



## Hamline Midway Library wins one

*State board votes  
unanimously to forward  
historic nomination for  
register status*

By JANE MCCLURE

The quest for a spot on the National Register of Historic Places for the Hamline Midway Branch Library moved one step ahead on Nov. 15, 2022. Minnesota's State Historic Preservation Review Board voted unanimously 11-0 to forward the nomination of what is formally known as the Henry Hale Memorial Library, Hamline Branch, for register status.

The nomination for the 1930-era building was forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. The keeper, housed in the National Park

LIBRARY WINS ONE >> 6

## Keystone food center gets \$1.7 million boost

*New University Avenue  
building will open in 2023  
as needs jump with inflation*

By JANE MCCLURE

Construction on Keystone Community Services' planned new food center gets underway in January, with a goal of opening the doors later in 2023. That's welcome news to anyone who has relied on the food shelves in their current cramped quarters, and or has volunteered there.

Keystone CEO Mary McKeown said the nonprofit is eager to move ahead and build out a new facility. Keystone owns a former transmission replace shop at 1790 University Ave. and a former furniture store at 1800 University Ave. Both businesses moved out of the area several months ago.

The one-story buildings date from 1917 and 1923. The oldest building was part of University Avenue's fabled "auto row" days and once housed a car dealership that sold Model T Ford vehicles.

Raising enough money to renovate the buildings is the focus of Keystone's Opening Doors to Food Security campaign. The goal is to raise \$8.5 million for the food center. The drive is more than halfway toward its goal.

KEYSTONE FOOD CENTER >> 6

## HAPPY TIDINGS FROM SHOP WITH COPS



Eugene Johnson and his children (Angelic, age eight, and Angelica, age nine) appreciate the experience they've had through Shop with Cops. Johnson told Midway Area Chamber of Commerce members about it during a fundraiser on Nov. 30, 2022. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

### Single dad and kids grateful for St. Paul program

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Last year, Christmas was looking pretty bleak for the Eugene Johnson family.

Johnson fell off a second story building onto a fence, and was hospitalized for weeks. Then he spent time in a wheelchair. He's a single parent of two, and didn't want any handouts. But he also wanted his kids to have a merry Christmas, so he agreed to be a part of the Shop With Cops program through the St. Paul Police Department and the Saint Paul Police Foundation.

"They made it really comfortable, and my kids had a good time," said Johnson. "I had a good time, and they got nice things."

Officers played ball with the kids, interacted with families, and handed out

toys. That's what made a difference for his family.

"Sometimes you can't figure it all out. Sometimes you can't make it happen. It's not a bad thing. You're supporting something positive," he said.

Johnson shared his story during a Midway Chamber of Commerce fundraiser on Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2022 at the Urban Growler event room.

"I want you to understand something. Everybody at some point needs a handout. There's no better option to get it than from your neighborhood police," he added. "We've just got to help each other."

He's hoping to be able to go back to work in the next six months, and then plans to pay it forward.

He encouraged people to do what they can for each other, like helping someone get out of a snowbank. "Just do it."

When asked what he liked best from last year, Angelic, age eight, talked about a purple race car.

Nine-year-old Angelica's answer was

simple. "Happiness," she said.

They were looking forward to the 2022 event the following week.

"I'm inspired by the people in this room," remarked St. Paul's new police chief Axel Henry. He looked at Johnson. "I'm inspired by you."

### 'IT GOES A LONG WAY'

Shop With Cops has been making Christmas a little brighter for St. Paul families for 22 years.

Some of the folks involved might not have had a good experience with a police officer, observed Kristen Sheehan of the St. Paul Police Foundation. At the Shop With Cops events, police officers run the games and interact with families. "It's bridging the gap," said Sheehan. The goal is to develop a better and more trusting relationship between citizens and officers. The event was established first in the Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhoods.

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Meet the new  
police chief in St. Paul:  
Axel Henry

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AGING WELL  
Tips on how to warm up  
chilly winter months

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Free bare root trees going  
to Frogtown, Hamline-  
Midway residents

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Left to right: Kristen Sheehan of the St. Paul Police Foundation, Dan Batten of Drake Bank, St. Paul Police Chief Axel Henry, and Midway Chamber Executive Director Chad Kulas. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

## SHOP WITH COPS

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Officers spent about \$20,000 buying items on Nov. 29, 2022, and families were invited in on Wednesday, Dec. 7 and Thursday, Dec. 8. The format changed after COVID-19. Previously, children and officers had gone shopping at the Midway Target together, and each kid received about \$100 to buy gifts for their family. In 2020, St. Paul Police worked with a battered women's shelter.

The program is about giving kids toys and also necessities such as coats and blankets. "It goes a long way," stated Sheehan. "It helps make what could be a tough season a little easier."

### STARTING WITH CHAMBER PEOPLE

Senator John Hoffman (who used to run a business in the Midway), John Bennett of 21st Century Bank and Dan Leggett of Avant-Garde Marketing Solutions, and Jeff Fenske of Fenske Law Office decided to get involved in 2011 when they heard about it. In 10 days, they had booked a room, invited about 20 others, and pledged donations for the program. That first year, they raised about \$1,000. They tripled that in 2012 to \$3,375; and it kept growing. "Target was the largest contributor, followed by the chamber," said Leggett.

"It just started with a bunch of chamber people," recalled Hoffman.

"This is a national model that others have followed," pointed out Bennett.

Today, 25 other cities have Shop With



"Shop With Cops helps kids and police officers," said Midway Chamber Executive Director Chad Kulas. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Cops programs modeled after the one St. Paul developed.

### 'IT REALLY MATTERS'

Arnoldo Curiel has been with Shop With Cops since the start in 2000. He grew up in Frogtown, where his mother and grandmother still live. At the time, he was coordinator of the Frogtown Weed and Seed initiative, and he connected with retired Chief John Harrington, then a senior commander with the St. Paul Police Department Western District. From 2000 to 2004 the operating support for Shop with Cops came from federal Weed and Seed dollars, a strategy which "weeds" out crime in communities and plant the "seeds" for positive change and development.

Years ago, Curiel recalled, two deputies showed up at a domestic call and both parents were brought into custody. Their two young boys were taken to a children's home. The officers picked the two boys up the next day, brought them out for breakfast, and made sure they were able to par-

### MEET NEW SPSPS POLICE CHIEF AXEL HENRY

Following the retirement of Todd Axtell, long-time commander Axel Henry was sworn in as the city's newest police chief on Nov. 16, 2022, and began his six-year term on Nov. 19.

Henry joined the Saint Paul Police Department in 1998, after serving three years with the Roseville Police Department. Over his past 24 years, he has served as a patrol officer, sergeant, and commander in Central District. He was senior commander of the Eastern District from 2016 to 2019, where he led 105 personnel.

He has also served in command positions in the Office of the Chief and Family and Sexual Violence Unit, and was logistics chief for Saint Paul's emergency response at the start of the pandemic. Most recently, he was commander of Narcotics, Financial Intelligence & Human Trafficking. Through his array of assignments, he has command experience in every division.

Henry also spearheaded the city's body-worn camera program; designed and led the Blue-Print for Safety Program; and has more than 20 years of experience as a trainer and use of force expert.

Henry holds a bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting, and a master's degree in educational leadership and administration from the University of St. Thomas. He is also a graduate of the FBI National Academy, the Command College at FBI Quantico and University of Virginia Master's Program, and the Wilder Foundation's James P. Shannon Leadership Institute.

"One of the issues we've been hearing a lot right now is that people are really concerned. I think there is a good reason to be

concerned. We have a lot of things in our community right now that have been worse than they've been in my entire police career," said Henry.

Police officers can become pessimistic based on what they see in their jobs, but Henry said he has opted to be a 'intentional optimist.' "I'm always looking for the potential and opportunity," he stated. "I'm extremely optimistic for the opportunity we have in front of us for our city. Right now, everyone is coming together over shared concerns. That's every community, every race, every religion we have in our city."

On Nov. 30, 2022, he told those gathered at the Midway Area Chamber of Commerce fundraiser for Shop With Cops, "The program like the one being celebrated, Shop With Cops, is one of these programs that brings us together."

He added, "As a police officer, you get to give and serve right out of the chute, and they pay you to do it. It's an awesome thing." He remarked that programs like Shop With Cops is a physical manifestation of the connections in the St. Paul community. "Everywhere you look, there are caring individuals and groups that want to give back and contribute. ... This isn't as much charity as it is an investment. We are investing in people and groups in the neighborhoods of our city."

When he was shopping with a family, the parent told Chief Henry that this program doesn't only affect his own kids. His kids go to school and tell their friends about the experience. "It's a wonderful chain letter," said Henry.

"Our community can do anything it sets its mind on when we come together like this," he said. "I'm absolutely astounded by the potential we have."



According to Arnoldo Curiel, Shop With Cops has served 4,500 families in the last 23 years. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

participate in the Shop With Cops program that night. In the meantime, a relative was located so that the boys could stay with family.

"Those two officers were about the community," observed Curiel.


"That's what happened. Two little kids' whole lives were changed pretty radically. I have to

guess the lives of the cops were changed, too," said Hoffman.

"Shop With Cops helps kids and police officers," remarked Midway Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Chad Kulas. "The St. Paul Police Department makes such a huge impact on so many people," said Dan Batten of Drake Bank, this year's event sponsor.

In the last 23 years, the program has served 4,500 families. Over 2,000 officers have participated, along with 2,500 volunteers. They've raised nearly \$500,000.

"It really is meaningful. It really is important and it matters," said St. Paul Police Chief Axel Henry. "It really matters."




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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](mailto:news@MonitorSaintPaul.com).

## WE ARE SUPPORTING TEACHERS AT DEC. 15 EVENT

### PLANTING SEEDS

BY DR. ARTIKA TYNER,  
[dr.artikatyner@gmail.com](mailto:dr.artikatyner@gmail.com)



Planting People Growing Justice™ Leadership Institute (PPGJLI) is honoring educators with our Teacher Appreciation event. All area elementary school teachers are invited to attend. The special event will be held Thursday, Dec. 15, 2022, from 5–6 p.m. at The Woman's Club of Minneapolis, located at 410 Oak Grove St. in Minneapolis.

During the 2020/21 school year, teachers spent on average \$750 of their

own money for school supplies. This is an increase of 25% and the highest amount reported by Adopt a Classroom's research division.

PPGJLI is dedicated to growing futures. One of the key ways that we achieve this goal is by supporting teachers with the resources they need. PPGJLI will be giving away backpacks filled with school supplies and diverse children's books.

PPGJLI will also celebrate the many elementary school teachers and the important job they undertake daily to educate and inspire the next generation. One of the many goals of teachers is supporting literacy, as does the PPGJLI. In Minnesota, this is vitally important when less than half of Minnesota third-graders are meeting state reading standards (48%) with only 32% of children of color profi-

cient in reading by third grade.

Teachers are an invaluable asset to the community, providing the building blocks of education that scholars will build upon and utilize throughout their lifetime. Teachers are a critical asset to overall society, imparting the knowledge needed for students to obtain economic security, equity, and develop core leadership competencies.

Every individual can name one special teacher that inspired them to become a journalist, judge, engineer, or medical professional. Many teachers supported me on my learning journey. The teachers at Highland Park inspired me to dream big and prepared me for my future career. My teachers at the Science Museum of Minnesota taught me how to leverage my STEM training to think critically and solve com-

plex challenges. All of my learning experiences inspired me to become an educator, author, and civil rights attorney.

As a first-generation college student, I can personally attest to the fact that educators create change in the lives of their students. Knowledge has a ripple effect that has long-ranging effects, like inspiring children to become readers and leaders. This is why we are supporting and celebrating teachers during this event.

PPGJLI's Teacher Appreciation event will provide elementary school teachers with an opportunity to share, network, and obtain essential school supplies for their students.

Register today: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/ppgjli-annual-teacher-appreciation-tickets-462316861177>

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

## Will our city officials stop tampering with the historic preservation process?

By BARBARA BEZAT,  
BONNIE YOUNGQUIST,  
JONATHAN OPPENHEIMER, ROY NEAL,  
AND TOM GOLDSTEIN

On Nov. 15, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Review Board voted unanimously, 11-0, to forward the nomination of the historic Henry Hale Memorial Library, Hamline Branch, to the federal Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) – a clear declaration by state preservation leaders that this library deserves to be honored and saved.

It is now time for the city to reverse its decision to demolish the existing library and for Mayor Carter and Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) leadership to pursue the win-win alternative that they have ignored for the past two years: renovate or relocate the current library.

Unfortunately, Mayor Carter has taken the unprecedented step of objecting to the library's inclusion on the NRHP, an action that we believe indicates his administration may use taxpayer dollars to wage a costly and unnecessary legal battle to stop historic designation from being granted.

If such a legal maneuver ensues, it will be in direct conflict with the city's



commitment to historic preservation – embedded in Saint Paul's comprehensive plan – as well as a misuse of public dollars for the sole purpose of compromising a fair, honest, and transparent effort by hundreds of St. Paul residents to save a building important to many in the Hamline Midway neighborhood.

Our elected leaders should allow this process to play out at the federal level without further interference, especially

since the administration has already been rebuked by the National Park Service for mischaracterizing the vote of the city's Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) when the nomination to the NRHP was before them in August.

During the past two years, Renovate 1558 has repeatedly documented widespread support for preservation in this community – and also exposed SPPL leadership's determination to demolish the current library well before they attempted any outreach to the public. We have acknowledged the need for a thoughtful renovation of the existing library, and previously indicated our support for the renovation option proposed by LSE Architects and commissioned by SPPL earlier this year. We remain committed to working together with those, who like us, are equally concerned about equity and accessibility issues but may favor a new building on the current site. However, there should be no rush to tear down this library in the spring; there should only be a rush to sit down and fully explore the alternatives to demolition, ideas that have never been seriously considered by the city or SPPL leadership.

Toward that end, we are asking city officials to drop their opposition to national designation for the Hamline Midway Library and to instead begin exploring possible locations for a new library, whether the vacant CVS building at University and Snelling, a building within Saint Paul Public Schools that may be vacant or underutilized, or, as we have previously suggested, a co-located site adjacent to Hancock Recreation Center. We also encourage city officials to seek out buyers for the library, as we believe there are many organizations or business entities that would be interested in repurposing the building and utilizing federal and state tax credits for renovation that are not available to a city. Finally, we implore the Carter administration to stop tampering with the historic preservation process, in particular by undermining dedicated staff at the HPC, a city commission responsible for objectively determining whether a property is eligible for historic designation based on federal, state, and local regulations rather than partisan politics.

Learn more at [Renovate1558.org](http://Renovate1558.org).

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### Letter

#### XCEL HAS RUNAWAY PROFITS WHILE PEOPLE CAN'T PAY THEIR BILLS

Let's talk numbers for a minute. For the 12 months ending June 30, 2022, Xcel Energy reported a year over year gross profit increase of a healthy 4.03%. Adding to that, Xcel Energy shareholders make a guaranteed 9% yearly return on their investment, with Xcel proposing to increase that to over 10%. In other words, Xcel is

doing well financially and will likely continue to do so.

These numbers tell a different story. According to the City of Saint Paul's Climate Action & Resilience plan, as of 2019, over 42,000 households in Saint Paul are struggling with what would be considered a high energy burden. In other words far too much of their monthly income goes to paying for their heat and electricity. One unfortunate outcome from this, as reported from Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light data, is that 1 in 8 Xcel customers are behind on their bills. That last piece

of data is for all Xcel customers, so if broken down by Saint Paul customers only it would undoubtedly be higher. In other words, unlike Xcel Energy, things are not going well for the average Saint Paul resident in terms of affording the basic energy they need.

After taking these two sets of data into account, it is mind boggling to learn that Xcel Energy currently is planning on increasing their customers rates by 21% over the next three years. The only word for this is unacceptable.

The only answer to this unacceptable

situation is for all to stand up and shine a light on what this is. Greed We as rate payers need to let Xcel hear us and demand better, particularly for our neighbors already struggling. Our elected officials, particularly the mayor and city council, need to stand up for us all and tell Xcel no to greed. With our combined voices Xcel needs to hear that the people who depend on their energy are more important than runaway profits.

Tom Lucy  
Saint Paul resident

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#### Design & Layout: Tesha M. Christensen

#### Printing by: ECM/Adams Publishing Group

This issue is printed on recycled paper using soy-based ink. Approximately 95-97% of material that enters the print facility is recycled.



#### Delivery: Bjorn Willms

612-235-7197, [delivery@swconnector.com](mailto:delivery@swconnector.com)  
Mail subscriptions are available at \$40 a year.

#### Contributing Writers & Photographers:

Jane McClure, Jan Willms, Jill Boogren, Chloe Peter, Susan Schaefer, Terry Faust, Penny Fuller, Chad Kulas, Amy Pass and Abha Karnick

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# A look at what's happening in Hamline-Midway

## BUILDING A STRONGER MIDWAY

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



On a snowy Thursday night in November, neighbors walked, bussed, and drove to Hamline University for the Hamline Midway Coalition's Annual Meeting. Speakers included Ramsey County Commissioner Trista MatasCastillo; Doua Yang, Legislative Aide to Saint Paul City Councilmember Mitra Jalali; and Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter. Organizations involved in the neighborhood had informational tables around the room,

and everyone could eat and drink through the buffet line. It was a great night to see old friends and make new acquaintances. Here are some of the highlights of the night and what's upcoming in the neighborhood.

The Hamline Midway neighborhood is one of the best in the cities for transportation, so it isn't surprising there is a dedicated group of residents on HMC's transportation committee. The committee is interested in the "Rethinking I-94" plan and have hosted meetings to get additional input. Rethinking I-94 is a long-term effort by MN DOT to engage with people who live, work, and play near I-94 between Minneapolis and Saint Paul in the hopes they can create more healthy and equitable communities. Final plan approvals are expected in 2026.

The HMC environment committee has also been busy with projects like

Pollinator Pathways and free tree distribution. Pollinator Pathways is a public art and environmental project focused on North Snelling with ten new planters with plants providing nectar and habitat for several varieties of bees. In an effort to get a healthier tree canopy, the committee works on giving out trees to private houses and businesses. The program began in 2020 and continues as neighbors can apply for a tree and get matched with the best fit available for their lot.

The HMC has a third committee, focused on development. The development committee helps create ways to grow the neighborhood economy and improve infrastructure. This committee helps identify projects and helps them be aware of neighborhood priorities, hopefully finding development which will be popular in the neighborhood for many years.

As the Midway Chamber's executive

director, I am very happy we have a partnership with the Hamline Midway Coalition and enjoy seeing the work they are doing. It's also my hope we can partner with them on their initiatives to help move the needs and wants of the neighborhood forward. We hope to act as a conduit to many proposed projects and ensure business feedback is present in future development and transportation projects. I like the walkability of our neighborhood and am happy HMC has a group dedicated to making it even better. I also applaud their work around environmental issues, as we also identify "environment" as one of our five strategic directives.

Our community is fortunate to have a group of dedicated individuals working on improving our neighborhood as they strive to make it more walkable, environmentally friendly and economically robust. To learn more about their work, go to their website at [www.hamlinemidway.org](http://www.hamlinemidway.org). I would encourage everyone to think about how you can be involved and help build our sense of community.

## LFL CAN'T GO IN BOULEVARD

*Residents ordered to move Little Free Library and planter box*

By JANE MCCLURE

One of the six Little Free Libraries installed as part of the 2021 "Love Letters for the Midway" project isn't feeling the love. Matthew and Jamie Wright's quest to keep their Little Free Library was rejected Nov. 2 by the St. Paul City Council. It had to be moved from the city boulevard in front of their Seminary Avenue home by Dec. 1, and placed at another location.

The Wrights also had to move a boulevard planter box where they had grown vegetables.

"Love Letters for the Midway" was a project led by Hamline-Midway Coalition Midway resident and artist Hawona Sullivan Janzen. The Minnesota State Arts Board-funded project was designed to

show the neighborhood some love after 2020 civil unrest and many months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sullivan Janzen wrote a crowd-sourced 100-line love poem for the Hamline-Midway neighborhood, with each line posted on a yard sign and displayed in yards throughout the area.

The project also included six Little Free Libraries, placed throughout the neighborhood. One was at the Wrights' home at 1155 Seminary Ave. The Wrights moved into their home in 2021, and found the library to be a good way to connect with neighbors.

After an anonymous complaint, a code enforcement officer visited the Wrights' yard in October to inspect the library and planter box. The Wrights soon

got a letter ordering that the planter box and library be removed.

The planter box was installed by a previous owner.

Matthew Wright told city council members that the library has led to "many conversations, connections, and good will."

The Wrights appealed and took their case to legislative hearing, where they were told the library and planter box are property code violations. What surprised the Wrights is that they have seen many similar planter boxes and boulevard fixtures throughout their neighborhood and others.

The city's regulations on boulevard plantings were first crafted in the 1990s, at the behest of Macalester-Groveland Community Council. The intent was to allow beautification and plantings, while at the same time making it clear to property owners that plantings would have to be removed if the city needed to dig up a boulevard for utility or street work. Permanent structures were not allowed. Over

the years that restriction has been flouted with the widespread placement of planter boxes and even furniture on some boulevards. Enforcement is on a complaint basis only, and it is city policy that complaints be anonymous.

Vague language in city ordinances governing boulevard space was called out by the Wrights. They also questioned the anonymous complaint process, the presence of many other structures, planters and rain gardens in boulevards, and whether the benefits of such additions should be considered and current ordinances modified.

Legislative hearing Officer Marcia Moermond said she's sympathetic to the desires to keep the Little Free Library, and the fact that it was placed as part of a nonprofit group. But the items cannot be in the boulevard.

Moermond also noted that the Little Free Libraries parent nonprofit, which recently relocated to Midway, makes it clear that the library boxes should be placed on private property.

## Cheniqua Johnson announces candidacy

Cheniqua Johnson, lifelong Minnesotan, public servant, community leader, and proud first-generation homeowner in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood, hopes to continue serving Saint Paul residents as the next Ward 7 Councilmember.

Johnson brings her lifelong experiences as a Black and Native woman, as well as leadership experiences in government, philanthropy, and community processes, to help lead Saint Paul forward. An experienced political organizer and philanthropic leader, Johnson has spent her career advocating for what will be her top priorities as Councilmember on the East Side: safe and stable homes for all, climate action and sustainability, economic justice, comprehensive public safety, and strong city services. Over a third of Ward 7 residents are under the age of 35, and Ward 7 has the fastest-growing population of young people and families in Saint Paul. In Ward 7, the average family income is less than \$75,000 a year. Over 60% of fellow neighbors are Black, Indigenous, Hmong, Somali, or Latinx.

Johnson graduated from the University of Minnesota as the first person in her

family to graduate from a four-year institution. Johnson has worked in constituent services and as policy aide to Congressman Keith Ellison, Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley, and U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Aviation. Johnson most recently organized with Saint Paul residents to support the campaign of incoming Ramsey County Commissioner, Rena Moran. At the same time, as the Minnesota DFL State Outreach and Inclusion Officer, she has worked with leaders across our state to reelect Governor Tim Walz and Democrats up and down the ballot. She worked as a program officer at the Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation, and also served on the Saint Paul Police Chief Selection Committee.

"My family has forever shaped the person I am and the values I hold now, and is why I dedicate my life to organizing, advocacy and public service. I am now running to continue serving our city as your next Ward 7 Councilmember, and I hope to earn your support," she said. Learn more at [www.cheniquajohnson.com](http://www.cheniquajohnson.com)



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# Victoria Theater Arts Center to finally open in January 2024

*Theater leadership is delighted to be moving forward after 'long haul'*

By JANE MCCLURE

Frogtown's historic Victoria Theater could be in the spotlight in 2024, as the long-awaited community arts center opens its doors. The theater leadership earlier this fall accepted \$1 million in state funding that was sought with help of the city of St. Paul.

The state grant is part of a \$5.5 million package to get theater renovations underway in 2023. The goal is to have the theater renovated and open for full community use in January 2024 as the Victoria Theater Arts Center. Overall, \$6.2 million is needed to complete the extensive work the building needs.

Theater leadership is delighted to be moving forward. A group could hardly contain its excitement when meeting with the St. Paul City Council. Tyler Olsen-Highness, arts center executive director, joked about "projecting" when making his remarks.

But it's been quite a journey for the boosters of the old building at 825 Uni-

versity Ave. Fundraising and planning has taken place for years. Efforts large and small have sustained the group.

"We're really thrilled," said Olsen-Highness. "Thanks for sticking in there with us. It's been a long haul."

The art center already has been host to a wide range of activities, from Minnecraft to community arts festivals and events. It is set up as a community-governed nonprofit, with a 13-member board.

Olsen-Highness said the planned new spaces offer the potential for a wide range of events. On the drawing boards is flexible community space for meetings, classes, workshops and small performances.

A 120-seat theater can host larger performances and meetings. There will be space for art displays, as well.

Supporters are excited that the planned arts center will have a blend of new and hoistoric features. Ward One Council Member Russell Balenger called the architectural plans "beautiful."

The state grant was awarded by the 2020 Minnesota Legislature, but it took time for funding conditions and plans to be pulled together. Project costs have risen from estimates of about \$2 million to \$6.2 million over time. The project has drawn on private foundations and individual fundraising as well as St. Paul city

loan and grant funds, and the now-closed Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, which supported projects along what is now Green Line light rail.

Organizers had hoped to open the arts center in 2023.

The Victoria Theater was built as a silent movie house in 1915, one of many St. Paul neighborhood theaters. Its name came from a nearby cross street.

The building later housed a nightclub and cabaret, and was the Victoria Café speakeasy during the Prohibition area. It advertised dancing, cabaret-style floor shows and Chinese food. It also skirted the law as the Victoria Café was raided more than once by police.

Musically, it is significant because it is where the historically important "Moonshiners Dance" was recorded by the café orchestra. The song is included in the Anthology of American Folk Music, a six-album compilation issued in 1952. The anthology was a key part of the American folk music revival of the 1950s and 1960s. Area resident and historian Kurt Gegenhuber did much of the initial research on the theater's musical history.

The building had different uses, including a lamp and lighting shop, in later years. Efforts to save the building began years ago. It was vacant since 2001 when



The Victoria Theater was built as a silent movie house in 1915.

the lamp and lighting store moved out.

A previous owner wanted to demolish the theater to make way for a parking lot in 2009. Historians and community members rallied to save it. Most of St. Paul's neighborhood theaters have been demolished, with only two still showing movies and the rest repurposed.

In April 2011, the city council approved the designation of the Victoria Theater as a heritage preservation site. The Twin Cities Land Bank purchased the property in 2014, holding it so that the Victoria Arts Theater Initiative could raise money to acquire and renovate the building. The theater group organizers were able to purchase the property in 2021.

Building conditions have been a challenge, and roof replacement and building shell repairs are needed soon.

## LIBRARY WINS ONE

>> From 1

Service, will make a decision on a register listing with 45 days of the state board's recommendation.

While the state-level decision doesn't mean the library will be saved from the city's plans for demolition and a new building, it does add a layer of complexity to what happens next. It could delay demolition and force more extensive structure documentation before it is demolished. Plans call for the building to be torn down in the spring and construction started after that.

Preservationists hope the state recommendation adds to their arguments that the building can be saved and renovated, rather than replaced with a new \$8.1 million structure. But the preservation-focused group, Renovate 1558, noted the whole matter could end up in court as city officials continue to fight for demolition.

The group's name comes from the library's address at 1558 Minnehaha Ave.

"Sadly, at (the) meeting, the city of St. Paul continued to assert that our nomination should not have been considered by the State Board despite the National Park Service, keeper of the National Regis-



I was a little taken aback by the argument that claimed the history of the library was not unique enough to warrant preservation. Historical significance is not only embodied in the great architectural masterpieces but in more modest buildings like the library.

Chris Schuelke

of library plans. The group last stated, "A NRHP listing would also call into question the city's claim that a new Hamline Library is about 'equity,' given that a renovated building would potentially free up significant money to serve the needs of libraries in our more marginalized neighborhoods."

The review board got more than 70 letters for and against library preservation.

ter, having granted our appeal and rejected the city's argument that the Heritage Preservation Commission had voted against the nomination when the HPC had actually voted to take no position on the nomination," the group said in an online post.

Renovate 1558 is holding out hope that state and possible federal decision could open the doors to renewed discussion

Only one person, Barb Sporlein, spoke. She until recently had served as interim library director, but stepped down days after the hearing. Sporlein at one point expressed surprised that the board would go against Mayor Melvin Carter's wishes.

The arguments for preservation are based not on architecture but on the library's place in the neighborhood and context of how library served evolved in Hamline-Midway, the history of Judge Henry Hale and his bequest, and the years of work by community groups – especially women's groups – to get a library built. Social and educational history can be considerations for National Register status. Carter, in a letter to the state board, described the history as being generic and typical of many other government buildings.

Researcher and former St. Paul Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Chair Barbara Bezat wrote the nomination. She and Renovate 1558 pushed for the state review after the HPC made no recommendation.

Bezart cites two national trends when the library was planned and built. One was that of having a wealthy benefactor, like Hale.

"The second is the trend of women's clubs to expand their work from 'social' activities (book readings, lectures on art and history, etc.) into work within the

public sector," the nomination stated.

Sporlein said the building doesn't meet criteria for preservation and that its deteriorated condition creates "significant issues." She also said a new structure would provide improved access, patron safety and more useful spaces for patrons and staff.

"This library does not have good bones," she said.

Board members disagreed, as did state staff. They also pointed out that the task before them was quite specific: to determine if the library meets National Register criteria, not to listen to other arguments.

Board members urged preservation and possibly adaptive reuse. Board member Lindsey Dyer said the city could make accessibility improvements and renovate the building while keeping the building on the National Register.

"Once it's gone, it's gone forever," said board member John Stark. Stark disputed Sporlein's claims about the building's conditions.

Board member Chris Schuelke said, "I was a little taken aback by the argument that claimed the history of the library was not unique enough to warrant preservation. Historical significance is not only embodied in the great architectural masterpieces but in more modest buildings like the library."

## KEYSTONE

>> From 1

Keystone had hoped for state funding from the 2022 Minnesota Legislature. Nonprofits, working with host cities, can seek state dollars for brick-and-mortar projects. But a bonding bill, along with a lot of other legislation, stalled at the end of session.

Keystone officials then turned to the City of St. Paul for help. The St. Paul City Council, acting Nov. 9 as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, awarded two federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) loans for the new facility. That funding is enough to get work started.

One loan is for \$1,260,214 million. The second loan is from the CDBG CARES Act Program and is for \$439,786. CARES is a federal COVID-19 relief program, with a deadline of 2023 for the city to spend the money. The two loans will be combined with a third loan issued earlier.

"This funding really gives us the boost we need, to get the project underway," said McKeown. "It helps us fill a funding gap."

In 2021, the plan was to phase in

work on the building shell, and continue fundraising. But a combination of increased project costs and rising demand for services forced Keystone to rethink that approach. The nonprofit's board voted to expedite the project.

Keystone's board also voted to assume debt, something not typical for a nonprofit project, McKeown said.

Demand for service at Keystone's two food shelves and its mobile food trucks has more than doubled. The trucks stop at more than 30 destinations a month.

More people are having to choose between food and paying rent and fuel costs, said McKeown. Keystone is seeing people who have never used a food shelf before.

The new facility will help meet increased demand. It will have more off-street parking, and garage space for the food mobiles. The food mobiles are currently parked outdoors and have had their catalytic converters stolen.

The new facility is meant to be a consolidated, transit-accessible foods center. The 20,000-square-foot center will vastly increase Keystone's capacity to receive and warehouse available food resources, improve logistical support for mobile food

services, and provide a grocery-store-like shopping area for participants to select culturally-specific foods to meet their household's needs. It will also have private spaces where Keystone Resource Navigators can meet with clients. The new space will have large community rooms to support group volunteerism and community meetings and events, according to a city staff report.

There will be space for up to 50 volunteers at a time, more than then five or so helpers who can be accommodated now.

The new building will also have much more freezer and refrigerator space.

City council members said they are pleased to see the project move ahead, noting that Keystone serves people throughout St. Paul. Keystone currently has food shelves at 1916 University Ave., and on Rice Street in the North End. Those will close once the new facility opens. Clients at many locations are served by Keystone's two food mobiles.

The city has helped the food center with other funding. The city council in August 2021 approved a \$56,443 Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) grant

for the project. A request for 2022 funding was turned down.

In October 2021, the city council approved a \$902,255 CDBG loan to Keystone. All of the loans are expected to be forgiven over time.

McKeown noted that this summer, Keystone saw its number of first-time clients more than triple, from 1,251 in August. That compares to 364 first-time clients in August 2021. Households are coping with wages not keeping up with inflation, and the inflationary impacts of all household expenses.

Keystone will maintain other community locations once the food center opens, said McKeown. Those include administrative headquarters and senior programming at Merriam Park Community Center, senior and youth programs at West 7th Community Center, and youth programs at the Keystone Best Buy Teen Tech Center and at McDonough Community Center. The Express Bike Shop in Lexington-Hamline neighborhood will also remain open, although the new University Avenue building will provide needed basement storage for bikes.



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## WARMING UP FOR WINTER

### 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.

Ever been accused of having a thin skin? When it comes to maintaining proper body temperature, this old adage is no joke. As we age, our metabolic rate decreases and our skin literally thins. Often, our aging bodies are not capable of generating enough heat to help maintain our normal 98.6-degree body temperature. Certainly, maintaining an active lifestyle, including mild exercise, can offset this heat loss, but not everyone can. Sub-zero temperatures can be particularly brutal in the bedroom, and with today's focus on the environment and decreasing energy consumption, turning up a thermostat is not always the best solution. After all, why heat a whole house when all that's needed is a bit of extra attention in specific areas?

We hearty Minnesotans know that keeping a cooler bedroom is recommended, but we can take a hint from our European friends by creating a warmer welcome to the bedroom just before our bedtime.

#### THE BED WARMER

Memories of Mrs. Senior's copper bed warmer being slipped into my guest bed in Edinburgh, Scotland sent me on a quest. I keep the temps down in my home



but slipping into an ice-cold bed on frigid winter nights doesn't promote falling

asleep easily. Not willing or able to heat a copper bed warmer, I set out to find the

Luke Kabat is the assistant manager at Fratallone's Como Avenue store, one of their many Twin Cities locations. Local stores carry items that can keep folks warmer this winter. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

safest and most efficient way to send myself to the land of nod. My research confirmed that heated mattress pads are the safest and most efficient forms of electric bedding.

According to the Electric Blanket Institute, safety is the number one consideration for any electric bedding. Happily, modern electric bedding products don't get as hot as older models, a key feature geared to preventing fires. The EBI suggests choosing products that are durable, able to be washed repeatedly, and preferably with a minimum five-year warranty. Be sure to consider models that offer well-lit controls that are easy to operate for those with poor eyesight or arthritis. And importantly, they recommend only brands with the UL (Underwriters Laboratories) or ETL (Electrical Testing Laboratories) mark – indicating they have passed rigorous safety standards.

In side-by-side comparisons, electric mattress pads top blankets for both safety and efficiency. Because pads lie flat, they tend not to overheat, as is the case with blankets that can easily ball up, making pads safer. On the efficiency side of the ledger, since heat radiates upward, half the heat is lost with a blanket. Additionally, our bodies and bedding act as insulators, holding in the heat. Finally, most pads

WARMING UP >> 9



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## WARMING UP &gt;&gt; from 8

heat up quicker than blankets – five to 10 minutes versus up to an hour or longer.

My long-time machine washable, multi-temperature, dual control mattress pad bed warmer has an auto shut off timer. It has turned my queen mattress into a 5-star slumber vessel every winter night! This device works so well, I can crank it up before turning in, then shut it off for a toasty, nightlong snooze.

## TAKE THE CHILL OFF

While it's recommended to keep a cooler bedroom, sub-zero outdoor temps can create sub-par sleeping conditions. As with switching on the mattress pad, you can pre-heat the bedroom with an energy efficient electric oil heater, which is rated as safer than fan-driven models for many reasons: they are low wattage, don't blow dust around (so they're great for allergy sufferers), and are silent. With only one hour of preheating, you can shut your heater off, creating a toasty welcome and a great night's sleep.

## BREATHE FREE

Dry winter air cracks skin and dries sinuses. A way to create a perfect night and daytime indoor environment is by investing in a humidifier. A cool mist humidifier is the preferred option to a warm mist humidifier in terms of safety, cost and area covered. A warm mist humidifier must boil water to create steam so there is always a risk for burns, and because it uses heat to boil water, it consumes more energy. Also, while heated steam produces a more concentrated stream, a cool water humidifier spreads droplet over a much wider area.

A one-room capacity ultrasonic cool mist humidifier provides relief from dry skin and allergy symptoms, plus extra defense against airborne illnesses by keeping germs at bay with an active carbon filter!

## BOTTOMS UP!

My European holidays also introduced to me to the luxury and hygiene of heated-seat bidets. A bidet (pronounced beh-DAY – from the French) is basically a sanitary toilet apparatus with a warm lavatory seat and a warm water shower that sprays water to clean one's genitals. Europe, Japan and other parts of the world have long utilized this sensible alternative to wiping. Washing with water is gentler than scraping dry paper across your tender parts, which may irritate and damage the sensitive tissue and nerve endings. Some units even feature a handy puff of air for drying. Using a soft stream of water is excellent for individuals who suffer irritable bowel syndrome or have difficulty reaching behind themselves. Plus, the gentle jet cleans more efficiently, and provides the added environmental benefits of buying and using less paper.

After another short internet sleuthing session comparing available products, I found an affordable bidet toilet seat that requires minimal installation. With a three-temperature heated seat and dual washing wands for separate front and back cleaning, this fourth addition transforms a bedroom and in-suite bathroom into a five-star hotel experience!

## FOUR EASY PIECES

It's easy and inexpensive to create a smart, simple way to enhance your lifestyle during Minnesota's dark, cold days of winter. Isn't it worth it to invest in yourself, or as a gift this holiday season? Sweet dreams.

*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.*

## BIDET AND GENITAL WATER WASHING: A BRIEF GUIDE AND IRREVERENT HISTORY

The aging community, and people with physical disabilities, are increasingly finding the benefits of bidets helpful. Personal hygiene is greatly improved with a gentle spray of water that more thoroughly penetrates difficult to reach, tender genital areas. Water washing is especially helpful post-surgery and for those who suffer from hemorrhoids and IBS (irritable bowel syndrome). Moreover, environmentally conscious folks resonate with the fact that "using a bidet is much less stressful on the environment than using paper." A recent Scientific American article reports that if the U.S. switched – 15 million trees could be saved each year!

Just how does water washing our privates work, and how did it all begin?

Water washing the genital area has a long and storied provenance. Dating all the way back to the 2nd millennium BCE, well preserved examples of a lota, or bodna, have been found. These small, usually spherical, often vase or teapot shaped water vessels of brass, copper or other material continue to be used for personal hygiene throughout South Asia.

Famous American designers, Charles and Ray Eames, (of Eames Chair fame), expressed great admiration for the Lota's design. They reported, "Of all the objects we have seen and admired during our visit to India, the Lota, that simple vessel of everyday use, stands out as perhaps the greatest and most beautiful." An ancient art object of tremendous practical use!

The design of these lovely vessels hasn't changed much over their 4,000-year history. The ancient lota pictured here is identical to the brass model I toted across India, from latrine to latrine during my year of living there in early 1970.

How is it used? One first fills the lota with fresh water, carries it to the latrine, uses the latrine, and then pours the water into



a cupped hand, splashing clean, though not directly touching, the genital area. No paper is used. Air drying is typical. It's very ancient and very simple. Of course, hand washing post usage is de rigueur.

It seems to have taken Westerners a lot longer to appreciate the hygienic benefits of a water wash after taking care of business. The bidet (pronounced beh-DAY) is thought to be an invention of French furniture makers in the 17th century. American inventor John Harvey Kellogg patented an "anal douche" in 1928. In 1965, the American Bidet Company offered an adjustable spray nozzle and warm water option seeking to make the bidet a household item.

Hmm. Didn't really catch on here. But that may be changing.

Anyone who has traveled throughout South America, Japan or Europe, particularly the southern regions, knows that a bidet is an essential household item.

In Europe, it is typically a separate bathroom fixture, looking like a low basin positioned next to the toilet, with hot and cold faucets and an upwards jet spray. To use, one squats, hovering over the spray.

However, in Japan, the bidet seat is increasingly an all-in-one experience. Toto is a well-known, upscale contemporary manufacturer that features free standing models or "washlets." There are also models with heated seats, dual front and back adjustable nozzles, a dryer, a deodorizer, a disinfecting basin with nightlight, and even programmable music.

Remember that old ditty by Bob Marley? *Stick out your can. Here comes the garbageman / Well, what did the fish say to the eel? / The more you wiggle, baby, the better it feels*

With inexpensive bidet seat top models becoming more available, it's true – the more you wiggle the better you'll feel!

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# FREE TREES FOR FROGTOWN, HAMLINE-MIDWAY RESIDENTS

By MAE MACFARLANE  
FrogTown Green

Since 2011, volunteers in the FrogTown neighborhood have been planting free trees in residents' homes. Inspired by those efforts, and alarmed by recent declines in urban tree canopy, residents in adjacent neighborhoods have followed suit.

This past fall marks the second season of free tree planting by residents of Hamline-Midway. In October, volunteers with the Hamline Midway Coalition's environmental committee (HMEC) planted a total of 47 trees: 44 in residential yards and three at Hamline Elementary School.

Members of HMEC work to restore native pollinators, increase the neighborhood tree canopy and educate residents about environmental issues. The committee's hands-on approach to tree loss is "empowering the community to work for its own improvement and not wait for others to do it," according to Stephanie Hankerson, the co-chair of HMEC and a longtime nature educator. "We were inspired by FrogTown Green," said Hankerson. We had been watching what they had accomplished over a decade, and our committee was interested in doing more action-focused work."

As with FrogTown's trees, Hamline-Midway's giveaway trees were nurtured from spring to fall in a "gravel bed," a simple wooden bin filled with gravel. The bed, which was also built by volunteers, was irrigated regularly. Relatively small, bare-root trees installed in such a bed and nurtured for a summer can grow thickly matted root balls, making these trees much more likely to survive transplant in fall. The trees were purchased with funds from the Minnesota Depart-



Gita Ghei, a longtime volunteer in both Hamline-Midway and FrogTown, holds up a tree that has just been extracted from a gravel-filled nursery bed. Gravel bed-grown trees form dense clumps of roots that aid in transplantation. (Photo courtesy of FrogTown Green)

ment of Resources, and the gravel bed was housed on the campus of the Friends' School of Minnesota. Other sponsors in-

cluded the BNSF Foundation, Hamline Church Earthkeepers, and Piecework Design.

Residents interested in a free tree signed on the Hamline Midway Coalition's website. Noah Anderson, an AmeriCorps member assigned to HMEC, said that the volunteer planting was "a great success, due to the careful preparations going into planting." Anderson, a Community Forestry Corps member, worked with HMEC's team to gather supplies, contact home owners, do yard assessments and to create maps of tree locations to give to volunteer groups, come planting day.

In addition to overseeing the HMEC tree-planting efforts, Hankerson helps to coordinate another environmental project undertaken in collaboration with FrogTown Green. "The Bee Line" is what both groups have dubbed a two-year effort to increase native pollinator habitat along a 2.25 mile-long corridor stretch of Pierce Butler Route, from Newell Park to West Minnehaha Park. More pollinator-friendly, native trees and shrubs will be planted along the Bee Line route in 2023 by HMEC and FrogTown Green volunteers.

To find out more about Hamline Midway's Environment Committee, the tree planting program or the Bee Line, visit [hamlinemidway.org/environment-committee](http://hamlinemidway.org/environment-committee).

Mae Macfarlane is an AmeriCorps member assigned to FrogTown Green ([frogtowngreen.com](http://frogtowngreen.com)).

FrogTown Green is a volunteer-powered initiative to build green and natural beauty in the FrogTown neighborhood. We plant trees, cultivate gardens and work toward a healthier environment. The St Paul Audubon Society supported the construction of tower for migrating chimney swifts at FrogTown Green's Lily Pad. If you'd like to know more, our website is [frogtowngreen.com](http://frogtowngreen.com) and our phone is 651-757-5970.

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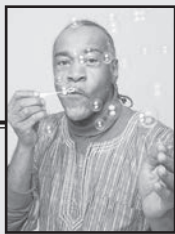
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## PEACE BUBBLES

BY MELVIN GILES  
peacebubbles@q.com



*"Urban has become the new word for Black. Let us say Black Students." - Lucky Rosenbloom*

*"The bonds of our common humanity are stronger than the divisiveness of our fears and prejudices." - President Jimmy Carter*

*"We can use words to uplift and include. We can use our words to fight back against oppression and hate. But we must also channel our words into action." - Stacey Abrams*

Hello Monitor readers,

Once again, I must give a shout-out to TPT and MPR. Great job of viewing First Nation, African-American, and early Minnesota History during the month of October and November. I enjoyed seeing and hearing the stories and information that are finally being affirmed for me and for my Summit-University/Rondo elementary-through-high-school classmates. It is another lesson and example that positive change is happening – or that the Arc of Justice is moving forward.

I have been thankful for the ongoing meetings, events, and growing opportunities that I keep experiencing on Zoom. A few of my friends have expressed how they really can't wait to when we get back to all in-person meetings/gatherings and things are back to normal. I normally smile and reply that I wasn't too happy with the normal. I often also express the obvious – that the growing majority of Black, Brown, and First Nations folks have never been happy with the Puritan/Superiority normal way of life. I find it amazing that some folks (including Black and Brown folks) prefer going back to the false and misguided philosophy of Manifest Destiny of controlling and mastering the life of women and non-White people, in order to keep America safe and great. These days, I think people who think that way might want to get a plane ticket to Russia; however, I would prefer that they consider participating in a human intervention and let go of their pain, fears, and hate, which I know is a very hard and courageous participatory act of faith.

## BLACK YOUTH HEALING ARTS CENTER

And, speaking of faith, congratulations to the Irreducible Grace Foundation! Here's an update on this fantastic group from the well-known and adored Jan Mandell:

Do you know there is a new safe space for youth right here in Frogtown?

The former St. Paul City School build-

## CENTER FOR BLACK YOUTH OPENS



The Irreducible Grace Foundation is now operating the Black Youth Healing Arts Center at the former St. Paul City School building. (Photo courtesy of Facebook)

ing is now the Black Youth Healing Arts Center (BYHAC). The BYHAC will provide cultural, ancestral, and innovative processes of healing for Black youth foremost, while creating safe spaces and healing opportunities for youth of color. The BYHAC is designed by young people in the Irreducible Grace Foundation (IGF). IGF is a St. Paul non-profit that has been housed in Camphor United Methodist Church for 10 years, led by executive director, Dr. Darlene Fry. Now they will continue to serve youth in the community through programming in the new building on Virginia Street.

The BYHAC will be a multi-faceted center with cooperative values, residential leaders, services, activities, and training opportunities for youth throughout the day. All offerings will have a holistic integrative health/healing focused approach rooted in the African Diaspora. Current spaces include an industrial kitchen, recording studio, ceramics, pottery, painting, weaving studio, performance space and a full gym with a basketball court. Future include housing for 16 site leaders as they earn, learn and prepare to move into the community. A dream of creating a therapy dog training center is also in the works.

• Sunday, Dec. 11, 2:30-4:30 p.m., Gifts that Don't Break the Bank: Join us making homemade gifts for the Holidays: Candles, granola, decorations; just show up and create in community! Supplies and snacks provided.

Ongoing in 2023:

• Gym hours 3:30-8 p.m. Wednesday and Friday starting in January.

• Sunday Self Care Sundays: 2:30-4:30

p.m. A meal and activities. Sunday, Jan 8 and Sunday, Jan 22

All programming is free. Focus: youth ages 14-24.

Contact us at [info@irgace.org](mailto:info@irgace.org) or call us at 651-226-6594.

## AS THE SEASONS CHANGE

And now, a few insight words of wisdom for our transitional Minnesota season.

Since the snow flew in November, have your bones settled in with the stillness of winter? Has your breath shifted to brace the sting of windy days? Have you been able to bask in the still-cold sunshine? The stillness in the air has an essence of nostalgia, it might be the changing of seasons or how we gather for the holidays. Most likely, a blending of it all. Reflecting on the year, you might have a lot to sit with, to grieve and to celebrate. I hope that as you look at your year, you're able to commemorate how far you've come. With warm and breezy fall days, like most of us at the Capitol Region Watershed District, you probably didn't get around to raking all your leaves this year. That's alright! As soon as there is an opportunity, keeping leaves and other debris out of the storm drains is a helpful way to improve our waterways and prevent pollution from entering the Mississippi River.

As we adjust to our present moment and breathe with the changing season, you might be taken aback by how fast winter found us. In moments where grief and change find us, collectively or individually, how do we breathe with this shift? In matters that seem uncontrollable and hopeless, finding a comfortable pace with stillness can shield protection over our hearts and minds. Yung Pueblo says in

their book "Lighter": "Nature is always changing; nothing ever stands truly still. If you look deep enough, you will always find movement. This same principle is true about identity. Your being is in a state of perpetual motion. Nothing about you has ever been static, even at your most subtle core there is the dynamic movement of change." Just as you might have ways of protecting your heart and mind in uncontrollable change, at the watershed, through data collection and observation, we know that there are ways we can protect and strengthen our surrounding waterbodies. Protecting freshwater, not only comes from watersheds but can be done through residents and business owners, too!

If you're new to Minnesota or have been here for a while, your shoes could be a tell-tale sign that we've arrived in the season of salting! We all can prevent chloride (salt) pollution in our aquatic environments, by knowing when and how to salt. Though we are navigating harsh winters, it's important to know, when it's below 15 degrees outside, salting doesn't work! The ice is too cold to melt. Knowing when to choose our battle with salting is important. It's also good to know that how we scatter is valuable too, generally about 3 inches between the granules is all you need.

When it seems there's less happening in our neighborhoods and when winter delivers its unique silence, we know that people are gathering inside, preparing for the next year, and keeping warm until spring. Similarly, though the waters seem still and frozen above, deep below, fish are still swimming, and turtles are burrowed in the mud. Though the ecosystem is slowed, there is still life there. Those beings and habitats bring such critical balance to our ecosystem. Salt on sidewalks and driveways might seem far from the fish and turtles below, however, there is a strong correlation between our actions and how it impacts other beings and their ecosystem, and in return, our environment.

"The trees before you and the bushes beside you are not lost. / Wherever you are is a place called Here / And you must treat it as a powerful stranger..." wrote David Wagoner in "Stand Still."

"Being mindful of how and when we salt is crucial for protecting our waters and the surrounding habitats. Knowing that over there is a place that is Here to other beings, is important for protecting us all. Wishing you a safe and cozy winter! To learn more about how to mindfully salt, visit: <https://www.cleanwatermn.org/using-sidewalk-salt-responsibly/>," said Mari-cella Xiong, Community Engagement Coordinator at the Capitol Region Watershed District.

Stay optimistic and I trust that you had a grateful Thanksgiving, and I send you blessings as we move into the Divine Season of Light and a fresh new year!

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# ATHLETES EARN STATE HONORS

COMO PARK  
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

BY ERIC ERICKSON  
Social studies teacher



## STATE SWIMMER

Cougar freshman Aleia Lueck entered the Section 4A girls swimming meet on Nov. 11, 2022 with a goal of setting a personal record in the 50-yard freestyle. When she touched the wall with a time of 24.99 Lueck had done more than set a new personal best – she qualified for the Minnesota State Meet!

The result brought joy to the entire team as they celebrated the achievement and continued to train with Lueck as she prepared for state. With supporters in the stands at the University of Minnesota Aquatics Center, Lueck swam strongly and nearly matched her best by clocking in at 25.11.

The Como 200 freestyle relay team of Lueck, fellow freshman Harriet Miller, plus junior co-captains Sophie Warner and Mia Trifilette-Simons earned a 7th place medal in the Section 4A Finals. Their time was 1.5 seconds off the school record, which they will work to break next season.



Como students and staff posed together after competing in a friendly volleyball tournament. (Photo by Diego Guevara)

## RUNNING SUCCESS

The Como cross country boys team concluded their season at the State AA Meet in early November. The Cougars qualified for state by earning their second consecutive Section 4AA Championship, outpacing Totino-Grace, Mahtomedi and eight other opponents.

Senior Charlie Power-Theisen repeated his performance as the section's individual champion and went on to earn the 6th place medal out of 160 runners in the state meet.

Junior Mason Aarness finished 22nd at state to also earn all-state honors. The varsity team's depth was rounded out by seniors Liam Schwie and Sig Isaacson, juniors Garret Seppanen and Davy Nelson, and Murray 8th grader Arthur Anderson.

## TWO VOLLEYBALL TROPHIES

The Como girls volleyball team rose to the top of the St. Paul City Conference this season and earned a share of the championship along with Central and Highland.

The Cougars earned the No. 2 seed for the Section 4AAA Tournament. They defeated Harding in the quarterfinals and Hill-Murray in the semifinals before falling in four sets at Mahtomedi in the championship match.

With a conference championship trophy, a section runner-up trophy, an overall record of 17-9 and awesome fan support, it was a season to remember.

## FUN END TO 1ST QUARTER

The first 10 weeks of the school year and the first quarter grading period concluded on Nov. 11. After final projects

and tests were completed, students gathered in the gym to witness a volleyball extravaganza featuring Como students and staff.

The talent on the courts ranged from talented Cougar volleyball players to student athletes from other fall sports to teachers who tried their best! The chance to play, laugh, and relax together after an academic quarter of hard work was a fun way to celebrate as a school community.

## THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

The fall play at Como was held on Friday, Dec. 2 in the school auditorium. A production of "The Unusual Suspects" featuring a hard-working cast and crew entertained the audience. The comedy caper centered around four high school students and a vilified principal.

# Local cleaning firm wins three awards

By CAROL MAHNKE

Good things come in threes. Mitchell Lallier can attest to that as his company, S & L Cleaning (1821 University Ave.), has won three awards in the past few weeks.

Each award cites the company's efforts to hire handicapped, older and immigrant people and veterans. Fully 40 percent of his employees fall into these categories.

Ninoska Salinas Lallier, Lallier's wife, is the financial officer for the company. Operations manager Tracey Chineth, has worked for S&L Cleaning for 11 years.

The award from Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman recognizes his "dedication and hard work." Friends say Lallier is relentless in pursuit of his goals, as well as the goals of each of his 55 workers.

"Talent is in everybody, and it's a matter of making it shine," says Lallier.

Frank Herd, placement coordinator for vocational rehabilitation services of the Minnesota Employment and Economic Development Department, and Anna Rice, career consultant with the de-

partment, say Lallier genuinely deserves the award from their agency for the way he helps his employees work out details of their jobs from transportation to adjusting work to deadlines.

The Ramsey County commendation recognizes efforts to coordinate limitations on earnings for disabled employees and the number of hours they worked. Fifty percent of workers at Ramsey East Government Center have some type of disability.

Ramsey County Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire describes Lallier, who is an old friend, as energetic and charismatic.

He has a "can do" attitude and, whatever he attempts, "he makes it happen," she says.

"He cares about people," McGuire adds. And the people who work for him know it, she says.

Kate, an employee, speaks French and is learning English. The young woman says she has a "good job" cleaning homes for Lallier. She came from the West African country of Togo three years ago.

N. Lallier helps with translation and



Mitchell and Ninoska Salinas Lallier

brings in other translators when necessary. Employees speak five different languages.

The company cleans libraries, state and county offices, COVID-19 Centers, homeless shelters, homes and other locations. Most employees work part-time to accommodate different abilities and needs. And many have two jobs.

Another employee says Lallier is "easy to work with because he really listens and encourages you."

Cortez Smith, building supervisor for the Ramsey East Government Center, says the company is easy to work for because they listen to the employees and work

with them to make them successful.

State Senator John Hoffman of Brooklyn Center says, "With Mitch, people with disabilities find a place where they can thrive and do a good job."

Like his mother, the late Edith Lallier, executive director of the Ramsey Action Program (antipoverty program) in the 1970s and a founder of Headstart, Mitch Lallier "finds a pathway to success" for the people he hires, Hoffman says.

Hoffman said Lallier sees "potential in every person he meets" and "he finds a pathway to success" for everyone he hires.

He creates flexibility in places where his employees need it, Hoffman explains.

Lallier also is a fixture at the Midway YMCA where he currently teaches swim classes for infants and toddlers and their parents. He also runs the state youth handball program, is part of the Friendship Club, and chairs the neighbor advisory board for the HHH Job Corps. He says he stays involved to help anyone who needs assistance to build their future.

Lallier says he and his wife feel very honored by the awards for their work for persons with disabilities.

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## COINS FOR CHILDREN'S CANCER DRIVE



Murray's National Junior Honor Society group held a Coins for Children's Cancer drive in October. They raised \$329.98, so three staff members rose to the challenge and volunteered to have their hair cut off to donate to Locks of Love. Eddie Owens and AP Ryan Eggers tag-teamed to cut off ponytails for donation. The proceeds were donated to Minnesota Children's Hospital Cancer Kids Fund to give comfort to kids undergoing cancer treatment and their families. (Photo submitted)

## Sisters collaborate on animated show to highlight unknown female composers

Hamline-Midway resident Dr. Lillie Gardner took her animated kids TV show about women composers to Austin Film Festival in October. A piano instructor and screenwriter born and raised in St. Paul, Gardner wrote "Allegra Sparkle's Guide to the Great Composers (You Might Not Have Heard Of)" to teach kids about women and other underrepresented composers – and to get the next generation to the concert hall.

Gardner's screenplay was a winner at Austin Film Festival's Rooster Teeth Women & Animation Fellowship, which puts the script in the Top 2% of over 10,000 submissions to the prestigious Script Competition. Earlier this fall, 'Allegra Sparkle' was an Official Selection at Catalyst Story Institute in Duluth, where the project received a SAG-AFTRA Table Read and a public pitch.

Inspired by Gardner's background as a classical pianist and piano instructor, the series centers around an imaginative 10-year-old composer named Allegra Sparkle. In each episode, she leads a magical podcast journey throughout history and around the world to meet composers who got left out of the classical music canon – including Florence Price, Elisabetta de Gambarini, Chiquinha Gonzaga and more.

The series concept art was illustrated by Gardner's sister Jane Gardner, who has worked as a designer for Fisher Price, Mattel and Nickelodeon. The team is about to work with FableVision Studios in Boston to produce a pitch video for the series, and they ran a crowdfunding campaign through Oct. 29 that raised \$12,720 for production and was fully funded. Learn more at [www.allegrasparkle.com](http://www.allegrasparkle.com).



An Austin Film Festival Winner and Catalyst Story Institute Winner, Lillie Gardner was raised in the St. Paul before she studied writing and music at New York University. Her work is focused on women defying expectations in both contemporary and historical settings.



Jane Gardner is a graphic designer and illustrator with a playful, modern style. She currently works at as an art director at the Midway-based Spot, a creative marketing agency was founded by her mom, Patty Voje.

## PLAN IT

## APPLAUSE COMMUNITY THEATER SHOW

Applause Community Theatre is excited to present another evening that showcases the talents of Minnesota playwrights in "More One-Acts? Heck Yeah!", at Dreamland Arts (677 Hamline Ave. N.). This one-act festival explores the theme of redemption and the quest the characters are taking or refusing to take on this journey. Shows are Thursday-Saturday, Dec. 8-10 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 11 at 2 p.m. Tickets: \$20 (\$16 for students/teachers/seniors/veterans). Call 651-645-5506.

## HMC WINTER SOLSTICE PARTY DEC. 21

It might be cold but the chili, bonfire, hot cocoa and cider will keep neighbors warm at the Winter Solstice Party hosted by Hamline Midway Coalition at Newell Park on Wednesday, Dec. 21 from 6-8 p.m. For those with culinary or competitive skills – or both! – there will be a Chili Cook-off. Bring a crockpot full of your best chili for a chance to win a gift card. This is a free event and all are welcome.

## HAMLINE MIDWAY ELDERS

BY LAUREL COLLINS  
laurel@hmelders.org  
651-209-6542



Here are a few upcoming classes:

- Arthritis-Friendly Exercise Program, Jan. 17-March 9, Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-2:30 p.m.
- Chair Yoga, Jan. 19-March 9, Thursday 10:30-11:30 a.m.
- Knit/Crochet Group, Mondays 1-3 p.m., ongoing
- Jody's Documentary Series – ongoing, last Wednesday of each month 1 p.m. at Hamline Library (no film in December, next is Jan. 25)

Classes are free of charge (donations always welcome), and people can join anytime. Classes are offered in-person and on Zoom. Contact laurel@hmelders.org for information or visit [www.hmelders.org](http://www.hmelders.org).

## TIDBITS

## SUNRISE BANKS HONORED

Sunrise Banks has received Fast Company's Brands That Matter award, a national accolade that recognizes companies making an impact beyond the bottom line and authentically communicating their mission and values.

"Brands That Matter honorees don't just recite corporate vision statements or management talking points; they have achieved relevance through cultural impact and social engagement, and their branding authentically communicates a brand's current mission and ideals," according to Fast Company, an American business magazine with readership in the hundreds of thousands.

Past recipients of the Brands that Matter award include Patagonia Provisions, Ben and Jerry's and Nike. This year, Sunrise was acknowledged alongside numerous other brands ranging in size from one to 1,000 employees.

"Sunrise Banks has been focused on empowering financial wellness since day one – we strive to be an innovative partner focused on social impact," said Sunrise Banks CEO David Reiling. "We're proud to receive this recognition and humbled to be in such great company among this year's Brands That Matter award recipients."

Winning companies were judged on relevance, cultural and business impact and ingenuity by Fast Company's editorial team.

## CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON METRO GOLD LINE

On Oct. 19, Metro Transit and project partners celebrated the start of construction on the METRO Gold Line, which will become the first Bus Rapid Transit service in Minnesota to primarily use bus lanes.

When construction is finished, Gold Line buses will run along a 10-mile corridor generally north and near Interstate 94,

serving stops in Saint Paul, Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, and Woodbury. Service is scheduled to begin in 2025.

"With all-day service in both directions, the Gold Line will become a convenient, reliable and sustainable transportation option for people traveling along the Interstate 94 corridor," Metropolitan Council Chair Charlie Zelle said.

Like other BRT lines, the Gold Line will feature enhanced stations with heat, light, and real-time signs, and specialized buses that allow for all-door boarding. Approximately 70% of the Gold Line route will use bus lanes.

Maplewood resident Darrell Paulsen, who chaired the project's Community and Business Advisory Committee, looks forward to riding the Gold Line for work and social outings. Paulsen lives near the future Maplewood Station and is among the 13% of households in the Gold Line corridor who are without cars. "I have cerebral palsy, so Bus Rapid Transit is a great asset to my family and myself," Paulsen said.

The Gold Line will provide access to several key destinations, including downtown Saint Paul, the Sun Ray Shopping Center, 3M's Maplewood headquarters, Tamarack Hills and Woodbury Village. There are around 93,500 jobs within a half-mile of Gold Line stations.

"It's a win/win," said Will Schroeder, executive director of East Metro Strong. "People in Dayton's Bluff get access to more jobs, and suburban employers get access to more employees."

And more development is coming. As of 2020, more than \$388 million in permitted construction was occurring along the Gold Line corridor and another \$1.2 billion in development was planned.

The Gold Line project is being led by Metro Transit with support from Ramsey and Washington counties. The Federal Transit Administration is covering almost half of capital costs, estimated at \$505 million.

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Saturday at 4:30pm  
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Sun, Dec. 4th	Second Sunday of Advent
Thurs, Dec. 8th	Mass at 12:05pm (Holy Day)
Sun, Dec. 11th	Third Sunday of Advent
Sun, Dec. 18th	Fourth Sunday of Advent
	(Children's Advent Program during 10am Mass)
Sat, Dec. 24th	Christmas Eve Mass 4:30pm (Carols at 4:00pm)
Sun, Dec. 25th	Christmas Day Mass 8:15am & 10:00am



# Former TIES building now Amber Union: 125 units of affordable housing

Amber Union, the former TIES building, at 1667 Snelling Avenue in Falcon Heights celebrated its grand opening on Dec. 1, 2022. Edina-based Buhl Investors repositioned the historic former office complex into 125 units of affordable housing.

"Amber Union highlights the very best of adaptive reuse and the power of public-private partnerships," said Harrison Mohagen. "We had amazing partners that helped bring this project to fruition. In particular, this project would not have been possible without the incredible partnership of the City of Falcon Heights."

The building, built in 1946 as the Farmer's Union Grain Terminal Association, underwent a \$57 million redevelopment, transitioning the Art Deco building into apartment units with community amenities. The onsite playground, fitness center, community game room, and skyways between the buildings are just some of the investments in the tenant experience. Individual units feature historic art deco details, as well as granite countertops, and stainless steel appliances.

Through creative financing including support from local and state funds, Buhl Investors curated a complex financing package to make the project possible. They leveraged LIHTC (Low Income Housing



*"We saw the potential at this historic site and took the leap to fill an urgent community need and preserve a historic building that will now remain as part of the fabric of this community," said Harrison Mohagen of Buhl Investors. The former TIES building is at 1667 Snelling Ave. (Photo submitted)*

ing Tax Credit) funds alongside TIF (Tax Increment Financing) in Falcon Heights,

and both the State and Federal Historic Tax Credit and funds from DEED among others.

"Thank you to Buhl Investors for their work to bring Amber Union to life," said Mayor Randy Gustafson of Falcon Heights. "Your organization's integrity and community-forward focus have been appreciated throughout the process. We are proud to welcome Amber Union Apartments to the wonderful community of Falcon Heights."

Amber Union is affordable at 50% of the area median income, so a household of two making less than \$46,750 per year is eligible to live in the development. This is a rare and important distinction because few units in the metro area or across the state meet this threshold – most serve people who earn at least 60% of area median income.

"We believe in pursuing the potential of place," said Monagen. "We saw the potential at this historic site and took the leap to fill an urgent community need and preserve a historic building that will now remain a part of the fabric of this community."

Harrison Mohagen of Buhl Investors lead the redevelopment. Cushman Wakefield will provide property management services.

## Residents join district council board

### DISTRICT 10 COMO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

BY SHEVEK MCKEE  
Executive director  
district10@  
district10comopark.org



Three new board members were appointed to the Como Community Council board to fill recent vacancies.

Longtime Como resident and Como Neighborhood History Project extraordinaire Laura Oyen was appointed to the Sub-District 1 vacancy, at last accepting her destiny to join the board. Chad Hermes of Sub-District 4, who has been active

in our Land Use committee for months, was appointed to an at-large vacancy. Also from Sub-District 4, Lauren Erchul McCabe, who has been working with us in Neighborhood Relations committee and fundraising planning, was appointed to the other at-large vacancy.

We're excited to be heading into an ambitious 2023 with a full board of wonderful volunteer community members! Thanks to our new members for making this commitment with us!

All appointed board seats will be in the next annual election (April). If you're interested in joining the board you can fill out an application or, even better, start coming to the meetings and see if you think it'd be a fit for you!

## FAREWELL FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### HAMLIN MIDWAY COALITION

BY SARAH O'BRIEN  
director@hamlinemidway.org



I had the honor and privilege to lead the Hamline Midway Coalition as executive director since August of last year. At this time I am stepping away from the role. It is with heavy heart that I leave, as there are so many aspects of the position and organization that I enjoy and love. It is the people that I will miss the most. However, I want you to know that the Hamline Midway Coalition is in a solid position.

In my time here the organization has said yes to many projects and initiatives. The Bee Line and Free Trees project are in full swing thanks to our active Environment Committee. The Midway Investment Cooperative is launched with a strong Board of Directors leading the way in making long-term, stabilizing, and

transformative investments that benefit our neighborhood. The Midway Project continues to feed and provide supplies to 60-80 families each week, thanks to two committed community volunteers who dedicate their time each week to make it happen. Work to engage and lift the voices of renters in our community is underway. The list goes on and on. Thank you to each person who has helped make these projects a reality for our community.

Please know that the HMC Board of Directors has a plan in place for the position and that will be communicated out shortly. In the meantime, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me, Board President Thom Foss, or Board Vice President Jen Hadley.

Thank you. Thank you to each of you who supported me in this role, who helped support the Hamline Midway neighborhood by volunteering with us, attending events, and getting involved. You make a positive difference. I ask that you please take a moment to vote for HMC's newest board members. We have six open seats - who fills those seats will shape the work of the Hamline Midway Coalition, and the neighborhood you call home.



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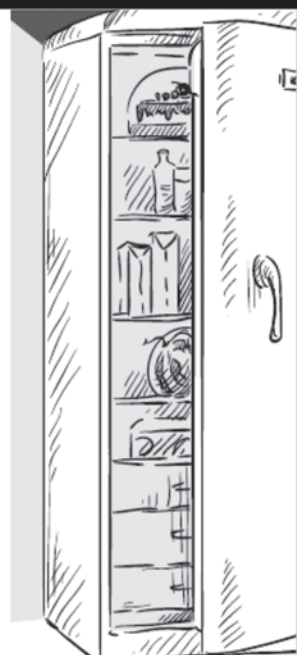
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## AUTO STORAGE

Secured auto and boat storage near Snelling and University. Short term or long term. Heated and unheated available. 570 Asbury Street. 651-641-0166. [hamlineparkstorage.com](http://hamlineparkstorage.com).

## CRISIS HOTLINE

Call the Minnesota Day One Crisis Hotline at 1-866-223-1111 if you or

someone you know is seeking shelter due to a dangerous relationship or needs to create a safety plan.

## LAMP SALE

The Lamp Mender Retirement Sale: Fixtures, crystal chandeliers, scones, lamps, glass, parts. Repairs still welcome. 9911 Lyndale Av S, Bloomington. Open 10am-4pm, Sat, Sun, Tues, Wed, Thurs. Closed Mon. & Fri. [www.lampmender.com](http://www.lampmender.com)

## PAINTING

Painting, wallpaper patch. Interior, exterior. Small jobs wanted. Jim. 612-202-5514.

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## ROOFING

30 years experience hail and wind damage specialist. Replace or repair. Free estimate. Licensed/insured. 612-724-3934

## SERVICES

Snow removal - sidewalks, driveways, roof tops. Gutter cleaning. 651-699-2832.

# Jobs

## OFFICE SPACE

Quiet, professional office space with free attached parking. Single offices up to 10,000 sq. ft. Building information available at [hamlinepp.com](http://hamlinepp.com). Contact Eric with The Terrace Group at 651-621-2550.

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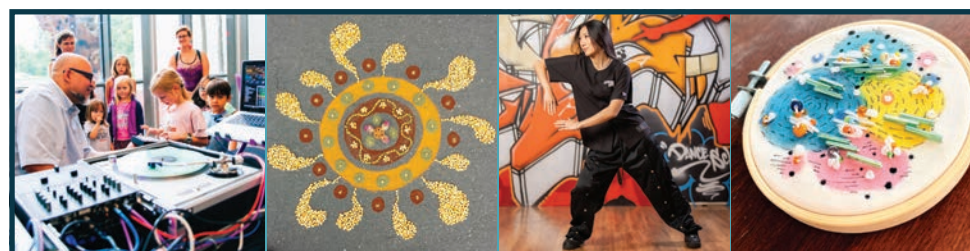
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[AllEnergySolar.com/Monitor](http://AllEnergySolar.com/Monitor)



## Winter Break at your library

Join Saint Paul Public Library for big fun and big learning  
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From cooking and art classes to dance workshops, free programs for kids ages 7-12 are happening at all library locations.

Learn more at [sppl.org/winter-break](http://sppl.org/winter-break)



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Want ads must be received by the Monitor by Monday, Jan. 2 for the Jan. 12 issue. Call 651-917-4183 or email [Denis@MonitorSaintPaul.com](mailto:Denis@MonitorSaintPaul.com) for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at [www.MonitorSaintPaul.com](http://www.MonitorSaintPaul.com)



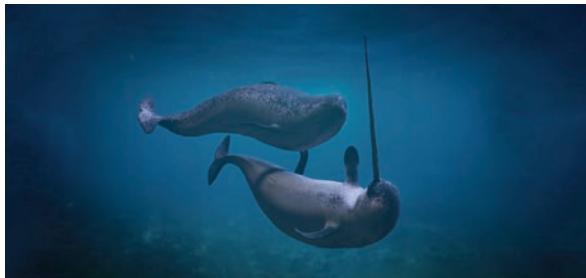


## Spend your holiday at the Bell Museum



### Spotlight Science: Bugs Below Zero December 10, 10 am – 2 pm

Join us at the Bell Museum for an afternoon of winter bugs! Learn more about how some insects are able to survive below-zero temperatures, their unique life-cycles, and more!



### Narwhal: Revealing an Arctic Legend Now on view

The Bell Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate, brings an exciting new exhibit, *Narwhal: Revealing an Arctic Legend*. View a full-scale narwhal model and learn the ways Inuit communities and Smithsonian researchers have worked together to help us better understand both narwhals and a changing Arctic impacted by climate change.



### Bell Museum Holiday Hours

#### Plan your visit

Stay up to date on Bell holiday hours. Visit our website for special December hours and travel the universe in the Bell Museum original interactive planetarium show *Latest in Space*, learn about seasonal constellations in *Minnesota Night Skies*, and explore what it takes to complete a historic journey to the red planet in Bell Museum original production *Mars: The Ultimate Voyage*.



[bellmuseum.umn.edu](http://bellmuseum.umn.edu)



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# Winter Solstice PARTY

**WED., DEC. 21**  
**6-8 P.M.**  
**NEWELL PARK**

**This is a FREE event. All are welcome!**

[www.hamlinemidway.org](http://www.hamlinemidway.org)

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