

Como Harbor makes a splash



Local officials, including Mayor Melvin Carter and Senator John Marty (far left), joined young zoo visitors to officially open Como Harbor, the new seal and sea lion habitat, on June 3, 2021. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

\$21 million project latest reinvention of Como Zoo

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Eight-year-old Jadeyn McCuis-ton of Eden Prairie became part of history on Thursday, June 3, 2021 when she helped cut the ribbon with a group of kids and adults to officially open Como Harbor.

Her mom, Marissa McCuis-ton, remembers coming to Como Zoo as a kid from St. Louis Park. They bought cups of chopped fish for \$1.25 to feed the sea lions and

harbor seals. Now she brings her daughter to Como Zoo 1-2 times a month. Jadeyn most loves the primates and the seals.

As the eight-year-old looked around the new amphitheater and saltwater pool, she said, "I like this. You can see the seals through the glass."

"This is truly a state asset," pointed out Senator John Marty. "Less than one of every six visitors

lives in St. Paul, yet more than one-third of the funding comes from the taxpayers of St. Paul. It's a gift from the city of St. Paul to the state of Minnesota and beyond."

Sen. Marty observed that one quarter of the visitors to Como Zoo come from greater Minnesota, and many come from other states. Prior to the pandemic, about 2 million people visited Como Zoo annually.

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St. Paul ponders new ways to handle public safety

Community First Public Safety Commission recommends addressing root causes of crime, plus handling lower-level calls and traffic stops differently



By JANE McCLURE

A new neighborhood safety office and changes in how some police calls for service are handled are among key recommendations from St. Paul's Community First Public Safety Commission.

Kate Cimono of the Citizens League said commission members came from a range of backgrounds. (Photo by Bruce Silcox)

St. Paul City Council members heard the commission's recommendations on May 19, 2021, which follow a six-month study process facilitated by the Citizens League.

The 48-member commission was appointed last year by Mayor Melvin Carter. Council members hope to use the recommendations to help shape public safety in the city, and how that is supported.

The commission also looked at how to provide ongoing community involvement on the greater Community First Public Safety Program.

The program includes efforts ranging from community ambassadors to healing circles. It seeks to approach crime prevention from the stance of addressing root causes of crime.

Citizens League Executive Director Kate Cimono said the commission members brought a wide range of backgrounds to their work. The commission held listening sessions and used other methods to gather information.

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MIDWAY CENTER DEMO

City orders demolition of Big Top and main Midway Center building

By JANE McCLURE

Most of Midway Center as we know it could be gone this summer. Demolition would mark the end of a chapter in neighborhood retail history.

The St. Paul City Council in late May declared the easternmost wing of the shopping center to be a nuisance building. That launches a property code enforcement process that could result in remove or repair orders.

The former Big Top Liquor store at the shopping center already faces its fate. It must be demolished within 45 days. On May 12, 2021, the St. Paul City Council ordered that the fire-damaged building come down.

Snelling Midway LLC, master tenant for Midway Center, hoped to get the structure demolished by the end of May. The company has worked with Mortenson Construction to seek demolition bids.

RK Midway LLC owns the Midway Center property, but has given a master



The Midway Center remains unusable after a fire and looting in 2020. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

lease to Minnesota Loons lead owner Bill McGuire and Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC. Attorney Bruce Parker represented McGuire at a legislative hearing April 13.

Big Top, 1544 University Ave., was looted and torched during civil unrest May 28, 2020. The civil unrest followed the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis Police.

The former liquor store building and remaining Midway Center building that housed several businesses were fenced off after both were extensively damaged by arson. Most other

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Philanthropy with purpose

Concept of Asian Giving Circle is rooted in generosity



What's pho got to do with it?

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The Building More Philanthropy with Purpose (BMPP) Giving Circle has gifted almost \$120,000 to 40+ community-based projects since 2013. Their mission is to fund good ideas to build a better world. They believe that brilliant solutions for community problems can come from anyone and anywhere.

Co-founded by Bo Thao-Urabe (executive director of the Coalition of Asian American Leaders) and Minnesota state representative Kaohly Vang Her, the group is fondly referred to as the "Bad Mo Pho Phamily" by giving circle members.

Pho is a noodle soup often served for Asian family gatherings. BMPP sparks family-table-talk conversations that are unconventional and welcome all ages. They consider themselves "Bad" because they're here to challenge how things have always been done. "Mo Pho" refers to there always being enough pho to go around; and "Phamily" because members are making a difference across generational lines.

There are currently nine families from Minnesota and Wisconsin participating in BMPP. They aim to gather quarterly, and use a point scale to evaluate the appli-

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Augsburg University

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in the heart
of the city

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AGING WELL
Hamline Midway elders
knit through pandemic

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Standing in front of the iconic fist sculpture at the center of George Floyd Square, Angela Harrelson (at center) introduces family members of George "Perry" Floyd who came to show their support at the Rise & Remember event on May 25, 2021 marking the first anniversary of his death. >> See full gallery online at MonitorSaintPaul.com. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

RISE & REMEMBER



Three-Time Grammy Award Winning Sounds of Blackness sing "Black Lives Matter: No Justice No Peace," "Sick and Tired" and "Royalty." With special guest Common, they give a riveting performance of his Academy Award Winning song, "Glory." (Photo by Jill Boogren)



11-year-old community member Innocynce sings "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the Black national anthem, before the Concert Honoring Families of Injustice or Loss at the Rise & Remember event on May 25 at George Floyd Square. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

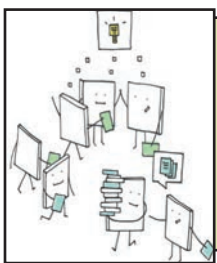


City removes concrete barriers to reopen George Floyd Square, protesters hold space

On June 3, 2021, Minneapolis City Public Works staff, along with contracted members of Agape Movement, removed the concrete barriers that had closed the streets and dismantled portions of the memorial at 38th and Chicago, where George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer. City staff returned on Tuesday, June 8.

The painted planters were moved and concrete cones were placed in front of the memorial, impeding access; visitors viewing the large portrait of George Floyd from behind the concrete cones must now stand in what the city marked as a northbound lane of traffic.

Community members who held the space for more than a year continue their calls for justice, as outlined in Resolution 001 ((bit.ly/george-floydsquare-a)). (Photo by Jill Boogren)



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DIVERSE, RECORD BREAKING CLASSES AT AUGSBURG

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

Augsburg University has become one of the most diverse universities in the nation.

In the fall of 2019, 65% of the entering class identified as BIPOC students. It was also the university's largest entering class at 636 students. Last year's class wasn't far behind and set the record as the second largest class. This year's class is on track to be larger than either.

How is Augsburg continuing to grow in a pandemic?

According to 15-year Augsburg President Paul Pribbenow, it's because of the partnerships they've developed over the last 10 years.

Their admissions department has connected with college readiness programs, and built trusting relationships with high schools. These programs create pathways for first generation students of color to attend higher education.

In 2008, the entering class was 18% students of color. "The last three years, it's been 65%. What that shows is 15 years of work of expanding the circle creates pipelines of students that come to us," said Pribbenow.

"I've got a population of students who are the future leaders. They fit the demographic of the future leadership for organizations." When he meets with Career Center representatives, he asks, "Are you ready for our students?"

Three pandemics

Like the rest of the world, Augsburg's students, staff and faculty have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Located in South Minneapolis, Augsburg is about a mile from where George Floyd was killed. The Cedar-Riverside neighborhood around the school is facing loss of jobs and other economic impacts.

"The intersection of these three pandemics has raised the level of urgency around our work even to a new level," said Pribbenow.

Giving hope to Augsburg was a new strategic plan developed in 2019 as part of their 150th anniversary. It provided a framework to be a new kind of urban, student-centered university. "We're educating our students as stewards of an inclusive democracy engaged in their communities and uniquely equipped to navigate the complex issues of our time," remarked Pribbenow.

1) A centered life

Pribbenow shared three leadership lessons for attendees of the Midway Area Chamber of Commerce Leadership Summit on May 19, 2021.

He pointed to the "myth" of a balanced life in American culture, and instead points to a "centered life."

"It's so important to find your center and make that the hub around which the many things you need to do are organized," said Pribbenow.

At Augsburg, they had to learn to pay attention to the needs of their students during this challenging last year in new ways. As they considered how to bring them back to campus, they pondered different ways of living and learning to make the experience as meaningful as they could.

They decided to call it "Augsburg Bold." A series of activities was organized around it, including art-making outside that provided a pandemic-safe way to be active in racial justice efforts. They went to their students' houses to put up yard signs with the "brand promise." And they froze their tuition rates.

2) Practicing abundance

At Augsburg they also prac-

tice abundance. "In some ways, we could see their whole last year as a kind of loss. We lost the ability to be together, to work the way we always had," Pribbenow stated. "Abundance here means taking what you have and figuring out how you can make the most of it. It's fighting against the notion of scarcity."

Instead of saying, "I don't have enough," it is asking, "What do I have and what have I gained?"

Because of the pandemic, last year Augsburg couldn't host 12,000 people over three days at its annual Advent Vespers service at Central Lutheran Church in downtown Minneapolis. But they reimagined it in a new format.

They created a 31-minute video version under the theme, "Come Now Breath of God," which in addition to being a Biblical theme was also a theme that spoke directly to the George Floyd situation.

3) Stewardship and keeping promises

While many people pulled back from things in the last year, Augsburg sought to keep its promises.

They asked people to donate on Give to the Max Day to help students and to give to their neighbors, and they raised more than \$500,000. "It was a record-breaking year for us," said Pribbenow.

Partnership, elasticity and community-building

Ten years ago the Minnesota Urban Debate League was a freestanding 501c3 nonprofit organization that provided volunteer coaches to set up debate programs in Twin Cities high schools. They found it hard to build the infrastructure they needed so they approached Augs-

burg and partnered with them, according to Pribbenow. Today, they've expanded into middle schools and across the state, as well as added specialized programs in Spanish and Somali.

It has created a pathway from middle and high schools into the higher education programs at Augsburg and ultimately into the workforce.

Pribbenow appreciates the idea of being an elastic hybrid organization. Augsburg was founded by Lutherans, remains associated with the Lutheran church, and grounds itself in that faith tradition. But their mission also includes being a welcoming place that supports students, faculty and staff from different faith and non-faith traditions. This perspective at the university is building important workforce skills for students in an increasingly diverse workplace, he pointed out.

"We're not talking about just theoretical stuff. We're talking about practical day-to-day practices that are linked to what it means to be somebody who's living in an interfaith setting," stated Pribbenow.

On the evening that the Chauvin verdict was announced in April 2021, folks gathered for a vigil at Augsburg, reflecting a deep longing for justice. Pribbenow is reminded of the concept of "beloved community" from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

At Augsburg, they are working to teach students the skills of democratic engagement so they take it out into the workplace and advance the mission.

Staff are mandated to complete an anti-racism training and can earn two robust certificates.

This fall, Augsburg will launch a new Critical Race and Ethnic Students program. "We're trying to build an institution that is truly trying to lean into anti-rac-



President shares 3 leadership lessons with Midway Area Chamber of Commerce members

ism and that takes hard work," said Pribbenow. "This is incredibly hard work especially for institutions that have been shaped by traditions that are primarily dominated by White people."

Thirteen years ago, Augsburg formed the Cedar Riverside Partnership and followed that up with the Central Corridor Anchor Partnership along the Green Line eight years ago. Augsburg seeks to follow a model where they go to the table and stay their self-interest in favor of entering into conversations with their neighbors.

This year, food insecurity was the biggest challenge they heard their neighbors were facing, so they work to not only bring food to folks, but also identify and address the underlying challenges. The Soup for You Cafe in a building on Franklin Avenue owned by Augsburg offers free meals every day at lunch.

"We have to think about how we do this work in common, how we come together to have each other's back, and how we build a community that in fact really does understand that the skills of community building may be some of the most important skills that we are teaching each other," said Pribbenow.



SIMPLY Life

Raymond is on his way home and is using public transportation on June 1, 2021.

Raymond shares, "I think about all the killings and everything that is going on in Minneapolis which is nonsense. We got kids being killed and I have a granddaughter - she's two and half months old."

Raymond continues "If these things are not solved, these murders, sometimes I'm wondering if it's an outside group doing these things."

>> Photo series by Vanna Contreras

Aubrie Sellers

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CAPTURING DIVERSE PHOTOGRAPHS OF COMPLEX PEOPLE

My name is Vanna Contreras and I am currently pursuing my undergraduate communications degree at Bethel University. I grew up in the Twin Cities and graduated from Saint Louis Park High School. I participated in a variety of athletic and cultural activities throughout high school that encouraged me to continue to participate beyond high school. I accepted a leadership position this fall as an executive director for United Cultures of Bethel in student government.

I thrive on connecting with people and I find value in learn-

ing from an individual's story. I try to find ways to give back to the community and look for ways to serve. I work towards highlighting racial justice issues, unheard voices, finding opportunities to support equal representation, sports photography, and lifestyle photography. When I am not behind my camera, I like to paddle board, shop at my local co-op, watch "Survivor," travel and spend time with family and friends. I also try to find ways to improve my lifestyle by looking for healthier food choices, sticking to a self-care routine, weight

Meet our intern

By **VANNA CONTRERAS**,
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lifting, running and swimming. I am passionate about capturing moments that speak a thousand words.

Photographs communicate in a unique way that brings sto-

ries alive. When I take photographs for a story, I try to visualize potential photo shots and I look for different angles that people typically do not see to emphasize a message. I look for opportunities to capture diverse photographs such as the atmosphere, people's emotion, and actions, as well as stillness. When I step into a place where emotions are intense and/or individuals are vulnerable, empathy and patience are critical to practice.

As a photographer, I view individuals as complex people with a unique life story. When I snap

a photo of an individual I try my best to convey their story.

What I value about working with a small newspaper is the ability to work with the community. I believe working with the community makes a person more compassionate and well-rounded which is an important life experience. Without a diverse exposure to community members, individuals lack the opportunity to grow and to bond with others. Sometimes, it can mean distrust and divisions are perpetuated. I want to do my part to contribute to the communities we serve.

What have we learned?

The pandemic isn't over, but it feels like it for much of our everyday lives. We only have to look at the daily numbers to realize our fellow Minnesotans are still testing positive for COVID-19, getting hospitalized and dying. However, the numbers are down dramatically and with over 70% of Ramsey County residents now vaccinated we have reason to believe the numbers aren't going to trend upward again.

The mask mandate is over, though some locations are still requiring them. Capacity restrictions are gone at restaurants and sporting events and with

the warmer weather patios are full. Every day I hear someone else say they are setting foot in a restaurant for the first time in over a year or seeing a loved one or friend for the first time since early 2020. Life feels pretty good here in Minnesota as summer arrives and the pandemic wanes.

Over the past 15+ months we have all adjusted our lives. We've learned how to do virtual meetings, along with the now familiar phrases like "You're on mute" and "Can I share my screen?" For those who have dined in a restaurant, you may have looked up the menu by

Building a stronger Midway

By **CHAD KULAS**,
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hovering your phone over the QR code and even ordered without ever talking to a server. Initial fears of what working at home would be like were somewhat alleviated when it was realized productivity could continue as employees found their new routines. I do have to say "some-

what alleviated" as for many with kids doing distance learning, the dual roles of worker and parent during the day was very difficult and stressful.

So...what have we learned? A silver lining on the past year will be if we can take some of these lessons and integrate them into the future. Maybe we don't need to meet in person for the 7:30 a.m. meeting where attendees come from throughout the metro area, or try our best to make it to the office on snowy days or if we have a cold, knowing we can be just as productive at our home office.

The Midway Chamber is curious how the transition back to in-person offices, or hybrid offices, will go. We are hosting

a panel discussion on June 23 called "Bringing the Office Back" where we hope attendees will get their questions answered and realize they had not yet thought about important details. All are welcome to attend and information can be found on our website midwaychamber.com.

Flexibility and technology will be two important factors in our worklife. But one thing we've missed is collaboration. While we can accomplish a lot in our separate homes, the synergy that comes with everyone together is hard to replace. Hopefully our future workplace can take the best of both worlds – the in-person office and the lessons we've learned.

An uncommonly good idea: co-locating library, school, and rec center

By Amy Ireland, Jessica Kopp, Karen McCauley, and Jonathan Oppenheimer

As the Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee prepares to make a decision that will affect the future of the Hamline Midway Library, neighbors continue to discuss their hopes and dreams for this important community space. It should surprise no one that opinions differ in this active and engaged community, revealing an opportunity to capture this energy through more expansive engagement.

We are a group of neighbors who are excited about the possibility of a different option than the ones currently offered – one that brings multiple institutions and departments together, co-located on one property, with the shared purpose of supporting and engaging our neighbors, young people, and their families in the Midway. We are asking that this third option (sometimes referred to as co-location) be included alongside the two other proposals – teardown and rebuild or renovate and expand – during any upcoming engagement process to

assess the community's interest.

We are proposing a co-located Hamline Midway Library alongside Hamline Elementary School and Hancock Recreation Center at Snelling and Hubbard Avenues. Because co-location can be understood in different ways, let's take a moment to define what we're talking about.

Designing a co-located space requires a clear understanding of and respect for the mission and programming of each partner as well as the types of space required by each to function at their best. Some co-located partners may share an entrance; others may find separate entrances a better fit for their needs. Co-located partners may choose to have some shared amenities and spaces (Hamline Elementary and Hancock Recreation Center use the same gyms, field, and playground) in addition to the spaces unique to their program. Partners in co-located spaces benefit from proactive planning, good communication, and support from institutional leaders to practice thoughtful collaboration and problem-solving.

One of the greatest advantages of this model is that it puts foundational community spaces in close proximity to one another, inviting shared investment, programming partnerships, and the ability to share resources. This large city block – defined by Snelling to the east, Fry to the west, Hubbard to the north, and Englewood to the south – includes green space and room to grow both up and out with amenities that enrich, inspire, and connect our community. Imagine a community garden and kitchen, ample meeting space, an outdoor performance space, and dedicated space for community-supporting organizations to put down roots.

This could become a one-of-a-kind gathering space for our growing and energetic community, bridging generations, welcoming neighbors to learn with and from one another, and making room for hyper-local, community-based programs and initiatives that arise to meet the needs of our Midway neighbors in real-time. Done right, it's an adaptive space that grows and changes with the community that doesn't just meet

the needs of today, but is prepared to meet the needs of future Midway residents.

We've spent a lot of time with this idea and acknowledge the difficulties of such a bold project. It will require institutions and departments to align in harmony, which is not always easy. There is the perennial challenge of funding and, of course, the concern about how to use or sell the current Hamline Midway Library building. These are real concerns and there is no desire to minimize them; there is, however, a commitment to work in real partnership with Saint Paul Public Library to creatively solve these problems and remove any obstacles.

As this process moves forward, we encourage our neighbors to imagine their ideal neighborhood library: What programs and resources does it have? Who is using the space? How is the space serving and growing with the community? What makes it unique to the Midway? Putting this third option alongside the others in a robust and lively engagement process lets all of us –

current and future library users – talk it out and discover, together, the future of the Hamline Midway Library.

We have the opportunity to meet this moment with purpose and energy and explore all options. It may be our only chance to do something special like this – something unique in our city that has the power to shape and support our community in truly dynamic ways.

We can do better than the status quo. We can do better than what's expected. We can do better than what's easy. We can do all of this if we do it together. Let's expand the menu, build a bigger table, and invite everyone to it.

For more information, please visit <https://midwaycommons.medium.com/>, and to get connected to other neighbors interested in this conversation, please drop us a line at midwaycommons@gmail.com. And make your voices heard at the June 14 public CIB hearing about CIB funding recommendations regarding the Hamline Midway Library.

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Throwing myself at an impossible task

Last year, I bought a child's folding chair and a new sketchbook, and started taking them up the hill by my house to sit and stare into various clumps of weeds and native wildflowers. I had decided that I would draw every species of plant that can be found along the walking path in Frogtown Farm Park.

Even on a small plot of land, this is an inherently ridiculous goal (part of what I like about it.) I hold on to a hope of accomplishing it some day, but that's not the point. The point is that plants aren't active movers and make few demands, so it's easy to spend a long, quiet time getting to know them. If there's a global pandemic and you are the only human in your home, the plants can provide good company and a change of setting.

To draw is to acknowledge the value and dignity of your subject. This dead leaf/patch of moss/wilting flower is worth ob-

serving closely and from several angles; it is worth understanding and remembering. The act of writing this, right now, accidentally helped me realize why I very often struggle for motivation to draw the ideas that come purely from my own head. Oops! Luckily, art from observation and art from imagination feed one another. Ideas come from the world. I mean from getting in there and really splashing around.

If you have made any kind of art, you have experienced the gap between your intention and what actually comes out. It can be heartbreaking: a glorious vision, some scribbles on paper, the distance between them. Your inspiration can fall right through – which is a shame, because the gap shrinks with practice. I don't believe it ever goes away, but that's ok. Eventually you might fall in love with the things that come out of there. That's where

Meet our staff

By Z AHKMETOVA
Artist



weird, spontaneous beauty lives – the kind you don't see or imagine until it's there on the paper, messing up your plans.

There's also information in the gap itself. A while ago I went out drawing with a friend. Looking back at a sketch from last October, they commented on the color of a leaf (for example, a particular silvery blue) that they couldn't quite get from their little watercolor set. Months later, they had a lovely drawing and this color was one of many details of a plant they still remembered



and noticed out in the world.

I love people, but regular conversations with strangers and loved ones alike make me anxious because I manage to truly say what I mean to say, in the way I meant to say it, maybe 15% of the time. Most of the remaining 85% is close enough, but I'm stymied by the gap. Possibly everyone feels this way, but I'm not sure how to find out. (This is a joke.) Art is both an alternate form of communication, and a place to remember that there are places where the concepts of "failure" and "success" aren't es-

pecially relevant.

I like to try painting the things that I have no idea how to paint:

> Sunlight in fine strands of milkweed fluff

> The infinite texture of tree bark (seriously, take a look at it!)

> How long, curly and brittle the grass gets at the top of the hill in November, right before the snow comes

In art, it's fun to throw myself at an impossible task. It's fun to be brave. Maybe there's a road between this feeling and courage in other parts of life, too.

Community Creates: Youth Writing Competition

Community voices shape the future. Each voice is essential for preserving cultural heritage, exploring historical roots, and reimagining the future. At Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute, we use the arts and humanities as our framework for community building and engagement. We provide opportunities for storytelling with the goal in mind of preserving the cultural history of the African Diaspora.

We also write and publish literature that introduces youth to key Black difference-makers while also teaching the principles of servant leadership. In addition, we host community dialogues to discuss current social justice issues (e.g., racial disparities in education, healthcare, criminal justice) and explore arts, literature and culture. The culmination of our efforts is the creation of a space for communities of color to build a more just and inclusive society. This is in furtherance of the Zimbabwean proverb: "Until the Lion tells

this side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the Hunter."

A brief history of Kwanzaa

The theme of our new Communities Creates: Youth Writing Competition is the history of Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa provides an opportunity to celebrate African culture. It is a time for African Americans to learn about Africa and their heritage. Kwanzaa is a seven-day celebration. It starts on Dec. 26 and ends on Jan. 1.

Kwanzaa means "first" in Swahili. It is a celebration of the first fruit of the harvest. This is when people gather the crops from the land and express gratitude for their daily sustenance. They also celebrate the gift of family, friends, and community.

In 1966, Dr. Maulana Karenga created Kwanzaa. He decided to bring the African American community together as a united front in the pursuit of harmony, peace, and justice. The goal is to never forget the meaning of

Guest columnist

By DR. ARTIKA TYNER,
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community and where you come from. Kwanzaa is a time to learn about African history and community values.

Each day, you can learn and apply a community value:

1. Unity (umoya): Unity means coming together as one people.

2. Self-determination (kuji-chagulia): This means to be responsible for yourself.

3. Collective responsibility (ujima): Ujima means working together.

4. Cooperative economics (ujamaa): This means supporting local Black-owned businesses.

5. Purpose (nia): Nia means remembering African and African American history.

6. Creativity (kuumba) This means unleashing the power in your hands to transform and lead change.

7. Faith (imani): Imani means hope for the future.

Kwanzaa Youth Writing Competition

Inspired by umoja (unity) and nia (purpose), Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute launched a youth writing competition. We hosted a two-part workshop series that focuses on inspiring youth of color to become literary artists who share stories that reflect their rich cultural heritage.

One lucky youth writer will be eligible to win a \$200 prize. The book will be published and the winner will be honored during our annual community celebration. All Minnesota residents of African American heritage who are ages 8-17 are eli-

ble to enter. The writers should submit a Kwanzaa-themed fiction or nonfiction children's book. The book types include: Board book - 50-125 words (ages 0-4) and Picture book - 300 words (ages 4-8).

All submissions are due by June 31, 2021.

This activity is made possible with a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council through the Minnesota Disaster Recovery Fund.

Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute is committed to inspiring the next lion and lioness who will use their voice to make a difference in the world.

To enter the youth writing competition, please submit your application at: <https://www.ppgjli.org/youth-writing-competition>

To learn more about Kwanzaa, read my latest book: Kwanzaa, Traditions, and Celebrations (Pebble Books).

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.

THE FINAL VERDICT

It felt like some sort of twisted New Year's countdown. The breath the world was collectively holding all weekend was about to be set free, let loose. She was on her daddy's shoulders, craning her neck to see the speakers, to try and understand just a little bit more.

Everybody is stir crazy, at least that's what dad said. I'm still not completely sure what that means. I feel nervous and everyone else looks nervous, so maybe that's what he meant. I give dad a big kiss on the head. He tilts his head to smile at me, but I can tell he's stressed.

It's loud here. A lot of people. I don't think I've seen this many people since we marched. I like marching with everyone, saying the chants.

I want Black men to stay alive. Everyone does... right?

If the police officer gets to go home, I will be scared. I think maybe our town will burn again. I don't want to see fire, it's hot

and scary and it moves fast. Everyone keeps saying "justice." I don't know what that means, but it feels right. I think it means the bad man should go to jail. Well, that's what I want. But I'm only five, I don't get to choose.

I just do what's right, where I am.

There are newspaper people here. I see them talking to people. To my aunts and my dad's friends. To strangers, to each other. All of their words are blending together, I can't focus on just one thing here.

All of a sudden, somebody cries out. I jump, a shiver tickling my spine. Before I knew what was happening, people began cheering like we were at some sort of sporting event. My eyes scan the crowd, taking in the shouts and the hugging that began. I feel myself being pulled from his shoulders into a big hug. I lay my head on his shoulders because I love hugs. I wrap my arms around his neck, feeling

Stop Think Feel

By ABHA KARNICK



safe and happy.

I think he is going to jail.

I think I will sleep tonight.

Maybe this is what justice looks like. I have never seen this before. Daddy is crying but it's okay. My house won't get burned down again. I like this moment, I want to live here for a while. I think George is in heaven, smiling. He probably wants to live here, too. I wish he was still here.

This verdict is okay; I think we will be okay.

Abha Karnick is a south Minneapolis resident with East Indian roots who graduated from Hamline University in 2019. Her passion lies in storytelling and finding moments to capture.

Letter

Consider another library option for Hamline

I would like to suggest we consider all the options for the Hamline Public Library.

Before that I would like to commend Jane McClure for a great article on the current options. I recall filling out an electronic survey, but don't recall even seeing the Hancock site as an option. In the article it was mentioned that the "raze and build new" option was for a one story structure – why would anyone want a one story structure instead of a two – or three-story one? With land and location valuable and current structure is about three stories high, let's rethink that one. It sounds like the owners for Hamline library are slumlords neglecting repairs for over three decades.

That neglect is not okay.

Here's our two options as I see it:

1. Build new library 2 or 3 stories on Hancock site. If pos-

sible, put parking lot in the rear of building. Upgrade elevator at current library to make it more usable for another renter or buyer. Bring it up to code like homeowners do.

2. Remodel current building by excavating "basement" to make it more usable with an elevator and maybe even a ramp on the west alley side. This would retain the look and beauty of the building's exterior and main floor with a lower cost. Consider moving A/C and outbuilding north to allow for one more parking spot.

Other options don't seem to make sense for our neighborhood. Razing means loss of library for over a year. One story means almost no square footage gain for a lot of money = poor investment of tax dollars with little gain. Libraries are a key fixture to a great democracy in my opinion. Let's rethink this.

Jerry Ratliff
Hamline-Midway



Bolé Ethiopian reopens, moves to Como

Solomon Hailie (left), who owns Bole Ethiopian with his wife, Rekik Abaineh, chats with African Economic Development Solutions Executive Director Gene Gelgule (center) and St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter during the ribbon cutting event on May 27, 2021, one year after the restaurant burned to the ground in the civil unrest along University Ave. after George Floyd's murder.



"When we needed something, we knew who to call," stated Hailie. "We appreciate your support and love." They received a \$50,000 grant through the We Love St. Paul/We Love Midway fund to help with the new space in the former Fox Trot Burger (1341 Pascal Street). "Thank you for leading the way," said Midway Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Chad Kulas. (Photos by Tesha M. Christensen)

MIDWAY CENTER DEMO

>> from 1

Midway area fire-damaged structures have been demolished or rehabilitated, and the Midway Center buildings are among the few remaining. It's not clear when the larger center building will come down.

A St. Paul Fire Department report from last year indicated that looters were still in the Big Top building when it was on fire. Firefighters attempted to make entry but when people began throwing things at them, the crew was pulled back until everyone was out.

City staff outlined the one-story building's condition. It was boarded up and fenced off after the fire, as was a larger Midway Center building that was also burned.

An emergency summary abatement order was issued in June 2020. A contractor fenced off the south and east sides of the building, removed loose materials, and cleaned up other items. Since June 2020, three summary abatement orders have been issued for graffiti cleanup. Four work orders were issued to board and secure the property.

A November 2020 inspection found the building to still be in a nuisance condition. An order to abate a nuisance building was posted Jan. 27 with a compliance date of Feb. 26, 2021. But the building remained in place.

City property code enforcement staff indicated that the building and land estimated market value is \$226,000. Rehabilitation of the building would cost more than \$250,000; city officials estimate that demolition would cost more than \$50,000. While the building is a slab on grade one-story structure, city staff said it's not clear what if any hazardous materials might be in the structure.

Parker told Legislative Hearing Officer Marcia Moermond in April that the intent is to demolish the structure as soon as possible. He said the master tenant was working to get demolition bids.

If the demolition and demolition permit process stalls, and the timeline goes beyond 45 days, city staff would have to go back to the property owner and master tenant and see what the issues are.

Big Top was a Midway Center tenant for many years, origi-

nally in a building at 1574 University Ave.

The liquor store in 2018 sought permission to move to the former Midway Perkins restaurant. Its longtime location was torn down to make way for an extension of Shields Avenue, as part of the Allianz Field development.

The fire-damaged Big Top building dates from the early 1990s. In 1991, then-Midway Center owner Rein Midway Partners tried to get rezoning approval for three fast-food restaurants along University, all with drive-through windows. The St. Paul City Council rejected the plan. After that Perkins and a small multi-tenant building were built. McDonald's won city approval for its building and drive-through in 1994. McDonald's and the multi-tenant buildings could be the only two buildings remaining.

The main shopping center was built in the 1950s and at one point had more than 40 tenants. Its western and center areas were demolished to make way for Allianz Field. The city has a redevelopment plan for the site, but those plans haven't materialized yet.

Big Top's owners recently obtained city council approval to possible transfer the business's off-sale liquor license to another location.

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>> from 1

What's best about Como, said Sen. Marty, is that it is free for everyone. It's a thing that doesn't have inequities, like Disney World where you can do more if you have money to pay for it. But at Como, he said, everyone gets the same opportunity to learn and grow.

"If we want to fight inequities, we've got to do more of what Como Zoo does," stated Sen. Marty.

Mayor Melvin Carter went to college in Florida before returning to his hometown, and he's glad that he did because he learned some important things. "Not a lot of places have a free zoo," said Mayor Carter. "Not a lot of places have an amazing city-owned zoo. Not a lot of places have their grounds kept like this. Not a lot of places have habitats like this. And the places that do don't have a lifetime commitment of making sure that people can enjoy them for free no matter what, every single day, all the time."

'Exactly as I pictured it'

The new, \$21 million Como Harbor features two saltwater pools connected by underwater tunnels. The water is heated and cooled so animals can be in it year-round, compared to the previous warm-weather limitation. There is a shaded amphitheater and stage that is open all the time. The immersive and naturalistic design features rocky outcroppings designed to reflect the Pacific coast. There are both above and below-water viewing areas (similar to the polar bear habitat).

As an intern at CLR Design in Philadelphia, Natalie Hoch, 23, worked on the colors for the new Como Harbor. She remembers trying to find the right shade of tan for the overhangs, and carefully selecting the blue and red of the building. Hoch just earned her bachelor of science in architecture from Northwestern University, and was home in Minnesota to catch the ribbon cutting ceremony on June 3.

"It's exactly as I pictured it," Hoch said. "It's amazing."

Transformation into 'modern and engaging experience'

The project was challenging, due to old infrastructure and a compact site, pointed out Michelle Furrer, director of Como Park Zoo & Conservatory.

It also took time to line up funding.

"This project took us a decade to put together," said Furrer.

The zoo has been working on updating habitats, starting with Polar Bear Odyssey in 2010, and moving onto Gorilla Forest in 2013. Plans for the seal and sea lion habitat began in the early 2000s, and the zoo first approached the legislature for funds in 2012.

The original infrastructure was built by the WPA in the 1930s as Monkey Island, and morphed into Sparky's home in the 1970s. It put the seals in a freshwater moat surrounding a mound of rocks.

In 2017, the Minnesota State Legislature approved \$15 million in public funding. Como Friends, the nonprofit partner of Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, rose



Kids get a close-up view of the sea lions and seals through the new underwater viewing area. The \$21 million renovation of the seal and sea lion habitat area at Como Zoo was unveiled during a ribbon cutting on June 3, 2021. The project was over 10 years in the making. There is no set schedule yet for the Sparky shows, but the new amphitheater with shade and seats is open whenever the zoo is. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)



Jesse, Floyd, and Bronwen Bloem – along with Lucille and Seal – celebrated the opening of Como Harbor. "It's so much better – like night and day," said Bronwen, of Highland Park. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

the remaining \$4.39 million for the project through gifts from foundations, corporations and individuals.

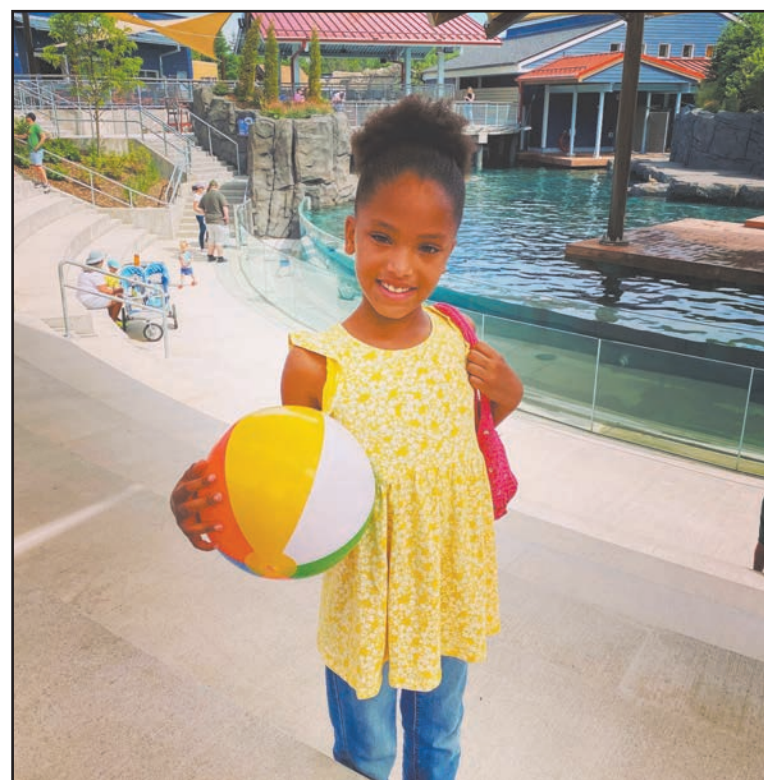
"Together we transformed the old seal island built in the 1930s for monkeys into this modern and engaging experience that will serve Minnesotans for generations to come," stated Como Friends President Jackie Sticha, who lives in Como.

Seal Island was torn up last year during the pandemic. "We've been dealing with 80-year-old utilities underground, from the piping under the former Monkey Island to rebuilding sanitary lines. In addition, a new filtration building for Como Harbor is positioned opposite the service road, which is the main artery for deliveries and staff," explained Paul Oberhaus of CPMI, the construction project management company.



As an intern at CLR Design, Natalie Hoch worked on the colors for Como Harbor. "It's exactly as I pictured it," Hoch said. "It's amazing." (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

The project also included Pier 56, a restaurant, and a new bathroom building, both of which opened up last summer. Pier 56, operated by Lancer Hospitality, derives its name from the year 1956 – when Archie Brand brought his famous Sparky the Seal Show to Como Zoo.



Eight-year-old Jadeyn McCuiston of Eden Prairie holds the beach ball she got to take home after helping cut the ribbon to officially open Como Harbor on June 3, 2021. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

The new space is home to Como's sea lions Poppy, CC, Niko, and Subee (stage name Sparky), along with harbor seals Kilian and Kash. Soon they will be joined by two grey seals, Wally and Stan, who were rescued from the ocean near New Jersey. They can't be returned to the sea because they are nearly blind. During construction, the zoo's four California sea lions lived elsewhere on site and the two harbor seals stayed at the Louisville Zoo in Kentucky.

'We love Como'

Highland Park child Floyd Bloem was excited to see the new Como Harbor. He bought along

Lucille the Seal to celebrate, the stuffed seal he's had since he was one year old. "We love Como," stated his parents, Bronwen and Jesse.

Before, Floyd viewed the seals in their indoor exhibit, where there was a floor-to-ceiling glass wall and the seals weren't always in sight. Now he and others can see them swim in the water and above the water from various points of view, and also watch them train.

"It's so much better – like night and day," said Bronwen.

Summer hours at Como Zoo are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Sunday.



AT LEFT: A mural adjacent to the Lily Pad garden on the southwest corner of Dale St. and Lafond Ave. celebrates neighborhood pride. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

AT RIGHT: Hydroponic gravel bins have recently been added to the garden. One hundred bareroot fruit and shade trees will summer-over there. The trees will be given to residents who have requested them for fall yard plantings. Check www.frogtowngreen.org for more information. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



Frogtown Green pulls together students, elderly and recent immigrants, middle class, landlords, tenants, motorcycle club members, urban missionaries, and more to garden and plant trees in the neighborhood

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The Lily Pad is an emerging community garden and gathering space on the southwest corner of Dale Street and Lafond Avenue in the Frogtown neighborhood.

The Hmong Funeral Home occupied that space from 1994 until it was shuttered and demolished in 2008. Then the 25,000-square-foot piece of land – equal in size to five city lots – rested. In the last four years, squash vines have started to wind along the ground, and crisp, leafy vegetables line the garden rows.

Members of Frogtown Green, a volunteer-powered, resident-led group began turning the vacant lots into community gardens in 2017.

Frogtown Green founder and director Patricia Ohmans said, "We manage four other garden sites in Frogtown, but the Lily Pad is our most ambitious project to date. Through a partnership with Safe City Community Project, we're able to lease this land from the city of Saint Paul.

"The plots are larger than typical community garden beds. We offer them at no cost to Frogtown residents; mostly refugee, immigrant, and elderly gardeners and their families who live nearby. Many of our Asian elders were farmers in their countries of origin; now they're demonstrating how to grow healthy, organic food sustainably and close to home."

The flower beds and grounds at the Lily Pad are cared for by Frogtown Green volunteers and summer interns.

CREATING GREEN SPACE IN HEART OF CITY

More green space needed in Frogtown

Frogtown Green projects and sites are working to make Frogtown the most sustainable neighborhood in St. Paul. Ohmans said, "We grow crops, plant trees, promote parks, share information, and celebrate Frogtown every way that we can. We're always asking ourselves how we can make our neighborhood healthier, wealthier, and more beautiful?"

The Lily Pad is a community gathering space and seasonal outdoor environmental commons in the heart of a neighborhood predicted to be hard hit by climate change. A model for public outdoor space use, it is both a place to relax and a place to learn.

Eventually seven learning stations will be installed that address different challenges of climate change for under-resourced urban households. Visitors can learn about simple, affordable ways to mitigate some of the inevitable effects of a changing climate: like planting trees, composting food waste, and "harvesting" rain water to irrigate garden beds.

Once COVID-19 restrictions ease, sustainability programs and activities will resume. Frog Lab, a kid-friendly science and art workshop will be offered at the Lily Pad starting in June.

"We grow crops, plant trees, promote parks, share information, and celebrate Frogtown in every way we can."

~ Patricia Ohmans

This summer, composting and food waste education stations will be added at the Lily Pad, along with rainwater harvesting demonstrations and, thanks to a grant from the Capitol Region Watershed District, a rain garden to divert storm water runoff.

Inequities trigger poor health outcomes

Frogtown is Saint Paul's most racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood. One third of its residents were born outside the United States. It is multiracial, with a majority Asian population. It ranks in the 96th percent statewide for toxins including breathable diesel particulates, made worse by the high volume of semi-truck traffic on Dale Street and the Pierce Butler Route. The poverty rate is 35%, and more than one third of its residents are under the age of 18.

According to Ohmans, a Frogtown resident for 40 years with an advanced degree in public health, "The neighborhood is lively, vibrant, entrepreneurial, and neglected."

She said, "I started out as an advocate for the Frogtown Farm and Park 13 years ago. Over time, I saw that the environmental deficits in our neighborhood (on top of the poverty) were linked to disproportionately high rates of asthma, heart disease, and cancer. With climate change, these numbers will continue to grow."

Free shade trees for residents

The city of Saint Paul has set a goal of a 35% city-wide tree canopy to help keep the air clean, and the residents cool. In Frogtown, the tree canopy is just 23% – the lowest of any neighborhood in Saint Paul, besides Downtown.

Frogtown Green has given away and helped install more than 500 trees for residents over the years. There are 75 trees designated for residents of Frogtown this year, 25 for residents of Hamline-Midway, and 25 for residents of Summit-University. The trees are 5-6 foot tall, with both shade and fruit trees available.

If you're a resident of one of those neighborhoods, visit the Frogtown Green website at www.frogtowngreen.com/tree-frogspop-up-park to choose one of the

six varieties for your front or back yard. These trees cannot be planted in boulevards. Landlords of rental properties, as well as home owners, are eligible.

The bare root trees will summer-over in hydroponic gravel bins just installed at the Lily Pad. When ready for planting in the fall, the trees will have healthy, non-compacted roots ready to grow. The goal of Frogtown Green is to plant 500 new trees by 2025.

Bringing people together with shared purpose

The events and programs organized by Frogtown Green give people a chance to overlap who might not ordinarily do so. Ohmans said, "We've got college students learning from gardeners who are mostly elderly immigrants or recent refugees."

"We've got long-time, middle-class Frogtown residents planting trees on rental properties, with help from tenants who may not be there next year."

"We've got folks from other neighborhoods working side by side with residents to plant pollinator gardens, joined occasionally by students from neighborhood schools like St. Agnes and Great River."

"We've got the Cash Money Ryders Motorcycle and Social Club joining forces with the urban missionaries from Safe City Project to distribute free food at the Lily Pad on event days. I guess you could say, 'We've got it all.'"

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Shoppers check out tools and building materials at the Minneapolis ReStore location. (Photo submitted)

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Local Do-It-Yourselfers head to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore at 510 County Road D West or 2700 Minnehaha Ave. to get inspired.

The outlet sells new and like-new furniture, appliances and building materials at discounted prices. The inventory comes from donations from individuals (free truck pick-up) and companies.

"Our customers and donors tend to have a social purpose beyond donating or buying goods," said Pete O'Keefe, ReStore Director. "They want items with value to go to someone who can use it and ReStore can make that happen. The best part is that proceeds from ReStore helped build five affordable homes within the Twin Cities. It's environmentally friendly and a lot of good comes out of the process."

There first ReStore opened in New Brighton in 2015. The Minnehaha location opened in 2016, and most of its staff live in the neighborhood.

Do-It-Yourselfers love ReStore

Two ReStore Outlets help keep 3 million pounds out of landfills



Volunteers assist staff at the ReStore locations. (Photo submitted)



Bruce Bebo of Lake County Builders says they feel good knowing that many of the items they tear out of homes are going to be reused. This fits with their company goals of recycling as much as possible and working with disposal companies that recycle.

Benefits businesses, too

The ReStore Outlets expect to keep three million pounds of used items out of landfills this year; and more than 10 million pounds over the past five years. This includes leftover building materials from construction and demolition, some of the biggest contributors to landfill waste.

Lake County Builders, a Twin Cities construction firm based in Excelsior, heard about ReStore from architects and clients.

"LCB tries to recycle as much as possible and also always work with only disposal companies that recycle," remarked production manager Bruce Bebo who

has worked there for 30 years. Donating items to the ReStore Outlets fit with their goals.

They have donated many cabinets, interior doors, millwork and more over the years totalling thousands of dollars.

"The reason LCB does it is to not have things go into the landfills plus others can make use of these items," said Bebo. This means the company pays less in dumpster fees too. "Plus we feel good knowing that many of these items are going to be reused," said Bebo.

"The ReStore is a very good resource for our company and we plan on always using this company in the future."

ReStore Outlets encourages

people to reduce waste by donating used goods to the store; to recycle by buying used goods and keeping tons of building materials and home furnishings out of landfills; and to repurpose through Do-It-Yourself projects.

Donations help local families buy their first homes

Every dollar raised from sales goes into building homes and supporting local families to buy their first home. ReStore staff members are normally assisted by hundreds of volunteers each year; however, most volunteer opportunities have been suspended due to the pandemic.

"We're proud of the work of our ReStore staff during this dif-

By the numbers

- Since opening in 2015, the New Brighton store has had nearly 54,000 drop-off donations; the Minneapolis store has had 19,500 since opening in September 2016.
- The two Twin Cities stores are on track to receive 21,000 donations this fiscal year (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021), a 35 percent increase over last year.
- ReStore trucks have picked up 15,700 donations since 2015; they are on track to set a record this year.
- 50,000 customers shopped at the two stores this fiscal year.

Birdhouse Upscale Challenge

- Unleash your creativity to build a birdhouse using existing materials or those purchased at ReStore. Birdhouse entries are due June 22 and online voting begins June 24. To sign up and learn more: <https://restore.tchabitat.org/blog>

ficult year," said Chris Coleman, President and CEO of Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity. "They provide a great community service, help protect the environment, and make a significant contribution to our mission of creating, preserving, and promoting homeownership in the Twin Cities."

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Let's broaden our perspectives for fair and just state, country, world

"How different would perspectives be had we all been taught about Tulsa in 1921, even as early as the fifth grade?" - Tom Hanks

Hello Monitor readers,

Yes, how different would our perspectives be if we would have been taught true history? How different would we treat each other and the environment?

Although, we can't go back in time, we can continue our current path of learning from the past and having tough and courageous conversations and dialogues. We have a long, long scroll of re-learning, restoring, and reconciling the errors and injustices in our Land of the Free Country! It will take decades to repair the shameful and dehumanizing centuries of intentional and unconscious White Superiority and BIPOC Internalized Oppression; however, we can do it and we are doing it! We just have to keep breathing and stretching our comfort zone perspectives and stop participating in toxic thinking and acting!

This month, I'm inviting two of my friends who can assist us in broadening our perspectives and imaginations for a fair and just state, country, and world.

Speak Change - Postcards on Policing

Speak Change - Postcards on Policing is a project of Gita Ghei, local artists, and activists of the neighborhoods of Rondo, the North End and Frogtown. The project is to provide a safe space engagement for sharing community experience and hopes for change with policing. The project is funded by the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Community Peace Celebration.

I asked Gita to share information about three events that community members can participate in the Speak Change - Postcards

on Policing project:

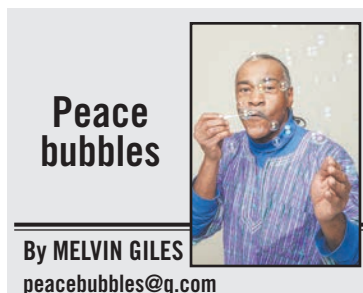
At each of our three engagements, we will have postcards, labels for people to choose which lawmaker to send their ideas and experience to, and 25 vouchers for groups of up to 10 to visit the RACE Exhibit at the Science Museum of Minnesota in downtown St. Paul. This Race Exhibit explores the social ramifications of the idea of race, racism, in education, healthcare, the criminal justice system and policing. Biologically, "race" isn't real. But the lived experience of racism is as real as it gets. "Race: Are we so different?" is presented in partnership with the American Anthropological Association. The idea that we can group people into "races" is only a few hundred years old. It was, and is, tied to power and hierarchy. Today, scientists have disproved the idea of race and its notions of biological superiority. But the idea of race continues to shape our lives.

How did we get here? And how can we do better?

Three engagements opportunities!

First: Northern Spark, is a collective late-night art festival that lights up the Twin Cities. This is the 10th year and on June 12, 2021 Northern Spark invites people to come together in safe, creative, unconventional ways, by engaging with artist projects at small in-person events in St. Paul over a span of two weeks from June 12 - 27.

You Change Me by Lelis Brito is one of these events, a dance through Rondo/Frogtown neighborhoods, beginning at Victoria Theater Arts Center (VTAC). Local artists will host the postcard project table at VTAC, 825



Peace
bubbles

By MELVIN GILES
peacebubbles@q.com



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CINEMATOGRAPHERS: SARAH LITTLEREDFEATHER, RIVER AKEMANN & KERI PICKETT

University Ave. W., in the outdoor plaza from 8-10 p.m.

Second: The Community Peace Celebration (CPC) is a beloved community event, this year celebrating its 25th year on June 18, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. The mission of the CPC is to cultivate healthy community and cultural values, advance messages of Peace, and create a shared vision of cooperative relationships within Community - locally and globally. The Peace Celebration is a grassroots effort, organized by community members of the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods and allies for the benefit of all people in the community. Local artists will be hosting a table with other artist organizers from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Celebration's outdoor location at

Western Sculpture Park.

Third: The third engagement will be on July 21 at the arcade outside of the Rondo Community Library from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Please remember, on each half hour of the engagement events, we will have a limited number of Science Museum entrance vouchers that are good for up to 10 visitors in a group. Visits will need to be scheduled in advance. Our engagements are for uplifting public voices, delivering spoken energy - experiences and ideas from We The People about the future of policing in our communities. Lawmakers such as city council members, county commissioners, the mayor and the governor, need to hear from us. We will have pre-printed labels for you to use. We hope to see you, hear from you, and to make sure that your voice is heard. Thank you, Gita.

'No More Pipeline Blues'

Musician and Artist Larry Long recently wrote and produced the song "No More Pipeline Blues (On This Land Where We Belong)." He graciously agreed to share a little about the creation of this powerful song, which is a meaningful call to action of re-learning, restoring, and reconciling our current errors and injustices based on miseducation and greed, in particular, regarding Pipeline 3:

Line 3 is owned by the Canadian multi-national, Enbridge, Inc., and dissects the heart of Anishinaabe territories and the most pristine and complex watersheds and ecosystems in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, including Lake Superior. I composed, produced and recorded "No More Pipeline Blues (On This Land Where We Belong)" to give support to Water

Protectors standing against highly polluting tar sands oil pipeline crossing 200 water bodies - including the Mississippi River twice - a drinking source for millions. All net proceeds going to Honor the Earth and #StopLine3.

The audio single, along with a supporting music video by award-winning filmmaker and photographer Keri Pickett, was released on Earth Day. Both the audio single and documentary music video are a clear call to action. Besides encouraging people to sign and share the petition for President Biden to #StopLine3, it is letting people know that by sharing, downloading, streaming and adding "No More Pipeline Blues" to their playlists they are making a difference. The more we share and stream, the greater difference is made through raising both awareness and funds to #StopLine3.

As Winona LaDuke speaks with the song, "This is the same water that was here when dinosaurs were here. There is no new water. This is the only water we will ever know. This is the same water my great ancestors drank from and harvested our wild rice upon. This water is sacred, because without water there's no life. You cannot drink oil."

For more information about "No More Pipeline Blues (On This Land Where We Belong)" and Larry Long, please visit: www.larrylong.org.

June 18 Peace Celebration

June is a great month, particularly for farmers, gardeners, and fans of our beautiful planet. I suggest when you have time, please take six minutes to check out the YouTube video called the Gardener's Tale, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktj4jG-mUs6Y>.

PEACE BUBBLES >> 11

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Philanthropy with purpose

>> from 1

cations they receive for their annual micro grants. Each family ranks each of the projects being evaluated. The base-line commitment of member families is to contribute \$1,000/year. Time is spent in family discussions, as well as in the larger giving circle group, deciding which projects to fund. Every voice counts, and adult members say their family bonds grow stronger by making philanthropic choices together with their children. This is one way of growing the next generation of philanthropists.

Lee Vue has been a BMPP member since 2020. She explained why she joined a giving circle during a pandemic, saying, "There came a point when I felt financially secure in my career. Generational wealth isn't prevalent in our culture, but generosity is. My parents taught me the importance of giving back to community as we were able, even though neither one of them had a high wage job."

"I realized I was at the point of being able to give back last year, so I reached out to BMPP and formally became a donor."

BMPP began as a Hmong giving circle, but now welcomes families and individuals across Asian cultures: members are Hmong, Korean, Laotian, Japa-



Members of the Building More Prosperity with Purpose Giving Circle at one of their gatherings. A premise of the group is that families who learn, share, and give together, grow together – and can change the world. (Photo submitted)

nese, and multiracial.

Generosity runs deep in culture communities

Vue said, "There are giving circles similar to ours in many parts of the U.S. The concept of giving is deeply embedded in Asian cultures and communities of color. You tap into your community when you need support."

"With BMPP, we are choosing to fund small, innovative projects that advance social justice and equity for Asian American and Pacific Islander populations in Minnesota, Iowa, North and South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Our funding creates impact in AAPI communities, but we believe in working toward justice

for all communities."

"For example, we recently funded the construction of a new dance floor for Indigenous Roots Cultural Arts Center on the East Side of St. Paul. Other grantees have included the Hmong American Farmers Association, Funny Asian Women Kollektive, and Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood for Empowerment."

"A little grant may not sound like much, but it can make a huge difference. BMPP envisions a world where individuals and families are supported and nurtured, creating conditions where communities can achieve their full potential."

2021-22 grant cycle to open soon

For the upcoming grant cycle, BMPP will make micro grants of up to \$2,500 for projects that advance social justice in AAPI communities, including building solidarity across BIPOC lines.

The micro grant must cover most of what is needed to complete a project. If the financial requirements of a project are substantially more than \$2,500, BMPP cannot fund it. They also cannot fund existing or ongoing work.

Vue said, "We know that groups have creative and innovative ideas for advancing justice."

Sometimes it just takes a small amount of financial support to bring those ideas to life – those are the projects we are looking for. If you have an idea that fits these criteria, apply."

Visit the website for more details at www.bmppgiving.org. Applications will be accepted mid-July thru mid-August, with final decisions made by Sept. 1.

Building solidarity across cultures

Vue, who was born in Fresno, Calif., moved with her family to Frogtown when she was in sixth grade. She graduated from Central High School and the University of Minnesota, and has her own perspective on why there is anti-Blackness sentiment in refugee Asian American communities.

She said, "My parents immigrated from Thailand; I was the first in my family to be born in this country. Because we live within a system rooted in White supremacy and racism, refugees are often placed in poor neighborhoods when they arrive. The system pits different groups of people against each other because of scarce resources, crime, and over-policing."

"Understanding anti-Blackness in Asian communities has become a necessity since George Floyd was murdered. It's time to take a long, hard look at the racialized circumstances that shape this country, and to start moving forward together in solidarity."

St. Paul ponders new ways to handle public safety

>> from 1

Focuses for the commission included ways to look at ways lower-level calls could be handled, other than simply by sending police. That not only could defuse some situations, it would also allow police to focus on higher-priority calls.

Another focus was police traffic stops, and how those should be addressed. That issue drew more attention after the death this spring of Daunte Wright. He was killed during a traffic stop in Brooklyn Center.

Some commission members said St. Paul should not do traffic stops except for more serious violations, such as DWIs, hit and run accidents and speeding.

The stops that would be eliminated are so-called "pre-textual stops." These stops may be for expired tabs, equipment violations or minor traffic violations. These stops can be used by law enforcement to legally investigate drivers.

The commission suggested use of red light cameras and mailed notices of violations. However, state law prohibits the

cameras, also known as "photo cop."

Citations idea to charter commission

Could non-criminal citations be a way to address issues ranging from problem properties to dangerous dogs? The notion of administrative citations is en route to the St. Paul Charter Commission. The St. Paul City Council May 19 voted unanimously to seek Charter Commission review of the idea.

The Charter Commission study process could take a few

months. The commission is likely to hold one or more public hearings, before sending a recommendation back to the city council.

The council and staff from the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) have discussed the citations off and on for several years as a means on enforcing non-criminal matters. The city could use such fines in cases ranging from property code enforcement to owners of dangerous dogs to penalizing employers who don't follow minimum wage or earned sick and safe time rules.

If the Charter Commission calls for the idea to go ahead, the

City Council would work with city staff on a fine schedule.

Supporters of the administrative citation process say it could bring faster compliance, without putting someone in the position of having a criminal record. Critics contend it could be another way for the city to bring in revenue.

Adding the ability to administer such fines would mean amending the city charter. An amendment requires a unanimous council vote.

Information sessions on the citations were held earlier this year.

Peace bubbles

>> from 10

I also want to share about the 25th Peace Celebration & the 1st Sweet Potato Comfort Pie Juneteenth Jubilee on June 18. Frogtown Radio will be broadcasting it Live again and we are zooming and FB-Live again, too. The event represents a new crossing the river Partnership that acknowledges the Annual Third Friday in June as the St. Paul Community Peace Celebration and the Annual Third Saturday in June as the Minneapolis Juneteenth Celebration/Festival!

Thank you; have a wonderful start to our excellent Minnesota summertime!

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

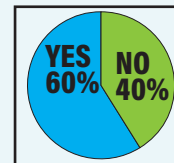
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Elements of normalcy at end of challenging year

The 2020-21 school year at Como concluded on June 11 for both in-person and distance-learning. In a challenging year for students, families, and staff, there were some elements of normalcy for those that returned to classes at the start of the fourth quarter.

Students enrolled in Advanced Placement classes concluded their college-prep studies with subject area exams in May. 279 students took at least one exam, with a school-wide total of 448 AP Exams completed.

A majority of those exams were taken in school with paper test booklets and pencils under the supervision of test proctors in the familiar setting of the Como gymnasium. However, the AP College Board also administered digital exams on secure platforms at a designated time for students who opted to remain in distance learning.

Como's Advanced Placement program features 20 different courses across disciplines that provide students with rigorous college-level curriculum and opportunities to earn college credits

Como Park Senior High School



By **ERIC ERICKSON**
Social studies teacher

with successful exam results.

Senior BBQ party

Seniors from Como's Class of 2021 were able to enjoy a barbeque party outside on the grass athletic fields of school on the afternoon of June 4. The Como Park Booster Club organized and sponsored the event, and took the traditional event to the next level.

Since the all-night indoor graduation party was not possible because of pandemic limitations, the booster club put resources and energy into the Senior Barbeque Party that included a large supply of catered food,



The Como softball team's victory on May 14 was the 400th win of John Fischbach's coaching career.

a DJ, volleyball, lawn games, a dunk tank to soak favorite teachers, a Como-themed mini-golf course, and more.

Graduation held in-person

Graduation was held on Monday evening, June 7. In another break from tradition, the commencement was not held downtown at Roy Wilkins Audi-

torium. The school district hosted Como's ceremony at Aldrich Arena in Maplewood.

There was uncertainty into the spring about what graduation may look like, with wonderings about another virtual graduation similar to 2020. In the end, there were livestreaming options for those unable to attend, but members from the Class of 2021

were grateful to have the in-person ceremony and the opportunity for family to be present and witness the milestone event.

Safe Haven Project

Students in the Academy of Finance (AOF) Business Communications classes teamed up with the St. Paul Fire Department to bring the Safe Haven Project to Como. AOF students provided education about the need for functional smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in every home, and promoted the event which brought a fire truck to school for free distribution of safety kits.

John Fischbach retires

John Fischbach has been Como's head softball coach for over 30 years. A retired St. Paul teacher, Fischbach is also now retiring from softball. In what has been another successful season for the Cougars, Fischbach surpassed the 400-win mark. His leadership of the program and commitment to help every player and team reach their potential have positively influenced hundreds of student athletes.

{ Monitor in a Minute }

By JANE McCLURE

Standoff over development continues

The St. Paul City Hall standoff over the Lexington Station mixed-use development continues. The Minnesota Attorney General's Office won't be asked to weigh in on whether Mayor Melvin Carter could legally veto City Council action denying the project site plan. In a May 13 letter to city council members, City Attorney Lyndsey Olson also explained that Carter's veto is a valid exercise of his authority under the city charter.

The \$57 million project, which includes 288 apartments, 254 parking spaces and 3,000 square feet of first-floor commercial space, can go ahead, said Olson.

But it could face a legal challenge. At a recent press conference, Frogtown Neighborhood Association Co-Director Caty Royce said opponents would sue to block the project. That district council is one of many organizations opposing the project. Other groups opposing the project include Summit-University Planning Council, Midway RiseUp, the Alliance and Black Ministerial Alliance.



Developer Alatus has indicated that about half of its units would meet the definition of affordable housing. Foes have pushed back, saying those designated studio and one-bedroom units wouldn't help families struggling to find housing.

The project at 411-417 N. Lexington Parkway has become a flash point in debate over housing affordability, gentrification and displacement. The fight over the project has drawn in property owner Wilder Foundation.

Because the developer isn't seeking city funding and needed no variances or zoning change, only site plan review is needed. A site plan was filed in late 2020.

The Planning Commission rejected the site plan on a 7-8 vote; the council rejected the developer's appeal on a 4-3 vote.

Carter vetoed the denial April 14. Without a fifth vote, the council couldn't override the veto within 30 days.

Support available to start health care career

Jobs in the health care field are among those in highest demand in the Twin Cities. Individuals wanting to begin or further their career in health care can receive support from LSS Financial Counseling's Health Care Careers Program in St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood.

The Health Care Careers Program meets individuals where they are on their employment journey. The service offers three types of support that are customized for each person:

- **Career Counseling:** Employment counselors connect individuals to specialized training opportunities, job fairs, employment opportunities, employers, job search websites and networking sites.

- **Access to Resources:** Counselors discuss barriers to getting a job and provide resources to remove those barriers.

- **Financial Coaching:** Counselors review your finances, discuss your financial goals and work with you on an action plan to take better control of those finances. This can include budgeting, learning how to improve credit scores and managing debt.

"Securing employment in a fulfilling career with a stable in-



People train through the LSS Financial Counseling's Health Care Careers Program in Frogtown. (Photo submitted)

come is a major component of an individual's personal and financial wellness," said Viva Yang, Senior Program and Communications Manager with LSS Financial Counseling. "We work with you to create a plan that fits with your personal goals and equip you with the tools and resources you need to secure a job in health care. We're there for you to answer your questions and help you manage the challenges you face along the way."

LSS Financial Counseling's Health Care Careers Program is located at 709 University Avenue in St. Paul. Staff are on hand to help and can provide service in Hmong, Somali and Spanish. Call 651.529.8851 to schedule an appointment and learn more. To limit the spread of COVID, only phone appointments are currently available. Learn more about the Health Care Careers Program at bit.ly/33VwB1Q

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Public hearing on Hamline library replacement, other CIP projects slated for June 14

By JANE McCLURE

Funding for Hamline-Midway Branch Library renovation or replacement is one of five projects that made it through the first round of the 2022-2023 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) process.

Advocates for saving the library, renovating the library, building a new facility on the library site or elsewhere, and even those who want to be able to "dream big" and have a combined new library with the Hancock Recreation Center are expected to testify at a virtual public hearing June 14.

The city's CIB Committee began reviewing recommended projects May 10. Find meeting and hearing links at <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/mayors-office/committees-boards-and-commissions/capital-improvement-budget-cib>

The hearing may not be another round of debate over just the library and its future. Many other projects didn't make the cut, which is like to bring some pushback from those project allies at the upcoming public hearing. Those include a sidewalk along Larpenteur Avenue and a long-awaited replacement for the Central Police District headquarters, which would serve part of Frogtown.

Past projects that ranked highly, including replacement of the East Side's Fire Station 7, also fell off of the list this time around. That also raised red flags for some committee members. CIB Committee Chairman Darren Tobolt questioned the shifts in rankings. He asked if the plans for a new fire station could be used in the future if the request is funded. Fire Station 7 and Pedro Park had funding taken away last year to balance the city budget.

"These were the projects that came to the top," said CIB Committee Member Devon Driscoll. "This is what the capital planning committee decided."

How does CIB process work?

The CIB process has changed in recent years. In even-numbered years, neighborhood-generated projects vie for a share of

\$1 million. In the spring of the odd-numbered years, a working group composed of representatives from city departments and the CIB Committee review project proposals and five-year plans submitted by city departments. The working group ranks projects as well as ongoing city annual programs.

The ranking are then released for community review and input. The committee reviews projects funded with bonds, various state and federal funds, and almost \$21 million in federal Community Development Block Grants.

By the end of June, the CIB Committee forwards its recommendations to the mayor for inclusion in the city's 2022 budget. The projects then go through a city council review process before a final vote at year's end.

During the process, the CIB Committee, the mayor and council members can make changes.

Chosen four

Hamline Midway Branch Library, North End Community Center, Safe Routes to School for Bruce Vento Elementary and parks deferred maintenance are recommended by the working group. The chosen four total \$14.168 million over 2022 and 2023. No police or fire projects were recommended.

The library proposal is presented as "funding to renovate/expand or rebuild the Hamline Midway Library on its existing site to create a new library that meets the community's current and future needs. The renovated/expanded or new library will be a dynamic, technology-enabled, inviting gathering space and resource hub that strengthens the social infrastructure of the Hamline Midway neighborhood. The renovated/expanded or new library will have additional square footage and a design and functionality that will be co-created with the community and expert architects, engineers and designers."

Annual programs total \$7.832 million for 2022 and 2023. The largest recommendation is for citywide long-

term capital maintenance, at \$3 million over two years. Other programs recommended include citywide tree planting (\$660,000), outdoor sports courts restoration (\$460,000), and bike/pedestrian and traffic safety (\$450,000). Children play area improvements were left out at 500,000.

The CDBG fund are used for some projects in low-income neighborhoods but largely go to city housing and commercial development programs, and neighborhood community development corporations.

Fourteen individual projects were left out. Area projects that didn't make the committee's cut include Merriam Park improvements (\$1.5 million), Interstate 94 noise wall construction (\$101,000) and Central District Police Station (\$9.55 million).

For Merriam Park, funds are sought to replace the 27-year-old play area and 16-year-old skate park. When citywide play areas are scrutinized, Merriam Park ranks third in need of replacement. The skate park is also at the end of its useful life. The park has had a master plan in place for more than a decade but has been unable to obtain funding in past CIB cycles.

Merriam Park Recreation Center, along with Oxford, Dunning and three other recreation center buildings, is in line for new roofs or mechanical systems under the deferred maintenance program.

Public Works sought funding to build a noise wall along the south side of I-94 between Prior and Fairview avenues. The city funds would match \$900,000 from the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Public Works also sought funding to build sidewalks along Larpenteur from Dale Street to Farrington Street.

Police sought funding for a new Central District building to be located in the Rice Street area. Area residents have sought to replace an old rental facility for more than two decades. Central is currently housed out of the Main police headquarters building.



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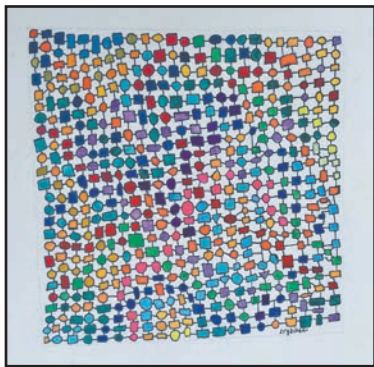
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Midway resident part of Art to Change the World

When Art to Change the World director Barbara Bridges saw all the new construction of apartment buildings going up in her Northeast neighborhood she saw potential art buyers and collectors moving in. The Northeast Minneapolis Arts District has seen a lot of change in the 10 years since she chose to buy a house and set up a studio there. Many artists were just like her – finding affordable space in a community where there were other artists all around to build a community. Gradually more non-artists wanted to live in NE and many worried that this change would push the artists out.

Art to Change the World connected with Rob Miller, developer of the Huxley Apartments under construction at 2201 Jefferson St. NE. Bridges' vision was to see the new residents make a real connection with individual artists in the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District in order to foster a community of artists and art collectors and admirers. The Arts District Palette – Where Artists and Neigh-



Midway resident Susan Gainen is part of Art to Change the World, which will have a pop-up event at Sociable Cider Werks on Aug. 8 from noon to 8 p.m. (Photo submitted)

bors Mix was created.

Miller commissioned a total of 224 works from 20 artists that are either members of Art to Change the World or the Northeast Minneapolis Art Association (NEMAA). Artists from these two organizations submitted samples of the works they would create and a panel of three jurors chose 20 artists, including Layl McDill,

Lucienne "Lucy" Schroepfer, Kelly Jean Ohl, Anne Kleinhenz, Cory Favre, Ashtyn Sibinski, Mary Bacon, Jodi Rebb, Kathryn Flora, Jo-Anne Reske Kirkman, Scorpio Rising, Jodi Janz, Marko Fields Owen Brown, Hannah Foster, Susan Gainen, Candy Kuehn, Barbara Bridges, Alison Price and Laurie Salmela.

Artist and "Whimsical Wildlife Documentarian" Susan Gainen is a resident in the Midway area. She celebrates the magic of detail every day. She arrived in Minnesota in 1992, and was introduced to the State Fair, a magical place. She began winning ribbons for needlepoint, jam, jelly, and barbecue sauce. She is also part of the Art to Change the World taskforce and working on organizing the upcoming in person pop up festival on Aug. 8, noon to 8 p.m. at Sociable Cider Werks (1500 Fillmore St. NE). Each artist will have work on display and for sale and look forward to conversation with the residents that chose their work.



Garden questions welcome

Connect with Ramsey County Master Gardeners online every Wednesday and Saturday from 12-1 p.m. May 26 through Sept. 29. Get advice for your garden problems, identify plants or insects (such as the Japanese Beetle pictured above), and learn researched-based, eco-friendly gardening best practices from Ramsey County Master Gardener volunteers. These online Zoom events are free and open to the public. Find the Zoom link at <https://www.ramseymastergardeners.org/garden-qa-live> or go to facebook.com/ramseymastergardeners.

Briefs

St. Paul edges out Minneapolis

St. Paul bumped Minneapolis to third and took second in annual Trust for Public Land's 2021 ParkScore® index. Washington, DC, is the best city park system in the nation, reclaiming the ParkScore title it last held in 2019. The Twin Cities have finished in the top three each year they have been ranked.

St. Paul City School builds at 215 University Ave. W.

St. Paul City School will consolidate three campuses at one location in the fall of 2022.

The new building site is at 215 University Avenue W.

The new building will include brand new, state-of-the-art classrooms, a full gymnasium, green space/playground, cafeteria and community space, and a full service community clinic (open to the public).

Currently, the primary building is at 260 Edmund Ave. The middle school is at 643 Virginia St. River's Edge Academy High School is at 188 W. Plato Blvd.

St. Paul City School is a preschool through 12th grade public charter school district located in St. Paul, Minnesota. River's Edge Academy merged with St. Paul City School in 2019 to expand both school communities and serve students and families through high school.

Maternity of Mary/St. Andrew Catholic School

The Minnesota Nonpublic School Accrediting Association (MNSAA) has renewed the accreditation of Maternity of Mary/St. Andrew Catholic School (Preschool-Grade 8) in Saint Paul (205 Lexington Ave. S.) for the eligibility period of 2021 to 2028. Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance with a goal to evaluate, validate, and improve each school's quality.

METRO Gold Line BRT

U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg announces that President Biden's Fiscal Year 2022 budget includes \$256.1 million for two new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects in St. Paul and Rochester, Minn., as well as an existing light rail project currently under construction in

Minneapolis.

It includes: \$100 million for the METRO Gold Line BRT project in St. Paul, which would better connect transit riders traveling along a 10.3-mile corridor on I-94 between downtown Saint Paul and the suburban cities of Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale and Woodbury and, more broadly, connect the eastern part of the Twin Cities metropolitan area to the regional transit network via Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul.

Calvo steps in interim director

Subdistrict 1 Council Member Rebecca Calvo has stepped into the role of Interim Executive Director of the District 10 Como Community Council following the departure of the long-serving Executive Director Michael Kuchta. Calvo has taken a leave of absence from the Community Council until the role of Executive Director has been permanently filled.

The council is engaged fully in the search and hopes to fill the role soon.



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Como Woodland Open House

The Como Woodland June Open House is set for Saturday, June 12, 9-11:30 a.m. Meet others at the Kilmer Fireplace to start your walk through the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom (SW Como Park), 1221 Wynne Ave. This event is free, but RSVP with committee chairperson: terhey@gmail.com

The CWOC has 17 acres with eight Minnesota plant communities and a trail system featuring 27 numbered posts with QR codes that correspond with the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom (CWOC) guidebook. The complete guidebook is available online at comowoodlandoutdoorclassroom.org.

On the day of the June Open House there will be three information stations with advisors providing information about CWOC plants, animals, and project history. Como Woodland Advisory Committee members hosting the information stations: Joan McKearnan, professor of biology and environmental science, Anoka-Ramsey College; Britt Forsberg, University of Minnesota Extension educator; Teri Heyer, Program Specialist-Urban Connections, U.S. Forest Service; and more.

Summer Family Nights

There will be three family-friendly outdoor events at Newell Park this summer. The first event is Wednesday, June 16, beginning at 5:30 p.m. with light refreshments and some sweet prerecorded tunes followed by a performance by Magic Maniacs at 6 p.m. Local community organizations will also be onsite with information to share and activities to do and everyone is invited to check out "The Thing About Bees" story stroll. Masks are not required and planners ask that neighbors respect any requests to maintain physical distance. Masks will be available onsite for anyone who needs one. Additional events are set for July 21 and Aug. 18. For more information, please contact: victor.mister@ci.stpaul.mn.us

'Who Gets to Vote?'

The League of Women Voters St. Paul is proud to present its

June 29 program, "Who Gets to Vote?" This program is free and open to the public. Discussion will provide context on changes to voting/election laws, the impact that they have on those who administer the elections, as well as those who may be affected by the changes.

Panelists include Professor David Schultz (Hamline University and the U of MN) and Tammy Patrick (Sr. Advisor on Elections for the Democracy Fund and an adjunct professor at the Humphrey School's Certificate in Election Administration program).

The program will be held as a Zoom webinar on Tuesday, June 29, from 7-8 p.m. and will also be available live on the League of Women Voters St. Paul's Facebook page. Watch the website for updated information on how to register. (www.lwvsp.org)

Mental health support groups

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) offers a variety of free online peer support groups for adults and young adults living with a mental illness, their families, friends, spouses/partners, as well as parents of children and teens. African-American, GLBTQ and BIPOC community focused groups are also offered. Led by trained peer facilitators, the support groups help individuals and families learn coping skills and find strength through sharing their experiences. Find a complete listing of group meetings and how to join in by going to namimn.org and clicking on "Support Groups."

Free food on Wednesdays

Get a free box of food every Wednesday in June at the Hancock Recreation Center (1610 Hubbard Ave.) from noon to 2 p.m. The boxes contain a mix of dairy, protein and produce. Other items such as non-perishables, household products, personal care and baby care will be available on June 23. Donations accepted at Ginkgo Coffeehouse during business hours and at Hancock Rec every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon. Interested in donating items, receiving food or volunteering? Check out the Hamline Midway Coalition web site.

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GARDEN TOUR

The St. Anthony Park Garden Club will host its self-guided garden tour on Saturday, June 26th from 10 am to 3 pm. Ten local gardens will be featured. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased before June 26 at StAnthonyParkGardenClub.com. Details of the tour and photos of past tours are also online.

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Judy Gibson has lived in the Midway neighborhood for more than 40 years. She has found lasting friendships through the Hamline Midway Elders Knitting and Crochet Group. The group currently meets on Zoom, but hopes to return to in-person meetings in the not-too-distant future. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Hamline Midway Elders knit through pandemic

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The Hamline Midway Elders Knitting and Crochet Group is live on Zoom for two hours every Monday afternoon. The 6-8 members who have stuck with it have gotten used to this new kind of knitting circle.

According to Judy Gibson, one of the regulars, Zoom has made it possible for the group to stay together. She said, "Being able to keep up our knitting circle during this last year has met a need. The regular members expressed great appreciation for that."

The group is unique in that everything they make is donated to Our Lady of Peace Hospice, Hamline Elementary School, and Keystone Community Services – all within about a one-mile radius. At last count, the group has given away more than 1,000 prayer shawls, winter scarves, pairs of mittens and hats.

According to Gibson, members of the group provide instruction for beginners, as well as yarn and needles. She said, "It's a lot easier to teach someone in person, but we can manage over Zoom. The group tends to be made up of women, though it doesn't have to be. The average age is 65-70 years old."

to what we had when we were meeting in person. There isn't pressure to talk all the time. Sometimes we just work on our projects quietly, and sometimes we visit. If someone has a question, chances are good someone else can answer it. We have several very good knitters."

It's common knowledge that knitting and crocheting (along with needle work) are healthy brain exercise. Keeping track of counting rows and stitches is mental stimulation; small repetitive motions can help with manual dexterity and hand-eye coordination. Hand work can also be calming in stressful times, and these are surely stressful times.

Gibson said, "A lot of us in the group like to experiment. We've been knitting long enough that we don't always like to use patterns. This winter I knit a shawl made with something called the 'Serendipity Design.' You have six different colors of yarn, and assign a number to each one. Someone rolls a dice to see which color of yarn to start with. Then you flip a coin to see whether you should knit or purl. You keep doing that throughout the shawl – and you can't predict what it will look like until it's done."

Donated yarns complete circle of giving

Most of the yarn for their projects is donated, either by the knitters themselves or by friends and neighbors who have extra yarn on their hands. According to Hamline Midway Elders Program Director Laurel Collins, "It's a wonderful circle of donated yarn being turned into handmade wearables – and then being given back to the community."

Gibson described the weekly meetings as relaxing. She said, "The atmosphere is pretty close

Rare bipartisan group

In crafting groups, there can be a funny separation of knitters and crocheters, something like downhill and cross-country skiers. Gibson said, "Our group is 'bipartisan.' Beginning instruction is available in both knitting and crocheting, and all are welcome to join this friendly group of yarn crafters."

To join the group or to make a donation of yarn, knitting needles, or crochet hooks, contact Laurel Collins at laurel@hmelers.org.



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