

Residents push for Rondo land bridge to repair community split by Interstate 94 construction

## Connecting past, present, future

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

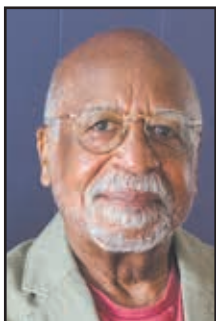
ReConnect Rondo (RCR) is leading the effort to revitalize St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood. The non-profit organization and its partners propose building a community land bridge that would cap I-94 for several blocks. Construction of a land bridge would be the first step toward replacing what was lost half a century ago, when construction of the interstate destroyed the Old Rondo neighborhood (see map for details).

According to the RCR website, Rondo was the center of African American life in the Twin Cities, with about 80% of the local Black population living there at the time of freeway construction. It was a hard-working, vibrant community supported by social clubs, religious organizations, community centers, and a thriving business community.

More than 700 African American families were forced to sell their homes in the 1950s, and were under-compensated for their value. An estimated 300 small businesses and institutions were also destroyed to make room for the freeway. The overall impact resulted in a 61% population loss in Rondo.

A less disruptive northern route for I-94 was under consideration at the same time. It would have followed the rail lines through what is now Energy Park, and resulted in much less displacement of homes and businesses.

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Rondo native, Marvin Roger Anderson

## GEORGE FLOYD SQUARE CROWD JUBILANT, RESOLUTE AS CHAUVIN FOUND GUILTY



The crowd at George Floyd Square, the site where former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin killed George Floyd, erupts as the guilty verdict is announced on Tuesday, April 20, 2021. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

By JILL BOOGREN

Hundreds of people poured into 38th St. and Chicago Ave. in South Minneapolis anxiously awaiting the verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial with the whole world watching. Eliza Wesley, aka the Gatekeeper, started a chant that carried across the Square: "Black lives they matter here," "Black lives they matter now," and "No justice, no peace!"

"And we gonna prosecute the police," Milesha Smith added, to applause.

Moments later, cheers and shouts of joy erupted in waves as three guilty verdicts were read and heard in intervals on mobile devices throughout the crowd. "We changed the world on 4/20," shouted Leon Lyons.

Billy Briggs, who had been tracking the number of days until and through the trial on the former Speedway sign, replaced those letters with: JUSTICE SERVED? Marcia Howard led the crowd in a chant "One Down, Three to Go" – referring to Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao,

the former officers who were charged with aiding and abetting Chauvin in the murder of George Floyd. People shared tears and long hugs, restrained over the past year due to COVID-19, as chants of "Say His Name: George Floyd!" echoed across the intersection. The crowd grew larger and after a sound truck pulled up, it became a dance party.

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ALSO Forging community at GFS >> 2

## Frogtown resident receives Chief's Award for helping young woman in mental health crisis



Turonda (last name withheld by request) stands with her family and accepts the Chief's Award for helping a young woman in a mental health crisis in April 2020. She has dealt with her own mental health struggles and used what she has learned to help the young woman. (Photo submitted)

## ONE MOMENT ON A BRIDGE

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Turonda (last name withheld by request) got in her car one afternoon in April 2020, buckled up, and double checked to make sure she had everything she needed for a visit to her parents. The COVID-19 lock down was just six weeks old.

A busy mom of three with a full-time job as a nursing assistant, Turonda had a lot on her mind. As she drove across a familiar bridge in her North End neighborhood, something caught her eye and she glanced again over her left shoulder. There was a young woman standing on the outside bridge rail, apparently ready to jump.

Turonda said, "When people are suicidal, it's a cry for help. I pulled

over, and walked across the street. She was crying, and had a look of desperation. I approached her carefully. There wasn't much traffic, so it was strangely quiet. When I got close enough, I wrapped my arm around her back and tried to console her. I've been deeply depressed before myself, and I thought it was important to talk to her.

"From what she said, she may have been in an abusive relationship. Maybe she lost her job, or custody of her children. So many things can go wrong that are beyond our control. Suicide can seem like the only option in the moment, but it's not."

When Turonda first experienced depression 15 years ago, she felt her life was caving in around her. She at-

"When I got close enough, I wrapped my arm around her back and tried to console her. I've been depressed before myself, and I thought it was important to talk to her." - Turonda

tempted suicide herself, in the throes of an ongoing custody battle and untreated post-partum depression. She said, "In 2006, I didn't know what post-partum depression was or how to get help; I just thought I was a bad mom."

"I was lucky to have a loving support system, but I wasn't telling my family and friends how depressed I was. Women are acculturated to believe they have to be so strong."

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Better biking, walking, rolling in St. Paul

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Watch out for jumping worms

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Teens qualify for National History Day

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# FORGING COMMUNITY AT GEORGE FLOYD SQUARE



Left to right: Simya Edwards, Milaen Mullins, Schiantae Mullins, Malachi Mullins, Levi W., NaJee W., from the Metro area of Detroit, Michigan, visit George Floyd Square. "It gives me goose bumps bein' here," said Mullins. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

By JILL BOOGREN

At the start of the Derek Chauvin trial, visitors from the Metro area of Detroit, Mich., approached the south gate of George Floyd Square at 39th and Chicago Ave.S. (GFS). They had just one day left in Minneapolis and wanted to stop there before they went home. Both Black women raising Black children, these mothers spoke to the significance of being there with their sons and daughters.

NaJee W. said she became active in Michigan after her son asked her, "Would that happen to me? Like, will I go out into the streets and get killed like that?"

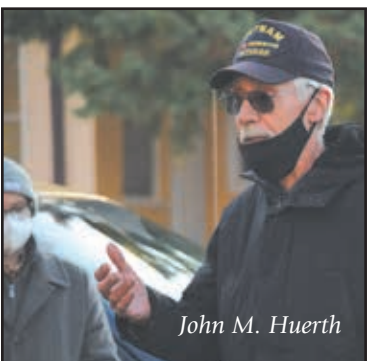
"My son is going to grow up to be a Black man one day. Ever since then, it really touched my heart. You know, that coulda been my son," said NaJee. She was moved to get active in her community, to be part of the positive change. "I wanna do this for everyone that don't have a voice right now."

For Schiantae Mullins, it was important to bring her children there to show them firsthand what was happening.

"I am a Black woman, I have a Black son and a Black daughter, I have uncles, I have a mom, I have a sister. We're all experiencing this together. Whether it happens to us or it happens to someone else, it's trauma from over the years, and it's just very important that they get to see and they get to know what's goin' on... and that they know they have a voice and their voice should be heard," she said. "Hearing George Floyd call for his mother? That did not resonate with me well. That coulda been my son. It was hurtful to hear. It's just a lot. Just bein' here. It gives me goose bumps bein' here."

Young Levi W. added, "The only reason we're protesting because how George Floyd died like Martin Luther King, 'cause we need to protest to all the Black presidents in the world."

John M. Huerth, welcoming



John M. Huerth



Eliza Wesley, aka Gatekeeper, said, "This community is so great and so a part of me." (Photos by Jill Boogren)

As with many others, these visitors were welcomed by community member John M. Huerth, who greeted them with a smile, as he has done countless times since coming to hold space at the Square last fall. A Vietnam Veteran and former teacher who once wanted to be a missionary, Huerth said his mission now is two words: peace and justice.

He uses a holiday lights analogy to describe his reasons for plugging in to this movement. "All these little twinkle lights, there's one that's not in there. Once I plugged in I felt the energy of the whole group."

Being at south gate, which is where most people go in and out, Huerth senses the solidarity of the neighbors. He said usually it's a wave or a fist being pumped into the air, but one woman put the peace symbol up. "It's the battle of hearts and minds. We used to use that in Vietnam, battle of hearts and minds."

## A Global Memorial

GFS is many things at the same time. Shown in its portraits, prayer flags and placards, it is a memorial, where people come to pay their respects, to mourn, and to offer tributes and prayers. Volunteer caretakers with the George Floyd Global Memorial, with support from the Midwest Arts Conservation Center and in temporary space provided by Pillsbury House & Theater (plus a greenhouse built by community), have preserved more than 2,500 offerings left by visitors. A small portion of those are on display now through Juneteenth in the Nokomis Gallery of the Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center (3749 Chicago Ave.).

GFS is also a gathering place for rallies and events, like the Black & Asian Solidarity event on April 18 that brought hundreds of people into the Square to hear music and spoken word and to rise up in unity against the killing of Daunte Wright and other stolen lives. A "Love Fest," held earlier in April, had people literally dancing in the street. There are often calls to action and petitions circulated, this time by Yes 4 Minneapolis calling to change

the city charter (and therefore public safety) in Minneapolis.

## Place of protest

GFS is a place of protest. On June 2, 2020, after neighbors placed makeshift barricades across each roadway leading into the Square to keep harm from coming to those entering the memorial, the city of Minneapolis placed cement barricades – one block north and south on Chicago Ave. and one block east and west on 38th St. (with another at Park Ave. that has open access) – where they've remained since. Eager to reopen the streets to through traffic last August, city leaders asked what justice looked like; the community's response was Justice Resolution 001.

Beginning with "WHEREAS, the city killed a man in the street..." the resolution lists 24 demands for justice (bit.ly/georgefloydsquare-a), which range from removing specific authorities from prosecutorial and investigative bodies (i.e. Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman and those who head up the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension), to holding officers accountable for police violence, to investing in local businesses, jobs and training for area youth.

City leaders have been in ongoing talks with community members but took a hard left turn on Feb. 12, 2021 when they announced their plan to reopen the intersection at 38th and Chicago to through traffic after the conclusion of the Derek Chauvin trial. On April 1, Mayor Jacob Frey and Interim Public Works Director Brette Hjelle announced the results of a survey they felt showed support for reopening the streets. The survey offered just two choices, though – each a means of reopening the streets to two-way traffic. Of 4,000 surveys mailed, 685 were returned (a response rate of just 17%). Unmoved, those holding space inside the barricades remain steadfast: "Injustice closed the streets. Only justice should open them."

## People first

Above all, GFS is a community of people. They are chefs,

cooks, carpenters, welders, electricians, nurses, medics, teachers, artists, photographers, musicians. They are the deeply faithful and the secular, the mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, cousins and uncles and aunties. They are caretakers, collaborators and change makers who have made the choice to come together during a pandemic at the epicenter of a global racial reckoning and do something extraordinary – forge community.

It is what compels people to show up every day, twice a day, under the awning of the Peoples' Way (the former Speedway) to share updates, ask for help, offer support, check in with each other and talk. Mutual aid, in the form of free food, free clothing in the bus shelter-turned People's Closet, free books in the People's Library, and in countless other ways, is practiced here every day. Grievances are aired, solutions sought, problems resolved – much of it through conversation that for many months has taken place around a crackling fire.

As resident Marcia Howard says: "We go next door, we don't go ON Nextdoor."

If the buzz of activity at the Square is what folks see and hear, there's an entire hive of activity that is hidden from view. These are the workers, who instead of waiting for springtime to melt winter away, shovel grit-encrusted snowbanks into wheelbarrows and haul it away. These are the workers, who lift, tenderly, a flower, votive or tiny stuffed animal in order to clear a single piece of debris blown by the wind into the offerings laid at the memorial. These are the workers, who, when that wind turns sideways, blowing rain, hail, sleet or snow, race to lower a tarp to shelter the large portrait of George Floyd. These are the workers, who chop firewood, build greenhouses, tend to gardens, light candles and bring coffee at the start of each new day – for 330 days, from the moment George Floyd took his last breath until the guilty verdicts were read, and counting.



## Phi Khalar, a helper

One of these helpers is Phi Khalar. They started coming to the Square in August, ready to listen and amplify, in time recognizing where things needed to be done and stepping up.

"Whether it's little menial tasks of sweeping up stuff, picking up garbage, shoveling, I like doing that grunt work," they said. But Khalar also helps facilitate ideas that they or others can follow through on, depending on their skill set. Asked what being part of this community means to them, Khalar took a long moment to find the words.

"It kinda means everything," Khalar said, explaining that they've been part of protests and campaigns and supported different organizations their entire life. "The work that residents and just regular people are doing out of their own volition, out of their own drive, to connect with each other and know community, it's the most real thing I've ever felt in my life. And yeah, it means everything."

## Eliza Wesley, the Gatekeeper

This sense of community runs deep for Eliza Wesley, aka the Gatekeeper, who came to the Square the day after George Floyd's life was taken from him and has been there "6 and 12, 3 and 9," walking the same four blocks, ever since. The Gatekeeper's role is to make sure people are welcome when they enter into the "free state of George Floyd."

"The reason why I say 'You are now entering the free state of George Floyd. Respect One Another. Peaceful Memorial' is to let you know everyone's welcome in the Square. And that you remember that you got freedom and peace when you walk in this Square. And so those are my words that I put on the north [gate], to let everybody know that this is a peaceful memorial and that we want peoples to come here and be safe," said the Gatekeeper, who keeps constant watch, guided by God.

"This community is so great and so a part of me. It mean everything to me. As a Black community, our thing is, 'Together we stand, divided we fall.' That mean we all stand here together... and we all comin' together makin' things right and correctin' things that's not right. We all bein' on the same page. This is a village and this is a community, at all times."

On Tuesday, May 25, the one year anniversary of the death of George "Perry" Floyd, the George Floyd Global Memorial and the GFS community will present Rise & Remember, a day of events, including community art and healing, a children's area, open mic, a concert and candlelight vigil. 1 pm. Check Facebook and other social media @gfgmemorial for info.





"We shook up the world. We changed the world. Right here, this little corner," shouted Leon Lyons on the day Derek Chauvin was found guilty in the murder of George Floyd. "We changed the world on 4/20. We made history." (Photo by Jill Boogren)



## Rise & Remember on May 25

**Free event at George Floyd Memorial Square to commemorate one-year anniversary**

The George Floyd Global Memorial and the community at George Floyd Square will present a day of events for the community on May 25, 2021, the one-year anniversary of the death of George "Perry" Floyd.

Rise & Remember George Floyd Global Memorial Celebration is a free event that centers the family and friends of George "Perry" Floyd, Minnesota families impacted by injustice, and the people who've preserved the Memorial for 12 months.

The host of the event, the George Floyd Global Memorial, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in Minnesota, was established by George Floyd's aunt Angela Harrelson, his cousin Paris Stevens, and Lead Caretaker Jeanelle Austin, to bring together members of

Holding up an East 38th and Chicago lawn sign, Jay T. said the verdict on April 20 meant a "future for my kids, change, hopefully my life can start being positive and not bein' so negative all the time." (Photo by Jill Boogren)

George Floyd's family and the local community to preserve over 2,500 creative expressions of pain and hope left as offerings at the place where George Floyd took his last breaths.

The family affectionately calls him Perry, but the world was introduced to George Floyd, a man who suffered an unjust death at the hands of police on May 25, 2020. One year later, a heartfelt community commemoration will begin at 1 p.m. with community art, healing space, free food, and a children's area.

An open-mic and arts demonstrations will fill out the afternoon. At 6 p.m., a concert featuring 3x Grammy Award-Winning Sounds of Blackness with Special Guests will honor George Floyd's family, Minnesota families impacted by injustice, and the 38th and Chicago neighborhood. The evening will culminate with a candlelight vigil in honor of George Floyd.

Now through Juneteenth, visitors to George Floyd Square, will also have a sacred opportunity to engage in the Rememory

Experience of the offerings laid at the intersection of E 38th Street and Chicago Avenue. The exhibit entitled, "Still Here... Unstolen. Unbroken." is located at the Nokomis Gallery inside Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center, 3749 Chicago Ave. S. Hours are Tuesday-Thursday 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Friday-Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

From teddy bears, hand-written notes, drawings by children, candles, flowers, cardboard signs, to public art, the preservation of the physical site has allowed those from around the world to continue to visit the Memorial, present offerings of support or expressions of grief, share food and supplies, COVID-19 testing, elevate the community through youth programming and events, and begin to heal from the trauma of global racial injustice for the past 12 months. Their dedication has been an inspiration and a source of encouragement for those who knew and loved George "Perry" Floyd. Rise & Remember George Floyd Global Memorial Celebration will be a day of reflection and commemoration of the community's resilience and the continued work of racial justice in Minnesota and around the world.

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## FIGHTING FOR OUR LOCAL PAPERS

On May 7 of last year, the *Hastings Star Gazette* printed its last issue. The paper's first issue as *The Hastings Independent* was published in 1857, a year before Minnesota gained statehood.

Generations relied on papers like this for local news—they told you who was born and who died, whose daughter just broke the county record for the 400-meter freestyle, whose Holstein won a surprise ribbon at the State Fair, and how your local leaders voted.

My dad was a Minnesota newspaper columnist and sports reporter. Even though he worked his way up the ranks to interview everyone from Mike Ditka to Ronald Reagan to Ginger Rogers, he was always, as his managing editor put it, “a champion of those on the outside.”

But today, newspapers of all sizes are struggling and closing.

The shuttering of the *Star Gazette* was helped along by the

coronavirus pandemic, but long-term trends in newspaper ad revenue show that the *Star Gazette* and many local papers like it were already on their last legs when COVID-19 struck. Ad revenue for U.S. newspapers plummeted from \$37.8 billion in 2008 to \$14.3 billion in 2018.

During that time, two other companies, Facebook and Google—worth over \$2.2 trillion combined—became advertising titans.

These two companies don't just control the majority of on-line advertising; they've built power over the news, crushing local outlets along the way. It saddens me to think my dad might not have a job in today's tech-dominated world, let alone a chance to interview a U.S. President.

In rural and small-town communities across America, we are seeing the impacts of this consolidation first hand—ex-

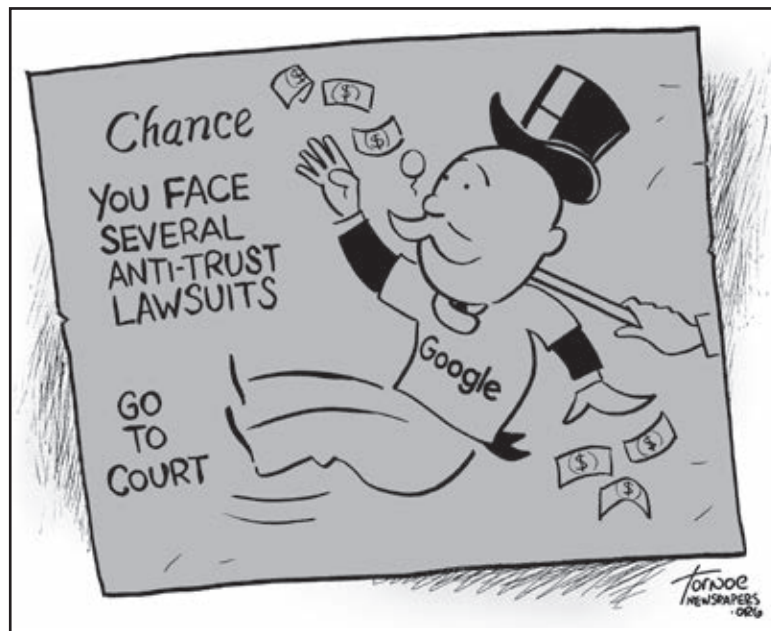
From the  
U.S. Senate

By SEN. AMY  
KLOBUCHAR,  
[www.klobuchar.senate.gov](http://www.klobuchar.senate.gov)



panding “news deserts” where local coverage is increasingly difficult to come by.

We can't stand by and watch this happen to our independent press. That's why I have introduced bipartisan legislation with Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) and Representatives David Cicilline (D-RI) and Ken Buck (R-CO) to let news publishers join together to get fair terms with these digital titans. The Journalism Competition and Preservation Act will level the playing field for the entire industry—not just a few publishers—by empowering



local media outlets to make deals that ensure fair treatment.

By giving independent papers the chance to compete, our bill will also give them the power to demand deserved revenue so that they can invest in quality reporting—ensuring that hard-working reporters can continue

to inform their communities.

The Journalism Competition and Preservation Act is a way we can turn the tide on this unprecedented threat to fair and honest competition. It will help America maintain access to the trustworthy local reporting that is the bedrock of our communities.

## Our Hamline Midway Branch Library needs your participation

By the Hamline Midway Library Association

Twelve years ago, amidst a budget crisis in St. Paul, the Hamline Midway Library Association (HMLA) formed to advocate for our library. Year after year, we've pushed officials to invest in our branch. This year, the SPPL has committed to making significant investment in improving our branch. After decades of waiting, it's our library's turn for improvements! We think that fact is worth celebrating!!

In March, SPPL presented two options to our community before they made their submission for Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) funding: a renovation, costing an estimated \$3.6 million, or a new building on the same site, costing roughly \$8.1 million. Looking at those specific proposals, HMLA was concerned that a renovation would

not address the wide-ranging needs and wishes that we heard our neighbors expressing for our library. So we crafted a community letter supporting the new building option. In that letter, we advocated two positions back to SPPL: neither option offered a building large enough to meet the community's needs, and broader community input, specifically from the underserved and under-25 year old populations, was imperative.

SPPL administrators have since applied for \$8.1 million in CIB funds for the Hamline Midway Library, to be applied either toward a renovation and substantial expansion of the current building OR a new building at the same location; which option SPPL will pursue will depend on a community engagement process still to come later this year.

This process has been filled

with many bumps along the way, but one thing HMLA is grateful for is that our neighborhood is having serious conversations about our library's future because SPPL plans to invest in our branch. And, both CIB options now imagine a larger library, which means SPPL recognizes that the footprint of the current building does not meet the needs for library services in our neighborhood!

Receiving CIB funding this year would be a key step toward gaining the upgrades our neighborhood needs, whether those upgrades come in a renovated building or a new one. Moving forward, there are places for you to be involved, and HMLA wholly encourages all people to participate. The CIB committee is considering proposals totalling \$56 million, while having only \$11-\$12 million to allocate. We

are asking our neighbors, friends, and anyone who loves our city's libraries to please contact the CIB committee before the end of May, in support of investing in the SPPL branches. You can send messages of support for the SPPL's request for CIB funding to Madeline Mitchell at [madeline.mitchell@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:madeline.mitchell@ci.stpaul.mn.us). Contacting the mayor and city councilmembers in support of the SPPL receiving CIB funding is helpful, as well.

Another way to support library improvements is to attend the CIB committee's online public hearing on June 14th. Please check the city's Capital Improvement Budget Process website for updates on how to attend.

We also urge your participation in public outreach and engagement by SPPL planned for later in the year. We look forward to opportunities to lis-

ten, learn from one another, and dream together about how to create the most vibrant library possible. No proposal will ever make everyone happy; HMLA's hope is that as a neighborhood, we can center making the best use of our tax dollars to provide the best possible library services for our community, now and for future generations.

The last piece of celebration is that the Hamline Midway Library branch will be opening up in June as a location with in-person Library Express services. We know that during this pandemic time, it's been hard on the neighborhood to have our library reduced to such bare-bones services. Please watch SPPL's website for the re-opening date, and join with us in gratitude for the opportunity to engage in our beloved HM branch library once again!

## Fan favorites, new restaurants open

Spring is in the air. The weather is warming up, the days are getting longer, and plants are blooming. Between that and more people getting vaccinated, many of us are ready to get out of the house and explore. One way to do that is by trying a new restaurant (or at least trying it in person instead of take-out). Here are some recent openings and re-openings in our community.

After watching their previous building burn down last

May, Bole Ethiopian Cuisine has opened in a new location at 1341 Pascal St. Though no longer on University Avenue, the new location offers a patio, larger indoor space, and ample street parking (other than during the Minnesota State Fair as its only a few blocks from the main entrance). Bole reopened March 16, originally for takeout orders but now for in-person dining, too. The liquor license will be effective mid-May and the Midway Cham-

ber is hosting a ribbon cutting May 27. The menu is expanded with the new location.

Another longtime fan favorite also recently reopened after being forced to close after civil unrest. Peking Garden opened its new doors for take-out on March 18. Now located at the old Mai Village/Tapestry space at 394 University Avenue, Peking Garden is dishing up many favorites but without the buffet. Parking is available in a lot directly be-

Building a  
stronger  
Midway

By CHAD KULAS,  
Midway Chamber  
of Commerce Executive Director  
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hind the building at the corner of Western and University.

Looking for a completely new restaurant? Check out Hodma, a Somali-Mediterranean

fusion restaurant at 1197 University Avenue. Hodma is open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner with a menu boasting many options. The site is next to a dance studio and used car dealership and run by multiple generations of a family with longtime Midway roots. Parking is available in their lot, and there are also many spots along side streets.

After the most difficult year restaurants have ever seen, the site of new openings and re-openings is refreshing! Next time you want to eat out, try a new restaurant.

# Monitor

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# We're demanding accountability and common sense laws

On April 20, 2021, CAIR-MN was at the Justice for George Floyd Coalition headquarters in downtown Minneapolis, watching with our coalition members as Judge Cahill read the verdict in the case against former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin. We celebrated with our community after a jury found Chauvin guilty on the count of 2nd degree murder, guilty on the count of 3rd degree murder, and guilty on the count of 2nd degree manslaughter.

Guilty.  
Guilty.  
Guilty.

For the past five weeks, CAIR-MN has been on the ground, working toward for justice for George Floyd. For the past year, we've been working with our community as we mourned together, were outraged together, and rebuilt together. From the very beginning, CAIR-MN has had their boots on the ground mobilizing activists and

working through coalitions as we fight to hold police accountable for their brutality.

Last year, last month, today, tomorrow: CAIR-MN will be there for our communities.

This conviction was a step toward police accountability and for that we are grateful. But there is still a great deal of work to do. We must continue to fight for those whose lives have been stolen by police officers.

Daunte Wright.

Justin Teigen.

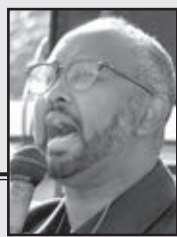
Jamar Clark.

Countless others throughout the United States.

A growing coalition of community groups including Communities United Against Police Brutality, Minnesota Disability Justice Network, Minnesota Justice Coalition, Racial Justice Network, Twin Cities Coalition for Justice 4 Jamar, Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence, and Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) Minne-

## CAIR-Minnesota

By JAYLANI HUSSEIN  
Executive Director



sota demands police accountability and an end to police violence.

The time is now for our legislature to pass meaningful, common sense laws that will hold police accountable and make our families safer.

The killing of George Floyd was not an anomaly. Police brutality is a real issue that disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income people in Minnesota and across our nation. In Minnesota alone, there have been over 400 deaths from police brutality

since 2000.

The torture and killing of George Floyd in nine minutes and 29 seconds is perhaps one of the worst police brutality cases in our nation's history. This happened here, in our state, in our community. In this moment as the entire nation and world watches Minnesota, we have an opportunity to lead the nation by passing pragmatic laws to promote safety, justice, transparency, and accountability.

Courageous Minnesotans are currently standing up for justice for all and peaceful protestors are demanding accountability and common-sense laws. Today, we are asking Minnesotans to demand Justice for George Floyd and all Stolen Lives by passing the following bills during this year's state legislative session.

### The bills would:

- End the Statute of Limitations for Lawsuits for Wrongful Deaths Caused by Police (HF 717, SF 2021)

- Strengthen Civilian Oversight (HF 640)

- End Police-Only Responses to Mental Health Crisis Calls (HF 1686, SF 1924)

- End Qualified Immunity (HF 1104, SF 580)

- Independent Investigatory and Prosecutory Body for Police Critical Incidents

- End Prosecution for Reporting Police Misconduct (HF 2201)

- End No Knock Warrants (HF 1762, SF 2139)

- Require Police to Carry Professional Liability Insurance (HF 440, SF 815)

- Require Access to Body Worn Camera Footage in Police Critical Incidents within 48 Hours (HF 1103, SF 807)

We ask you to join us in this continued fight with us. We must stand together with our community. Let's keep the momentum going. We still have so much to do.

## The Black Doll Project

Black Dolls Matter.

This statement is a reminder of the importance of developing self-identity, embracing cultural heritage, and fostering self-awareness. As early as three months old, children begin to notice race. Research has demonstrated nine-month-old babies categorize faces according to race.

By three years old, children begin to connect certain racial groups with negative traits and characteristics.

These early experiences of race shape how children see the world around them and influence their identity formation. It is important to provide opportunities for all children to learn and grow. A history lesson related to the importance of Black dolls can guide children and families on this learning journey.

The process of developing positive self-identity was explored during the legendary U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown v. The Board of Education* (1954). This case effectively paved the way for ending racial segregation

in public schools. The plaintiffs, represented by future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, used the "Doll Test" (known as the "Clark Test") to show the damaging effect of racism on the development of Black children. The test was created by two psychologists, Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark. Black children were asked basic questions about the intellectual capacity and worth of Black dolls in comparison to white dolls.

Tragically, the overwhelming majority characterized their Blackness as "looking bad" and not a "nice color." When asked which doll was most like the Black child, children in Massachusetts cried, refused to answer the question, and some even ran out of the room abruptly ending the research engagement, according to Dr. Kenneth Clark. The results of this experiment were used to support the decision to desegregate the schools and create equal access to education for all – no matter the color of your skin. It was an acknowledgment of the detrimental effect of racism

## Guest columnist

By DR. ARTIKA TYNER,  
dr.artikatyner@gmail.com



ism and White Supremacy.

Sixty-seven years after *Brown v. The Board of Education*, we still mourn these devastating examples of the damage done by systemic racism on all children. Dr. Kenneth Clark shared these conclusions after years of research, "racism was an inherently American institution, and school segregation inhibited the development of white children, too." (NAACP Legal Defense Fund) Unfortunately, the Supreme Court did not cite these conclusions in *Brown* and these challenges still persist today. The unfinished work of Drs. Clark compelled us to take action with the launch of the Planting People Growing Justice Black Doll Project.

Following a social enterprise model, the Black Doll project

donates a doll to a child in need with the sale of each doll. Our first doll – Miss Freedom Fighter Esquire Doll comes as a supplemental learning tool to the book, "Justice Makes a Difference: The Story of Miss Freedom Fighter, Esquire."

### Leadership Challenge:

**Help a child to discover their beauty and unveil their limitless potential.**

**Positive Affirmations** – Create daily affirmations to remind your child about their beauty and brilliance. You can begin by helping your child to create three powerful "I am" statements. Examples include: I am strong. I am smart. I am beautiful.

**Images** – Post and hang images within your home which reflect the beauty and great intellect of people of African descent. For example, post a picture of the legendary entrepreneur (Madam C.J. Walker) or the first Black Congresswoman (Shirley Chisholm). Hang artwork from African artists which embody positive images of black children.

**Reading materials** – Invest in reading materials for the special young person in your life. These

books will serve as a source of inspiration while aiding them in discovering the leader within.

**Share our PPGJLI Pledge** – Encourage the young people in your life to R.I.S.E. to new heights by learning these leadership characteristics: Respect, Integrity, Self-Awareness, Engagement.

To learn more about the PPGJ Black Doll Project, please visit: [www.ppgjli.org/ayasplace](http://www.ppgjli.org/ayasplace)

### Suggested readings:

- "Akua is Great" (2021) by Dr. Artika R. Tyner

- "Amina of Zaria: The Warrior Queen" (2021) by Dara Bevas

- "Black Barbie" (2020) by Comfort Arthur

- "I know I Can!" (2015) by Veronica Chapman

- "Justice Makes a Difference: The Story of Miss Freedom Fighter, Esquire" (2017) by Dr. Artika R. Tyner and Jacklyn Milton

Through her organization, *Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute*, Dr. Artika Tyner seeks to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach.

## Let's lead on climate, racial and economic justice

How our energy is created and distributed impacts us all. It impacts our health and it impacts our wallets. That said, it does not impact us all equally.

First, let's look at energy and health. It is no secret that the burning of fossil fuels is not healthy. What is often not publicized is how our energy choices impact our BIPOC communities. Do a quick web search and you will see study after study showing how our BIPOC communities are exposed to greater pollution, directly based on the energy choices we make.

Then there is the relation between energy and our wallets. We all want to have cheap energy and we all want smaller energy bills. What is again often not publicized, is how study after study show that our BIPOC communities typically have a higher energy burden than their White community counterparts. On average BIPOC families often have double the burden, which only adds on to their overall economic stress.

These are issues that directly impact Saint Paul residents and our students in Saint Paul Public Schools. It may seem odd to

## Solar Power for Saint Paul Schools

By THOMAS LUCY



connect these issues to a school system, but I do so to highlight efforts being taken within the SPPS community to address these systematic issues. Let's take them one at a time.

First, staff, students and community members have been working on gathering support to encourage SPPS leadership to move on creating community solar gardens on SPPS schools. This is an effort that would help take steps toward cleaner SPPS communities AND help the pocketbooks of SPPS families. As of the writing of this letter over 800 people have signed the solar on schools petition, including 200+ students! You can join this effort as well by signing at the following link: <https://forms.gle/jzCLxKVQJBerksx6>

Second, in late April the Saint Paul Federation of Educators, Westside Community Organization, Saint Paul 350, Center for

School Change and the Eastside Freedom Library held a school board candidate forum, centered on climate, pollution and sustainability. Potential future board members (and one current one) discussed their plans for how SPPS could embrace renewable energy and do it in a way to benefit our students and families most in need of help.

These are positive steps, but to make the changes we need SPPS leadership must hear all our voices that the time is now to lead on climate, racial and economic justice. Simply put, we need you. Thank you.



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## Who will get STAR grants?

*African retail plaza, food shelf, and Como Park pavilion work among hopefuls*

By JANE McCLURE

Creation of an African retail plaza, a new home for the Keystone Community Services food shelf and improvements to the pavilion at Como Park are among the hopefuls competing for 2021 Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) grants and loans. Seventy-four projects are in the mix this year, including several small business along University Avenue.

Another six projects were rejected due to ineligible expenses or site control issues.

The 21-member Neighborhood STAR Board is now reviewing applications and will make its recommendations to the mayor and city council in late spring. The St. Paul Planning Commission will also review the applications for consistency with the city's comprehensive and neighborhood plans.

After the mayor weighs in, the city council is expected to approve the projects later this summer.

Requests for funding greatly outpace available dollars. The 2021 requests total \$6,044,126.83. The grant requests total \$3,933,670.03. Loan asks total \$2,110,456.80. Matches pledged total \$25,448,653.

The 2021 total funding available isn't known yet. In 2020 the council allocated \$1.6 million.

Commercial projects make up the bulk of the candidates, with 62. Five housing projects are in the mix, with seven public improvement projects. Fifteen projects were submitted in Ward One, 19 in Ward Two, a partial project in Ward Three, 12 in Ward Four, four in Ward Five, nine in Ward Six, 10 in Ward 7 and five citywide or multi-ward projects.

In 2020, 60 projects were submitted for Neighborhood STAR. Twenty-one projects were funded. The COVID-19 pandemic struck just as review of submissions began, forcing a virtual review process. The 2021 process will also be virtual.

Several asks came from University Avenue businesses, including Best Steak House, Little Szechuan, Salon Elise, West Indies Soul, multi-tenant buildings at 690 University and 385 University, and a project dubbed Frogtown Crossroads with no designated address.

One area request is from Keystone Community Services, which hopes to open a food shelf and program space at 1790-1800 University Ave. The nonprofit seeks a \$100,000 grant with \$100,000 match, to go toward the cost of renovating two 1920s-era commercial buildings.

Another is from African Economic Development Solutions, which seeks a \$75,000 grant and \$25,000 loan to rehabilitate a vacant commercial building at 678 N. Snelling Ave. The building, which most recently was a fan shop, needs a new roof and new windows, as well as extensive interior and exterior work.

It is currently undergoing review by the city due to its deteriorated condition.

AEDS has pledged a \$50,000 match toward the project.

A third is from Lancer Food and Beverage, which seeks a \$19,000 grant with \$19,488 match to remove three windows at the Como Park lakeside pavilion and replace them with doors, and add awnings.

### Other area projects include:

Bang Brewing Company, 2310 Capp Road, seeks a \$75,000 grant and \$75,000 loan with \$150,000 match to expand its facilities and make renewable energy improvements.

Center for Community Services, 1399 Eustis St., seeks a \$35,000 grant with \$35,000 match to improve its parking lot, add signage and lighting, and add garden space.

Community Action Program of Ramsey and Washington Counties, 450 Syndicate St., seeks \$40,000 grant and \$60,000 loan with \$448,550 match to install a white roof and solar array on its resource center building. The building houses 15 community service nonprofits.

Creative Enterprise Zone in West Midway seeks a \$120,000 grant with \$120,000 match to provide six to eight grants through a small business resilience fund.

IO Investments LLC seeks a \$25,000 grant with \$25,000 match to make interior and exterior improvements to the Brassavola Building at 1053 N. Dale St.

Mariam's Daycare, 567 Asbury St., seeks a \$25,000 grant with \$25,000 match to renovate the facility's basement.

OMG Digital Media Solutions, 550 Vandalia St., seeks a \$125,000 grant and \$125,000 loan with a \$200,000 match to build out a state-of-the-art studio, creative space and digital performance venue.

Podium Custom Sports Apparel, 2408 Territorial Road, seeks a \$20,000 grant with \$20,000 match to make parking lot improvements.

St. Anthony Park Community Council seeks a \$10,000 grant with \$21,350 match for public space improvements in the Territorial-Carleton area.

SA Food Brothers LLC seeks a \$20,000 grant, a \$5,000 loan with a \$20,000 match to renovate its building at 629 Aldine St.

Sannah Foundation, 1276 University Ave., seeks a \$100,000 grant with \$100,000 match to make interior and exterior building improvements to its building.

Victoria Theater Arts Center, 825 University Ave., is seeking a \$100,000 grant with \$3.8 million match as part of the project to adapt the former nightclub and move theater for community art center use.

Work It Coworking Space, 635 Fairview Ave. is seeking a \$27,275 grant with \$28,965 match to install a sprinkler system to convert the coworking space into a child care facility.

## { Development Roundup }

By JANE McCLURE

### New tenant for old Walmart

At Home, a Texas-based home furnishings and decor store, is moving into the former Midway Walmart at 1450 University Ave. City officials in April issued a building permit to Parkway C&A LP, a Texas-based company. No opening date has been set.

Work will be done to the building interior and exterior, according to the permit. The new store will fill a space that has been vacant since fall 2019, when Walmart closed its doors.

The building is owned by Kraus-Anderson, which is located in Minneapolis. Kraus-Anderson bought the shopping center last year from an Ohio-based company.

The store was originally a Kmart. Kmart was one of the original tenants of the Midway marketplace development, along with Mervyn's California, a new Ward's store, Cub Foods and other smaller stores. Cub is the only original major tenant remaining.

Midway Marketplace replaced the old Montgomery Ward store/regional distribution center and small structures in much of the block bounded by University, Hamline and St. Anthony avenues and Pascal St. Planning for Midway Marketplace began in the 1980s, but due to site conditions and other factors, work didn't start until the mid-1990s. The shopping center property is zoned for traditional neighborhoods four use, which had sparked hopes of redevelopment for higher-density mixed use.

### Playwrights center, fan store project get grants

Two area projects will receive grant assistance, one from Metropolitan Council and the other from the state.

The new Playwrights' Center facility was awarded a Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) grant in an amount up to \$850,000. The funds, allocated last year by the Minnesota Legislature, are for pre-design and design work. The center is moving from its longtime Minneapolis Seward neighborhood home to 710 Raymond Ave.

The Metropolitan Livable Communities Fund provides assistance to developers, who apply for the dollars through local units of government.

One Midway project funded is a vacant fan store at 678 N. Snelling Ave. The project, led by African Economic Development Solutions, received a \$100,000.00 grant from the Livable Communities Transit Oriented Development Pre-Development Account. It was part of a package of more than \$2 million in grants received by the city.

The building at 678 N. Snelling Avenue has been called out in past historic designation studies as a candidate for designation and preservation. It is currently in a city legislative review process due to its condition, which could result in a remove or repair order.



## St. Paul Bicycle Coalition advocates for safer biking options and connections

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

The bicycle system in St. Paul is improving each year, in part due to the advocacy of the St. Paul Bicycle Coalition.

Co-chairs Andy Singer and Ian Buck point to the increased number of bicycle lanes, protected bike lanes and off-street trails that have been added in recent years.

Last year the city completed six major bike projects – four off-street trails on Como Avenue, Johnson Parkway, and Ayd Mill – and the Robert Piram Trail, connecting Lilydale and downtown with Kaposia Landing, West Saint Paul and the Mississippi River Trail south of the Twin Cities, pointed out Singer.

“Cycling in cities used to be harder and more dangerous when I started doing it in the early 1990s. Over the decades, cities around the world have allocated more street space to bikes and invested in trails, protected bike lanes and other amenities,” remarked Singer. “It’s made cycling much more pleasurable.”

### Getting around on his terms

“I love that biking gives me a low-carbon, safe way of getting around on my terms. When I’m on my bike, my body feels great, I can go where I want when I want, and I’m not a danger to other road users nor am I harming the planet,” observed Buck.

He added, “Ever since I was a kid, biking has served as both recreational activity and utilitarian form of transportation. Over the years, it has shifted away from recreation and more towards transportation. And this has been reflected in what kinds of bikes I own: childhood through college, I had mountain bikes because off-roading was what I thought I was going to be doing all the time. Then I got a job and realized that I was only commuting to and from work and going grocery shopping, so I have a hybrid commuter for city errands and a touring bike for longer trips.”

Some areas of the city are easy to ride in and others difficult.

“As a Frogtown resident, I can tell you that the new east-west corridors in the area (Charles Ave, St Anthony Ave, and Energy Park Drive) have really improved my options for safe routes to and from Minneapolis,” said Buck. “We don’t have nearly so many good north-south routes, particularly when crossing the railroad that borders Midway and Frogtown. And getting across 35E to the east side is needlessly

# BETTER BIKING, WALKING, ROLLING



Folks ride with Mayor Melvin Carter to celebrate the opening of the newly completed trail along Ayd Mill Road on Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020. Off-street trails along Como Ave. and Johnson Parkway were also completed in 2020. (Photo submitted)

difficult.”

Singer agreed. “Connections over the railroads north of Pierce Butler Route are few and far between. There is basically nothing between Raymond Avenue and Lexington Avenue – almost four miles. So I wish MnDOT would put the promised protected bike lanes on Snelling Ave. from Hewitt to Como Avenues. They promised to do this almost 10 years ago and have failed to act on their promise,” he said.

Singer pointed out that downtown St. Paul is a massive hole in the bicycle network. “It’s hard to get in and out of it and, other than Jackson Street and temporary bike lanes on 9th and 10th Streets, there’s not much to bike on when you get there. This is a shame because not only is downtown a destination but you have to go through it to get across the city to other neighborhoods. Part of the problem is that downtown is ringed by massive freeways – I-94, I-35E and Highway 52, as well as some major railroad lines. There are only a few streets that traverse these highway trenches and railroad lines and the city has dragged its feet on creating safe spaces for bikes on at least some of those streets. There are plans to address this, however, some of which will get constructed in the next few years.”

### Bicycling is empowering

Singer appreciates how bicycling puts him in touch with his surroundings and with other people. He also finds cycling to be empowering.

“I love that it keeps you healthy and in shape while get-

ting you to where you need to go,” Singer said. “I like that it’s cheap. You can buy a decent used bike for less than \$200. It’s also cheap to store and maintain a bike. It doesn’t require gas, tolls, tickets or insurance. Biking is a simple, low tech form of transportation. Anyone can learn to ride a bike and even fix it with relatively simple, cheap tools.”

“I like that it greatly increases the distance you can travel versus walking. This is particularly important in a place like the Twin Cities which are very spread out. A grocery store or hardware store might be two or three miles away from your home, which could take you an hour to walk but just 15 minutes to bike.”

As a MacGroveland resident, Singer lives half a block from the Cleveland Ave. bike lanes, and he uses them almost every day. Running from Highland Parkway north almost to University Ave., they were the first major victory for bike advocates in implementing the newly passed St. Paul Bicycle Plan in 2015.

He’s excited about the potential for extending the Midtown Greenway from Minneapolis over the river into St. Paul. It’s a project the St. Paul Bicycle Coalition is working on along with the Midtown Greenway Coalition and the Sierra Club.

The coalition also supports some kind of off-street bike trail down the entire length of Summit when it is reconstructed.

While Buck would like to see more individual routes and bike parking in some places, the most important thing he’s advocating for right now are policies surrounding bike detours. “We need policies in place at the city, coun-

ty, and state levels that anytime a bike route is closed for construction, a detour of equal safety must be provided,” said Buck. “It is very difficult to convince people to use bikes as their primary form of transportation when their only safe route through an area can be taken away for months at a time.”

Minneapolis groups are working on bike skills parks and BMX spaces similar to those in Cottage Grove and Isanti, but St. Paul isn’t having conversations on those yet.

### Over 200 bikes, peds on river trail an hour

Last year, St. Paul closed off the southbound motor vehicle lane to car traffic between the Ford and Lake Street Bridges so cyclists and walkers would have more room to socially distance. “Minneapolis did the same thing on the other side so it formed a great loop and was enormously popular,” said Singer. “I believe both cities plan to do this again this summer.”

This stretch of the Mississippi River Trail is one of the top five biking spots and walking spots in St. Paul.

“Based on count data, at some points, it handles over 200 bikes and pedestrians per hour – significantly more people than drive on the street,” said Singer. “But the trail is often super narrow, as little as five feet wide under the Ford Parkway Bridge, and many portions of it don’t separate cyclists and pedestrians. So there have been conflicts for years.”

“Dog walkers, runners, walk-

### About the St. Paul Bicycle Coalition

The Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition is an all-volunteer coalition that works to improve biking, walking, and transit infrastructure and culture in Saint Paul and Minnesota. Since 2010, they have partnered with citizens, businesses, community groups, government agencies, and elected officials to build a community where people can meet their daily transportation needs through biking or walking. More at <http://www.saintpaulbicyclecoalition.org>.

### Get involved

Get on the mailing list and follow the coalition on Facebook and Twitter. They send out a monthly newsletter and posts about upcoming public meetings and open houses where bike infrastructure is in the offering, as well as opportunities for people to write to their elected officials about proposed bikeways or other cycling and pedestrian issues.

### Join a ride

The bicycle coalition has socially distanced rides and discussions every summer on the third Wednesday evening of each month, usually meeting up somewhere at 6 or 6:30 p.m. Check the Facebook page or sign up via the web site for more information.

ers, and cyclists of all abilities have to share this narrow path. So we’d like to see this southbound lane closure be made permanent – or additional land (which the city owns) used on the east side of the road to create more space for separated bicycle and pedestrian trails. We think it would make this beautiful parkway more pleasurable for everyone.”

Singer and Buck believe that St. Paul’s bicycle system is one of the best in Minnesota. “If we fix the donut hole in downtown and make some other improvements, I think we’ll have as good a bike system as almost any U.S. city,” stated Singer.

“In terms of comparing St. Paul to other cities globally, we’re not quite as impressive,” admitted Buck. “Municipalities in a lot of other countries take the safety of their vulnerable road users much more seriously.”

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# Connecting past, present, future in Rondo

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## No just compensation for home owners

Rondo native Marvin Roger Anderson is a tireless advocate for the neighborhood he grew up in. He co-founded an annual celebration called Rondo Days in 1983, and has been honing the land bridge vision, along with several other community members and project partners, for more than a decade.

Anderson was 18 years old when his family was forced to sell their Rondo home and business. He would go on to have a long, successful law career, but as a young man he learned about the power of eminent domain the hard way – when his family's home and business were seized.

Eminent domain is the authority of federal, state, and local governments to take private property for public use, providing they give just (or fair) compensation to the owner.

Anderson said, "In the case of Rondo, and probably all of the 1,200 other communities destroyed to make way for I-94 across the country, there was no 'just compensation' paid to residents by the government."

## One family's story

Anderson explained, "Our family's story wasn't that different from the other families in the neighborhood. Everybody worked hard and found a way to get by, and many used their homes as a way to make extra money to live on."

"My father worked for more than 40 years on the railroad, earning a minimum wage of \$0.75 cents/hour as a waiter by the end of his tenure. He worked

18-hour days, and slept nights in a dormitory car with only the heat from the locomotive to keep the waiters warm.

"Somehow, he convinced four of his friends to go in with him on a real estate development project. Together, they applied for and received an FHA loan that enabled them to build two row houses in Rondo with six rental units in each. It was the largest loan the FHA had granted up until that point to a minority person or group. With that loan, the federal government backed their dream and made it possible for my father and his friends to earn a decent income for their families. Those 10 years were good years for my father."

When the rumored interstate construction became a reality, appraisers moved through the Rondo neighborhood to talk with property owners.

Anderson said, "My father believed the rental units were each worth \$11,000, but he and his partners were offered only \$3,000 per unit. 'On paper,' the appraiser said, 'the Rondo neighborhood was labeled a slum, and the units were marked as poorly constructed.' The group contested their valuation in court, but the process took money, time, and effort. Eventually my father and his partners were worn down, and they accepted payment of \$4,000 per unit."

Anderson estimates that if the properties had survived, they would have been worth close to \$2,000,000 in today's market.

He said, "There was an incentive for undervaluing homes that came from the top down, and the loss of generational wealth brought on by these kinds of deals is still being



Marvin Roger Anderson at the Rondo Commemorative Plaza (on the corner of St. Anthony and Fisk avenues). (Photos by Margie O'Loughlin)



felt today. What my dad went through pretty much destroyed him."

## African American Cultural Enterprise District

A community land bridge is the catalyst for restoring what was lost with the original I-94 construction, and for reigniting a vibrant African American Cultural Enterprise District in the reconstructed Rondo neighborhood.

Proponents of the land bridge believe that reconnecting the two sides of Rondo will provide critical support for a thriving community, and improve the quality of life for all Rondo residents.

## What would it look like?

RCR envisions approximately 500 new housing units – to replace a good portion of the 700 homes that were destroyed. The units would be built with 21st century design for 1,000+ residents. Anderson said, "We plan to combine affordability, energy efficiency, and an emphasis on Green Space for better health outcomes. We anticipate being a demonstration site for net zero,

solar powered living."

To minimize the risk of real estate speculation and gentrification, RCR will build in creative financing tools to ensure direct community benefits to residents. Possible financing includes land trusts, investment funds from development projects on the newly created land bridge, and housing cooperatives. There would be a "Right of Return" for descendants of Old Rondo whose homes were taken for the I-94 construction.

In addition, there would be opportunities for culturally appropriate retail spaces (including start-ups), grocery stores, restaurants, non-profit organizations, and other businesses necessary for a fully functioning neighborhood.

Anderson said, "At its heart, the African American Cultural Enterprise District must transmit the vibrant memories of what was lost into the minds and imaginations of our young people. This is crucial. What we're trying to recreate is the economic, social, and political power that was Old Rondo."

## Time to right the wrongs

Keith Baker is the executive director of RCR. He brings more

## Get ready. Get set. Get involved.

There are several ways to get involved with ReConnect Rondo's restorative movement. Register for a free, one hour listening session on May 24 to get started. Each of the next three days offers sessions on different aspects of the Land Bridge and the African American Cultural Enterprise Corridor. Listen, learn, weigh in, and share your thoughts by registering at <https://reconnectrondo.com/engage/>.

than three decades of community-based work to his position, including 18 years with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

He said, "Our vision is to become a national model for equitable development success, and to be known for leading a restorative movement in Minnesota. RCR is setting the marathon pace. It's going to take perseverance, but we can do this."

"We envision structures placed on top of the land bridge in some configuration, but it is premature to say where and how. Further analysis and community engagement will be required. If successful at the legislature, pre-development resources will help us refine the vision."

In many ways, the timing for this project could not be better. Two pieces of legislation in support of the Land Bridge have now been authored and sponsored in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

Simultaneously, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg has pledged to support the Federal Highways to Boulevards Program, which would earmark significant federal funding for neighborhoods like Rondo destroyed by interstate construction.

Anderson concluded, "The Great Migration was the relocation of more than six million African Americans from the rural south to northern cities. Between 1915-1970, African Americans came north fleeing Jim Crow segregation, searching for jobs and a better life. The second largest displacement of African Americans was caused by the construction of the interstate highway system, which destroyed more than 1,200 intact communities across the country. We have an opportunity to right the wrong that was done to Old Rondo."

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### Why be concerned about jumping worms?

Jumping worms (Amyntas spp.) are an invasive species native to eastern Asia. In fact, no earthworms are native to Minnesota.

Jumping worms contribute to major forest ecosystem disturbance and are also troublesome for homeowners and gardeners. They negatively impact soil structure and reduce plant growth.

Earthworms, including jumping worms, are ecosystem engineers. By changing soil characteristics, they contribute to a number of other ecosystem shifts that may ultimately increase allergies and Lyme disease, reduce crop and forest productivity, and reduce forest biodiversity.

Like all earthworms, there are no research-based management options, so preventing their introduction and reducing their spread are the only two proven forms of management.

### How to identify jumping worms

Jumping worms can be 1-1/2 to 8 inches or more in length.

They are similar in size to other earthworms such as night-crawlers or some of the larger angle worms, but their clitellum (collar-like ring) and coloring are different.

The clitellum is located 1/3 the length down the worm from the head, and it is smooth, cloudy-white and constricted, unlike the swelled saddle-like clitellum of European earthworms.

As their name suggests, these worms may jump and wiggle noticeably when disturbed. They



## WATCH OUT FOR JUMPING WORMS

can move across the ground in an "S" pattern like a snake.

Jumping worms live for only one season. They hatch in late spring in 1-4 inches of soil. The worms grow during the summer and the adults start laying eggs in August. We don't know how many eggs each adult can lay. Eggs are very small but can be identified. Removing eggs is likely impractical.

In Minnesota, jumping worms have been found in home and landscape gardens.

They are surface and shallow-soil dwellers and have a large potential range within the state. As of May 10, they had been reported 32 times in Ramsey County and 94 times in Hennepin County.

### How to control jumping worms

There are no pesticides labeled for worms in the United

#### QUICK FACTS

Jumping worms are an invasive species.

- As their name implies, they jump, wiggle and are very active.
- Jumping worms live in the leaf litter and the top few inches of soil on the forest floor.
- They change the soil texture to appear like coffee grounds, strip the soil of nutrients and can kill plants.
- Prevention is the only known way to manage them.
- Jumping worms should be disposed of in the garbage. Do not release them into the environment.
- Jumping worms should be reported.

States. No products can legally be used in Minnesota as pesticides, including for jumping worms, if they are not labeled and regulated by the EPA and the Minnesota

Department of Agriculture. Prevention is the only known management for worms.

If you have jumping worms, consider participating in a citizen science project to help better understand possible jumping worm management options.

Don't buy worms advertised as jumping worms, "snake worms", "Alabama jumpers" or "crazy worms" for any purpose.

Anglers: Dispose of unwanted bait worms in the trash. Never release any worm into the environment – all earthworms are non-native in Minnesota.

Gardeners: Be on the lookout for jumping worms in soil, potted landscape plants, mulch or compost. If you see soil that looks like coffee grounds or notice unusually jumpy worms in your mulch: Don't move any material that might be harboring jumping worms. Report any suspected jumping worms.

Composters: If you purchase worms for composting, know how to identify the species you are buying. Check your order to ensure it doesn't have jumping worms in it. Get advice from Great Lakes Worm Watch on the ABC's of composting with earthworms safely.

If you are purchasing compost, you can ask if the supplier follows the "process for further reducing pathogens" in their composting method. This process makes sure that compost reaches high temperatures (131°F or above) and involves turning compost piles on a schedule. If the facility is following that process they will likely be able to kill jumping worms and their eggs. Following this process also kills weed seeds.

When out enjoying nature, follow the recommendations of PlayCleanGo: Stop Invasive Species in Your Tracks:

- REMOVE plants, animals, and mud from boots, gear, pets and vehicles.

- CLEAN your gear before entering and leaving a recreation site.

- STAY on designated roads and trails.

Jumping worms, as with all worms, should be disposed of in the garbage. Do not release them into the environment.

It is unclear what level of worm harvest will produce a meaningful difference in your landscape.

*Information from the University of Minnesota Extension Service and Ramsey County Master Gardeners. More at <https://extension.umn.edu/identify-invasive-species/jumping-worms>*

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### CATCH THE BUZZ

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You can BEE a HERO at home! Here are some tips for transitioning to a bee-friendly landscape:

- Choose native perennials, trees, and shrubs that bloom throughout the season.
- Over-seed your existing lawn with bee lawn mix - early spring, late summer and early fall.
- Eliminate pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.
- Turn off your irrigation system. Native plants do better without pampering.
- Reduce mowing. Mow just once at the end of the season, late August is best.
- Schedule a consultation with our designers. Begin your transition to a bee friendly landscape today!

*Bee friendly landscapes are low maintenance, attractive spaces where people and pollinators thrive.*



Russ Henry,  
owner



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Minnehaha Falls Landscaping creates outdoor environments that grow beauty, and support health and wellness. From this foundation grows our garden division, Giving Tree Gardens and our advocacy branch, Bee Safe Minneapolis.



# Couple offers e-Course to make recovery home ownership more accessible during opioid and COVID-19 crisis

Georgia Giles-Jones and Bernard Jones have launched CVH Recovery, an extension to their Recovery Home business, Central Village Housing LLC.

CVH Recovery offers resources on how to own, operate, and manage a successful recovery home nationwide, through their e-Courses, recovery home audits, recovery home coaching and membership; for future and current recovery homeowners/operators.

Since 2015 the couple has opened several successful recovery homes that they own, operate, and manage. In 2018, Georgia and Bernard began consulting

others looking to open recovery homes, following their recovery home model with a proven model of success. When the pandemic hit in March of 2020, their consulting had to be put on hold to maintain safety for their families and residents. But a growing need for housing that promoted a healthy lifestyle for those struggling with addiction became incredibly apparent, they said.

Throughout the year stories appeared around recovery homeowners abusing their power by demanding high deposits, overcharging for rooms, filling homes above capacity, destabilizing communities within their homes, and delegating harsh consequences or putting them out with little to no notice. With limited options for affordable sober-friendly housing to begin with, many have been forced to either deal with sub-par conditions, or remain in homeless shelters, unhealthy environments, or the streets.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield, M.D. "The disruption to daily life due to the COVID-19 pandemic has hit those with substance use disorder hard. As we continue the fight to end this pandemic, it is important to not lose sight of different groups being affected in other ways. We need to take care of people suffering from unintended consequences."

Unfortunately, some of those consequences include relapse, agitation of previous mental illnesses, and general conflict for vulnerable adults that makes owning these kinds of homes seem intimidating. After watching their community continuously battle addiction after addic-



Bernard Jones and Georgia Giles-Jones aim to help others open recovery homes.

substance use disorders." That is 81,000 sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, who lost their lives to addiction in only 12 months, pointed out Georgia and Bernard.

While a sober home, or as Georgia and Bernard prefer to call it "a recovery home," is not a licensed treatment center, they will use their e-Course to promote recovery homes using the "Social Model" to evolve and adapt the community within for better co-habitation and a more supportive living environment. Recommended by the National Alliance for Recovery Homes (N.A.R.H.), this model usually requires residents maintain sobriety while attending recovery meetings, being productive (like treatment, volunteer, or work). It includes set hours and structure around how the home operates on a day-to-day basis. These requirements are not meant to try and control those who live within the recovery homes, but to promote the development of better habits and routines that ensure that residents have a better chance at preventing a relapse and maintaining their recovery journey.

"We're so excited to be able to offer this nationwide. This has been something we have wanted to do since safe and healthy recovery homes can be hard to come by in some areas. We hope with our experience and resources, we will attract those who are looking to start their own recovery home to better their communities and building financial wealth."

To learn more about Georgia and Bernard or to purchase their self-paced e-Course check them out at [cvhrecovery.com](http://cvhrecovery.com).

tion, Georgia and Bernard are especially adamant about the topic: "Battling the stigma around recovery home ownership is the priority to hopefully encourage potential recovery home-owners to take the leap. We have seen such a huge increase in overdoses this 2020 because of backlash from the pandemic – people are jobless, lonely, stressed. With so many negative stories coming out about recovery homes, we worry it seems like owning a recovery home is something that cannot or should not be done. It's really

an affordable housing crisis for a particular group of people – and we need all the help we can get."

Over 81,000 drug overdose deaths were recorded over a 12-month period ending in May of 2020. That is the highest number ever recorded in a 12-month period. Although that assessment started in 2019, the historic overdose death rate suggests the pandemic may have had an impact. One of the main CDC recommendations? To "expand awareness about and access to and availability of treatment for



## Sign up for a free tree

Sad about tree losses in our neighborhood? Sign up for a free fruit or shade tree to plant at your home.

## Help Frogtown Park

Give our beloved park a facelift, starting with its rain gardens. Workdays on Saturdays, May 22 and June 12, from 10 to noon.

## Save the butterflies

Join volunteers planting 6,000 feet of pollinator-friendly gardens at West Minnehaha Rec Center. Thursday mornings, 10 to 11.

## Frogtown Green

For more info  
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# ONE MOMENT ON A BRIDGE

>> from 1

## Silent too long

It took Turonda years to get the professional help she needed for her own depression. Help came in the form of therapy, short-term medication, and a self-care regimen that includes regular walks through her North End neighborhood.

As she stood on the bridge that afternoon, bystanders gathered, someone called 911, and paramedics arrived. A life was saved, but Turonda understands that the journey to better mental health is usually a long one. A short stay in a psychiatric unit will not end suicidal thoughts.

She said, "When the paramedics brought the woman to the inside of the bridge, I hugged her. I hope she has been able to find some peace, and to get the help she needs."

## A family celebration

Because of what happened that day, Turonda was nominated by an officer on the scene for a Chief's Award – an award given for exceptional actions or activities taken on behalf of the po-

lice department and/or the city of Saint Paul.

The award presentation is usually a public celebration but because of COVID-19, Turonda's was a private ceremony. She said, "I invited my parents, my fiancé, and my three kids. We were escorted into the police station, and Police Chief Todd Axtell presented me with a medal and a framed declaration.

"There were a couple of other staff present, and everyone was excited because they hadn't done this ceremony since the pandemic started.

"There has been a lack of trust regarding law enforcement and the Black community. It felt really good to have a positive experience with members of the police department. I was especially glad my kids could be there."

## Empathy grows from experience

When Turonda looks back at her own struggle with depression, she said, "At my worst, I felt like I didn't have anything to live for besides my kids. I came to realize that self-worth had to be based on more than that. My

mental health improved when I started to find out who I was. You're no good to anyone else if you're not good to you."

She concluded, "Certain times of year can be especially hard for people for different reasons. The worst season for me was always early spring, which was the same time of year that I encountered the woman on the bridge."

## Mental health resources

Sue Abderholden is the executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness Minnesota. She said, "Between COVID-19 and the George Floyd murder trial, this is a really tough time. If you know someone is struggling, reach in to them. People have a really hard time reaching out when they're depressed."

If you or someone else is at risk of suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.8255 or text MN to 741741. If you or someone else is at imminent risk, call 911 and ask for a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer.

NAMI offers a wide range of classes and support groups on mental health issues and concerns. Visit their website at [www.namimn.org](http://www.namimn.org) to learn more.

## Mental health crises on rise during COVID-19



### HOW TO HELP

Experiencing a mental health crisis is difficult for all people involved. Here are some simple ideas to help you support and understand someone experiencing a mental illness.

- Listen without judging.
- Give hope and reassurance - try not to give advice.
- Remind them mental illnesses can be treated and people can get better.
- Express sympathy and concern, offer your support.
- Visit, bring meals, send cards and flowers.
- Assure them that they are not alone.
- Tell the person you are sorry they are in such pain.
- Share hopeful stories.
- Understand that someone can't just "pull themselves out of it."
- Recognize the person is not their illness; they have dreams, strengths and gifts to share with others.

~ Information from NAMI

### FREE ONLINE CLASSES

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) has set up a wide variety of free online mental health classes for May and June. They include classes such as Hope for Recovery, Transitions, Ending the Silence, Understanding Early Episode Psychosis for Families, In Our Own Voice, Family to Family, Positive Psychology, Creating Caring Communities, a suicide prevention class called QPR – Question, Persuade and Refer, a special QPR class for Agricultural Communities and many more.

The classes are designed for family members and caregivers, persons living with a mental illness, service providers, and also the general public. Find a complete listing of these classes and how to join in by going to [namimn.org](http://namimn.org) and clicking on "Classes" or go straight to <https://namimn.org/education-public-awareness/classes/scheduled/>.

# I appreciate finally being able to exhale

*"The Future Depends On What We Do In The Present."*

- Mahatma Gandhi

Happy May Flowers, Mother's Day, Teacher's & Nurses' Appreciation and more monthly Monitor Readers,

And, let's not forget Memorial Day. This year I believe Memorial Day will have that special sacred remembrance that I recalled as a child. Do you remember your earlier years of Memorial Day? Please take time to reflect, to appreciate, to grieve, and to honor the gift of gratefulness.

This month I had too many thoughts that I wanted to express, mostly about the events that happen in April. In fact, I believe we all could write a book about the happenings of April 2021. However, I decided to just appreciate finally being able to exhale for the moment of Blue-

Line accountability and witnessing Black Live Matters. Instead, of sharing my expressions I'm simply requesting that you please contact the governor and our lawmakers to cross the Red-Line accountability to #Stop Pipeline 3; and I'm sharing two lessons from "The Tao of Pooh" by Benjamin Hoff.

## The Tao of Pooh

To know the Way,  
We go the Way;  
We do the Way  
The way we do  
The things we do.  
It's all there in front of you,  
But if you try too hard to see it,  
You'll only become confused.  
I am me,  
And you are you,  
As you can see;  
But when you do,  
The things you can do,  
You will find the Way,

And the Way will follow you.

**Today Was A Difficult Day**  
"Today was a difficult day," said Pooh.

There was a pause.  
"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Piglet.

"No," said Pooh after a bit. "No, I don't think I do."

"That's ok," said Piglet, and he came and sat by his friend.

"What are you doing?" asked Pooh.

"Nothing really," said Piglet. "Only I know what 'Difficult Days' are like. I quite often don't feel like talking about my 'Difficult Days' either."

"But goodness," continued Piglet, "Difficult Days are so much easier when you know you've got someone there for you. And I'll always be there for you, Pooh."

And as Pooh sat there, working through in his head his Difficult

## Peace bubbles



By MELVIN GILES  
[peacebubbles@q.com](mailto:peacebubbles@q.com)

Day, while the solid, reliable Piglet sat next to him quietly, swinging his little legs.... He thought that his best friend had never been more right.

Have a grateful month....and stay optimistic!

May Peace Be In the Rondo, Frogtown, Hamline/Midway, Como, & Surrounding Communities...

May Peace Be In Our Homes & Communities...

May Peace Prevail On Earth (MPPPE)!!!!

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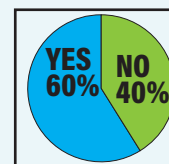


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- School culture that emphasizes relationships, community building, leadership and character growth.



# NATIONAL HISTORY DAY QUALIFIERS

Como students and their History Day research projects have advanced from St. Paul regional competition, to State History Day, and now to the National History Day Finals.

Kai Sackreiter, Soren Sackreiter, Alice Wagner-Hemstad, and Zach Bollman advanced to nationals in the group website category for their elaborate and topical project "For the Love of Learning: MECC and Communication Through Educational Technology."

Taylor Fairbanks qualified in the individual exhibit category for her well-researched and insightful digital display of "A Fight For the People's Land" which examines and chronicles the formation of the White Earth Land Recovery Project.

Only the top two entries in each category advance from state competition to National History Day. With five categories, that means only 10 projects from Minnesota qualify for nationals. Remarkably, 20 percent of Minnesota's high school History Day projects are coming from Como.

Paw Wah, Gay Nee Thaw, and Kabao Xiong also qualified for state competition in the group documentary category. Their informative and skillfully produced 10-minute film "The

Stonewall Riots" received an honorable mention award.

National History Day is traditionally held at the University of Maryland in the summer. However, because of the pandemic, nationals will be virtual for the second year in a row.

While Como's students will unfortunately miss the in-person excitement of the event and summer travel to the east coast, their stellar research, organization, and final products continue to inform and impact others while earning elite recognition.

## Teacher of the Year semifinalist

English teacher Kathy Romero was one of 25 semifinalists for Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

Romero spent over 30 years in business before teaching. She's currently in her 14th year as an educator with eight years in St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS). She taught five years of middle school at Murray before joining Como's staff in 2018.

Romero deflected praise and viewed her nomination as acknowledgement of hard-working educators in the Como community.

"There cannot be individual success in our business," Romero said. "I am honored to be a part of our passionate group of

Como  
Park  
Senior  
High  
School

By ERIC  
ERICKSON  
Social studies teacher



educators that show up every day for our amazing students. I am sincerely and deeply humbled by the recognition, and grateful for the opportunity to represent Como."

When discussing the year of distance learning during the pandemic, Romero said it reinforced that "education is a relationship business."

"Relationships have been the primary tool in attempting to bridge the gap for our disenfranchised students to gain access to the skills needed for independence. The pandemic has significantly weakened our tool belt. With that said, we have witnessed and experienced extreme examples of resilience! And through this we have learned, or been reminded, of the power of our SPPS students."



(L to R) Alice Wagner-Hemstad, Kai Sackreiter, Soren Sackreiter, and Zach Bollman advanced to National History Day for their website detailing the origin of modern educational technology.



Taylor Fairbanks advanced to National History Day for her digital exhibit "A Fight For the People's Land."



Kathy Romero, English teacher, is one of 25 semifinalists for Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

## They're representing you on the district council

In voting during annual elections in April, Como community members elected three new District 10 board members, re-elected four incumbents, and elevated two current members to officer positions. Elected to two-year terms:

- Chair: Jill Henricksen
- Secretary: Jennifer Nelson
- At Large: Sarah Reuter, Chad Smith (new), and Jennifer Victor-Larsen
- Sub-District 1: Morgan Weinert (new)
- Sub-District 2: Maggie Zimmerman
- Sub-District 3: Matthew Brown (new)
- Sub-District 4: Benjamin Kowalsky-Grahek

### Vote by May 18 in special elections for two positions

The elections of Jill Henricksen and Jennifer Nelson to officer roles on the District 10 board mean two special elections are taking place through May 18 to fill the seats they previously held:

- One At Large seat; any District 10 community member can

vote in this special election.

- One seat from Sub-District 3; current board members and community members who live between Victoria, Larpenteur, Dale, and north of the railroad tracks can vote in this special election.

Request an online ballot at [www.district10comopark.org/ballot.html](http://www.district10comopark.org/ballot.html)

### Where we've been and where we're going

At its annual meeting in April, the Como Community Council board gave its annual report on what it achieved (or didn't achieve) in this unprecedented year – and how you've helped. Watch the recording: <https://youtu.be/Ss1atcLnsFs>

Also at the same meeting, the board adopted a new mission statement and, for the first time, a vision statement.

- The mission (which is the board's definition of why the community council exists): We connect and empower each other, creating a compassionate community, courageously ad-

District  
10 Como  
Community  
Council

By MICHAEL  
KUCHTA,  
Executive Director  
[district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org)



ressing injustices of the past and present, and forging a bold and inclusive future.

- The vision (which defines the result of what the community council hopes to achieve): A vibrant, diverse, affordable neighborhood filled with a spirit of kindness and belonging.

### Help clean up lake your way

The Como Community Council is coordinating two different types of Como Lake Clean-Up events in May.

- An in-person clean-up on Saturday, May 22: Get together with others in the community to clean trash from the lake surface or shoreline between 9 a.m.-

noon. We'll meet near the dock on the lake side of the Lakeside Pavilion.

- A weeklong "do it yourself" opportunity from Saturday, May 22 through Friday May 28: You (and your own circle of friends, neighbors, or family) clean up trash and debris on your own schedule.

Whichever option you choose, register in advance at [www.district10comopark.org/lake\\_cleanup.html](http://www.district10comopark.org/lake_cleanup.html).

### Much of Como was 'Whites Only'

At least 350 homes in the Como neighborhood contain racially restrictive covenants, new research by the University of Minnesota's Mapping Prejudice Project shows. The covenants created impenetrable barriers; for decades, they meant only white people could own – or even live – in those homes (unless they were servants).

Covenants were common in Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and nearby suburbs from 1910 through World War II. Though the language now is unenforceable, the covenants created a "system of American apartheid" and a legacy we are still dealing with, says Kristen Delegard, director

and co-founder of the project. The covenants' impacts, she says:

- continue to shape neighborhood segregation, exclusivity, and amenities
- are embedded in a range of private and public housing policies and decisions, such as redlining and low-density zoning
- contribute to massive housing, wealth, and generational inequities between whites and people of color, especially black Americans

Mapping Prejudice previously explored the extent of covenants in Hennepin County; it is now finishing research on Ramsey County. Read more details at: [www.district10comopark.org](http://www.district10comopark.org)

### Call or link into D10 meetings

To obtain links or other access information, send a request by email to: [district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org)

- Board meeting: Tuesday May 18
- Anti-Racism Work Group: Wednesday May 26
- Neighborhood Relations: Tuesday June 1
- Land Use: Wednesday June 2
- Environment: Wednesday June 9

Agendas and more at [www.district10comopark.org](http://www.district10comopark.org).

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## \$150 million capital improvement project to maintain St. Paul's water treatment system for future generations

Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) has reached a major milestone in maintaining and enhancing its water system for future generations. Following a procurement strategy developed by the owner advisor team of Brown and Caldwell/Stantec, SPRWS has selected Jacobs (NYSE:J) to design and build improvements at the city's McCarrons Water Treatment Plant.

Its oldest portions dating back to the mid-1910s, the plant continues to perform well, producing 40 million gallons of high-quality drinking water per day for 450,000 people in Saint Paul and the surrounding communities.

Like many Midwest water utilities, SPRWS is addressing aging infrastructure to maintain reliable service to customers, enhance water quality, improve operation and maintenance, and provide sustainable and efficient facilities. The planned upgrades are considered vital in maintaining a dependable, viable water utility for future generations.

"This project represents the largest capital undertaking in the history of SPRWS," said SPRWS General Manager Steve Schneider. "As we look to enhance the livability of our city, we take pride in providing communities with high-quality, safe, afford-



able drinking water. Upgrading our water infrastructure reaffirms our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of public health."

Delivered by Jacobs via a phased, progressive design-build approach, the proposed improvements include new facilities for lime softening, recarbonation, and ozone. Replacing the existing lime softening and recarbonation facilities will increase reliability while improving water quality, solids handling, and process efficiency. The addition of ozone will further protect public health while also improving the drinking water aesthetics through enhanced removal of unwanted color, taste, and odor.

A global leader in water, Jacobs has 20 years in the water design-build space and has delivered more than 500 projects and programs. The Jacobs design-build team includes PCL Construction and Magney Construction, each having combined design and construction experience

at the McCarrons facility and throughout the United States.

"For more than a century, the McCarrons Water Treatment Plant has served the St. Paul area well, producing safe, high-quality drinking water. With more stringent regulations and the challenge of meeting the needs of a growing community, the Jacobs design-build partnership will make the improvements in infrastructure and technology that are necessary to continue SPRWS' legacy of protecting public health today and well into the future," said Jacobs People & Places Solutions Executive Vice President Ken Gilmartin.

Working alongside Brown and Caldwell and Jacobs is major sub-consultant Stantec, who is providing technical support and management throughout the project. The multidisciplinary team comprises local minority-owned, women-owned, and small business enterprise firms supporting the city's commitment to equity and inclusion, including, Sambatek, Buildings Consulting Group, and Pro-Ops, Inc.

Design, construction, start-up, and commissioning of the improved McCarrons Water Treatment Plant is scheduled for completion by summer 2025.

## District Council Executive Directors bid farewell

Como District 10 and Hamline Midway Coalition are both looking for new executive directors.

After almost six years in the position, Como District 10 Executive Director Michael Kuchta is moving out of state to become town administrator on Madeline Island.

The Como Community Council is seeking an executive director to provide leadership, vision, and the administrative foundation for the council, its activists, and its activities. The director often is the most-visible representative of the district council. The director's ability to provide continuity and connections, to organize and mobilize community assets, to expand capacity, to navigate systems and personalities, and to combine practical and aspirational goals heavily influences the organization's success. Learn more about the position at [www.district10comopark.org](http://www.district10comopark.org). The initial review of applicants will begin May 20.

Longtime neighborhood resident Kate Mudge joined Hamline Midway Coalition as executive director in 2018. She and her wife moved to rural Ashby, Minn. late last fall, and she has accepted a position with West Central Initiative. She will be working on their Business and Economic Development team as a lending officer.

The effort to replace her will be led by the HMC hiring committee, which plans to post her position in mid-May.

Alec Armon is the new HMC Community Project Coordinator who replaced Melissa Cortez Michener. He gained experience in economic development working for an entrepreneurship nonprofit in Mexico City following graduation and most recently learned more about local government in his hometown through an internship with the city of Rochester.



Michael Kuchta



Kate Mudge



Alec Armon

## Mayor vetoes city council vote on Lexington station project

By JANE McCLURE

The much-debated Lexington Station mixed-use project likely can proceed, despite objections from some St. Paul City Council and community members. April ended with a 5-2 vote by council members asking that Attorney General Keith Ellison's office issue an opinion.

The council majority wants to know if Mayor Melvin Carter was acting within his authority earlier this spring when he vetoed a 4-3 council vote to deny a site plan appeal by developer Alatus. The council needs at least five votes to override the veto, but that isn't happening.

Ellison's office could opt to issue a nonbinding opinion, or not act on the matter at all.

The request to Ellison wasn't on the published council agenda. Council members and the City Attorney's Office only had a few minutes in which to read and respond to the request. Ward 1 Council Member Dai Thao said the opinion is needed. He and other council members early tabled a request to clarify the mayor's.

The request for Ellison to weigh in is just the latest salvo in the long debate over the project at 411-417 Lexington parkway. The site, which is owned by Wilder Foundation, has been vacant for more than a decade. Alatus wants to build 288 apartments and first-floor retail space in a six-story, \$57 million building.

Plans call for 124 of the 288 units to be affordable to renters making 60 percent of the area median income, and another 20 units would be affordable to those making 50 percent of the area median income. The rest would be rented at market rate.

But critics said those units would be small, and not big enough for families. They also

are upset with Mayor Carter.

Tian Williams, co-director of Frogtown Neighborhood Association, criticized Carter for touting his family ties to the historic Rondo neighborhood on one hand and then supporting Lexington Station on the other. She called the veto "an egregious power grab to protect his political aspirations and signal support for moneyed developers."

Carter has argued that the site plan is legal and the city has no grounds under which to deny it. His office issued a statement, saying that, "Mayor Carter stands ready to partner with the concerned council members to add more affordable housing units to this project, as soon as they are ready to work together toward that goal." He has also offered to seek public subsidy for affordable housing in the project, something Alatus didn't do.

The project only needs city staff site plan review. It meets the underlying traditional neighborhoods four zoning. But it has become a lightning rod in debate over gentrification, displacement and affordable housing for the city's poorest residents. Supporters contend it will provide needed market-rate and affordable housing during a city housing shortage. Foes argue that the proposed housing, even the lower-price units, aren't affordable to residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.

The St. Paul Planning Commission rejected the site plan on an 8-7 vote, prompting Alatus to appeal to the City Council.

Carter's veto angered project opponents, who held a news conference April 27 near the development site. They contend he has violated local and state regulations on zoning. They also threatened to sue.

Council members Dai Thao,

Jane Prince and Nelsie Yang and community members called on Carter to reverse his veto. They also wanted a review of Carter's action, but opted April 28 to lay over a motion demanding such scrutiny and clarifying the mayoral role in zoning cases.

Thao, Prince and Yang were joined by Mitra Jalali and Rebecca Noecker in asking for Ellison's

opinion. Council members Amy Brendmoen and Chris Tolbert cast the dissenting votes. They objected to a lack of time to look at the request.

The City Attorney's Office also didn't have time to review the council resolution before the city council meeting. Deputy City Attorney Rachel Tierney said she has been told that the issue is



one the Attorney General's Office isn't likely to weigh in on. Nor would the city delay issuance of building permits for the project, based on an advisory opinion.

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### Ramsey County partners with Salvation Army to manage Bethesda Shelter site

The Salvation Army will serve as the new shelter services provider for people experiencing homelessness at the Bethesda Shelter site in Saint Paul. This new partnership will transition the current shelter staffing from Ramsey County to The Salvation Army, whose trauma-informed staff will lead the day-to-day operations and management of the emergency shelter. The \$3.1 million contract covers the period of May 2021 through April 2022.

The Salvation Army will operate the Bethesda Shelter for single adults experiencing homelessness through the existing referral process for other East Metro shelters – such as Safe Space, Higher Ground and Union Gospel Mission. Once accepted, Bethesda guests will have access to the facility and its on-site programming. Services will be provided by staff members trained in trauma-informed care, person-centered thinking and motivational interviewing skills. Staff are also trained in crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques and have First Aid and CPR training.

Security, janitorial and food services will continue to be provided by Ramsey County. The county will also equip the shelter with beds, cots, linens and other basic necessities.

Bethesda Shelter is part of Ramsey County's efforts to ensure enough shelter space is available for anyone experiencing homelessness. Over the past year, the county has invested more than \$20 million toward the expansion of shelter services, hotel programming, and the opening of several new short-term, temporary shelter facilities.



### Vaccine bus visits Hmongtown Market

North End resident Xia Yang drove the vaccine bus for Metro Transit to Hmongtown Market on Thursday, April 22 for scheduled and walk-up appointments. The vaccine bus is a joint partnership between Metro Transit, Blue Cross Blue Shield and the Minnesota Department of Health. It is staffed by clinicians and Blue Cross Blue Shield staff volunteering for the day, according to Coley Wright. "Vaccine distribution is not as equitable as it should be. Our goal is to make the vaccine equitable by delivering to communities," she said. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

## In Brief

### Raie Gessesse Awarded Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship

Hamline University alumna Raie Gessesse '20 has been awarded a Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. Chosen from a pool of 2,445 applicants, Gessesse is one of 30 outstanding individuals selected for their potential to make significant contributions to the United States.

Gessesse will receive up to \$90,000 in funding for her graduate studies at Harvard Kennedy School where she will pursue a Master in Public Policy.

Born and raised in Minnesota to parents who emigrated from Ethiopia by way of a Diversity Immigrant Visa, Gessesse is passionate about public policy, the law and public service.

"My parents worked endlessly in pursuit of the American Dream," said Gessesse. "I learned from their experiences about the policy and legal challenges immigrants face in the United States."

She stepped into public service and advocacy at a young age and has not looked back.

At 18, Gessesse was appointed by former Gov. Mark Dayton to serve as a cabinet member on the state's first-ever Young Women's Cabinet. In 2019, she was awarded the national Truman Scholarship for her commitment to public service and was selected as a Public Policy & International Affairs Fellowship (PPIA) Scholar at Berkley's Goldman School of Public Policy.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts in public health and political science at Hamline University, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa with honors. Currently, Gessesse is the Midwest program manager for IGNITE National, one of the country's largest young women's political organizations. She is the resident fellow and program coordinator for Hamline University's Center for Justice & Law, where she manages student workers, coordinates event logistics, invites high-profile speakers and designs programming.



Raie Gessesse

### People support St. Peter Claver Catholic School

Is it possible for St. Peter Claver Catholic School to conduct successful fundraising campaign in the middle of a pandemic, when many Catholic churches are closed and door-to-door fundraising methods aren't available? The answer is a resounding, "Yes!"

Students, faculty and families were able to raise \$2,575 through the Catholic Schools Raffle program between Jan. 15th through Feb. 28. Along with 81 other schools, St. Peter Claver raised a combined total of \$1.49 million -- a new record for the program.

Students of St. Peter Claver sold \$5 raffle tickets as part of the Catholic Schools Raffle, a fundraising program provided free of charge by sponsor Catholic United Financial since 2009. St. Peter Claver is one of 82 schools in Minnesota and the Dakotas that were involved in 2021.

"As we continue with hardships due to this pandemic, it feels so good to chalk something like this into the win column," said Michael Ahles, president of Catholic United Financial. "It has been our privilege to offer this program to local Catholic schools for the last 12 years. We knew through experience how creative and enterprising the families and staff at these schools are. They have taken things to a new level in 2021, despite the challenges the lockdowns threw at them. We're amazed and encouraged at this show of support for Catholic education. Congratulations to everyone involved."

### Chroma Zone returns

Rather than eight days in the fall, this year's Chroma Zone will kick off in May with a four-day live painting event at Bang Brewing called the Bang It! Mural Meet, curated by Peyton Scott Russell, on May 20-23.

A public day for people to check out the paintings, sponsors and community partners at an outdoor "open house" event is planned for Saturday, May 22. Muralists will engage in mural production over the summer months (May-September). More details to come; browse chroma-zone.net.

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# 40 YEARS FOR INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

*Because of COVID-19, event kicks off and ends with outdoor showings*

By JAN WILLMS

In a year that has seen its share of trauma with the ongoing pandemic and the tragedies of George Floyd and Daunte Wright, the Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF) has reached an historic point.

MSPIFF40, as it is being called, is marking its 40th anniversary. "I think it's a milestone that we have been able to make it and actually host the 40th festival in the climate that we are now in," said Susan Smoluchowski, executive director of MSP Film Society, the parent organization of MSPIFF.

As part of the festival, which will run from May 13-May 23, there will also be a celebration of Al Milgrom, who founded the U Film Society, later renamed the MSP Film Society, in 1962. Milgrom died in December 2020 at the age of 98 after decades of running MSPIFF and more recently, completing his first feature documentary when he was 92. (See article at [www.longfellow-nokomismessenger.com](http://www.longfellow-nokomismessenger.com) by doing a search on Al Milgrom.)

Milgrom will be honored by the MSP Film Society, with the support of the Milgrom family and estate, by renaming its MSPIFF International Auteur Tribute after him. According to

Smoluchowski, "The Milgrom Tribute" recognizes a filmmaker who has made a significant contribution to the medium of feature filmmaking.

The inaugural honoree of the "Milgrom Tribute" will be Polish writer and director Angieszka Holland, who was a personal favorite of Milgrom's. She will accept the honor and hold a Zoom dialogue Sunday, May 15. MSPIFF40 will also present her newest film, the award-winning "Charlatan."

Milgrom and what Smoluchowski describes as "his tireless advocacy and passion for cinema as art," will be further honored by a short film tribute and a memorial page at MSPfilm.org. MSPIFF40 will host a panel discussion of Milgrom's friends and former colleagues discussing his influence in the world cinema community.

MSPIFF40 will present over 150 films from more than 70 countries. The films will all be shown virtually, with a few shown at outside venues.

"We sent out a survey to 25,000 households," Smoluchowski said, "and asked people if they would be ready in May to get back in a theater, and would they be ready to go to an in-person event outdoors. The response to the first question was an over-



See "Summer of Soul" at an outside event taking place at Como Pavilion on Thursday, May 13. (Photo submitted)

whelming no, and to the second a resounding yes. We had wanted to take the temperature of the people most likely to be attending."

## 'Summer of Soul'

As a result of the survey, the opening film "Summer of Soul," will be shown on Thursday, May 13 at the Como Lake Pavilion, 1360 Lexington Parkway N., St. Paul. "There was a series of concerts in Central Park in 1969 that were recorded and shot on video," Smoluchowski said. "They ended up in a basement in New York and were discovered a couple years ago and turned into a documentary. The concert featured the biggest Black musicians

of the time like Stevie Wonder and Sly and the Family Stone and the Staples family. And the audience was all Black.

"The film has such reverence," she continued. "It's very historic, yet no one knew anything about this. It's amazing."

The closing film of the festival will be "After Antarctica" and will be shown as a drive-in movie at Bohemian Flats Park, 2150 West River Pkwy, Minneapolis. "This is a documentary about the explorer, Will Steger, and his trip to Antarctica, which will never happen again because of climate change," Smoluchowski said. She said the Minnesota-made film is produced by Susan Pillsbury,

among others.

As well as being shown outdoors, following COVID protocol, both films will be available virtually for a limited time.

Another film Smoluchowski highlighted is "Riders of the Purple Sage: the Making of a Western Opera." She said an opera was made about a Mormon woman who refuses to become the third wife of a man selected for her. The story is based on a novel written by Zane Grey in 1912, and over the years has been turned into several films. However, it recently was developed as an opera. "A unique number of artists made the opera," Smoluchowski said, "and this film documents that. It's a fabulous film with a feeling of 3-dimensionality."

## Representing the world in film

The virtual films shown will include those from the New American Vision, celebrating the independent visions of American auteurs; features and shorts from Minnesota filmmakers; Scandinavian films from the Midnight Sun category; Nextwave Global Features; Asian Frontiers; Cine Latino films; and films representing Images of Africa and World Cinema.

"We are trying to be as representative of the world as we can be," Smoluchowski explained.

She said the year has been challenging for the MSP Film Society. Films have been shown virtually since the beginning of the pandemic.

"Thirty percent of our operating funds come from our ticket sales, and those were down by 85 percent. But our members and donors and constituents stayed with us, and that really helped," Smoluchowski said.

"It's an indication people continue to want to invest in the Film Society so that it sticks around for the future. Our institutional funders have been extremely flexible, and as a result we can keep our heads above water."

She said they have been able to plan the festival, and she has not had to let one person go, which she called quite remarkable. Since the pandemic was in progress during last year's MSPIFF, the festival was also virtual then.

"I think because we did this last year, we know we can do it again," Smoluchowski noted. "At least we know what we're doing. Last year we were operating in the dark."

She said MSPIFF40 is operating with a very small staff, since nobody is being added as is the usual case. She said the fully vaccinated staff members are all wearing many hats, but they are ready.

Festival attendees will be given directions on how to get the films onto their TV screens, and special household passes are available. For more information on MSPIFF40, go to [mspfilm.org](http://mspfilm.org).



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