



Midway signs **INSPIRE** children's book

Slow down and take a walk to Hamline-Midway Library through pages of story

By JAN WILLMS

When children's book author Ioana Stoian started taking her two and a half-year-old son, George, on walks to the Hamline-Midway Library, he would stop and point at the different street signs they encountered along the way.

"He became really interested and noticed the signs, so pretty soon it became a game. We would look for what sign came next, and if he could recognize a sign," Stoian said.

She made little index cards for him, each with a picture of a sign on it. And they looked for books about signs, but had a hard time finding any. The few they did find showed traffic signs from the perspective of a child riding in a car, not walking along the sidewalk.

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Ioana Stoian presents her new book, "Begin One Way: A Children's Book of Road Signs" at the Gingko Coffee Shop on June 18. When five-year-old son George (aka Biff) was 2.5-years-old, he was curious about traffic signs. Ioana and he went to the Hamline Library and found the only books on traffic signs were published in the 1980s and not very interesting. (Photo by Terry Faust)

PERSPECTIVES ON UNIVERSITY AVE.

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

How have businesses in the Midway weathered the dual challenges of the pandemic and racial unrest? Hear from two local leaders, one from the art community and the other from the business community.

Carl Atiya Swanson is the Springboard for the Arts Associate Director.



HOW WAS SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS AFFECTED BY COVID?

We purchased the old Saxon Ford dealership on University Avenue in May of 2018, and held it for a year of pre-development where we hosted lots of meetings, events, and workshops. We broke ground on renovations in August of 2019, and had just moved into our building in February of 2020 – great timing! We were looking forward to being able to finish the building and prepare for opening to the public, and instead, two weeks into being on site, we sent everyone home and began to work remotely.

In that period we saw an enormous upheaval in the arts and creative sector – artists saw their whole year of shows,

CARL ATIYA SWANSON >> 10

Chad Kulas is the Midway Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director.



HOW WAS THE CHAMBER AFFECTED BY COVID?

The Midway Chamber immediately had to pivot all of our events to virtual. We really missed the in-person interactions, but we've learned things from the experience. First, we offer some events at hybrid where people can attend in person or virtually. This move has helped some members be able to view the event while they were sick, including myself when I had COVID. We are also continuing on with some events that are only virtual. This way, we can find quality speakers who cannot attend in person.

We also had to watch our financials closely, and our executive committee met weekly for over a year to review numbers

CHAD KULAS >> 9

City's new deeply affordable housing to open in Midway

By JANE McCLURE

A unique and historic University Avenue building will become the Twelve22 University apartment building, as part of a larger effort to provide very low-income housing. The St. Paul City Council approved the project's spending plan June 22, both as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board and as the council itself.

The project by Midway-based developer JB Vang will convert a vacant former casket company building at 1222 University Ave. into 55 apartments. It is St. Paul's first very low income housing project, funded through a \$12 million federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation.

According to the Metropolitan Council, Ramsey County needs around 15,000 affordable housing units to meet the current need for very low-income housing. The county and city are drawing on a variety of sources to build or renovate such housing. Even then the public resources only support a few hundred apartments per program or funding cycle. That's a

drop in the bucket when compared to the actual need.

An area median income or AMI number is used to determine who can live in the units. The AMI for a family of four is \$118,200. At 30 percent, that household would have an annual income of \$35,200.

AMI is calculated by the federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It varies by area and calculations can vary by program.

City council members praised the Twelve22 project, with Ward Seven Council Member Jane Prince calling 50 years of affordability "extraordinary." She also pointed out that there is a huge need for deeply affordable housing. A similar project in her ward opened with 60 apartments and about 600 applicants.

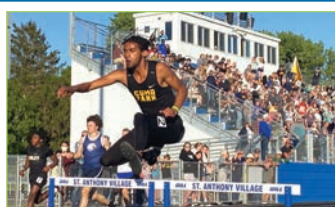
In December 2021, city and county officials announced that they would provide \$74 million toward providing deeply affordable housing. The county announced its initial projects in the spring, which include renovate and expansion of Kimball Court, 545 N. Snelling Ave.

DEEPLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING >> 10



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Como High students compete in state track and field meets

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Shobi's food truck offers pay-as-you-can

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UNDER THE HOOD

BY SUSAN SCHAEFER



Something under the hood is not immediately apparent or obvious. This column will uncover stories that span the neighborhoods covered by TMC Publications.

A BODACIOUS BIRTHDAY BASH DRAWS FAR-FLUNG FANS. WHAT TOOK SO LONG?

To create something entirely new, never seen, touched or heard before – something that resonates deeply with the beholder – is a hallmark of genius. Many such virtuosos are often misunderstood or unrecognized in their own time or homeland. Yet, native Minnesotan, Prince Rogers Nelson, known as Prince, was wildly acknowledged and adored by ardent fans around the world.

Why then, did it take our community so long to recognize its own prodigy?

THE PRINCE MURAL PROJECT

Back in 2015, well before his death on April 21, 2016, Prince's former marketing manager, Sharon Smith-Akinsanya, was busy seeking a public tribute for Prince, even as the eye-popping, five-story Bob Dylan wall mural on the corner of 5th and Hennepin was getting finishing touches by world-renowned Brazilian artist Eduardo Kobra.

With Prince's consent, Smith-Akinsanya had quietly approached Betsy Hodges, then-mayor of the Minneapolis, who enthusiastically supported the idea. However, critical additional official support was lacking.

Shockingly, even Prince's untimely death did not generate the political will needed from the authorities to commit the necessary resources to honor him with a public art project. Determined, Smith-Akinsanya continued full steam to move the Prince Mural Project from planning to center stage, testifying before state legislators and arm-wrangling other civic and private sector leaders.

ADD JOAN VORDERBRUGGEN – THE MAGIC SAUCE

Eventually, Smith-Akinsanya met and landed the consummate ally, Joan Vorderbruggen, and new blood began to flow.

Possessing the will-power of an army of municipal leaders, Vorderbruggen, then-Director of the Hennepin Theater Trust, in fact, had purple running in her veins. Having spearheaded the Bob Dylan

A TOWERING TRIBUTE



The newly unveiled Prince mural is at 8th Street and 1st Avenue on Parking Ramp A. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

mural project, Vorderbruggen has too many accolades to list, but she is credited for her seminal role in multiple creative projects that revitalized the beleaguered Hennepin Theatre District.

Vorderbruggen is a founding member of the Placemaking Leadership Council and is nationally recognized as a placemaking and public art expert. Legendary for her "Made Here" twice-yearly window displays that transformed downtown

storefronts into mini public art galleries, Vorderbruggen is affectionately considered an authentic civic booster and people-connector with a heart as large as the murals we've come to know her for.

Yet, even with her dogged involvement, it still took a confluence of events to move the Prince Mural forward. Happily, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and city of Minneapolis cooperated to offer Parking Ramp A's towering façade, and tragically, the murder of George Floyd revealed the power of art as a form of community healing. Finally, the Prince Mural Project garnered the support it needed.

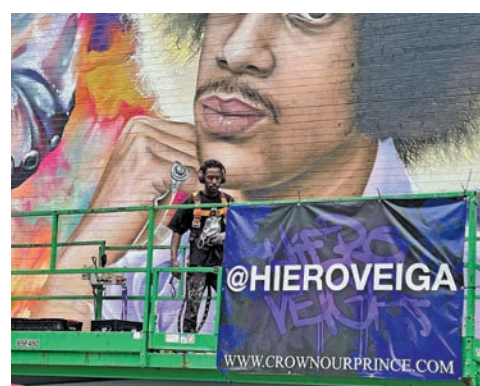
A HIERO FOR A PRINCE

Prince ranks among a short list of luminaries known by one name. So, it is entirely fitting that internationally known muralist, Hiero Veiga, who goes by the solo moniker Hiero, was selected from a field of 60 original artists to design and render the long-overdue tribute.

Evolving a hyperrealist style for the past 21 years, this self-taught artist's work, which began with graffiti writing, has advanced to impressive worldwide commissions such as the exterior of Miami's Museum of Graffiti.

In the months before his death, close confidants attested to Prince's newly ignited spirit. At the time of his death, global luminaries sang his praises: Mic Jagger stated, "His talent was limitless." Oprah Winfrey proclaimed, "The doves are really crying now." And then President Barack Obama (uncharacteristically commenting on a celebrity) pronounced that Prince "was one of the most gifted and prolific musicians of our time, ... a virtuoso instrumentalist, a brilliant bandleader, and an electrifying performer... Today the world lost a creative icon."

Minnesota's Prince gets long-awaited honor



Muralist Hiero applies finishing touches to his masterwork. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)



New Yorker visitors Dorothy Billis and Twila Perry view the new mural on their annual Prince pilgrimage. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

The task set before the artist was monumental. Hiero's bold 90-foot captures the colorful phases of Prince's well-documented life.

And so it was that at the beginning of June 2022, several "Crown our Prince" celebrations marked an early 64th birthday bash to unveil this towering tribute.

I chose Prince's actual birthday on June 7 to capture the images for this column and serendipitously got to meet both the cultural impresario, Vorderbruggen, and the muralist, Hiero, who was putting finishing touches on the masterpiece.

But it was two fans decked head-to-toe in Princely regalia who symbolized the impact of Prince's life and death on a far-flung audience. New Yorkers, Dorothy Billis and Twila Perry, have been making a yearly pilgrimage to the Twin Cities since Prince's death.

Endearingly, the two did not know each other in New York but met here the year following Prince's death. Since then, they have become fast friends and are committed annual travel partners for the yearly festivities.

"We actually discovered Prince after his death," confessed Billis. "We're from a different generation and never knew his music." "But once we heard his music, we were hooked," added Perry. How did this year's mural unveiling compare? Responding almost in unison, they declared that it was the best party yet.

POSTSCRIPT

Prince rewrote life's rules – he was never constrained by them. He broke free of the bonds of socioeconomic, race and gender, as well as those of the tightly controlled entertainment world. His lyrics, compositions, and instrumentality defied genre; his groundbreaking, risk-taking break with the recording industry's star making prison unshackled him to not only explore new musical worlds but to plant his gender-blended glyph in the stratosphere. Now it literally soars on a wall across from his beloved First Avenue for all the world to see and pay homage.

Susan Schaefer is a widely published independent journalist, creative writer, and poet. Her articles appear in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *PBS' online magazine*, *Next Avenue*, *Next Tribe*, and *beyond*. She was columnist and features writer for *Minneapolis' Southwest Journal* and *Minnesota Good Age* magazine.

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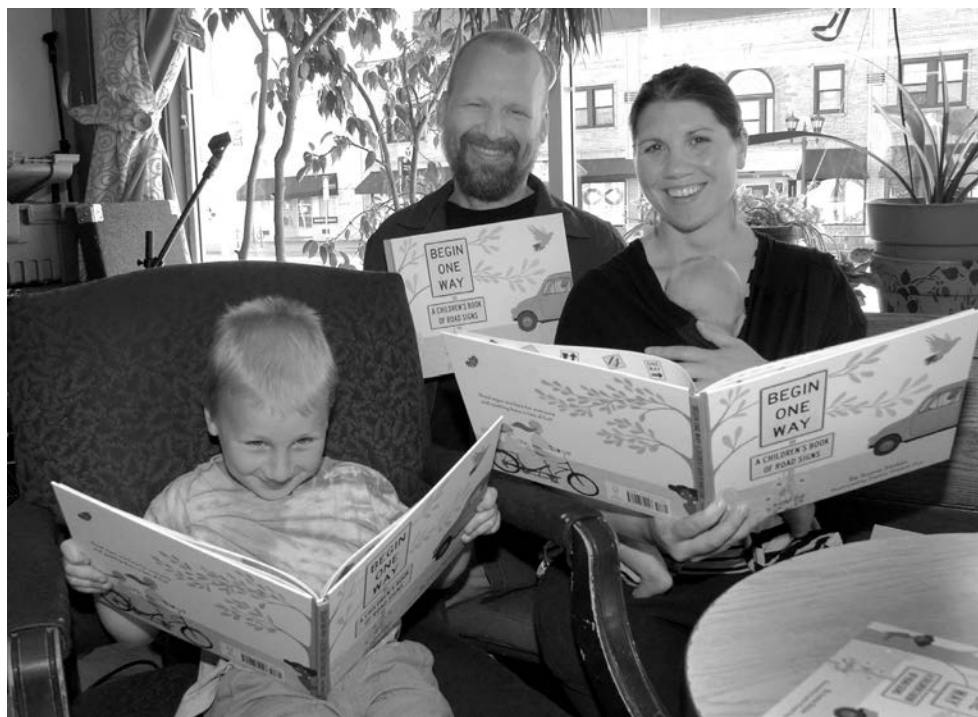
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As George grew older, he and Stoian collaborated on writing information about each sign. The idea for a book was born, and Stoian started writing. She also started searching for an illustrator through the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. She chose Sophia Rivers Guy, a Canadian who lives in Israel, to illustrate the book. "Begin One Way: A Children's Book of Road Signs" was printed and published in Minnesota in June.

"Sophia has an eight-year-old son, so she has been using the book to help him navigate his way to school by himself," Stoian said. She said she wrote the book, then Guy did the illustrations based on photos she had taken. "We documented our whole actual route," she added. "When you find a good illustrator who connects with the text, it goes well."

The text of the book is written in rhyme. "The rhyme just came about, and it felt like a good way for children to remember. Even now, when we cross the road, George recites a bit of rhyme from the book. It's not learning in a strict way, but easy to remember.

"The walk begins at our little pink house on Edmund Avenue. Then you have the roundabout, which our neighbors plant and tend to. There's a tractor coming through, which obviously you don't have



On June 18, Ioana Stoian presented her new book, "Begin One Way: A Children's Book of Road Signs" at the Gingko Coffee Shop. With her were her husband Eric, 5-year-old son George (aka Biff), and nine-week-old daughter Lydia. (Photo by Terry Faust)

on the Midway, but there is a train representing the transit, and one of my favorite librarians is in the book," Stoian related. She said the Hamline Midway Library is illustrated in its current state. "It's an historic element from the Midway that was captured in the book, not at all intentionally. But I think it is one of the only books that has an illustration of the library as it is today, before it comes down."

Stoian said the book conveys the idea of getting children outside, away from screens. "It is about being present with our children and giving them our full attention," she noted. "I think one of the best ways to do that is to take a walk. You meet neighbors, see dogs, and smell the flowers.

I would love for there to be more adults and children walking around their neighborhoods."

In the back of the book, there is a spread of even more road signs. "People living in the country will have some different road signs, and I hope the book leads to a discussion with your child of what signs you find in your own neighborhood."

Stoian said as a child growing up in London, she walked a lot. "Almost everybody in London walks," she said. She and her mother would go to the library, and she had hoped to do the same with her children.

"George and I saw all these signs

between our house and the library," she said. "This is the whole thing. As a mom (to George, who is now 5, and Lydia, 10 weeks), around young children you slow down. They open our eyes to things we don't even see any more. I have been driving for many years and don't even notice the signs, but when your two and a half-year-old notices this thing on a pole that has a symbol and wonders what it is, you go back to their pace. They open our eyes to the world we take for granted. That's what children give us. We are so focused on the destination and not the journey. The whole point of the book is to focus on the journey, stop to talk and play games along the way."

Stoian said she is a stay-at-home mother, and George (who prefers to be called Biff because that is a construction worker's name and he currently wants to be a construction worker) is home-schooled. "He has been part of this process of how you make a book," she said. "We got it printed in Minnesota and distributed in Minnesota, so he has seen it and has been a part of every single step. He is so proud to be in it, and it has been a wonderful family-engaging adventure, helping us through COVID-19."

This is Stoian's second children's book. Her first was a board book called "Always Be You." Her current book is hardcover, and 40 pages long. Stoian already has plans for her next book, which will be about road sweepers. "We follow the crew that comes through twice a year, from the beginning to where the leaves go and what happens at the end. It has been inspired by my 5-year-old, and I look forward to what my little one will inspire."

She said "Begin One Way: A Children's Book of Road Signs" is a celebration of the Midway, some of her family and neighbors. It is available wherever books are sold and at local bookstores in Saint Paul.

Native American Community Clinic combines medical care, classes and Indigenous spiritual practices

By CHLOE PETER

A patient who had an appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine was having second thoughts. They were anxious to receive the vaccine and did not know if they wanted to continue on the day that they were scheduled for. Anita Tapio, the traditional healing coordinator at the Native American Community Clinic, set up smudging with the patient. Smudging is a ceremony involving sacred herbs or resins that purifies or cleanses the soul of negative thoughts of a person or place. After smudging and having a conversation with Tapio about getting her own booster, the patient felt less anxious about the vaccine and was ready to receive it.

"I think combining healthcare and culture is vitally important because without having culture, there will always be that piece missing," Tapio said.

The Native American Community Clinic (NACC), located at 1213 East Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis, opened its doors in 2003 to address the health disparities within the urban Native American community of the Twin Cities. Their mission is to promote the health and wellness of mind, body, and spirit of Native American families, and offer a full range of healthcare services that include medical, behavioral health, dental, and substance abuse programs. As a community clinic, NACC will see patients regardless of ability to pay.

NACC combines their healthcare services with traditional medicine and culture. The clinic aims to honor health and tradition by providing spiritual care and access to traditional healing. To promote these ideals, the traditional healing committee planted sage in the garden outside the clinic. Sage is used for smudging within the clinic, and is given to communi-

ty members. The clinic has also planted tobacco, sweetgrass, cedar and other traditional medicines around the clinic to provide teachings and to be used by community members.

"The relief that some of our patients feel when we're able to provide sage or smudge, I don't even know how to describe it, but it's such a cool feeling to know that we're able to help people in this way," NACC Operations Manager Ashlee Jallen said.

NACC also provides classes for the community members that they serve. One of these classes is making jingle dresses where participants will be given the necessary materials and taught how to create them before pow wow season. Classes like these help people to come back to their culture and find acceptance and support. Tapio mentioned that many participants will come back and are excited to make jingle dresses for their granddaughters and friends.

"Knowing that there's something bigger than you and having spirituality is vitally important," Tapio said. "Just as important as the medical piece."

The clinic also has a holistic approach to healthcare. They aim to address the root causes of health disparities like access to food, housing and health insurance. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, entire tribal communities, like the

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I think combining healthcare and culture is vitally important because without having culture, there will always be something missing.”

Anita Tapio



The Native American Community Clinic at 1213 East Franklin Ave. works to promote the health and wellness of mind, body and spirit of Native American families. (Photo submitted)

Red Lake Reservation, lack access to fresh and healthy food. And, according to the Minnesota Homeless Study, 48% of Native Americans were homeless in 2018. The clinic addresses these disparities through resource navigation, care coordination, outreach and community-based activities through the use of peer recovery coaches and community health workers. NACC also partners with outside businesses and nonprofits in order to connect any individuals with the care that they need.

"Our patients tend to come here more than once, and we get to build that relationship with them and we really make sure that we get them the services that they need. If we can't provide it, we find outside resources that can," Jallen said.

In addition, NAAC offers several unique substance abuse treatment programs in partnership with the Red Lake Nation. They provide a heroin and opioid addiction program that includes daily dosing, harm reduction services, spiritual care, mental health care, nurse care coordination, and drug and alcohol counseling. A cultural-



"It's such a cool feeling to know we're able to help people in this way," said NACC Operations Manager Ashlee Jallen. (Photo submitted)



Anita Tapio is the traditional healing coordinator at NACC. (Photo submitted)

ly-centered approach outpatient program is also offered, which is rooted in Indigenous spiritual practices to treat substance use disorders. This program includes individualized programming with a gradual step-down, daily prayer and cultural teachings by NACC's Elder in Residence, medication assisted treatment, health education, relapse prevention, individual, family and group therapy, and peer recovery support.

"I've seen women who were recovering from addiction. They came in and made Ribbon Skirts or learned dances that they've wanted to but never could," Tapio said. "Seeing them complete that and get excited about their culture brought tears to my eyes. It sparks something in them."

Join the conversation, and let us know your diverse and varied thoughts on the issues that affect your neighborhood. Send letters and guest commentaries to news@MonitorSaintPaul.com.

We're redefining our priorities

BUILDING A STRONGER MIDWAY

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



Recently, the Midway Chamber of Commerce held a retreat for our board of directors. We are like many nonprofit organizations, where we have staff and also a dedicated group who serve in a volunteer capacity on our board. The board of directors help set the direction and priorities of the chamber while staff manage the daily operations. Our board consists of a good mix of people from different backgrounds, skill sets, and industries. At our retreat, thanks to our ice breaker activity, we even found out some know how to juggle, have served in the military, or been at their current employer for over 20 years. Nobody has ever lived on a farm or is an only child, though.

The retreat was a good time for us to re-evaluate our strategic directives to better serve our members and the Midway community. We created our current five strategic directives in 2019: Careers, Community, People, Commerce, and Environ-

ment. While that was only three years ago, in some ways it feels like a long time ago when you consider everything which has occurred since March 2020.

We looked back on the past three years at the successes but also the areas we need to improve. And we also looked at how we would continue to adapt to show value of chamber membership and that we are a strong community partner with the Midway's interests in mind. Here are some take-aways from our retreat.

Defining the Midway narrative.

Three years ago we had set out to define the Midway in the hopes of selling it as a great place to live, work, and play. We aimed to highlight the positives that attract people here. While we continue to do so, we also have realized everyone values something different and we should let people define their own narrative. For many, the location in the middle of the Twin Cities with transit is part of their narrative and reason to locate here. For others, it is the diverse cultures found here. We should enhance those viewpoints rather than merely define it ourselves.

More community outreach.

In 2019 our board and staff made a point to meet with many different community leaders. They were people from the nonprofit, multi-cultural, religious, and neighborhood communities, to name just a few. Some we already knew, but

UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS

• Bremer and The Pitch: Developments near Snelling and University Ave.

Learn about Bremer's modernized approach to banking and take a tour of some of The Pitch's dynamic units at our July Economic Development meeting. Lunch provided by Bremer Bank! Tuesday July 26, 2022, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

• 2022 Annual Patio Party & Recognition Event @ Urban Growler

Join us at Urban Growler Brewing Company outside in the beer garden to catch up with food, fun, and drinks! We will recognize our outgoing board members, executive committee members, ambassadors and more. Wednesday July 27, 4 - 5:30 p.m.

• Midway Chamber Coffee Club

The Midway Chamber is introducing a fun, casual networking program in the mornings! We are excited to bring you the Midway Chamber Coffee Club! Each month we will visit a coffee shop and encourage members and neighbors to join us. Stop by for our first one at Abogados Cafe, the new coffee shop owned and operated by Ofelia and Inti from Ceiba Forte Law Firm (1053 Dale St. N.). Tuesday Aug. 9, 7:30 -8:30 a.m.

• Midway Chamber Saints Game Outing @ CHS Field

Join your Midway Chamber friends at CHS Field for a ballgame as the Saints take on the Columbus Clippers, (a Cleveland affiliate). Day games are a great way to bring your staff together and meet your fellow members. \$30, Wednesday, Aug. 10, 1-4 p.m.

many we didn't and wanted to learn more about their priorities for the Midway. The meetings were beneficial and wanted to have ongoing meetings, but the pandemic made it difficult. The time is right to reconnect with some partners and meet new acquaintances.

Addressing concerns.

While we aren't necessarily going to define the narrative, we can and have been listening to concerns and we want to do what we can to help. We know many are

concerned about perceptions in public safety, how can we help educate others and help them realize how to better keep themselves safe? For many employers, they struggle with staffing and ways to save costs. What educational opportunities can we share with them?

We discussed many ways to help build a stronger Midway, and the points above will be included in our efforts. In a way, we all juggle as we try to balance our lives and show our pride in our community.

8 tips to help children become readers and leaders

PLANTING SEEDS

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



Summertime is the perfect time for enjoying reading. It can be an opportunity to inspire the reluctant reader by introducing a new book genre like science fiction. Alternatively, it can provide the motivated reader with more time to discover new adventures in the pages of the book. No matter what type of reader your child is, summertime is an invitation for learning and growth.

Summer months can lead to learning challenges or opportunities. In many instances, youth are missing learning activities and academic support throughout the summer. According to the Brookings Institute: "On average, students' achievement scores declined over summer vaca-

tion by one month's worth of school-year learning." This is a missed opportunity for learning and growth.

Imagine if your child gained a month's worth of learning and started the next school year well prepared. You have the opportunity to help develop your child's brain and set them up for this type of future success. By taking intentional action to become engaged in your child's literacy development, you can prepare them to be strong and confident readers. An investment in reading a new book per week can help to support learning gains.

Reading supports the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, and innovation. It is the foundation of learning. From kindergarten to third grade, students are learning how to read. In subsequent grades, students are reading to learn. Annie E. Casey Foundation noted: "88% of students who failed to earn a high school diploma were struggling readers in third grade." To promote academic success, it is critically important that children develop basic reading skills at an early age. You can follow these simple tips

below to help support your children in becoming readers and leaders:

1) Read books aloud to children and designate a reading time. This will help to ensure reading becomes a routine and common pastime.

2) Talk to children about life and daily activities. This will help to introduce new vocabulary.

3) Engage in creativity. Sing songs together, create art, and tell stories.

4) Visit your local library weekly. This is a fun, family outing with a wide selection of books, movies, and music to select from.

5) Stop by the Little Free Libraries in your neighborhood. Donate a book or pick out a new book.

6) Participate in your local indie bookstore's author events and activities.

7) Join Planting People Growing Justice's newsletter list to receive tips on increasing literacy and reading motivation.

8) Watch the Justice and Friends series. These free virtual read-alouds feature diverse authors.

Through her organization, *Planting Peo-*

SUGGESTED SUMMER READING LIST

- Brandon Spots His Sign
By Sheletta Brundidge
- Music is a Rainbow
By Bryan Collier
- Gumbo Joy
By: Robert P. Dixon, Jr.
- Ol' Jim Crow's Jubilee Day Caper
By J. Darnell Johnson
- My Daddy Tells Me...
By Thuba Nguyen
- Family Reunion
By Chad and Dad Richardson
- Black Girl, Black Girl
By Crown Shepherd
- Abdul's Story
By Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow
- Tika Speaks
By Elise Washington

ple *Growing Justice Leadership Institute*, Dr. Artika Tyner seeks to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach.

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Story ideas always welcome.

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

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responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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Correction

On the front page of the June edition, we published a rendering of the proposed Hamline Midway Library building design. However, we inaccurately labeled it as the proposed new building while it was actually the design for what a remodeled facility could look like. The library has decided to demolish the existing building and build a new one. We apologize for the error.



What a remodeled facility might look like.



The proposed design for a new building. This is the direction the library is going, despite opposition from the community group Renovate 1558, which prefers to remodel the existing building.

FOR THE PEOPLE

It was an astonishing idea. Spend \$100,000 in 1873 to buy 260 acres of land, including Como Lake, a lake that was little more than a large swamp at the time? Crazy as it sounded, that's exactly what the Minnesota Legislature decided to do.

That act of legislative courage and foresight changed St. Paul forever. If you doubt the impact one dedicated person can have on history, look no further than Horace W. S. Cleveland, a landscape architect who believed in the healing power of nature and free public spaces for the working masses. He was the driving force behind the state's acquisition and development of not just Como Park, but also much of the parkway system in the Twin Cities.

Cleveland would have been thrilled and amazed at the benefits Como Park provides for the people today. Is there any other park in Minnesota where a family can pack a picnic lunch, spend the day at the lake, walk up to the zoo, wander in Como Town and the conservatory, and not spend a dime? I think not. Although a donation is requested, Como Zoo is one of only three zoos nationwide that still offers free admittance. For a \$3 ticket, you can also go back in time and ride one of the 75 hand-painted wooden horses on the restored Cafesjian's carousel, built in 1914 – one of only a few vintage carousels still operative in the U.S.

Over two million people a year visit the zoo and conservatory. Many more walk,

GUEST COLUMN

BY SONJIE JOHNSON
Como resident



run, bike, bird, fish or ski the paths, wooded hills and trails around the lake – all seasons. In January, the conservatory gardens offers a blessing of warmth and green for the winter weary. The seasonal flower shows are breath taking. Any day, any time, the park offers open spaces for people to sit a while, take a deep breath, enjoy the bird-song, clouds, trees and lake. The healing power of nature. All free. For the people. It's still an astonishing idea.

Nowhere in St. Paul could the importance of open spaces be felt more than in Como Park during the pandemic. In the spring and summer of 2019, and well into 2021, the walking and biking paths were filled with people. Early morning people, eager to avoid contact with others. Mid-morning families on break from online learning and remote work. The lake paths became so crowded that Como Blvd. East was closed to traffic to allow more space for all of us to escape the worry and solitude of our homes and hearts.

To this day, the park continues to thrive, because it's also by the people.

Como Friends, a primarily non-profit, donor-based organization makes pos-

sible maintenance and improvements at the zoo and conservatory. The successful public/private partnership forged by Como Friends has raised more than \$35 million in new investment toward capital projects and community programs at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory. Polar Bear Odyssey, Gorilla Forest, Sparky the Sea Lion in Como Harbor, Large Cat Habitat, Japanese Garden. All free, and open to the public, thanks to their dedicated fund-raising efforts. Friends' funding provides educational programs that reach more than 500,000 kids and adults every year.

Then there are the roughly 1,500 volunteers who give of their time and effort to maintain and staff the zoo, the conservatory, the Cafesjian's carousel, the grounds and the lake. You'll never know their names, any more than you'll know the name of the guy with a stick-picker who clears trash every morning around the lake. He does it for all of us, as do the diligent dog walkers and others who pick up, clean up, keep up. Nature doesn't care who we are, what we earn or who we vote for. The park sustains and refreshes us, one and all. Free. For the people.

Note: "A Chronological Illustrated History of Como Park Saint Paul, Minnesota" by Timothy V. Gadban is an excellent Como Park historical source.

Sonjie Johnson has lived in Como Park for 28 years. An avid nature-lover, she has run or walked Como Lake all of those years, and find the park's history unique and compelling. She also gardens, reads, and writes. She belongs to the church of the open sky.

Letter

SAD TO HEAR LIBRARY WILL BE DEMOLISHED

I am saddened to learn our elected city officials have decided to misspend taxpayers' money to demolish this beautiful old building. Our elected officials, not just city but also state, seem to believe if they make minor or no repairs needed on a public building entrusted to their care, they have the right to designate millions or billions of tax dollars to repair at a later date (like they did with our state capitol) or demolish Minnesota and city public buildings only to rebuild at additional millions or billions of dollars. They have too much of our money already for the many bike lanes on our city streets which are not used in proportion to the money

spent. I do not see Mayor Carter on any of these bike paths. As a matter of fact, many bicyclers will not travel on them because they are too dangerous due to traffic and being too narrow.

St. Paul is so unique with its historic old buildings and their wonderful architecture. It would make a great advertisement for tourism to Minnesota along with our museums, zoos, etc.

Audrey Clasemann

THANKS FOR VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE SERIES

I am a staff attorney at Standpoint. In case you aren't familiar with us, we are a non-profit (located in St. Paul right on University Avenue, but we offer our services statewide) that provides legal advice and advocacy to victims of domestic and sexual violence. We also provide trainings

and technical assistance to domestic abuse advocates across the state.

I receive the *Monitor* at my home (I am a Frogtown resident) and I often share your Voices Against Violence series with my colleagues. I specialize in advising victims in the fields of family law and civil protective orders, and I am so grateful for your role in educating the public on vital issues like post separation abuse and financial abuse, and how incredibly broken our family court system can be.

Beth Assell
www.standpointmn.org

NEIGHBORS NEAR FAIR BANDING TOGETHER

I am part of a group of neighbors near the State Fair. After gun shots were fired on a neighbor's lawn in 2021 (during a parking dispute), we decided to band

together to work towards a safer neighborhood during the fair for residents and visitors. This effort is built on community connection. While we are in communication with law enforcement and other entities, we are focused on prevention vs. response, de-escalation, and neighbors being able to rely on each other and know what the response times and actions will be.

We feel this is a unique situation faced by St Paul neighbors of the fair, particularly those of us living in the parking overlay, and we hope that our efforts will generate positive outcomes. We welcome the opportunity to connect with you and hope that news coverage will increase awareness.

Kate McCreight, Como

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Design workshops set for Hamline-Midway Library

By JANE McCLURE

With plans in hand to demolish and replace the Hamline-Midway Branch Library, a detailed focus on design continues. Updated design renderings, the latest floor plans and specific details derived from community input are online.

Demolition of the Hamline Midway library is controversial, as the group Renovate 1558 has sought expansion and reuse of the current structure. A process continues to seek historic designation for the structure. Others contend a new library would provide modern spaces and improved access for all.

Design workshops for Hamline Midway, as well as the West Side Riverview and East Side Hayden Heights libraries, are set for July. Riverview and Hayden Heights are being renovated. Hamline Midway is the largest of the three projects, at more than \$8 million.

The Hamline Midway workshop is 5-6:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 19 at the library at 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave. Preregistration is required for the 90-minute workshop, and as of Monitor deadline there were fewer than 40 spaces remaining.

Other workshops at 5-6:30 p.m. Monday, July 18 at Riverview, 1 E. George St. and 5-6:30 p.m. Thursday, July 21 at Hayden Heights, 1456 White Bear Ave.

At each workshop, library staff and representatives of LSE Architects will review the results of the second community survey, which ended June 30, and discuss spaces at that library.

LSE Architects will lead attendees through a visual design exercise to continue discussions on the interior and exterior design of the library, including a focus on the look and feel of individual areas in the library.

If people cannot attend the workshop, information will be posted on the library website by July 23.

A third community survey will also be offered online and in hard copy form at libraries later this summer.

All three libraries also have interactive art installations available during library hours throughout the summer. Community members can visit the libraries to participate in an arts experience to make suggestions about future library space. The Artist Cohort, which is part of the community engagement team for the three library projects, has created an interactive art installation on display in each library.

The public is urged to “draw, doodle and dream big” to share ideas as part of the interactive display. They are also urged to share about the communities and cultures in the neighborhood that should be reflected in each library’s design and more.

Ward 1 council vacancy

Last week, Councilmember Dai Thao announced that he will retire from his post effective Aug. 1, 2022. The Saint Paul City Council is required to appoint a replacement who will serve until the end of his elected term – December of 2023. The council will consider applicants who are familiar with city government and its operations. Applicants must be able to devote the significant time and ener-

gy required to successfully represent the residents of Ward 1. Interested applicants must agree not to run for the Ward 1 office in the 2023 election. City council staff will review applications and recommend a limited number of applicants who may be interviewed.

Resume and cover letter must be received by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, July 22, 2022, to be considered.

Applications should be emailed to Council-Vacancy@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

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FROM FIRE TO REGROWTH IN THE MIDWAY

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Today's Midway still bears the scars of the last few years, and also shows regrowth and renewal.

There were over 170 businesses damaged in Midway following the unrest after George Floyd's murder. Overall, there were over 300 businesses with an estimated \$73,374,886 in damage in St. Paul (not including business inventory). The spaces on University Avenue where DTLR Sports Dome, Big Top Liquor, the Midway Center, and Napa/Bole were remain razed and empty, as does the former BP station at Hamline and University. The CVS at Snelling and University is shuttered.

Meanwhile, Lloyd's Pharmacy/Motherhood to Menopause rebuilt at the same location, and celebrated with a grand opening a little over a year following the looting and fire that destroyed their historic building. Bole Ethiopian, Thien's/King Cajun and Peking Garden reopened in new locations. The Turf Club, Elsa's House of Sleep and others resumed operations as they were able, helped in part by various funds that raised over \$3.5 million. These included \$504,000 from the Asian Business Recovery Fund; \$487,000 from Let's Rebuild: African Immigrant Businesses in Minnesota; \$1 million from We Love Midway/We Love Saint Paul; and \$1.578 million from Neighbors United Fund.

"Both the African Economic Development Solutions (AEDS) and Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA) had previously received STAR dollars to administer programs to support small businesses in Saint Paul," pointed out Saint Paul Marketing and Public Relations Manager Suzanne Donovan. "After the unrest, this funding source supported the relocation of one of the former Midway Shop-

ping Center tenants to the Little Mekong Cultural District, as well as Ahn's Hairstylist (also located on University Avenue).

"We were able to design criteria with the community advisory council. This was an opportunity for us to make sure the community designed the criteria on how to distribute the fund and decided who should be funded."

"It was about community empowerment," said African Economic Development Solutions CEO and President Gene Gelgelu.

"Each property represents a unique set of circumstances, and the city does not track costs to rebuild," observed Donovan, due to the individual variables. "City staff reached out to many business owners after the events, with some success. However, many were reluctant to share insurance information so staff was never able to get a complete picture of which businesses or properties were insured."

"There were many businesses under-insured...[they] said they thought they had better coverage or that due to COVID impacting their businesses, they couldn't pay their premiums, so insurance had lapsed," observed said Kathleen Lohmar Exel of the SPACC Foundation in a 2021 city report. She suggested the going forward the public and private sector focus on connecting business owners to reputable insurance brokers, particularly BIPOC businesses.

NEW TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

New at Snelling and University across from Allianz Field are two six-story, mixed-use buildings: The Pitch and the Pivot. Other intersections along University with new construction completed or planned include Marion, Dale, Chatsworth, Fairview, between Hampden and



The site of the Midway shopping center is empty on the east side of Allianz Field, while The Pitch and the Pivot, two six-story, multi-use buildings, have risen on the west side. The nearby sites where Big Top Liquor and DTLR Sports Dome were formerly located also remain vacant and covered by grass. CVS closed its location on the corner of Snelling and University. The locally-owned Lloyd's Pharmacy rebuilt at its former location at 720 Snelling Ave. N. (Photos by Tesha M. Christensen)

Pillsbury, and Raymond. These projects bring a mix of housing, commercial, education and office space. Sejong Academy moved into the historic Iris Park building (1885 University) last summer. St. Paul City School is consolidating its three sites with a move to 215 University for the 2022-2023 school year.

From the start, a goal was set to add new wealth-building and ownership models for BIPOC community members.

Midway Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Chad Kulas pointed out that two new business incubator spaces are opening this year: one by the nonprofit Neighborhood Development Center at

Dale and University, and the other by African Economic Development Solutions at 678 Snelling Ave. N.

Two Black owned businesses, Lip Esteem and Black Garnet Books, plan to open storefronts this year.

The Black Market (originally Black Business Is Beautiful) began in 2020 with the goal of helping BIPOC businesses close the racial wealth gap. They continue to hold monthly pop-ups with over 60 vendors on the second Saturday from 2-7 p.m. at the Lab Taproom + Pilot Facility, 767 N. Eustis St.

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Perspective: Chad Kulas

>> from 1

and consider our overall planning. Initially, we checked in with members to see how they were adapting and how we could help. We ended up convening meetings on certain topics, like with building managers one time and for people interested in PPP loans twice.

HOW WAS THE CHAMBER AND ITS MEMBERS AFFECTED BY THE UPRISING?

For many members, they did not see any change to their business or building. But unfortunately, so many were directly impacted. The damage ranged from minor to total loss. The Midway Chamber, along with the Saint Paul Area Chamber and the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance, formed the We Love Midway We Love Saint Paul fund to support those directly impacted. I was really proud of the work done; the fund raised and gave away over \$1 million.

Initially, there was also confusion on when businesses were open. We would hear from members their customers were unsure if the area was safe or if hours of operation were changed. By now, most of the boards have been taken off the windows and it is business as usual.

WHAT HAVE LOCAL BUSINESSES LEARNED THROUGH THE DUAL CHALLENGES?

Businesses learned to adapt. Restaurants and taprooms went to more outdoor seating, delivery options, and touchless ordering. Many businesses realized their employees could work at home and still be productive. I'd say one lesson from both challenges is the strong support they received from loyal neighbors and customers. When some businesses saw complete loss from civil unrest, their decision to re-open was made easier by the strong support they got from others. And early on in



the pandemic, many people chose to get takeout more often and from the restaurants they cared about the most. It helped as a business owner if you'd met and built a rapport with some of these customers; it put a face to the business and customers wanted to support them.

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU SEEN THE MIDWAY, AND UNIVERSITY ESPECIALLY, CHALLENGED DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS AND IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU SEEN GROWTH?

University Avenue is always changing, and the last two years people have grown more aware of safety. But I've also noticed this is a concern everywhere and not specific to our community. Some growths are also seeing challenges. We have seen many new buildings built, including many apartments. This is great as more people can take advantage of life on University, but rent control will make future developments challenging. We've seen this in the numbers compared to Minneapolis' growth.

The Creative Enterprize Zone (CEZ) summer mural project by the collaborative Few and Far (above) was installed in late June 2022 on the west wall of the Bro-Tex Building (800 N Hampden Ave). A mural by Rodrigo Onate has been added to the north wall at Northwest Packaging, Inc. at 1996 University Ave. W. The closing party for this year's Chroma Zone is Oct. 1. (Photos courtesy of CEZ)



WHAT NEW THINGS ARE ON THE HORIZON?

I'm excited for more density on University, and also for future developments. I'm excited to see what happens near Allianz Field.

The Midway is one of the most exciting neighborhoods in Minnesota. There is always a vibrancy in it, and things are always changing. The community has a lot of pride and the future should be bright.

SPRINGBOARD for the arts **WE'RE OPEN, AND YOU'RE INVITED!**

The newly renovated Springboard for the Arts in Saint Paul is open, with a large Community Hall and front yard ready for community to share, create connections, and spread joy.

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Perspective: Carl Atiya Swanson >> from 1

tours, and workshops disappear overnight. At Springboard we were able to move our core work of supporting artists through workshops, consultations, and resources online and virtual for the most part, and then also moved to respond to the crisis by opening up a Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund. Through fundraising and generous donors, over the next year and a half we were able to support over 2,600 artists, creative workers and culture bearers with financial support, distributing over \$1.25 million in Minnesota. We also created a toolkit for starting an Emergency Relief Fund and convened conversations of people doing this work across the country, supporting a national response in the creative sector.

Throughout the past two and a half years, we've been able to continue to support artists with their careers and center artists as essential in vibrant and just economies by supporting creative response projects. We continue to have a high standard of care when it comes to community and health, but we did begin hosting events in our space on University Avenue last year, with an official grand opening celebration in October 2021, and the start of public drop-in hours this year.

HOW WAS SPRINGBOARD AFFECTED BY THE UPRISING?

In the uprisings following the murder of George Floyd, we did have damage to the building, including a fire that was set. We're grateful that no one was hurt in the fire, and that we had recently completed renovations that included an up-to-date sprinkler system and fire-retardant carpets, which stopped the damage from being too severe. We were able to work with our insurance company and our contractor partners at Flannery Construction to re-set the building, but it did mean that it was pretty unusable through most of 2020.

One of the unexpected benefit of being closed for that period was that it did allow us to do the exterior renovations without having to work around the building open to the public. With support from the Met Council, Capitol Region Watershed District, and city of St. Paul, we converted an asphalt parking lot into a front yard with lots of green space, rainwater garden and reclamation, a walking circle, and public art. This space is important to us and our vision of more human-centered systems, celebrating creativity, public use, and environmental stewardship.

HOW HAS SPRINGBOARD SUPPORTED ARTISTS AND THE COMMUNITY AS THEY WORK TO WRESTLE WITH RACIAL INJUSTICES, THE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD, AND THE PANDEMIC?

We focused direct support for artists through the Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund, and through the consultation, workshop, and resource services that we provide. We have also created a flexible container for artist-led work in community that we call Artists Respond. These Artists Respond projects build on our long practice of artist-led community development work, and allow us to fund artists to take on small, community-centered projects. Immediately following the uprisings, we worked with local district Councils on University Avenue for Artists Respond:



In October 2021, Springboard for the Arts officially reopened its building at 262 University Ave. with a grand celebration. The community hall and front yard are available for rental. (Photos courtesy of Springboard for the Arts)

On Plywood, supporting artists to create murals on the plywood window coverings on local businesses. Artists Respond: Combating Social Isolation, was a project supporting artists to do work in their communities and bring people together in COVID-safe ways through 2020. The over 80 projects across Minnesota included pop-up concerts, collaborative zines sent by mail, art kits, and online workshops.

In April 2021, we were able to launch our Guaranteed Income for Artists pilot. This pilot sits alongside the People's Prosperity Pilot in the city of St. Paul, and supports 25 artists in the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods with \$500 of guaranteed income a month for 18 months. We know that emergency relief is not a sustainable response to the crises we are facing, and we are excited to have artists involved in the nation-wide movement for guaranteed income.

We also have dedicated projects to support artist leadership and community-building. The Creative Community Leadership Institute supports a cohort of 60+ leaders from across Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native nations that share that geography in building relationships, planning their own community work, and project support. The Rural Regenerator Fellowship is an in-depth, two-year fellowship for 12 creative leaders from rural places across the Upper Midwest. And we have the Creative Economy Fellowship, which is for 10 Black, Indigenous, People of Color, artists and creative community leaders in Minnesota who are building platforms and opportunities for others. Applications for the Cre-

ative Economy Fellowship will be opening up in July!

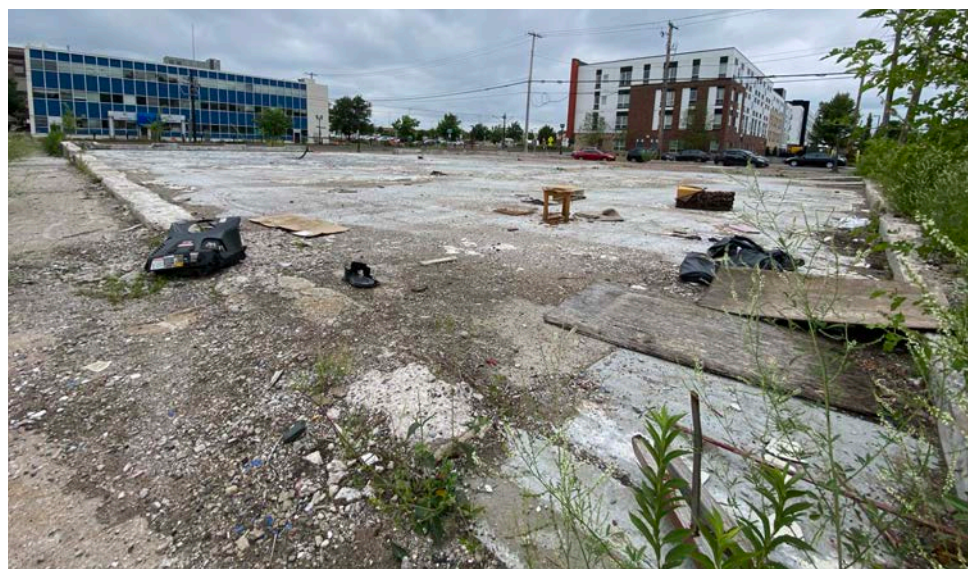
HOW DOES ART HELP PEOPLE WORK THROUGH GRIEF, ANGER, FRUSTRATION, AND MORE?

Art got us through the darkest days for the pandemic, whether it was our own creativity, connecting through music and movies, or finding ways to connect to others. Artists are often the ones giving voice to the frustrations, challenges, and opportunities of the moment, and one of the things that became abundantly clear in the pandemic was how precarious people's livelihoods to perform this kind of essential community work really was.

Alongside the direct financial support of the Guaranteed Income pilot, we were excited to fund five artists for Artists Respond: People, Place, and Prosperity. This project has shared stories about the impact of guaranteed income in people's lives, how the funding has reduced stress, how it gives space for creativity and connection, and how it underscores human dignity. The audio stories, videos, sculptures, and coloring books that have come out of this project are a testament to how art helps us grow, heal, and feel connected to each other.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

We'd love to host your event! Our Community Hall and Front Yard are available for rental, and we do have an open call for artists to create or host events in the space, that will be open through July 31: <https://springboardforthearts.org/262-university-site-use/>



The site at Syndicate and University where Napa and Bole Ethiopian restaurant sat remains empty. Bole relocated to 1341 Pascal Street. (Photo by Tessa M. Christensen)



Deeply affordable housing

>> from 10

Beacon Interfaith operates that housing, which is in a former hotel.

Over time more projects will be announced. What's typical is that several funding sources must be drawn on for each affordable housing program.

For example, three sources of funding are identified for the Twelve22 project. Beside ARPA, the second source is up to \$12.5 million in conduit multi-family revenue bonds. The third is a \$748,983 pooled tax increment financing (TIF) loan to be blended with the 30 percent AMI ARPA funds

The \$24.8 million project will provide 55 affordable apartment units. Of the units, 15 will be deeply affordable at 30 percent of AMI and 40 units will be affordable at 60 percent of AMI. All units will be affordable for a term of 50 years.

Rents could range from \$660 to \$1,584 per month, depending on unit size and level of affordability. The building will have 27 one-bedroom units and 28 two-bedroom units, amenity spaces, and 50 surface parking stalls.

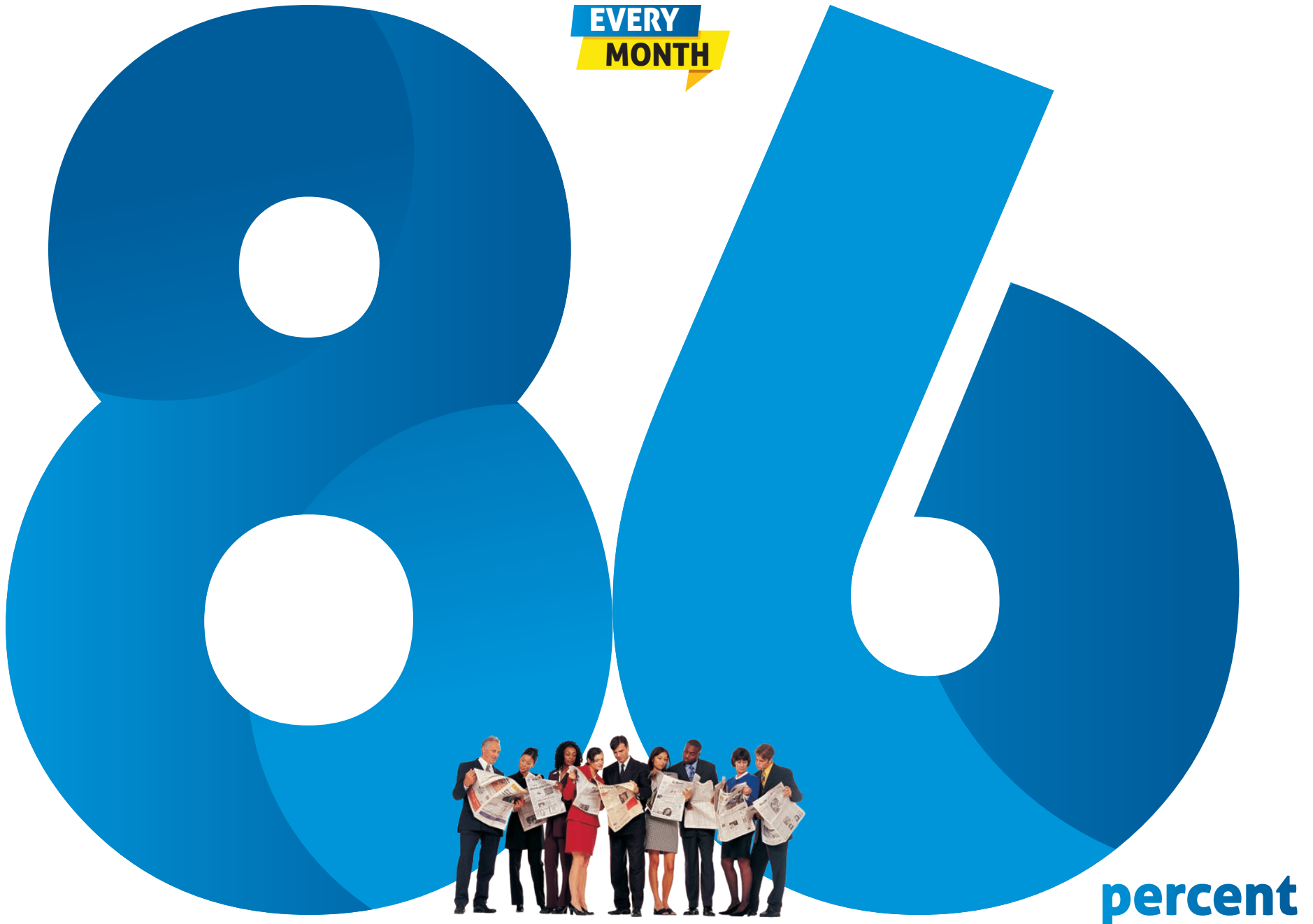
The JB Vang firm is a development and project management veteran, with more than 15 years experience. The developers hope to close on the property in July, and have it done by summer 2023.

The building will be 100 years old next year. Built as a casket company, it was designed to have casket manufacturing and showroom space. It later was a warehouse and office facility for the Snyder drugstore chain, which operated in the Twin Cities for many years.

Its final business occupant was Landfill Books and Records fir.

It has won votes of approval from the city's Heritage Preservation Commission and Union Park District Council. It will also draw on funding including a site cleanup grant from Metropolitan Council, state and federal historic tax credits and other sources.

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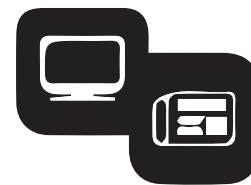
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By JANE McCLURE

First skater trail opens in St. Paul

Highland Bridge skate park is third in city

When a “skater trail” and other skater amenities opened in June at St. Paul’s Highland Bridge Gateway Park, supporters of other city skate parks watched with great interest. That includes members of the organization City of Skate. The non-profit works with parks and recreation officials and parks supporters through the region to add new skate parks and refurbish older ones.

Paul Forsline is a self-described “skater dad” and Minneapolis resident who helps lead City of Skate. “We advocate for quality skating facilities,” he said. “These are heavily used resources.”

The Highland Bridge facility is hailed as the city’s first “skater trail.” Young people from the Highland neighborhood had input on how the park and skater trail are designed. The 3.6-acre park extends from Mississippi River Boulevard at Bohland Avenue to Ford Parkway at Woodlawn Avenue. It includes game tables, picnic tables, walking paths, a viewing platform and fountain.

Highland Bridge was for many years the home of the Ford Motor Company Twin Cities Assembly Plant. It is being redeveloped into about 3,800 housing units, retail, commercial and institutional uses.

St. Paul’s first skate parks opened in 2003, at Merriam Park on Prior Avenue just south of Interstate 94, and at Front Park at 485 Stinson St. The parks get many visitors, with people traveling miles to use them. The parks can be used with skateboard, skates and bikes.

Front’s skate park was extensively upgraded in 2014. Plastic fixtures were re-



On June 14, the new skate park and skater trail at Highland Bridge officially opened. (Photo courtesy of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation)

placed with sturdy concrete. The \$350,000 project included a redesign for skaters wanting to try more tricks.

But despite talk of opening more parks at Arlington-Arkwright and Harriet Island Regional Park over the years, the new Highland Bridge facility is only St. Paul’s third permanent skate park. An East

Side request for more than \$1 million to build a skate park didn’t make the cut in the current Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget process.

City of Skate has worked with city officials to add pop-up type skate park facilities, including one summers at the West End’s Palace Recreation Center. It occupies

what is a refrigerated outdoor ice sheet in the winter.

For the last few years, City of Skate’s efforts have included the aging Merriam Park skate park. It’s in a small, fenced area that Forsline describes as being like a cage.

“We’re hoping to bring that park into the new era of skate parks,” he said. Park supporters hope the project can move ahead in the future. Like many efforts it was stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic. A lack of funding also is an issue.

The vision for Merriam Park is to replace the original modular ramp skatepark with a larger custom, concrete skatepark along with a new pedestrian gateway entrance to Merriam Park from Prior Avenue. It’s not known what the project would cost as estimates are old.

The Merriam Park project has been discussed over the past few years, most recently with Union Park District Council and one of its committees. Last year the district council put \$10,000 toward the park. But much more would be needed.

City of Skate had a request before the 2022 Minnesota Legislature, to support \$15 million for matching grants for public skate parks in the state.

The request was led by the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission. The intent was to have a match and spark the construction of \$30 million in world-class public skate parks throughout Minnesota. But bonding was one of many issues state lawmakers didn’t finish during the regular session. Without a special session, the request and many others must wait.

Two years ago, the skate park effort got \$250,000 from the state.

By CAROL MAHNKE

LEARNING HOW TO SWIM AT THE YMCA

Little eyes brighten and smiles break out when mommy or daddy say it’s time to go to the pool at the Midway YMCA Saturday mornings for swimming lessons for infants and toddlers. Mitch Lallier teaches the classes where little ones get used to the water while their parents learn how to teach the children to swim as well as becoming comfortable with their kids being in the water.

Ken Strike said his child was scared of the pre-swim shower but was delighted with being in the pool.

It’s a noisy class peppered with shrieks of delight and nursery songs like “Old McDonald” and “Hokey Pokey” as Lallier leads children and parents in a circle of movements like “put your chin in” and “kick, kick, kick.”

The children range in age from six months to two years.

Occasionally adults from the lap swim pool join in with the songs, and sometimes they even join the circle in the recreational pool.

Many of the little ones hesitate to jump into the pool. Only if a parent’s



Little Jibril can now swim the length of the recreational pool at the Midway YMCA on Saturday mornings. (Photo by Mitchell Lallier)

arms are waiting to catch them will they take the dare.

Not so with little Jibril (last name withheld) who jumps into the water, letting his head go under, almost before his mother can get into position.

Putting faces in the water is a difficult lesson for most of the children, so Lallier has them put in one side of their faces and then the other to get used to the idea.

Dominique and Joel Holwaida have a pool at home so they are particularly anxious to make sure little Quinn, seven months, is safe in the water. So far, Dominique said, she loves the water.

Matthias (who withheld his last name) said he appreciates Lallier’s class as it makes both parents and children feel “safe and comfortable” in the water. Mother Lauren is qualified as a lifeguard but appreciates Lallier’s lessons.

They, too, have a pool at home. Quinn loves the water, Lauren says.

After class parents hurry to get their little ones dry and in clothes before they go out into Minnesota’s early spring.

But even though the children often shiver as they get out of the pool, they are delighted to get back in the water the next week.

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DIARY OF A PLASTIC-FREE WANNABE

By PATRICIA OHMANS

Have you heard about Plastic Free July? It's a decade-old movement to get people to reduce their use of single-use plastics. The hoped-for result: cleaner streets, lakes, rivers, and communities, with far fewer of those pesky discarded plastic objects that simply... never... decompose.

Originating from Australia – the land mass closest to the legendary Giant Garbage Patch in the Pacific Ocean – this idea is getting traction around the world. Millions of people in more than 190 countries have signed up to participate in Plastic Free July this year. (Check it out at plasticfreejuly.org)

Are you a plastic-free wannabe, like me? It's a compelling concept: just "choose to refuse" single-use plastics like filmy grocery bags, soft drink straws, throwaway soap dispensers, and packaging on fruits and vegetables. Should be easy, right? Well... read on.

According to the Plastic Free folks, the first step is to notice how, where and when single-use plastic is in our lives. So, over the course of a week, I kept careful track, noting each offending item in a small (paper) notebook. What I realized was pretty depressing. I was personally handling a bare minimum of 10 one-time-use plastic items every single day. From the filmy grocery bags enveloping my oranges and snap peas, to the plastic bottle of water I bought to slake my thirst, to the electric toothbrush I discarded when the battery died, I was – and am – awash in plastic.

Plastic is lightweight, durable, moldable, and clean. It's incredibly cheap to manufacture and it can be made to be

tough as nails. It also takes forever to break down. That plastic fruit bag has an average use of about 10 minutes, according to Plastic Free Foundation. It will take more than 1,000 years to decompose in a landfill. If it ends up in the ocean, it looks exactly like a jellyfish to a hungry sea turtle.

Given the ubiquity of single-use plastic, not to mention its sheer volume, it's tempting just to shrug and move on to an easier campaign. World peace, anyone? But the folks at Plastic Free Foundation (plasticfree.org) have lots of ways to break the work of reducing plastic use into doable steps. Check out this 31-day calendar for ideas (and note that Plastic Free "July" could really be any stretch of 31 days!) Here are a few of their tips:

1. Start small: eliminate just one single-use plastic at a time. For example, just say no to the paper-wrapped plastic straws that come with fast food soft drinks. Who needs 'em, really?

2. Once you've triumphed over straws, tackle the next target. How about plastic bags? Eliminating their use might seem nearly impossible; Americans use an average of 365 plastic bags a year. But people in Denmark use an average of four a year! If the Danes can do it, surely we can, too.

3. Ready to ramp up? How about giving up plastic bottles? Just about everyone has one of those reusable water bottles by now. Dust it off and fill it with tasty tap water and take it along with you to work or school. Forgot your water bottle at home and need to buy something to drink now? Go for recyclable glass or metal alternatives to the drinks sold at convenience stores.

Using fewer plastic items can be a fun process, but it can also seem endless. There's just so much plastic out there! Consider, though, that the stuff was invented 100 years ago. It will take us a while to undo the damage we've done to our health and our environment through careless use of plastics. So let's take it one day at a time... starting on a day this July.

Patricia Ohmans founded Frogtown Green, a volunteer-powered initiative to build green beauty in the Frogtown neighborhood. We plant trees, cultivate gardens and work toward a healthier environment. If you'd like to know more, our website is frogtowngreen.com.

CHOOSE TO REFUSE SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PLASTICFREEJULY.ORG

Joining 31 Days of Plastic Free Choices 2022

- Taking the Plastic Free July challenge
- BYO shopping bags
- Choosing reusable drink bottles
- Ditching disposable coffee cups
- Skipping the straw
- Choosing loose produce
- Using what you have
- Switching from bottle to bar
- Choosing reusable utensils
- Choosing plastic free laundry products
- Buying local
- Reducing plastic in the bathroom
- BYO bag to the bakery
- Storing food in reusable containers
- Choosing plastic free cleaning products
- Avoiding plastic wrap
- Considering cloth nappies
- Choosing loose tea
- Hosting an event or gathering
- Switching to plastic free stationery
- BYO takeaway containers
- Making personal care products
- Picking up litter
- Skipping plastic bin liners
- Staying and enjoying
- Making homemade snacks
- Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- Choosing reusable menstrual products
- Learning more
- Choosing reusable decorations
- Turning the tide

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER



Tearra Oso (left) and Yajaira Fleming perform during the annual Peace Celebration on June 17, 2022 at Western Sculpture Park. (Photo submitted by Abby Gessesse)



Deon Haider staffs a table during the annual Peace Celebration on June 17, 2022 at Western Sculpture Park. (Photo submitted by Abby Gessesse)

Kalpulli Yaocenoxtli from Indigenous Roots perform during the 2022 Peace Celebration. (Photo submitted by Abby Gessesse)

PEACE BUBBLES

BY MELVIN GILES
peacebubbles@q.com

CELEBRATING TRUTH AND PEACE

REFLECTIONS OF THE JUNE 17TH ANNUAL COMMUNITY PEACE CELEBRATION

"The Peace Celebration was definitely a highlight of my 20 years on earth. From the preparation of the event up until to the cleaning up of it, I encountered the beauty of mankind. For a moment, the Peace Celebration made me forget about all the atrocities of the world and how helpless the human condition can feel at times, and forced me to appreciate the present and be happy in the moment. It was an opportunity for community leaders and members who spend most of their days fighting an oppressive system to take a breath and celebrate how far we have come and prepare for the journey ahead," said Respect Djunga.

"The perennial Peace Celebration has harbored a safe space for community healing and uplifting. The ability to truly experience the greatness of one's community is something we often take for granted but celebrations such as these remind us of the wholeness that comes from being together," said Sarah Zalanga.

"The Peace Celebration was an excellent time of community gathering full of amazing performances, food, vendors and conversation. The love and care people had for one another and the community

was very present and felt. As society continues to face unprecedented times, the Peace Celebration brings a sense of healing amidst the storm," said Abby Gessesse.

"The Annual Peace Celebration was a very positive space where community members came together to produce a beautiful afternoon. The different community artists, vendors, and talents harbored a safe space for peace, love and healing. The unique bond of this community was felt at this event which I found to be very important, especially considering the current times," said Alise Ostercamp.

"The Peace Celebration was a warm reminder of the vast life community can bring to the bigger picture in Saint Paul. I had a great time being able to interact and organize with other community members that knew how to put together something amazing. The intentionality behind the event as a whole was much needed, considering all of the iniquity happening right now in this country. By the end of the event, I was so proud of everyone that came together to make this event possible," said jml.

STORY OF TRUTH AND LIE

A fable that I first heard from a Black preacher years ago. This is a shorten version of the Story of Truth and Lie,

as shared by <https://medium.com/@ParkerSimpson/the-story-of-truth-lie-1476bda2d45e>

One day a man named Truth and a man named Lie stood by a river just outside of town. They were twin brothers. Lie challenged Truth to a race, claiming he could swim across the river faster than Truth. Lie laid out the rules to the challenge stating that they both must remove all their clothes and at the count of three, dive in to the freezing cold water swim to the other side and back. Lie counted to three, but when Truth jumped in, Lie did not.

As Truth swam across the river, Lie put on Truth's clothes and walked back in to town dressed as Truth. He proudly paraded around town pretending to be Truth. Truth made it back to shore, but his clothes were gone and he was left naked with only Lie's clothes to wear. Refusing to dress himself as Lie, Truth walked back to town naked.

People stared and glared as naked Truth walked through town. He tried to explain what happened and that he was in fact Truth, but because he was naked and uncomfortable to look at, people mocked and shunned him – refusing to believe he was really Truth. The people in town chose to believe Lie because he was dressed appropriately and easier to look at. From that day until this, people have come to believe a lie rather than believe a naked truth.

The moral of this story, and how it applies to modern day society, is that we often either consciously or subconsciously reject certain truths in our personal lives or in the world around us for the sake of our peace of mind. These truths may be in our personal lives: financial issues, relationship issues, struggles with our faith, addiction problems; they are all areas where we often turn our back to the cold hard truth, even if it's at our own peril.

We've also seen this in public society, as well. Our country is brutally divided among ideological lines on every front. People can be presented with irrefutable yet inconvenient truths regarding societal issues including terrorism, global warming, race relations, cultural differences, and countless other issues, but they shun those truths and decide instead to believe the well-dressed lie, especially if it benefits their agenda or idealistic narrative. The story of Truth and Lie swimming in the river may answer why we do this to ourselves, but what it doesn't answer is when and if we will ever learn from it.

In Gratitude: Keep the positive vibrations flowing, stay optimistic; and, keep hope alive by striving and digging to hear, see, and be the truth.

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May Peace Be In Our Homes & Communities...

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"The naked truth is always better than the best-dressed lie." – Ann Landers

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will... The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress." – Frederick Douglass

"By your thoughts you are daily, even hourly, building your life; you are carving your destiny." – Ruth Barrick Golden

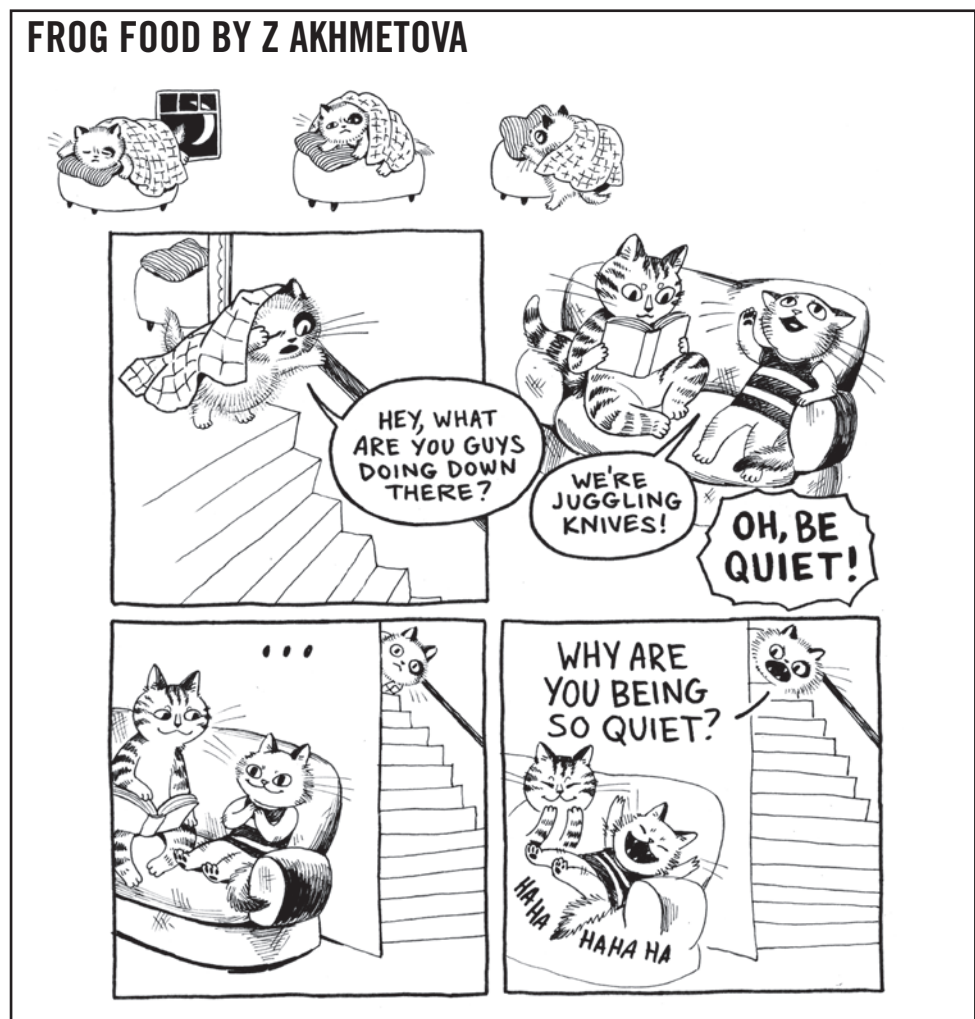
Hello Monitor readers,
I'm keeping it very simple this month with assistance from a few of my older gardening children who bring knowledge, joy, and blessings to me daily. And, I end this column with a fable that I might have shared before.

WHO ARE THE K'NYAW?

The K'Nyaw are people, whose home has been vandalized by the Tatmadaw of Myanmar. Still, they persist in preserving their existence, their culture, their language, and their identity. They are the indigenous people of Myanmar/Burma and that will never change. They have been fighting one of the longest civil wars in the world with the Burmese Tatmadaw, who seek to destroy the individualized cultures that make up the country of Myanmar.

The K'nyaw are people with bravery, purity, and hospitality. When you enter their home, whether you know them or not, they will offer you with the best food they've got. They live a very simple and humble life. Because of their humbleness, they have been exploited and used wherever they go. Many became victims of the civil war going on in KawThooLei. Due to unsafe situations in their homeland, they fled and became refugees and a lot have moved to many different countries, including the United States.

In Minnesota alone, there are about 20,000 K'Nyaw or also known as the Karen. The word Karen was given by a western scholar for this group of people but to the people themselves, they've always claimed themselves as the K'Nyaw. Minnesota houses the largest K'Nyaw/Karen in the United States. Due to assimilation, there are many different dialects of K'Nyaw. Two main ones are Sgaw and Pwo. Sgaw is the dominant dialect and the most common. Pwo K'nyaw also understands and speaks Sgaw, whereas less Sgaw speak Pwo. There are also many different accents even amongst the two main dialects. To learn more about the K'Nyaw, go to <https://www.mnkaren.org/> or <https://www.theurbanvillage.org/>.



Neighborhoods pinpoint priorities for city CIB funding

By JANE McCLURE

Six area projects are candidates for 2023 and 2024 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) funding, which is cause for cautious optimism in Frogtown, Union Park, St. Anthony Park and Como neighborhoods. The CIB Committee finalized a list of nine total projects June 27 and sent them to Mayor Melvin Carter to meet a June 30 deadline.

Supporters of solar lights for Frogtown Park and Farm, safety improvements for the Como Lake trail, bike racks in 13 city parks, a flashing beacon at the north end of Ayd Mill Road, lighting on part of Raymond Avenue and traffic calming improvements on a stretch of Thomas Avenue in Frogtown will know in August if their projects are part of the 2023 city budget.

But it has been a difficult budget process. The \$1 million allocated for neighborhood-scale projects doesn't go very far when the 43 applicants and plus-\$15 million in requests are considered. That leaves a lot of projects out, including every single project proposed in Hamline-Midway.

There's also the review process itself. The CIB Committee, which was set up by the Minnesota Legislature in the 1960s, has 18 seats. It was set up to provide a community and citizen-driven process through which capital projects are reviewed and funded. It allocates bonding proceeds,

federal Community Development Block grants, Municipal State Aid and other funds for brick and mortar efforts.

Projects used to be reviewed and ranked every other year. Now, city departments come in with their requests one year, with community projects submitted the following year.

Fifteen seats are filled but only six members attended the June 27 meeting. The committee did have a quorum for its June 23 public hearing, but community members questioned the absences.

CIB and other city citizen boards, commissions and committees have struggled at times to reach quorums and do business. The COVID-19 pandemic allowed the groups to meet virtually but once the declared city emergency ended, in-person meetings were required again.

Lacking a quorum, the committee couldn't do a formal vote on its recommendations it had reviewed for several months. The committee used its own ranking as well as district council and public rankings to make suggestions to Carter.

Almost three dozen people attended the June 23 committee hearing, most from Frogtown. Replacing damaged park lights with solar fixtures was the ask of many. Hamline-Midway Katie Taylor, one of the Frogtown park stewards, said lights were damaged in 2018 and not restored. Copper thieves are to blame. Without ade-

quate lighting, the park feels unsafe.

Other spokes for traffic safety improvements on Thomas, in Frogtown and near Griggs Street in Hamline-Midway. Speeding vehicles on Thomas create hazards for pedestrians, cyclists and other motorists. Some speakers said they don't let their children play out front because of the traffic hazards.

The committee began its deliberations June 27 with six projects including Lights On! Frogtown Park and Farm (\$154,526), bike racks at 13 city parks including College, Ryan and Dickerman parks (\$65,675), Como Lake path safety improvements (\$104,715), and Raymond-Wabash Avenue street lighting (\$30,000). The six recommended requests total \$755,633, leaving \$184,367 for the committee to allocate.

The committee added three projects for Carter's consideration, including \$75,000 for pedestrian and bicyclist safety beacon at the north end of Ayd Mill Road, and \$89,000 for the 700-900 blocks area of Thomas Avenue in Frogtown.

Committee members looked at committee, district council and community members' rankings before making additional picks. The Ayd Mill Road project was proposed by Lisa Nelson, a member of Union Park District Council's Transportation Committee who also submitted the bike racks proposal. She suggested a flashing beacon where the Ayd Mill Road

multi-use trail intersects with Selby Avenue. It got the highest amount of online votes through the city's Engage St. Paul website.

"There's strong support for that, and we should consider adding it," CIB Committee member Jack Fei said.

Adding some funding for a Highland community gathering space and Thomas Avenue in Frogtown projects is based on community input at the June 23 hearing, said Fei.

The traffic safety issues continue to worry CIB committee members. Committee Chairman Darren Tobolt said that he'd like to see the city take strategic approaches to such problems. One idea the committee debated June 27 was whether or not to simply fund speed bumps in some places.

Several area projects are off the table unless the mayor and City Council add them back in. Those include Thomas-Griggs traffic safety, Wabash Avenue railroad track removal, wind fences for parks including Marydale and Horton Park improvements, Como Park kiosk and trail improvements, a flashing beacon lights near Midway Peace Park, reconfiguring the Selby Avenue-Saratoga Street intersection, adding sidewalks in the West Midway area.

The advocacy group Sustain St. Paul's request for pedestrian safety improvements near several schools, libraries and recreation centers citywide was turned down. It included Jackson Elementary in Frogtown.

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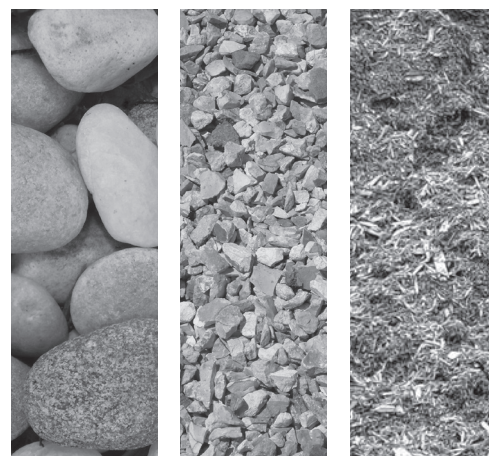
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HIGHLIGHTS AT SCHOOL YEAR END

**COMO PARK
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



BY ERIC ERICKSON
Social studies teacher

GRADUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Seniors from the Class of 2022 and their families were busy celebrating accomplishments in early June. Graduation took place at Roy Wilkins Auditorium in downtown St. Paul on Tuesday, June 7.

Senior Ikram Mohamed served as hostess for the ceremony, senior Cece Ler provided the student address, and senior guidance counselor Ms. Becky Mendoza gave the staff commencement address. The Como band performed the processional, choir members sang the national anthem, and Principal Kirk Morris conferred the diplomas.

The annual senior barbeque was hosted by the Como Park Booster Club during the seniors' last day of school on Friday, June 3. The festive celebration on a warm, sunny day was a well-earned memory for the class of '22 who endured so much missed time together during the pandemic.

SUMMER INTERNSHIPS

In addition to the hundreds of Como

students who are working part-time or full-time jobs in the community this summer, seven rising seniors are serving as paid interns with the 3M Science Training Encouragement Program (STEP).

Ellen Chinema, Hla Khay, Abdi Hidig, Diego Guevara, Pray Meh, Thay See, and Wah Saw Tamalar are working with scientists in 3M labs for 12 weeks to increase their skills and gain insight into scientific careers.

Twelve Como students were selected for internships with Genesys Works, which pairs students with employment experiences at leading companies that also provide skills training and career coaching.

Selected students include Da'tavia Depratto, Ridwan Sallah, Momtas Oday, Daisy Sanchez Blancas, Munira Shuriye, Naimo Mahumud, Jackson Thao, Eh Say, Abdirahman Abdisalam, Jairo Rodriguez Cayetano, Mohamed Mohamed, and Ridwan Ahmed.

SUMMER AND FALL PLANS

The last day of school for underclassmen was June 10. Many staff members prepared for summer school classes which began on June 27. Como is serving as a summer school site, providing credit recovery classes and academic support to students from many different St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS).

In September, there will be a new daily schedule at Como and at all SPPS high schools. It will be an 8/2 format,



Como Park senior Rais Jaffer raced to medals in both hurdling events at the Section 4AA track and field meet. (Photo by Eric Erickson)

meaning that students will take up to eight classes over the course of two days. The schedule will rotate with four class periods on "A" days, and another four class periods meeting on "B" days.

SPRING SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS

The Cougar boys and girls track teams placed third in the city conference. Most varsity team members continued to improve and set personal records the next week in the Section 4AA Meet.

Como junior Charlie Power-Theisen won the section championship in both the 3200M and 1600M races. In the Minnesota Class AA State Meet, he placed 5th in the 3200M and 7th in the 1600M.

The Como boys volleyball club team won the East Conference with a regular season record of 10-1. The Cougars qualified for the Minnesota Boys Volleyball Association State Tournament where they won their first-round match before falling to Shakopee in a dramatic five-set quarterfinal match.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

**DISTRICT 10 COMO
COMMUNITY COUNCIL**



BY SHEVEK MCKEE
Executive director
district10@
district10comopark.org

TopLine Federal Credit Union, Hmong College Prep Academy, Como Park Language and Arts, Bethel Lutheran, North Suburban Kiwanis, and Subtext Books. Community members can donate to our events fund at <https://bit.ly/D10EventsFund>.

GET INVOLVED: COMO LAKE CLEAN-UP - JULY 26

D10 Como Park is planning our next Como Lake Clean-Up for Tuesday, July 26, 6-9 p.m. These events, in partnership with the Capitol Region Watershed District, focus on the shoreline and lake itself.

District 10 provides trash-grabbers, rakes, buckets, nets, trash bags, and nitrile gloves for those who need them. Or, feel free to provide your own gear. Registration (before July 26) is not required, but it helps us plan and communicate if changes come up. Register and find out more at District10ComoPark.org/Como-Clean-Up

SAVE THE DATE: TILDEN HARVEST FESTIVAL

The Como Community Council will be hosting a Harvest Festival at Tilden Park on Saturday, Sept. 10. Whether you come with your neighbors or come to meet your neighbors, we would love to see you there! Everyone is invited to this free event. This event is still being planned. If you're interested in helping plan or volunteering at this event you can fill out our



Kids enjoyed treats and painting at the annual ice cream social. (Photo by Shevek McKee)

volunteer interest form, come to our Neighborhood Relations Committee meetings (1st Tuesdays), or reach out to organizer@district10comopark.org. Find out more at district10comopark.org/sd1event.

COMMUNITY MEETING SCHEDULE CHANGING

Our monthly meeting schedule is changing. Starting in August, our three committee meetings (neighborhood relations, environment, and land use) and board meeting will happen on two nights per month instead of four. Combining our meeting dates means it'll be easier for community members to attend multiple meetings and be part of more discussions.

We'll have more focused agendas, and we'll have greater flexibility to hold working meetings on specific projects. The D10 board will have more time to spend in the community and host community-building

events. We'll be able to consistently offer hybrid meeting for community members to attend in person or continue attending via Zoom. We'll also have increased capacity to hold special meetings for topics that need more time.

Our trial period begins in August and will go through the end of the year. In December, we'll gather community and board feedback on the new meeting schedule. We'll make any necessary adjustments to the schedule starting in January and announce those changes to the community through all of our communication channels.

You will find more details about meeting dates and times on our website District10ComoPark.org. All D10 board and committee meetings are open to the public and have space for community members to bring topics for discussion.



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Making St. Paul even more awesome

New giving circle jumpstarts small projects

What do a Makerspace teacher at Randolph Heights Elementary School, the owner of a St. Paul Frogtown-based non-profit that provides medical supplies to Bolivians, and a library media specialist at American Indian Magnet School located in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood have in common? Bottom line, all three of them are improving life for their stakeholders, often in small but significant ways.

Recently each of them received a \$1,000 micro-grant from the St. Paul chapter of the Awesome Foundation, a new local giving circle that was started in February of this year that awards \$1,000 gifts monthly to support awesome ideas in our community. They are a small band of donors guided by a firm desire to promote diverse ideas and uplift small projects throughout St. Paul.

"St. Paul is a unique community with thriving neighborhoods," said Su Yeager, dean of the St. Paul Awesome chapter. "We decided to pool our money to fund projects that serve our community through the lenses of the arts, education and social outreach. We love projects that are solving problems and bringing joy to people in St. Paul."

Because most of these projects are small and done on a shoestring budget, these gifts can be transformational. According to Katie Meier, Makerspace teacher at Randolph Heights Elementary School, "The Awesome grant allowed me to take my Makerspace classes to the next level! We bought a palm sander, drill, nails, hammers and paint for kids to learn basic wood working skills while making an original piece of art. The kids LOVE using the tools and have made amazing creations out of wood. Thank you!!"

Pollinator garden grantee Joan Velasquez, head of Mano a Mano, an international non-profit with headquarters in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul, said,

"The Awesome grant application process was clear and simple. We received a quick response to our request, and the Awesome group expressed much personal interest in our pollinator garden project. They add to our own excitement about attracting more bees, butterflies and birds to our neighborhood. Truly awesome!"

Library media specialist Nicole Bierwerth said, "Our students at American Indian Magnet are so excited to have brand new books for our developing library space. We are committed to fostering a safe and exciting learning space for our students to grow as lifelong learners. With Awesome Foundation's generosity we can make that dream a reality! Chi Miigwech."

The application process is very easy, and deadlines are the 28th of each month. Simply visit www.awesomefoundation.org and click on the St. Paul chapter page to apply. "You also can follow AwesomeStPaul on Facebook or contact us at stpaul@awesomefoundation.org," Yeager said.

The Awesome Foundation was started in 2009 and has 83 chapters in 13 countries. Since then, it has awarded \$5.717 million in grants to 5,717 projects worldwide.



"We bought a palm sander, drill, nails, hammers and paint for kids to learn basic wood working skills while making an original piece of art. The kids LOVE using the tools and have made amazing creations out of wood" said Katie Meier, Makerspace teacher at Randolph Heights Elementary School. (Photo submitted)

SAINT ANTHONY PARK TREE LOVERS FIGHT BACK



Asphalt or trees? A group of St Anthony Park residents gathered on Tuesday, May 31, 2022 to declare their firm allegiance to the trees.

Armed with packing tape and scissors, the tree advocates affixed bright yellow flyers to more than 150 large trees lining Cleveland Avenue. "SAVE THE TREES!" the flyers read, noting that each flyer-festooned tree was slated for imminent destruction by county road crews.

"Given the death and necessary removal of thousands of St Paul trees due to emerald ash borer disease, you'd think a plan to cut down over 150 healthy trees would have raised eyebrows at the county planners' offices," observed Pat Thompson, the chair of the St Anthony Park Community Council's transportation committee. "Why add to the destruction?"

County officials insist that the trees must go, in order to widen the road to add both in-street bike lanes and an off-street multi-use path along Cleveland – a necessity that Thompson and others representing the neighborhood firmly dispute. "St. Anthony Park Community Council maintains its strong preference for a reengineered street plan on an 8-foot-narrower roadbed," reads a statement that Thompson and other council members sent to the Ramsey County board of commissioners late Tuesday afternoon.

The statement cites data from the Metropolitan Council (the source of much of the county's funding for the intended project) which correlates lack of tree canopy with health disparities and heat island effects. "The urban heat island affects those at home, but also pedestrians, bicyclers, those wait-

ing for the bus. Removing so many trees along this important corridor will significantly increase health risks and the quality of life of people who use and live by this street. The county should balance the need for a street rebuild with the increasing recognition of the value of trees for climate and human health, even if it means delaying the project one year."

The irony that some of the largest trees slated for removal are on the verdant mall of the University of Minnesota's College of Agriculture was not lost on the tree-flyering group. Long time St Anthony Park resident Margot Monson returned to one big oak tree on the mall to tape even more flyers to its giant trunk. "I want everyone to see what's going to happen unless we do something," she said grimly.

The trees were removed in June.

IN BRIEF

BICYCLE SHOP HONORED

Mr. Michael Recycles Bicycles is one of 108 bicycle shops across the US and Canada to receive the 2022 Bicycle Retailer Excellence Award from the National Bicycle Dealers Association (NBDA). The St. Paul shop was awarded the Gold level.

Key to certification is a lengthy application survey that quantifies key elements found in successful retail operations of all kinds. The retailers were also evaluated through phone and email contacts, website appeal and accuracy, and marketing expertise. The process of going through the application and the outside perspective of the NBDA staff have created a program in which every shop can recognize their strengths and weaknesses and become the very best retailer they can be.

Recipients of the Bicycle Retailer Excellence Award also are evaluated on their support for their local community and cycling advocacy efforts. Mr. Michael Recycles Bicycles is not just a bike shop, but leadership and staff are pillars of their community. The NBDA is proud to recognize Mr. Michael Recycles Bicycles for this honor.

PLAN IT

SEE MACBETH JULY 22-31

"Something wicked this way comes" as Shakespearean Youth Theatre presents Macbeth at the Crane Theater, 2303 NE Kennedy St. in Minneapolis, July 22-July 31. Shakespeare's masterpiece of ambition, murder, and civil war tells the timeless story of Scottish general Macbeth, whose theft of the crown unleashes tragedy for his country and those he loves most. Founded in 2004, Shakespearean Youth Theatre offers youth ages 13-19 professional level training and performance opportunities, as well as workshops and camps for young people 7-19. They believe young people have original and vital perspectives to share – perspectives that enrich the lives of everyone who watches them unfold on-stage. Visit <https://www.sytmn.org> for tickets and more information.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT AT JEHOVAH AUG. 2

Jehovah Lutheran Church will host its annual National Night Out festivities from 5-7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 2, in the parking lot of the church at 1566 Thomas Ave. It will include food and drink, music, activi-

ties for kids and a giveaway table featuring gently used clothing, toys and household items. Police and firefighters are always invited, and may make an appearance as well.

MIDWAY SUMMER SPLASH AUG. 5-6

A two-day rally, Midway Summer Splash, is set for 9:30-11:30 a.m. Friday and Saturday, Aug. 5-6, at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Ave. The free event, open to all, features Bible stories, crafts, activities and refreshments for children ages 3 years and older. Participants can register at the door the first day they attend. More information at office@jehovahlutheran.org or 651-644-1421.

VEGAN FOOD SHELF AND COMMUNITY DINNERS

A vegan food shelf with Eureka Compass is held regularly at Zion Lutheran Church (1697 Lafond Ave.), and the next one is on Thursday, July 28 from 5-8 p.m. There will be a bunch of food, a free meal, and art from Arts on Lafond, including paintings on display by Wen Brovold and long exposure, candle lit portraits by Jerry Sedgewick. The church is also home to the Second Tuesday Community Dinner from 11 a.m. -7 p.m. As always, half of all

contributions benefit the Zion Lutheran Church Food Justice Initiatives. On Thursday, July 21, attend the Community Dinner at Heritage Park Apartments from 5-8 p.m. (1000 Olson Memorial Highway).

On Tuesday, July 26, the 4th Tuesday Community Dinner is at Hamline Church United Methodist (1514 Englewood Ave.) from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. Use the "south entrance" near the garden located off the drive connecting their parking lot with Asbury St. This dinner will benefit Protect Minnesota.

B-Art-BQs on alternating Thursdays

Connect with your neighbors through art and food at the regular B-Art-BQs at Victoria Theater Arts Center. Events are every other Thursday, 4:30-6:30 p.m. at 825 University Ave. The next ones are Aug. 4 and 8 and Sept. 1. "For each B-ART-BQ, we will partner with a local business to provide free food, highlighting the cuisine in our neighborhood, as well as a fun, simple art activity that everyone can enjoy," say planners. "From origami to friendship bracelets to murals to hand crafts, you can get creative in a relaxed environment, enjoying good food and good company. Events are free.

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A COMMON TABLE

By CHLOE PETER

In the summer of 2021, a woman came to get lunch at Shobi's Table, a pay-as-you-can food truck started by Christ Lutheran Church (105 University Ave. W.), just because she saw the big blue truck as she drove by. She loved the meal so much that she came back the next week. As she didn't have any money to offer, but wanted to give something in thanks, she gave Shobi a single yellow rose.

In 2021 alone, Shobi's served 4,691 meals through the food truck, and brought 932 meals to other partner ministries and organizations.

When Kari Olsen was first asked to consider working with the food truck, she had some initial ideas of what she thought Shobi's Table should become. It wasn't until she met someone connected with One World Everybody Eats (OWEE) that it became very clear. OWEE is a national network of pay-as-you-can cafes in the United States. This network helps start cafes and provides the support to thrive.

"Hearing more about how it all worked, I knew the pay-as-you-can model was exactly what I wanted to try for Shobi's Table," Olsen said. "Over the last three years it has been wonderful to see it blossom as a way to make delicious, quality meals served to everyone in a dignified way, no matter what they can pay."

Olsen has worked for Shobi's Table since 2018. She is a deacon in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA),



Kari Olsen, at left, chats with a community member while working in the Shobi's Table food truck., In 2021, Shobi's served 4,691 meals through the food truck and brought 932 meals to other partners. (Photos submitted)

and said she felt called to be the director and mission developer of Shobi's Table. Shobi's Table food truck has three locations: Tuesdays at 105 University Ave. W., Thursdays at 499 Charles Ave., and Fridays at 400 Snelling Ave. St. Lunch is served from noon-1 p.m. at each location.

"Some of my work is there [in the kitchen], some is more administrative and development, and some of it is in shaping how this ministry is preaching good news," Olsen said. "Sometimes that takes the form of preaching in different churches around the area, but mostly it means



cultivating a language and experience of welcome to each person who comes to the food truck – whether that be to volunteer or to eat, to support, or all three."

Shobi's provides meals made from scratch. These meals contain nutrients one needs for a healthy body, but Olsen also mentioned that they are infused with the love, inherent in food made from scratch. This kind of quality food, without the boundary of a price on a menu, can also provide dignity in creating a way for people to offer what they can in exchange,

Pay-as-you-can at Shobi's Table food truck

whether there is no money involved, \$10, or inviting a neighbor to come with them next time.

Shobi's Table creates meals from rescued groceries from Twin Cities Food Justice, an organization that works to reduce food waste and hunger by creating a link between those willing to help and those in need. Shobi's is also hoping to collaborate with local farmers in the future.

"We believe everyone deserves access to healthy food," Olsen said. "Not everyone has the resources of time and money for this. We know we can't solve this for everyone all the time, but we believe that providing access to nutritious meals a few times a week, no matter what you can pay, can make a difference."

According to Feeding America, the largest hunger relief-organization in the United States, 1 in 13 people in Minnesota are currently facing hunger. This means that more than 430,000 Minnesotans struggle to get access to meals every day. Shobi's Table is one of only three pay-as-you-can cafes in Minnesota connected to the national network of OWEE.

"Our community is so beautifully diverse – economically, socially, and racially," Olsen said. "A pay-as-you-can cafe is a place where people can come together across those differences to receive bread for their hunger from a good meal, a dignified experience, and an opportunity to offer our respective needs and resources at the same table."

Olsen said that community members can help Shobi's by visiting the food truck for lunch. They need those who can pay and those who can't to make the food truck work. Volunteer and donation opportunities can be found at <https://shobistable.org/>.



The 150th celebration continues!



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