monster Brewing

550 Vandalia St
St. Paul
612-964-6288

If Matthew Zanetti hadn't decided to enjoy a lovely 2011 fall day at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum with his wife Daniele, Lake Monster Brewing may never have been created.

The traffic from home to the Arboretum was backed up and they saw a sign for a winery. They took a detour and "the experience was very cool." The few hours spent sipping wine brought back memories of Zanetti's childhood in Napa Valley, his dad's time as a vineyard manager and his time living on a farm in the Driftless area of Wisconsin. "Grow grapes," he told his father.

But, Zanetti the younger wanted to open his own brewery. He partnered with his brother-in-law Jeremy Maynor and did

some research. "I have the gump-tion and Jeremy, now the CFO, had the spreadsheets," he said. "We were put in touch with Matt Langue. A few years earlier, Matt was broadcasting a show on beer at the University of Wisconsin radio station and then got a job at Ale Asylum, a brewery in Madison. He had the beer knowledge." Langue became their master brewer.

For two years the team did contract brewing, starting with a pilsner and an IPA in a rented space and started bottling their brew. When Langue's wife got her MBA, followed by a job in the Twin Cities, the team found a space in St. Paul to open Lake Monster Brewing.

"Jeremy and I put in our own money for the start. We put in proposals to banks showing we were profitable. We opened on Dec. 4, 2015."

The space was an empty warehouse lacking everything,



Lake Monster's founder Matthew Zanetti is confident people will enjoy their outdoor space and indoor space this winter. (Photo by Stephanie Fox)

including plumbing but with Zanetti's construction and real estate background, this was the perfect situation. They could create what they wanted and needed.

Lake Monster's taproom is open, with an outdoor space and an indoor space with Plexiglas at the bar, hepafilters and outside in the circus tent with propane tables. "I think people will bun-

dle up and come January, when it's 20° outside, people will still come. We have exacting quality standards and will have a huge super-safe place with masks, masks, masks.

"The patio is 15,000 square feet but we can operate inside at 34 percent capacity."

The COVID virus brought their draft sale down 90 percent so they started to self-distribute to liquor stores. Soon, they had a distributor and are now available in 175 liquor stores across the state.

Lake Monster offers classic beers like pilsners and classic American style IPAs and Oktoberfest beers, but they also sell more exotic styles including a passion fruit guava sour. There's a Minnesota classic, a Munich-style Dunkel with wild rice. And for the patio, you can drink their apple cider ale, gluten-free and served hot. The taproom is open, but reservations are required.

Free meal boxes available on Fridays

Make a meal out of this

The Como Community Council, in partnership with the Sanneh Foundation, is distributing free meal boxes on selected Friday afternoons for Ramsey County residents dealing with financial hardships because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The boxes hold ingredients and recipe suggestions for two meals (6 servings each). The boxes contain locally sourced food, including lean proteins, whole grains, fresh produce, spices, and pantry staples.

Distribution will be on Fridays Nov. 13 and 20, and again on Dec. 11 and 18, beginning at 1:30 p.m. Distribution will be in the north parking lot of Niem Phat Buddhist Temple, at Como and Front. The site is served by the 3A and 65 buses.

Reservations are recommended: sign up at www.district10comopark.org/mealbox.html. Walk-up distribution will be available while supplies last.

Need some good news?

District 10 residents donated more than \$1,600 (and counting) to purchase Thanksgiving meals for neighborhood seniors who will be isolated because of COVID-19 precautions. Plus, more than two dozen residents are volunteering to deliver the meals.

The outpouring of generosity is another example of Como Kindness in action. TST Catering is preparing the meals, the North End South Como Block Nurse Program is lining up who gets what, and the Como Community Council is handling the logistics and connecting community members who want to make a difference.

District 10 Como Community Council

By **MICHAEL KUCHTA**,
Executive Director
district10@district10comopark.org



tics and connecting community members who want to make a difference.

Wonder what you're missing?

Como Community Council is recording the Sunday Series presentations organized by the council's Anti-Racism Work Group. Topics so far:

- Equity in Community (Lissa Jones-Lofgren)
- Our Justice System and Race Equity (Richard McLemore II)
- Mapping Prejudice Project/ Saint Paul

In addition, Ramsey County Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo gave the Como Community Council board an extensive overview in October of the county's efforts to find housing for residents living on the streets. Those efforts include housing residents at Bethesda Hospital and at hotels such as the Best Western in Bandana Square.

You can watch the recordings at www.district10comopark.org/recordings.html

Call or link into D10 Meetings

Pandemic or not, renters, homeowners, and other community members are always welcome to participate in District

10's board and committee meetings. You can join either by video conference or by phone.

To obtain links, phone numbers, or other access information, send a request by email to district10@district10comopark.org. Or, call 651-644-3889. Upcoming meetings:

- Board meeting: Tuesday Nov. 17. The meeting will feature a presentation from Neighborhoods First about MnDOT's Rethinking I-94 planning.

- Neighborhood Relations: Tuesday Dec. 1

- Land Use: Wednesday Dec. 2

- Environment: Wednesday Dec. 9

All meetings begin at 7 p.m. Whenever possible, agendas and other relevant documents are posted in advance in the "Board News" section of District 10's website: www.district10comopark.org

SPIRIT WEEK GOES VIRTUAL

Distance learning has entered its third month of the 2020-2021 school year. St. Paul Public Schools announced that high schools will continue with the format until at least January.

One of many challenges for students during distance learning is finding safe and healthy outlets for their energy. The high school experience with daily face-to-face interaction and traditional routines and rituals is impossible to replicate from iPads at home.

Homecoming season has come and gone. The void was felt within the student body and the school community. Despite the pandemic's cancellation of long-anticipated events, many Como students are taking advantage of the altered opportunities that are still available.

Como's student council created "Virtual Spirit Week" for the last week of October. Thematic dress-up days, photo contests and activities such as the selection of a homecoming court were all components to help create connection.

Royalty court representatives included seniors Mabur Bility, Lilly Klett and Claire Olson, juniors Saylor Landrum and Raven



By **ERIC ERICKSON**
Social studies teacher

Florez-Reese, sophomores Selena Paul and Thay Ler See, freshmen Kyle Kosiak and Krisha Rama.

Como's debate team has been active with participation in several meets via a virtual format. All of the team's practice sessions are also virtual. The Como debaters include students ranging from the novice division, to junior varsity and varsity levels.

Notable finishes and awards have been earned by Sam Skinner, Chikamso Chijioke, Caitlyn Coyle and Allie Rognerud.

Sports during COVID-19

With precautions, protocol and monitoring, fall sports that started in August successfully completed their seasons. Football and volleyball started later but



The Como Park Cougars celebrated their season-opening "W" against Highland Park. Como had a record of 3 wins and 0 losses as the Monitor went to press. (Photo submitted by Eric Erickson)

are in the middle of their abbreviated seasons.

While student athletes and coaches know things can change in an instant, they are embracing every day they get to be practicing and playing with their teams. The physical activity and release from screen time is a rejuvenating element after each school day.

Both the girls' and boys' cross-country running teams had solid seasons with third place finishes in the St. Paul City Conference. Senior Justine Wulff was

the top runner for the Como girls and earned all-conference.

Sophomore Charlie Power-Theisen was not only the Cougars' fastest runner, but also the individual champion for the conference. He also finished in the top ten at the Section 4AA Meet and qualified for a state invitational. Senior Shakur Bati was also all-conference and qualified for the state event.

The Cougars football team began the season with a significant win over a traditionally tough Highland Park squad.

They followed that up with an overtime upset of Johnson, and a convincing shutout over Humboldt. The 3-0 start has been a joyful surprise after a challenging 1-8 season in 2019.

Several returning starters on both sides of the ball who committed to off-season improvement have made the turnaround possible. Seniors Sully Lucy, Kaelby Sears, Jahrese Adeagbo start on both offense and defense, as does junior Aaron Adekplovi.

{ Monitor in a Minute }

By **JANE McCLURE**

Auto repair business can open

A former Frogtown creamery can be reused as an auto repair business, with approval of a conditional use permit Oct. 16 by the St. Paul Planning Commission. The commission approved the permit for Ebisso Uka, who wishes to open an auto repair business at 1033 Thomas Ave. Planning Commission approval is final unless there was an appeal to the city council within 10 days. No appeal was filed.

The property is zoned for business use and has two buildings. The oldest structure was built as a creamery in 1919. A large storage building was built later. More recently the property was a sign shop and then a transportation company. Rift Valley outgrew the site and recently moved to a larger location.

Rift Valley was allowed to repair its passenger vehicles on-site. But a new conditional use permit is

needed for the new auto repair use. Planning staff determined Uka met all but one condition for the conditional use permit, except one requiring a 10-foot landscaped buffer at the property. The configuration of buildings on the property makes it impractical for Uka to meet that condition, so the Planning Commission and its Zoning Committee agreed it didn't have to be met.

Uka plans to only use part of one building for an auto repair business.

Frogtown Neighborhood Association didn't send a recommendation to the Planning Commission or its Zoning Committee. The commission received five letters, some in opposition and others asking that issues such as potential pneumatic tool noise and on-street parking of vehicles awaiting repair be handled properly.

Audit committee picks focus

A reconstituted St. Paul City Council audit committee has

picked its first study focus. The council's Performance Audit Committee will scrutinize city's delivery of constituent and customer services across multiple departments chosen from more than 100 ideas submitted through a survey process. The intent is to help residents and businesses with such issues.

The original committee worked closely with city council Research staff to look at issues including the city's half-cent sales tax program and how problem properties are addressed. Budget cuts have eliminated most of the council research staff over the years.

The committee includes five council members, with Rebecca Noecker and Jane Prince as chairs. It also includes three citizen representatives, with city staff in an advisory role.

Citizen members are Nou Fang, with a background in real estate accounting, financial reporting, budget analysis and auditing; Ellen Brown, retired public policy and expert and consultant, and Eric Zidlicky, with a background in business management and logistics, a district council member and

neighborhood advocate.

"I'm very excited that we chose to audit customer service this year," said Fang. "With all the unrest and challenges the city is facing in 2020, it is a great time to evaluate the call-in number and services we already have in place. We can find and address what barriers there currently are and how we can make the services better and more accessible to our community, in terms of language and channels of communication."

"There's a lot of great innovation in the area of traditional thinking around call centers," said Innovation Chief Matt Larson, advisor to the committee. "There are new generation approaches that leverage technology to reduce cost and increase engagement. This is a great topic to drive equity for everyone," he said, noting that getting a response shouldn't depend on knowing who to call.

Watch for slower speeds

Slower is Safer and Twenty is Plenty are the slogans St. Paul and Minneapolis motorists must

remember. Signs reminding motorists of the new speed limits began going up on major streets leading into both cities in October.

The speed limit changes are allowed under a 2019 state statute.

In St. Paul and Minneapolis, new speed limits are 20 mph for local residential streets, and 25 mph for busier, arterial city streets. All downtown streets are now 25 mph. That is a reduction from the longstanding speed limit of 30 mph.

Some speed limits are still above 30 mph for a few city streets, but this is on a case-by-case basis.

St. Paul has had 75 vehicle-pedestrian crashes in the first half of 2020 alone. Sixty-six people were injured and four killed. There have been 28 vehicle-bicycle crashes with 22 injuries.

"We know that lower speeds give drivers time to react and also greatly reduces the chance of serious injury to those involved in crashes with motor vehicles," said Sgt. Mike Ernster, St. Paul Police Department spokesperson.

Tabitha Wheeler named Social Worker of Year

The Minnesota School Social Workers Association proudly announces the selection of Tabitha Wheeler as the Minnesota School Social Worker of the Year for 2020.

Wheeler has been a school social worker for the High School for Recording Arts in St. Paul for 17 years. She earned her LSW from Winona State University in 2001.

Nominator, Joey Cienian, director of Educational Programming, wrote, "She has done exemplary and heroic work sustaining and being a foundational rock in support of our schools mission which is to find and nurture the genius and creativity of every student despite any life changes or setbacks. We believe strongly that Tabitha's dedication to our mission has changed the lives of hundreds of students and families over her many years of service."

Tabitha's co-worker, Stephanie Miska, Assistant Director of Special Education, shared, "Tabitha is truly a student advocate extraordinaire. She ensures that she educates her students on their rights as individuals, provides them guidance in how to navigate through a system that may continue to oppress and contribute to barriers that frustrate and devalue human dignity and worth of our students. She maintains the highest level of integrity, with her actions, intentions and advocacy skills. She will go up against an army if she feels her students are in any way shamed, marginalized or their rights are being violated."

Wheeler makes strong con-



Tabitha Wheeler of the High School for Recording Arts in St. Paul is the Social Worker of the Year. (Photo submitted)

nections with her staff as well continuing to educate them on how to meet students' needs. Director of Student Engagement Dan Frey wrote, "From the moment we met, she changed the way I thought about how education and social work services relate to one another in a school setting. She instilled in me the idea that our young people must have their social, emotional and physical needs met at a high level by a caring community before we can begin to build trust and engage in education."

Community member and former co-worker, Paris Yarbrough, Esq., said, "Tabitha recognizes that many of the youth enrolled at High School for Recording Arts are dealing with

communal violence, ostracization due to their sexual orientation or LGBTQI identity, suffering from PTSD and other issues. However, Tabitha consistently challenges herself to evolve in understanding issues that plague the communities she works with."

Working in a district where they have anywhere from 100-150 of the students struggling with homelessness and high mobility, Assistant Director of Educational Programming Renee Swanson added, "Tabitha is deeply connected to community resources for our students and Tabitha has been an advocate of getting resources for our students on-site at HSRA so that our students can access them at school, eliminating the need for students to seek assistance outside of school. Tabitha has also done extensive grant work and collaboration efforts in order to acquire on site, nurses, housing advocates and a full time therapist for our students."

MSSWA is so excited to acknowledge Tabitha Wheeler and her dedication to the profession, according to representatives. "Her knowledge, her support for her colleagues, her commitment to students and advocacy to the families she serves makes her our Minnesota School Social Worker of the year for 2020!" they said.

Dan Frey's words sum it up best. "She has undertaken this professional selflessness without expectation of recognition, but with the sole goal of making our young peoples' lives better, every moment of every day."

TIF district moving ahead around Allianz Field

By JANE McCLURE

A new tax increment financing (TIF) district for the Snelling-Midway redevelopment site is moving ahead, with hopes it will spur affordable housing and redevelopment by Allianz Field.

On Nov. 3, the St. Paul City Council approved establishment of the renovation and renewal TIF district, following an Oct. 28 vote of approval as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board.

Council members expressed support for the TIF district, with Dai Thao and Mitra Jalali praising the inclusion of affordable housing and potential to spur more development along University Ave. and Green Line light rail.

TIF will support redevelopment of the "superblock" bounded by Pascal Street and St. Anthony, Snelling and University avenues. A master plan for the site, which won city council approval in August 2016, calls for 620 dwelling units, one million square feet of office space, 421,100 square feet of retail space and 4,720 parking spaces. But Bill McGuire of Minnesota United FC has cautioned that those plans would be revised with a changing economy. He and Rick Birdoff of RK Midway are leading redevelopment efforts on the block, through a development partnership, Snelling-Midway Redevelopment, LLC.

An HRA staff report indicates that site redevelopment could include 800,000 square feet of

office space, approximately 399,250 square feet of retail, approximately 400 hotel rooms, approximately 3,350 stalls of structured parking, and approximately 620 housing units. For the housing unit, there is a planned goal of 30 percent of units to be income-restricted. Thirty percent of housing units would be affordable to households earning 60 percent or less of area median income, with at least one-third of units affordable to households earning not more than 50 percent AMI, and one third affordable to households earning 30 percent AMI.

The taxable base value for the TIF district is estimated at \$28 million. Increments will start being collected in 2024.

It's assumed the site will have \$485 million of market value by the end of 2032, generating annual tax increment of \$8.78 million. Over 16 years that will generate \$112 million. A gap is anticipated, according to the city staff report.

That will be used to help cover an estimated \$115 million in costs including public improvements and affordable housing.

The goal is for construction to start in 2021, with buildout complete by the end of 2030.

The potential redevelopment impacts and mitigation steps are outlined in an alternative urban areawide review (AUAR). The AUAR also won approval in 2016 and is due to be updated in 2021.

Nicoll Goodman, director

of the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED), said the actions are a statutorily required step in a process that began in 2017, when initial steps were taken to set up a TIF district. Council members had to act by Nov. 13 to preserve the ability to use TIF at Snelling-Midway and meet a state-mandated deadline.

"This action is needed to meet a deadline and preserve a tool for possible use," Goodman said.

Goodman emphasized that the council action isn't a commitment to TIF assistance for any developer or project. Applications for TIF uses have to come in in the future.

The council and HRA in June approved a demolition and development agreement with Snelling-Midway Redevelopment, LLC. Findings were made to determine that the remaining section of Midway Center and the former Big Top Liquors buildings are substandard. Both were extensively damaged by fire in May, in the wake of civil unrest tied to the death of George Floyd.

The council in 2017 took similar action to determine that part of Midway Center, including the Rainbow Foods site, and the original Big Top Liquors building were substandard and should come down to make way for Allianz Field. The timing of that initial round of building demolitions started a three-year clock ticking and triggers the upcoming Nov. 13 deadline.

{ Development Roundup }

By JANE McCLURE

1825 University

A 243-unit affordable housing complex at the northwest corner of Fairview and University avenues is moving toward a 2021 construction start. The St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board October 14, unanimously approved \$30 million in conduit bond for the 1825 University Limited Partnership's \$63.9 million project.

The project was unveiled in late 2019 for Hamline Midway Coalition and Union Park District Council. Its two seven-story buildings will include a mix of 15 studio, 89 one-bedroom, 63 two-bedroom, and 76 three-bedroom units studios, one, two and three-bedroom units. Units range from 534 square feet to 2,104 square feet in size.

It will have about 150 parking spaces in a lot shared with nearby Goodwill Easter Seals and more than 120 underground parking spaces. A playground is also planned, along with plazas by each building.

The project, which is developer Reuter Walton's first foray into affordable housing in St. Paul, will use what is called "income averaging" for rents. There will be 27 units at 30 percent of area median income (AMI), 83 units at 50 percent of AMI, 58 units at 60 percent of AMI and 75 units at 80 percent of AMI. The affordability requirement will be for 30 years. The units at or below 50 percent of AMI will remain fixed for 30 years. Other AMI units may float rental rates, as long as overall rents and incomes average 60 percent of AMI.

One change to the original plans is the addition of 2,400 square feet of retail space at the corner of Fairview and University, something HMC has pushed for. Ward Four Council Member Mitra Jalali praised the addition of commercial space, saying it will provide opportunity for local businesses to be part of the new development.

"We're really excited about the project," said Paul Keenan, vice president of development at Reuter Walton. He noted it will help meet a demand for larger, affordable units for families. "To provide a lot of two and three-bedroom units is a big component of this project."

Keenan also said the current COVID-19 pandemic is accelerating the demand for quality workforce housing.

The project was able to come together quickly for several reasons, said Marie Franchette, project manager for the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED). The developer was chosen by longtime landowner Goodwill Easter Seals, which assembled the properties for several years. The site includes a gas station that later served as Andy's Garage restaurant and a Goodwill shop, the former Finn Sisu ski shop, a two-story commercial building and other buildings that were torn down earlier. Part of the site along University has been parking for Goodwill Easter Seals. Businesses closed or moved over the years.

The property is zoned for traditional neighborhoods four use. At this point it's not anticipated that any zoning change or variances will be needed.

Franchette said no other city financial assistance is sought for the project. Nor is there a need for gap financing. The conduit bond issue doesn't create any debt or obligation for the HRA and the city. The city acts as a pass-through for this type of financing.

Of the development's total cost of \$63.9 million, \$30 million are the conduit multi-family

housing bonds. The project also includes Low Income Housing Tax Credits, a Fannie Mae loan, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development contamination cleanup grant, Metropolitan Council Tax Base Revitalization Account and other sources.

The project will create a total of 1,080 construction jobs, with 1,026 of those anticipated to be local hires. It's anticipated that the project will generate 2,246,400 labor hours.

New apartments near Marshall and Cleveland avenues

A proposal to redevelop the Suds America property at 2045 Marshall Ave. into a four-story mixed-use building got a vote of support Oct. 19 from the Union Park District Council land use committee.

Developer Paul Tucci and 2C Development wish to tear down the laundromat and build a structure there with about 50 underground and surface parking, one story of commercial space and three stories of housing.

The property is zoned for traditional neighborhoods (TN) two use. That allows heights of up to 45 feet without a conditional use permit, with more height allowed through a conditional use permit process. Tucci said more height is needed to make the project financially viable. The property was rezoned in fall 2018 as part of the larger West Marshall Avenue Zoning Study. It's not clear yet if the property would need any variances. The request for a conditional use permit and any variances if needed would go to the St. Paul Planning Commission before year's end.

Housing would be mix of 55 studio, one and two-bedroom apartments, ranging in size from 530 to 1,095 square feet. Committee members pushed for some of the housing units to be at an affordable rent level.

Questions were also asked about a tenant for the 2,500 square feet of first-floor commercial space. Tucci has been in talks with a restaurant but nothing has been finalized yet.

The plans were recently reviewed with the district council's transportation committee, which is recommending that all parking access be from the building's alley and that there be no curb cuts on Marshall. Suds America has two curb cuts and surface parking areas.

Funding sought for reuse at 678 N. Snelling

A vacant building on North Snelling Ave. is the focus of efforts to obtain city funding. In October the St. Paul City Council approved applications for rehabilitation and reuse of 678 N. Snelling Ave.

The brick building has housed a number of businesses over the years. It has been on the city's "problem properties" listings in the past several months. It has sat vacant since a lighting and fan store moved out. The building has drawn attention because past historic studies have called out its significance.

The intent is to clean up the site and building, and explore feasibility of office space on the second floor and retail on the first floor. Another idea being considered is to add housing at the site.

Developers have to seek grants through the city. City officials are seeking Tax Base Revitalization Account dollars for the project, from the Metropolitan Council. No dollar amount was listed.

The city is also seeking Metropolitan Council Livable Communities Demonstration Account Transit-Oriented Development Pre-Development grant fund for 678 Snelling Avenue N., for \$100,000.

Marketplace

Want ads must be received by the Monitor by Nov. 30 for the Dec. 10 issue. Call 651-917-4183 for more information. Place your ad via our new web site at www.MonitorSaintPaul.com

Monitor Want Ads are \$1 per word with a \$10 minimum. Send your remittance along with your ad to *Monitor Classifieds*, 5139 34th Ave. S. #17097, Minneapolis, MN 55417. Ad copy can be e-mailed to denis@monitorsaintpaul.com, or call 651-917-4183. You can also place the ad via our website.

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Creative Solutions with a Personal Touch. Legal Services in the areas of: Small Business, Wills and Trusts, Probate, Real Estate, and Family. Kirsten Libby, 855 Rice Street, Suite 100, St. Paul, MN, 651-487-1208. www.libby-lawoffice.com. B-20

AUTO STORAGE

Secured auto and boat storage near Snelling and University. Short term or long term. Heated and unheated available. 570 Asbury Street. 651-641-0166. hamlineparkstorage.com. 12-20

CRISIS HOTLINE

Call the Minnesota Day One Crisis Hotline at 1-866-223-1111 if you or someone you know is seeking shelter due to a dangerous relationship or needs to create a safety plan. B-20

EMPLOYMENT

Fun People Needed - Face To Face Solutions In Partnership with Star Tribune wants to hear from you if: You enjoy having fun! \$\$\$ You Need Extra Income \$\$\$ Are you friendly, outgoing, neat in appearance, and enjoy talking to people. Are you looking to earn some money each week to help with bills, college, or just some extra spending money. Flexible Scheduling! You get to create your own each week! Please contact Mike at 612-723-9282 or contact contact@facetofacesolutions.org

FOR SALE

Sirius XM Satellite Radio Model SXSD2 in excellent condition. With dock and play radio - comes also with vehicle kit (still in the box). \$120.00 John 651-285-1296

North End - 3 bedroom plus garage. Contract for Deed. Handyman special. DeLisle 651-488-0561.

OFFICE SPACE

Quiet, professional office space with free, attached parking. Single offices up to 10,000 sf. Building information available at hamlinepp.com. Contact Eric with Colliers at 952-837-3087.

12-20

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North End - 3 bedroom plus garage. Contract for Deed. Handyman special. DeLisle 651-488-0561.

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Window washing, inside and out. "You will see the difference." Call Larry. 651-635-9228.

EMPLOYMENT

Virtual Connections with LSS Companion Services

Trusted support
Ongoing, friendly phone or video visits with a trained companion can help in this time of social distancing.

Volunteer opportunities

- Make a difference from home via phone or video chat by providing companionship.
- Support kids who have fallen behind next school year - in person or virtually.
- Earn a stipend, plus mileage. Virtual training is provided.

To learn more contact Jacqueline James 651.310.9455 OR Jacqueline.James@lssmn.org



Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota



Elizabeth Wegner, who teaches at King of Kings Lutheran School in Roseville and doubles as Jehovah Lutheran music director, led her fifth- and sixth-grade students in a project making nine tie-blankets for people in need. The blankets are for ex-inmates served by prison ministry Crossing Home and for others served by New Freedom, a free store the church operates with Minnesota South District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Jim Seeman, a Jehovah Lutheran member, New Freedom store manager and correctional ministry coordinator for Minnesota South District, went to King of Kings Oct. 30, 2020 to pick up the blankets and talk about the needs the organizations try to serve. (Photo submitted)

Midway Project distribution set for November

The Midway Project just entered its fifth month of operation and Oct. 28 marked its 15th distribution event. It started by shar-

ing fresh and non-perishable food items, household, personal care, and baby items and expanded to regularly offer masks, school supplies, family games and activities, and information about voting, housing, and additional food resources in our community. Over the summer and into the fall, this community of care got to know each other and shared the joys and difficulties of everyday life. It has welcomed hundreds of families, and together created something that goes beyond what anyone expected back in June. The Midway is truly mighty in heart and in its commitment to one another.

The Midway Project team is so thankful for the incredible generosity of our neighbors, the continued partnership with Hancock Recreation Center, The Sanneh Foundation, and Ginkgo Coffeehouse, and so many supporting partnerships along the way including Celtic Junction, Hamline Midway Early Learning Coalition, and Resurrection City Church.

The Midway Project distributions will continue through November - see schedule below - and possibly into December. Watch for updates and opportunities at the Hamline Midway Coalition Facebook page, check out <https://www.hamlinemidway.org/TheMidway->

Hamline Midway Coalition

By KATE MUDGE
kate@hamlinemidway.org



the midway food & empowerment project



Project, or email midwayproject@hamlinemidway.org.

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In Brief

Landlord assistance

Landlords with properties in Ramsey County who have tenants that have been unable to make rent payments as a result of COVID-19 may be eligible to apply for one-time assistance grants through the Landlord Assistance program.

Eligible landlords can receive up to \$20,000 in reimbursement per rental unit for tenants' missed rent payments and/or unpaid fees due to hardships caused by COVID-19 from March 1, 2020 through Dec. 30, 2020. Visit ramseycounty.us/LandlordAssistance to review other eligibility requirements and request or download an application. For questions, call 651-266-4896.

Mental Health in Challenging Times Conference Nov. 14

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) will hold its state conference online on Saturday, Nov. 14, from 9:00 to 4:00. Titled "Mental Health in Challenging Times," the conference will feature three keynote speakers, nine breakout sessions, and NAMI's annual meeting and awards ceremony. The 2020 NAMI Minnesota State Conference has been approved for 4.5 CEU hours for social workers by the Minnesota Board of Social Work.

For more state conference details and registration, go to namimn.org or call 651-645-2948.

'PROFILES IN KINDNESS'

By JAN WILLMS

Paul Kotz, a writer living in the Como neighborhood, knows that everyone at some time goes through crises.

He is hoping his latest book, "Profiles in Kindness: Stories of Servant Leadership and Inspiration," can help people emerge from those crises and find some comfort and some joy in his words.

Although written before COVID-19 and the tragedy of George Floyd's death impacted so many, his book strikes a chord during these difficult times.

Kotz, a professor at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota who teaches in the Doctorate in Leadership program, said he loves to write. "Hopefully I can touch peoples' hearts and let them see there is hope, and good stories are happening in the world," he noted.

Be a servant leader

Kotz wrote an earlier book, "Something Happened Today," for his daughters, and then decided to publish that collection of stories designed to inspire and challenge the reader.

"For this book, I coupled that with the idea of servant leadership," Kotz explained. "How do we reach out to our community, the people we interact with daily? It builds on the first book."

Kotz explores how people can be influential and inspirational leaders. Throughout the book he draws on quotes from individuals, both the famous

and not so famous, who all have something noteworthy to share.

A point made by American author Alison McGhee especially resonated with Kotz. "Every moment of every day you can bring people down or you can lift them up," she said.

Kotz emphasizes that point throughout 'Profiles in Kindness.' "We need to seize the day for what it is," he said, "But we all hit hurdles and hardships." Looking at how people can lead in their community, their schools or companies, Kotz said he asks this question: "How do you want to spend your remaining days?"

He suggests in his book that being a more effective leader involves experiencing everyday life and learning from it, being kind, developing new insight, having our eyes open to better ways of handling situations, and then taking action to make a situation, our communities and the world a place to thrive and inspire others. "If you lead by example, people get inspired to do good things on their own," Kotz added.

He acknowledges that all people are in some ways flawed human beings, and there is no one canned way to provide leadership. "But everything we do is built on the shoulders of giants," he said. "We can learn so much from history, yet still unfortunately do the same things over and over."

Motivate others to see good in themselves

Kotz noted that the Martin



Paul Kotz (Photo by Jan Willms)

"We have to face our problems head-on and look at ourselves on a daily basis and ask, 'What are we all about?'"

~ Paul Kotz

Luther King Jr. quote "It's not possible to be in favor of justice for some people and not be in favor of justice for all people" is as timely today as it was when he first said it.

"I am a privileged white male," Kotz said, "and I have had my own hardships. But if you are a person in poverty, and you don't have all the resources others have, it's hard to say pick yourselves up by your bootstraps and go get a job." Part of leadership, according to Kotz, is recognizing how you can look at people's strengths. "If you can

Como author hopes new book helps people emerge from crisis with comfort and joy

motivate others to see the good in themselves, things can kind of take care of themselves."

Open your eyes and ears

Being in a position of leadership can be both a blessing and a curse, Kotz states in "Profiles of Kindness." He said, "It's a blessing when someone trusts you, but at the same time sensitive information they share can be almost too much."

Citing his own experience, Kotz said he may not be able to actually help the person who came to him seeking advice. "I can't live your life, but I can give you examples of what I have done. It may not work for you," is what he may tell the person.

"I temper my comments to others with the gift of experience, the gift of making mistakes and learning from them and trying to help others not make some big ones."

In his book, Kotz writes that he tells individuals that even if they did not get the job or promotion they wanted, they can learn from the experience and prepare better for the next challenge down the road.

Kotz admitted that life's challenges provide us with some pain, and we may have to refocus or give up. "My hope, with both of these books, is that they can serve as a springboard," he said. He cited the difficulties people face when they are in the midst of a problem, but once they are through it they say "Wow!"

"We can use creativity and

motivation to bring a better joy," he said.

Kotz explained that he does not write every day, but his writing can come in clumps. "I do write every other day, some small snippet of me trying to process things," he said. Taking his dog for a walk, he often comes across people who come up and talk to him. "That happens to me a lot; I must give off signals," he said. "And I welcome that."

People who have read or reviewed his latest book have told Kotz they like the idea that they can pick it up and read different pieces of it and feel something different each time.

"I maintain in both books that someone, somewhere, is trying to do something good for someone else at this time," Kotz said.

"Some say this is a horrible world, but you have to open your eyes and ears to hear things around you. It takes patience and a conscious effort, and as a leader you have to do that."

Kotz encourages others to reach out to others and ask for help when needed. "Don't be too hard on yourself, especially these days," he said. "It has been a long time since we had a pandemic, compounded by the George Floyd tragedy. We have to face our problems head-on and look at ourselves on a daily basis and ask 'What are we all about?'"

"Profiles in Kindness" is available on Amazon or by contacting the author at paulkotz@smumn.edu.

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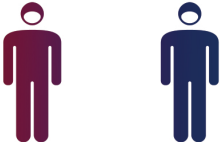
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Hamline-Midway artist driven to 'Do the most good' with design



Artist Suyao Tian with a basket of her Modern Cover mittens. She said, "Hands for me have always had a very special meaning. They symbolize universal friendliness, helpfulness, and connection." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

When Hamline-Midway artist Suyao Tian thinks back on her childhood, she remembers the freezing cold of winter. Tian grew up in a province of Northern China, near the border with Tibet. Her city, Xining, which sits at an elevation of 7,200 feet, was rugged. She said, "The children of many poor families had red cheeks, and dry, cracked hands because of the harsh winters."

When Tian moved to Minneapolis in 2014, her first winter here brought back that childhood memory. While brainstorming for her MFA thesis project at Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD), she thought, "What if I could use my design skills to help kids who are suffering from the cold?"

Tian had long been interested in the line between fine art and commercial design. She was ready to challenge that, using mittens as her vehicle.

She used the time at MCAD to build her own social impact company, called Modern Cover. Her mind and creativity were engaged in every aspect of small business development: from initial concept and design, to branding, to managing production in China, to marketing, and, unexpectedly, delivering the first pairs of mittens herself when they arrived just days before Christmas.

Cover hands, warm your heart

Tian has a deep interest in how art, immigration, and identity are all woven together. She said, "Not only should design be about making things that are beautiful, it should be about solving societal problems."

The problem, in this case, was suffering from the cold.

The solution was well-designed, warm, playful mittens. Modern Cover offers one style of children's mittens made from four different fabric patterns. There are sizes to fit ages 1-13 years.

The mittens are made of breathable nylon. Tian conducted her own quality control research on the issue of whether the mittens were waterproof. She said, "I soaked a pair mittens in a bowl of water, and after three hours – the seams finally began

to leak a little."

The mittens are waterproof.

Tian said, "At Modern Cover, we strive to do the most good with design. Our focus is on helping kids in as many difficult situations as possible – poverty, homelessness, hunger, abuse, and neglect – by contributing a percentage of all sales to various organizations which work to benefit children."

Free mittens to organizations serving children

In this most difficult year of COVID and economic hardship for people everywhere, Tian is taking the sale of her children's mittens one step farther. She would like to donate pairs of her children's mittens to organizations serving children.

Twin Cities' school groups, households of faith, and non-profit organizations are encouraged to contact Suyao Tian by email at suyaotian@moderncover.net with a description of how they work to better the lives of children.

In addition to her design work with Modern Cover, Tian is a new mother, an independent art curator, an accomplished musician on the Guzheng (a 21-stringed traditional Chinese instrument), and a watercolor artist.

Her watercolor paintings, as well as her mittens, speak to childhood memories. Tian explained, "I am of the one-child-only generation born in China in the 1980s. I grew up in an intellectual family, and there were many strict rules. I didn't have siblings or pets; even the kind of friends I could make was limited by rules. I was quite lonely."

She said, "When I was little, I collected everything interesting to me – from things found in nature to objects found in the street. I put these things in jars, played with them, and talked to them. This was the way I connected to the world. These small creatures and elements appear in all of my paintings, along with other surprising characters. When I am painting, I let my imagination be free."

Her original watercolors and prints are available on her Instagram site at <https://www.instagram.com/suyaotian>, and also

STAND WITH ARTISTS

Art to Change the World is a diverse, non-profit coalition of local change-makers employing the arts in service of positive social change.

Their latest project is to reinvent holiday gift-giving through their Stand with Artists Project (SWAP). They have brought together works by member artists in one virtual store. Give a gift with soul – an original work of art. Each work of art is bought directly from the artist.

Artists receive 100% of the sale, and will arrange for the transfer of the art piece. When art is purchased locally, there is a smaller carbon footprint.

SWAP is also offering experiential gifts like classes and concerts. Consider this type of low impact environmental giving, and create a memory or new skill – rather than a pile of stuff. To view the selection of art and other offerings, visit www.arttochangetheworld.org.

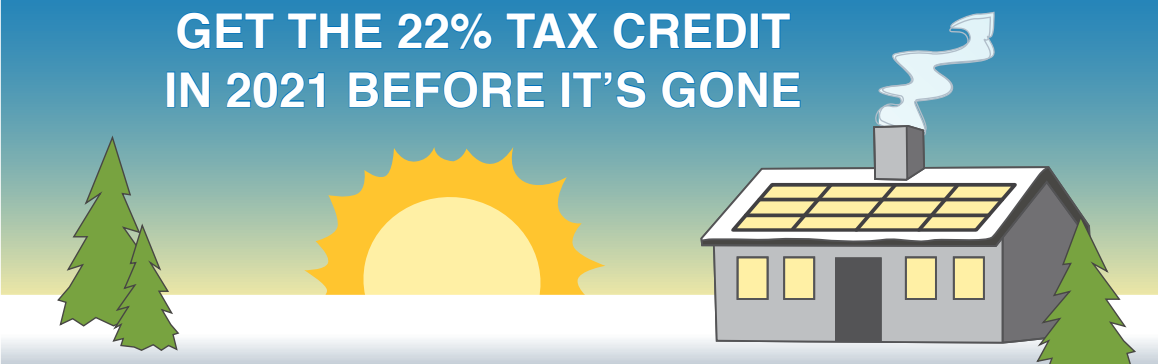


An example of Tian's watercolor work, available for sale through her Instagram site <https://www.instagram.com/suyaotian> and the "Art to Change the World" artist registry (see sidebar). (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

on the "Art to Change the World" artist registry (see sidebar).

For more information on Suyao Tian and the design work of Modern Cover, visit www.moderncover.net.

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