



A new
leader
» 10

“SHARING THE FINER THINGS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A JOYFUL AND DEEPLY MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE FOR ME. I SEE EYES LIGHT UP AS FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES SAMPLE AND DISCOVER MY CHOCOLATE NOTES AND NUANCES. FOR ME THE WORLD OF FINE FOOD IS ABOUT DISCOVERY,” SAID MARY LEONARD OF CHOCOLAT CELESTE.



Chocolat Céleste owner Mary Leonard adds a layer of chocolate to truffles at her Midway facility. Leonard battled breast cancer in 2020, but didn't miss a day of work. She had chocolates to create, after all. Each chocolate is hand made with fresh whipping cream, small batch butter and the finest fair trade cocoas. The company that she started at age 46 was named after her beloved Bichon Frise. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

A SWEET JOURNEY

Mary Leonard battles sexism, street work and breast cancer to create truffles at Chocolat Céleste

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Chocolat Céleste owner Mary Leonard didn't take a day off work when she was being treated for breast cancer. Not even when she was dealing with severe radiation burns.

It was her busy holiday season, after all.

On Christmas Day 2019, her sister called her twice. The second time, Kate told her why she had called. She had just been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Breast cancer had always been on Leonard's radar. Her grandfather died from breast cancer in the 1930s, and an aunt also battled it. Leonard started having regular mammograms in her 30s.

After hearing the news from her sister, who is two years older, Leonard called to make an appointment. They tried to put her off, she recalled, and she asked

when their next opening was. It was the next morning. That first appointment on Thursday showed lumps in both breasts. When they suggested a second appointment two weeks later, Leonard again asked when their next opening was. She went the next morning, and then again on Monday. The diagnosis was stage one breast cancer, ductal carcinoma. Her sister had both ductal and lobular, and opted for a double mastectomy and reconstruction.

Leonard's path involved a lumpectomy – which she scheduled for right after the Valentine's Day rush. Because of the physicality of her job, she didn't get a mastectomy.

She learned she carried the BRCA2 gene, which is fueled by estrogen. Chemotherapy started the second week of March 2020 at Methodist Hospital's Fraumshuh Cancer Center. She went every Thursday



for the infusion and had a full head of hair through Aug. 1. Then she switched to a medication known as “The Red Devil.” She had lost all her hair by Sept. 1.

“I was very lucky because I was not sick at all after chemo,” stated Leonard.

“Radiation was different. I still came to work everyday, but I had pretty severe burns. I'm pretty fair skinned. That was pretty intense.”

Every couple hours she soaked towels in a warm saline solution and placed them on her radiation burns while she worked. “It was Christmas by that time,” she said. “You can't miss Christmas.”

Throughout the uncertain months, Leonard found joy in making fine chocolates and sharing them with others. “Fine chocolate actually affects the brain chemistry, changing your dopamine and sero-

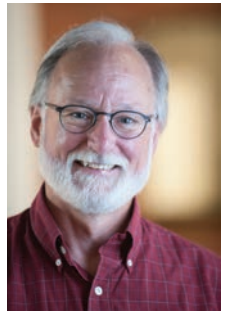
A SWEET JOURNEY » 8

ENCHANTED BY THE MISSISSIPPI

Book born from time spent in the Mississippi Gorge

By JAN WILLMS

The research for Thomas Becknell's recent book, “Enchantments of the Mississippi,” began years before he actually wrote the book. “At the outset, I must have read at least a hundred Mississippi River narratives,” said Becknell, who taught literature and writing in St. Paul for 35 years.



THOMAS BECKNELL

“It has been fascinating to read the accounts of so many different ways people have encountered the Mississippi River – paddling, rafting or just being near the river, and writing about their experience. So many different stories,” he said.

These stories of numerous historic figures and their connection to the river, as well as those lesser known individuals he meets on his travels, set Becknell's book apart. He also takes the reader with him on his exploration of the Mississippi, and provides a sense of place and an understanding of his fascination with the river.

ENCHANTED » 5

Planning tool updated for Allianz Field site

By JANE McCLURE

Development around Allianz Field is anticipated to be scaled back from what was originally planned, according to an alternative urban areawide review or AUAR update completed late last year. Neighbors could also see a plan come forward for a large dynamic display screen at the property.

Notice of the AUAR was published Dec. 20 in the EQB Monitor. A comment period ended Jan. 5. If Metropolitan Council and state agencies don't object, city officials can approve the AUAR and use it for another five years.

WHAT IS AN AUAR?

An AUAR process is a hybrid of the environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) and environmental impact statement (EIS) review processes. The process is overseen by the state's Environmental Quality Board (EQB).

ALLIANZ FIELD SITE » 10



New library for preschoolers inspires them to read and lead

PAGE 4



HEALTH
Reflecting on the gifts of the season

PAGES 6-7



Marshall Avenue Flats coming to former Richard Gordon School

PAGE 12



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Tips to help kids **struggling** with social media

Social media is a big part of young people's lives. It has its benefits, and being able to keep in touch with friends and family remotely was one of the saving graces in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when people were isolating in their homes. But there's a dark side to social media, as well. Recently leaked documents from Meta, suggest the company has known for several years that its Instagram app is contributing to body image issues and other mental health problems for teens, particularly females. Social media platforms use algorithms to enhance users' engagement. Feeds may be driven toward polarizing topics or those that have the most shock value, further leading teens down a negative path.

Children may not be developmentally ready for the immediate gratification that social media provides nor the constant onslaught of content. As a result, teens increasingly are becoming more irritable, having trouble sleeping and are spending more time alone as a result of phone usage. The Harvard Graduate School of Education says recent studies have noted a significant uptick in depression and suicidal thoughts over the past several years for teens, especially those who spend multiple hours a day using screens.

There are steps parents can take to help teens and teens who may be struggling and need assistance managing social media.

1 Set real limits. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health suggests that until meaningful government oversight is in place to police social media platforms, parents will have to set their own parameters for use. Putting phones down at meal times, turning off alerts close to bedtime, and making certain days "a rest from technology" can help.

2 Block upsetting content. It's a parent's job to be a parent, not a best friend. Giving in to requests to engage with certain social platforms, even when they do not align with one's beliefs or values, can be harmful. Set limits on which platforms children are allowed to use.

3 Regularly monitor kids' usage. Parents should look through their kids' phones and accounts on a regular basis to see which sites are being visited and how kids are engaging with others. If social media is affecting a child's mental health, have him or her take a break or delete the account.

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CADETS SORT, DISTRIBUTE TOYS

**COMO PARK
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BY ERIC ERICKSON
Social studies teacher



Como Park's Marine Corps JROTC cadets continued their tradition of volunteering for Toys for Tots during the holiday season. Cadets collected, sorted and distributed brand new and unwrapped toys as Christmas gifts for families in need.

Sgt. Major Kirkland noted that the U.S. Marine Corps has supported Toys for Tots for the last 75 years. Collectively, over 627 million toys have been distributed to more than 281 million children.

"This success stems from great partners, sponsors and volunteers such as the Como Park cadets," Kirkland said. "Without their help this program would not be as successful as it is!"

Como's effort in this year's Toys for Tots drive was led by 11th grade cadet Thierry Tetevi.

DEBATE

Como students participating in the Minnesota Urban Debate League have been improving and gaining confidence this season. Like other activities at Como,



Como students from the Marine Corps JROTC serve the community at a Toys for Tots drive in December. (Photo by Sgt. Major James Kirkland)

all students are welcome and appropriate competitive levels are offered. Many students brand new to debate have developed skills and are now thriving in the league's "Novice A Division."

At the year-end city meet, Como juniors Sundus Ali and Gudon Mohamed advanced to the semifinals. Junior Angie Jimenez-Valerio and freshman Lisa Aigner advanced to the finals and finished as the runner-up team.

Jimenez earned the additional honor of being selected the Novice A Top Speaker, while Aigner was awarded the Novice A Runner Up Speaker.

Como's debate coach is social studies teacher Joshua Lincoln.

THEATER AND CHOIR

Forty-five Como students had the

privilege of experiencing the Ordway Theater for a matinee performance of "Beauty and the Beast" on Dec. 13. For many participants, it was their first time seeing a live theater show.

Members of the choir toured local elementary schools, a nursing home and the Radisson Blu at MOA on Dec. 9 to perform holiday songs and carols.

SPIRIT WEEK

The final week of school in 2022 was a spirited one with thematic dress-up days for Como students. Monday's theme was "Zoom-Fits" (professional on the top, pajamas on the bottom.)

Tuesday was Dress Like a Teacher Day, Wednesday was Ugly Sweater Day, Thursday was Disney v. Nickelodeon characters, and Friday was Class Colors

Day. The class colors theme carried over into the gym at the end of the day for the first-ever "Battle of the Classes Futsal Tournament."

Embracing the World Cup competition that ran through December, students from each grade signed up to represent their class in the popular version of soccer played on hard surfaces with a low-bounce ball.

Fans in the stands cheered on their classmates as the freshmen took on the sophomores, followed by the juniors versus the seniors. The sophomores and juniors met in the finals with the sophomores from the class of 2025 winning the title (and then defeating the Como staff team!)

The spirited competition was a fun way to conclude classwork for 2022 and kick off winter break.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT YOUR SCHOOL?

Submit new items and photos to the Monitor. Email tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com

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New library for preschoolers inspires them to read and lead

PLANTING SEEDS

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



Early reading supports learning and growth. It provides a solid foundation for academic achievement by introducing children to new words and concepts while developing critical thinking skills and supporting social and emotional learning. This is vitally important since the most significant brain development happens in the formative years from birth to three years old.

Planting People Growing Justice™ Leadership Institute (PPGJLI) is partnering with Wilder African American Babies Coalition (AABC) to support early childhood education in the Hamline/Midway community. The R.A.W. library was recently launched in furtherance of this goal. The name reflects the importance of reading, arithmetic, and writing. The library is located in the Wilder Child Development Center (CDC) which provides early childhood education and preschool care for children ages 16 months to five years old. R.A.W. Children's Library is open two days a week for CDC families to come in and check out a book. The R.A.W. Library contains over 100 diverse reading titles for young readers. Since its opening on Oct. 27, 2022, parents have expressed extreme gratitude for the space and book selections and enjoyed having their children participate in the monthly book reading events from local authors.

Reading, writing, and math skills are



Artika Tyner reads "Justice Makes a Difference" to preschoolers at the Wilder Child Development Center, which is the home of the new R.A.W. library. (Photo submitted)

commonly viewed as separate and independent skills. However, these are essential skills that impact school readiness and future career development. A study conducted by Reut Balhinez and Shelley Shaul published in "Frontiers in Psychology" demonstrated the intrinsic relationship between comprehension in the three disciplines. Reading is the thread that weaves together these skills. It makes learning accessible and engaging.

It is especially important to support sources of children's books and educa-

tional resources in our post-COVID-19 pandemic learning environment. Disruptions to in-class instruction resulted in a reduction in reading, writing, and math skills. The problem was compounded by online instruction when many households did not have access to an internet connection. PPGJLI is working diligently to replace these learning losses with learning gains with the goal in mind of ensuring all children have the resources they need to thrive.

One of the ways that PPGJLI pro-

motes literacy is by helping children of color to discover joy in reading. We provide programs, initiatives, and resources that serve as a mirror for the BIPOC community. These mirrors provide a positive representation of people of color on the pages of books. This is evident in each of our PPGJ books that feature characters like Justice, who is a young Black difference maker, and Akua, who is a global citizen. Our books also focus on career development which enables children to see themselves in career pathways they might otherwise not consider like STEM. Careers in STEM are growing at a rate of two to three times faster than all careers combined. Yet, research shows Black and Hispanic workers are underrepresented in most STEM careers and represent less than 20 percent of all STEM professionals. Our latest PPGJ book, "Kojo Loves Science," introduces STEM in an engaging and practical manner. Access to diverse books encourages literacy and aids in building the essential connection between reading, writing, and math children need to succeed.

The R.A.W. Library supports family learning and promotes healthy communities. "Wilder AABC and Projects is dedicated to putting mothers, babies, and families at the center of what we do. The importance of healthy childbirth, brain development, and the fight against the social damage of health for the entire family is our mission," according to Sameerah Bilal Royce, founder and director of AABC.

You can support the R.A.W. library and PPGJLI literacy initiatives by hosting a book drive at your workplace or local civic group. Learn more: <https://www.ppgjli.org/host-a-book-drive>

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.

BUILDING A STRONGER MIDWAY

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



As 2022 ended and a snowy 2023 has begun, what does the new year hold for the Midway?

New developments. The Midway and nearby neighborhoods have a lot of potential sites. Will we see approved plans at the site around Allianz Field? What about the former CVS site? The old hardware store on Snelling?

New restaurants. In January, it's hard

THE YEAR AHEAD

to predict all the openings and closings of restaurants. But it's also hard to imagine a year going by without both occurring along University Avenue. It isn't a secret the restaurant industry is tough, so please think of your favorite places and make sure you give them business so they can survive to see another year. While not a new opening, Black Hart is planning an expansion into the open area next to the bar for an outdoor patio area. A new coffee shop, Rafiki, is planning a January opening in the Griggs-Midway Building.

New legislature. With the Minnesota State Senate flipping to DFL-controlled, one party has the trifecta of House, Sen-

ate, and Governor's office. Last year's split government led to no bonding bill; we should expect bonding and a significant amount of spending this session – let's hope we see impactful support for the Midway. The new legislature also has new members for our community. New Saint Paul legislators include Senator Clare Oumou Verbeten, Rep. Samakab Hussein, Rep. Leigh Finke, Rep. Liz Lee, and Rep. Maria Isa Perez-Vega.

Changes at SPPD. Axel Henry getting sworn in as the new Saint Paul Police Chief isn't the only major change for 2023. A new police chief also means restructuring within the department and our Western District Senior Commander Josh Lego has been reassigned to Deputy Chief of Operations. Taking his place is Stacy Murphy, a longtime Saint Paul Police Officer who was most recently an assistant

chief.

City council races. Every year in Saint Paul is an election year, and in 2023 it's the City Council's turn. Unlike most council election years, we know there will be a majority of new city councilmembers due to four of the seven not seeking reelection. Closest to the Midway, Mitra Jalali is running for reelection while in Ward 1 there will be a new councilmember as Russell Balenger is an interim member after Dai Thao moved. Part of the stipulation as an interim councilmember is you cannot run in the next council race.

There will also be plenty of other surprising stories in 2023. Perhaps a Minnesota United championship run? This new year, let's resolve to work together to build a stronger community.

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The Midway Como Frogtown Monitor is a monthly community publication in the Midway, Como, Hamline and Frogtown neighborhoods of St. Paul, owned and operated by TMC Publications, CO. Visit our website for our calendar and publication dates.

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 tesha@monitorsaintpaul.com. Unsigned letters will not run.

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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
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

The Monitor is for profit and for a purpose – and we don't sacrifice one for the other. We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that is both black and white, both/and. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and

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

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Members of Minnesota Newspaper Association, Midway Chamber Area of Commerce, and Midwest Free Community Papers. Sister publications: Longfellow Nokomis Messenger and Southwest Connector.



ENCHANTED BY THE MISSISSIPPI

>> From 1

"All the time I spent on the river and along the river – exploring, observing, listening, and paying attention – was as much a part of research as time in the archives," Becknell continued. "When I actually began the process of writing, turning my notes into narrative was a real pleasure, and time seemed to stop. Writing 'Enchantments' was a great joy, and I hope that comes through in the writing."

Becknell said he did not initially set out to write a book, but once the river fully caught him, he had to write about it. "It's kind of like falling in love – not so much a decision as an enchantment," he claimed.

Becknell said he likes to set foot on the spaces he writes about, if it is possible. "The contemporary Kowa author N. Scott Momaday said that everyone should, at least once in their life, give themselves up to a particular landscape, look at it from as many angles as possible, wonder about it, imagine being there at various times and seasons," he stated. "I began doing just that with the Mississippi River Gorge, near the Longfellow community, and continued the habit with other parts of the upper Mississippi – its many confluences, its bluffs, bottomlands, and bends in the river. It had the feel of a great pilgrimage."

According to Becknell, he approached the river with a holy sense of terror. "It's such an enormous and powerful body of water, representing many different things for different peoples. In this book, I tried to capture – not only through my own experiences, but also through the many stories I encountered – the river's enormous mystery and multiple associations."

One story Becknell tells in his book

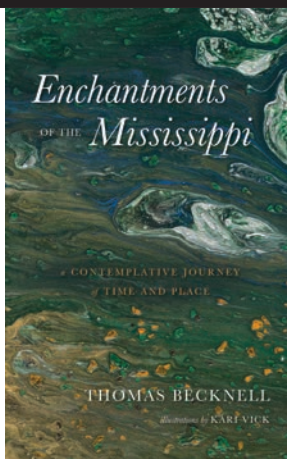
is about his meeting with Jerome. It is in a chapter about unexpected meetings and transformations. Becknell recalled that each of the river's many confluences changes the river, and that his encounter with Jerome changed him.

"I had been looking for a solitary experience at that particular confluence with the Wisconsin River, and instead, there was Jerome at sundown offering me a beer and conversation. His unique perspective on the river was one of many small transformations I experienced on my journey," Becknell said.

On his journey, he also connected with Jim Bear Jacobs, a Mohican and Christian pastor who works for cultural healing and reconciliation through Healing Minnesota Stories. "His stories of the Dakota experience are transforming," Becknell said, "but his encouragement to all his participants is to 'Tell your own stories. You are stories wrapped in bodies.'"

Becknell also recalled the Nigerian author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who gave a TED talk some years ago on the danger of a single story. Becknell said Adichie related that stories are who we are, how we know ourselves and each other. "He said there is a grave danger for all people in having only one story, and in refusing to hear the stories of others."

In his book, Becknell has made sure to include the perspectives of all who are in some way enchanted by the Mississippi. "Long before Europeans arrived on this continent, Indigenous peoples were drawn to the great river, building cities like Cahokia (near present-day St. Louis), constructing effigies and mounds all along its banks and bluff tops, and trading at its many confluences, like Bdote," he said. "Unfortunately so much of what the river meant to them is lost to time. What the European immigrants called the falls of St. Anthony were known to the Dakota as Owamniyamni, and the Ojibwe as Kababikah, and both nations held



Thomas Becknell takes the reader with him on his exploration of the Mississippi, and provides a sense of place and an understanding of his fascination with the river. "I'd like to think I've told a story of falling in love with the currents of time, the beauty of life, and the consolation of the spirit," he said. (Photo submitted)



them sacred."

Becknell said he would like his readers to take from the book a sense of enchantment, of being spellbound, of connection with the world one inhabits and with a presence much larger than oneself.

"I like to think I've told a story of falling in love with the currents of time, the beauty of life and the consolation of the spirit."



New CEO Steps into *New Hospice Care Suites*



Jeff Thorne is stepping in as the new CEO of Our Lady of Peace Hospice & Home Health Care as our in-home hospice and home health care program continues to grow, and our hospice residence raises the bar of excellence with 21 private care suites.

"10 new suites are already providing to be a sacred space for patients and families, and at least five more will be ready in mid-February," says Jeff. A new

reception area with a fireplace and exterior awning are also part of the renovation that will be a blessing to patients, families, and our compassionate staff. We will continue to provide care at no cost beyond what is covered by Medicare, and we're hiring additional staff to care for patients in the community, and within our hospice care suites."



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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.

HYGGE

Certainly, the long, cold, dark Minnesota winters can spark a melancholia for some. Yet frigid temperatures and spare daytime hours can also create the mood to hibernate, as other creatures of nature do. One way to take advantage of wintertime is to retreat inside to our snug spaces.

The Danish concept of hygge refers to finding comfort, pleasure, and warmth in simple, soothing things such as a cozy atmosphere or the feeling of friends. It is a time to gather around the hearth to spend more intimate time with loved ones but also an opportunity to make time to nurture ourselves. As a writer, I revel in the fact that northern wintertime brings more hours for reading. Books, magazines and newspapers pile up around my reading nook.

GETTING SOME INK ON OUR FINGERS

In fact, the Twin Cities are a haven for local print news, boasting two dailies, 11 specialty, and over 15 local/neighborhood/community newspapers/newsletters. Your local news heralds – the Messenger, Monitor and Connector are the Harry, Ron and Hermione of the pack – a dynamic trio bringing news and a bit of magic to each community served. From Midway, Como and Frogtown on the St. Paul side of the river to Longfellow, Nokomis, Southwest and many neighborhoods in between, the print editions have proven to

GIFTS OF SEASON GIVE REASON TO REFLECT



While it's customary to make resolutions at this time of year, it's also a fine time to reflect on the gifts of the present

Under the Hood columnist, Susan Schaefer, shares her spectacular view of the Mississippi River. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)

be much anticipated by our readership.

I'm grateful to be a part of these independent papers assembled by our hard-working publisher, Tesha M. Christensen, who like Dumbledore, holds the entirety of TMC Publications' "Hogwarts School" together. She's assembled an equally hard-working team under her leadership who are grateful to the readers and advertisers for helping to keep local news alive and well.

Along the same lines, the metro is a major hub for literary arts, blessed with a vital print publishing industry. Our literary forest is populated with numerous book branches, so to speak.

One such publisher, founded in 1859, is Minnesota Historical Press with three imprints, Minnesota Historical Society Press, Borealis Books and MNHS Express, and sister publication, Minnesota History Magazine, which each abound with stories about local culture, history, Native Amer-

ican and Scandinavian Studies, and more.

Another, approaching its 100th anniversary, is the University of Minnesota Press, a venerable pillar of the state's publishing industry. Topping the list of other local presses are Graywolf Press and Milkweed Editions, both lionesses in our publishing den. These organizations put wind under the wings of our copious crop of homegrown writers and authors, many of whom grace national and international booklists, as well.

Our area is rich in resources for readers and writers. According to a recent Christian Science Monitor survey, Minneapolis comes in fourth, behind Seattle, San Francisco, and Cincinnati, based on sheer number of bookstores. From the unique Open Book building that hosts a trifecta of literary gems – the Loft Literary Center, a haven for readers and writers, Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and Milkweed Bookstore – to dozens of other

booksellers dotted throughout TMC's readership areas like the Red Balloon, Midway Used & Rare Books, Next Chapter, Magers & Quinn, Birchbark, Wild Rumpus and newcomer, Comma, to name a few. These literary temples often provide meeting space for community gatherings and host live author readings, fostering an array of cultural activities, serving as much more than solely brick and mortar structures.

So, when cold winds blow and we do have snow, there are many choices to curl up with a favorite beverage and get some ink on our fingers.

OR GO FORTH INTO NATURE

Strange as it seems, I am also grateful to live in an area that experiences such robust and true seasons. Over the past year, my column has described how to embrace

GIFTS OF SEASON >> 7

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Victoria Ford, proprietor of the new Comma Bookshop in Linden Hills, consults with a customer. (Photo by Susan Schaefer)



TMC's Tesha M. Christensen, publisher, (at right) and sales representative Suzie Marty, join the Harriet Brassiere crew at a team gathering in September.

GIFTS OF SEASONS >> from 6

all that the metro area and beyond have to offer throughout the year. My January column took readers on a self-guided outdoor winter art tour available for free on the East and West Banks of the University of Minnesota, providing both exercise and culture.

Speaking of art and culture, our area features a dazzling array of free outdoor art, from the amazing Prince and Bob Dylan murals in downtown Minneapolis to Mears, Kellogg Mall Park and Western Sculpture Parks in St. Paul. Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall our communities burst with seasonal art crawls, and almost every night of the week our galleries and museums have exhibitions that are free and open to the public.

We are blessed with an urban environment nestled in nature. A recent survey

by The Trust for Public Land ranked St. Paul second, for the second year in a row, and Minneapolis fifth as the best park systems in the United States. The Minneapolis Chain of Lakes – Cedar Lake, Lake of Isles, Bde Maka Ska, Harriet and St. Paul's Como, Phalen, White Bear and Carver Lakes are minutes from all urban hubs, allowing for wintertime skiing and skating or warm weather kayaking, sailing, swimming, biking, running and walking.

The World Health Organization reports that green areas are essential for ecosystems and the mental health of urban denizens. The Trust for Public Land also named Minneapolis America's Best City for Parkland and Green Spaces, citing that "Minneapolis reserves 14.9% of city area for parkland and the 95% of residents live within a ten-minute walk of a park!"

I am eternally grateful to live atop Bohemian Bluffs, directly overlooking the majestic Mississippi River that runs right through Minneapolis and St. Paul. Our nationally protected 72-mile waterway exists entirely within our urban areas! I surely have one of the best views in the world, overlooking the University of Minnesota's West and East Banks, with Frank Gehry's fanciful Weisman Museum directly outside my window. This location means I can walk or bike along the ribbons of pedestrian only trails that seem to run forever.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

U.S. News and World Report has again ranked the Twin Cities together in the top 30 of its list of best places to live. Our plentiful parks, lakes and rivers, trails and green spaces, affordability (I know hard to believe with current inflation, but it is worse elsewhere), clean air, robust job market, excellent infrastructure and higher education systems, and cultural richness define our area as one of abundance.

At this time of year, I take the time to acknowledge such priceless riches. I wish you and yours light in the darkness and gratitude in your heart.

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.

New CEO named at Our Lady of Peace Hospice

Jeff Thorne took the helm at Our Lady of Peace Hospice and Home Health Care on Dec. 30, 2022, replacing Joe Stanislav who is retiring as CEO after 32 years of service.

Thorne brings 25 years of experience in healthcare and senior housing and care within not-for-profit organizations. He comes to Our Lady of Peace from Volunteers of America where he served as regional vice president of healthcare operations. Prior to Volunteers of America, he was vice president of operations at St. Therese and administrator/CEO at Cerenity Marian of Saint Paul, a senior Benedictine community. Thorne said, "Throughout my career, I've intentionally chosen to work for not-for-profit organizations that are mission focused, and I believe in hospice care, having experienced it personally and professionally. I'm looking forward to continuing to educate people on the benefits of hospice for individuals and families."

Thorne will continue the 81-year leg-



JEFF THORNE

acy of compassionate care at Our Lady of Peace as 21 private care suites are added and the in-home hospice and home health care program continues to grow. Defining priorities, he said, "I want to listen and learn what people value most about Our Lady of Peace, and make sure it's in our strategic plan to do more of it. And I want to make sure the medical community is aware of how our services can align with what they're doing."

Thorne described himself as a servant leader who likes collaboration. "I prefer to work with a team and draw from the expertise of other team members to make the best decisions. Our decisions will be mission focused, thoughtful, and based on facts and data."

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WHAT ARE YOU CURIOUS ABOUT?

SWEET JOURNEY >> from 1

tonin levels," said Leonard, which affects your sense of well-being. "Chocolate can have a calming effect."

She fashioned a box of chocolates for the Firefly Sisterhood, an organization that gave her support during her journey through cancer. Each piece of chocolate featured the group's signature firefly. Twenty percent of every Firefly Sisterhood Collection purchase supported the organization's mission: to ensure that women in the community do not face breast cancer alone. She also created a box to benefit the Hope Chest for Breast Cancer Foundation.

The Breast Cancer Collection continues to be sold at Chocolat Céleste, made with Valrhona chocolate, cream, and butter.

A CACAO LOVE STORY

Leonard has always worked hard – past employers said she did the work of five employees.

Now 68, Leonard grew up around female entrepreneurs. Her mother owned Eileen's Salon, first in the old building that used to be next to the original Cossetta's and then at West 7th and Victoria. Her mother's aunt was Nellie Kessler of Kessler and Maguire Funeral Home.

"We counted money on Saturday night," recalled Leonard.

Her parents died within a few months of each other when she was a junior at Highland Park High School. She began to dream about running her own business. Even as a teen, she loved to bake and make chocolates. "I was visually inspired to create visually appealing foods," said Leonard.

She earned a bachelor's degree in liberal arts in 1976 and a bachelor's degree in business and food science in 1978 from the University of Minnesota. She began working in the kitchen and dietary department of a 150-hospital system. She wrote 3,000 recipes and learned how to manage a kitchen. Then she shifted in 1989 to manage a project with the state of Minnesota and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University to introduce artificial intelligence and expert systems to state agencies. They partnered with IBM. Next she was tasked with managing the merger of the state of Minnesota's voice and data networks. Along the way, she earned her software development and design certificate from the University of St. Thomas, as well as a mini masters in marketing and telecommunications for the non-engineer. Plus, she took cabinetmaking classes at Minnesota Technical College.

When she encountered sexism in the workplace, she went to work for one of their vendors. At MCI Telecommunications, she served as the marketing and sales manager of a four-state region serv-



Postal carrier Kendra Hill collects packages full of truffles from Chocolat Céleste.



Chocolat Céleste owner Mary Leonard (left) and worker Stephanie Drake met in chemistry class at Highland Park High School. Today, they work together making and shipping chocolates. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

ing state governments and universities and managing a multi-million dollar piece of business.

MCI was her last employer.

When it was purchased, she took a package and didn't work for three years. She was in her mid-40s and checked off items on her bucket list.

While on a bicycle tour of France, she forwent the wine tours and checked out the patisseries and chocolatiers instead. "At 46 years old, I made the decision it was time to take the leap," she recalled. "I needed to do what I had intended to."

THE FINER THINGS OF LIFE

She attended various Chocolate and Sugar Technology courses through the University of California, Davis, and took a chocolate course from Jean Marie Auboine. In 2008, she earned a Fast Track for the Lean Organization mini masters from the University of St. Thomas.

"I taught myself what I needed to



DID YOU KNOW?

Mary Leonard of Chocolat Céleste enjoys educating folks about chocolate.

- About 70% of the world's cacao beans come from Africa. The largest producer is Côte d'Ivoire, then Ghana, followed by Indonesia, Brazil, Ecuador, Togo, Mexico, Papua New Guinea and the Caribbean Islands.

THREE KINDS OF TREES

- 1) Forastero:
 - 90% of all beans
 - Clean chocolate flavor with low acidity
 - Do not have fruity or aromatic flavors found in other beans
- 2) Criollo:
 - Complex, fruity flavor
 - Mainly in Latin America
 - Susceptible to disease and low productivity
- 3) Trinitario:
 - A fusion of the two strains
 - Good flavor and hardness
 - Flavor notes range from spicy to earthy to fruity to highly acidic

know," said Leonard.

She bought the machine she needed the day before 9/11 – and then discovered that the world had changed and she needed to pivot immediately.

She tested some boxes of chocolates at a local grocery store to see how they would sell. She doesn't partner with stores now to carry Chocolat Céleste products. "They aren't any chocolates like mine at Lunds and Byerlys or a department store because they're fresh," she explained. She said she's not in a mall because she needs access to a high-quality kitchen that doesn't smell like a deep fryer.

Leonard leveraged the connections she had made over the years to network with universities and corporations looking for gifts to give their clients and donors. She also caters to individuals who want to come in and personally build their own box of chocolates.

Leonard imports the Valrhona brand of luxury chocolates made purely from cocoa beans, and uses that to fashion the signature Chocolat Céleste truffles. Valrhona, based in the small village of Tain L'Hermitage, France is a certified B Corporation. She uses Organic Valley cream, and handcrafted butter from the family-run Hope Creamery in Hope, Minn. Her se-

lections change slightly according to the season. There are no preservatives and no gluten.

"Sharing the finer things has always been a joyful and deeply memorable experience for me. I see eyes light up as friends and colleagues sample and discover my chocolate notes and nuances. For me the world of fine food is about discovery," said Leonard.

A SENSORY CELEBRATION

Leonard battled sexism again as she sought funding and began building the business. Some folks didn't place a high value on anything that happened in a kitchen. "There was a lot of 'little women' stuff," Leonard remarked. She heard things like, "Well, if you can't get funding, you can get a job." And, "I didn't know you went to college."

As a women entrepreneur, Leonard received funding from the Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) which supports businesses along University Ave. Her first location was at 2506 University Ave. and she was there from 2001 to 2010. Things were booming – until the lightrail construction. "It did kill the business," said Leonard. "It's never grown to the level we had before."

She was wiped out, and closed for a few months. Then she moved into a building a block off University on Transfer Road, owned by the Rancone family. (It also houses the Twin Cities Model Railroad Museum.) It had the sort of kitchen she had hoped for from the start, one more like a lab. She's been at 652 Transfer Rd. ever since.

She has seven seasonal staff –and many of them also work at various State Fair booths in August, such as Jan Halter who works at Sweet Martha's Cookies. Stephanie Drake also works at the fair –and has known Leonard since their high school chemistry class. She appreciates the flexible hours and likes being busy. When asked what her favorite chocolate is, Drake responded, "Vanilla peries. Or, creme caramel."

For Leonard, it is the Franglico, which was called the Celestial Sweetie for 10 years (until Celestial Seasonings threatened a trademark infringement).

Hiring staff has been difficult. She previously paid \$12 an hour and has bumped that up to \$18. Leonard doesn't plan to retire, but she'd like to hire a full-time person to do more of the day-to-day operations so that she can focus on marketing.

Costs have gone up on chocolate, cream and butter. Someone else might consider finding cheaper alternatives and downgrading the ingredients. But Leonard doesn't plan to take that route.

She knows what makes her chocolates taste so good.

CHECK OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AND INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT for between the issues coverage.

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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund and the generous support of Minnesota United.

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REFLECTIONS, LOOKING AHEAD

DISTRICT 10 COMO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

BY SHEVEK MCKEE
Executive director
district10@
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Thanks to everyone who participated in our work in the Como Neighborhood in 2022. By the numbers, D10 published 51 Friday Newsletters in 2022, held 65 monthly board and committee meetings with nearly 700 attendees, successfully transitioning to hybrid meetings the second half of the year. We coordinated 34 community events where we counted approximately 2,700 attendees! Many of these events were new for us in 2022, and we're pumped to invite everyone back

as these become annual events around the neighborhood. We've been planning ahead at D10 and it's bearing fruit not only in increased engagement, but in building deeper connections and additional opportunities for partnerships and funding. We welcome you to get involved with us in 2023!

COMO BLIZZARD BREAKFAST FEB. 4

Join Parks and Rec and the Como Community Council for a Pancake Breakfast and Winter Activities at North Dale Recreation Center on February 4, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. Try snowshoeing, cross country skiing and skating before you warm up with a bonfire and s'mores. After all the fun activities, head inside for a pancake breakfast, neighborhood resources, a Como History Photo Harvest, kids activities and much more!

If you're interested in planning our

Como community events with us, you can join our Neighborhood Relations Committee meetings on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:15 p.m.

JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER WRITERS

Are you good at sharing good stories? Then you could be exactly who we are looking for to help with year two of D10 Como Park's Know Your Como project. Over the past year D10 Neighborhood Relations committee has continued to coordinate volunteer writers from the neighborhood to celebrate and appreciate the large and small contributions of our neighbors and the diversity that make Como a special place, and expanded the history stories with help from the Neighborhood History Project. The latest Know Your Como pieces are posted in the D10 website newsfeed and weekly newsletter, but you can find all the articles to date at www.district10comopark.org/kyc/.

This year the group will be looking at featuring places and history, in addition to community members. Email if you would

like to join the volunteer team!

JOIN BOARD IN 2023

Here's your chance to tackle that new year's resolution to get more involved: Several seats are up for election in April to the District 10 Como Community Council board. These positions serve two-year terms, through April 2024. To get on the ballot, apply now at District10ComoPark.org/Elections. That's where you can also learn more about the roles and opportunities of board members. The filing deadline is Sunday April 2. The election ends April 18.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Land Use Committee - Tuesday, Jan. 17, 6 p.m.
- D10 Board - Tuesday, Jan. 17, 7:15 p.m.
- Environment Committee - Wednesday, Feb. 1, 6 p.m.
- Neighborhood Relations Committee - Wednesday, Feb. 1, 7:15 p.m.

THEN AND NOW PHOTOS AT JAN. 21 BENEFIT



The community is invited to a "then and now" slide show about Frogtown and the Midway area at Half Time Rec (1013 Front St.) on Saturday, Jan. 21 from noon to 3 p.m. There will be story-telling and guessing games to go with the slides. No admission charge, but it is a benefit for the Recovery Cafe Frogtown and donations are welcome.

Recovery Cafe Frogtown hosts support groups and other activities for those struggling with addiction, or mental illness, or those who just want a place to meet others. It is located in the old Faith Lutheran Church building at 499 Charles Ave. Frogtown resident and Recovery Cafe Board Member, Andy Dawkins enjoyed putting the slideshow together. (Dawkins was also the State Representative for the area for 15 years.)

"What fun it was looking for old photos of places and signs in Saint Paul's Midway, and then taking photos of what's there now. We also have slides of some semi-famous residents and we'll have a contest guessing their names," he said. "It's a great cause and it will be great fun." (Photos submitted)



PLAN IT

WINTERRIESE CONCERT JAN. 22

Award-winning collaborators Justin Anthony Spenner (Baritone) and Caron Rose Schneider (Piano) will perform Franz Schubert's beautiful, dramatic, and monumental song cycle Winterriese exploring the human need for connection and acceptance on Sunday, Jan. 22 at 4 p.m. at Hamline Church United Methodist.

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM WEBINAR JAN. 25

World Without Genocide will host a webinar on Christian Nationalism and the Threat to Human Rights on Wednesday, Jan. 25, 7-9 p.m. on Zoom. Christian Nationalism is the belief that the American nation is defined by Christianity, and that the government should take active steps to keep it that way. Registration is required at www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/christian-nationalism. On Dec. 7, 2022, World Without Genocide, a human rights non-profit at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in Saint Paul, Minn., was one of nine human rights organizaLons, known as NGOs (non-governmental organizaLons), awarded Special Consultative Status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC.

DANCE CLASSES OFFERED WEEKLY

Keane Sense of Rhythm (KSR) recently opened a new dance studio at 2161 University Ave. W., Suite 117, in the Creative Enterprise Zone. KSR is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve, present, create and expand the boundaries of American tap dance. For passionate tap dancers ages 8-18, the Youth Tap Ensemble offers professional-level training and performance opportunities. Dance Fit Tuesdays offers a strength and conditioning class held in a dance party setting. The dance studio provide free, high-quality arts enrichment experiences to students in St. Paul city schools.

SEED SWAP SET FOR JAN. 28

MnSEED will hold a Seed Swap on Saturday, Jan. 28, 1-4 p.m., at the Anderson Center at Hamline University. "This swap will be an informal gathering of growers, gardeners, pollinator supporters and seed-enthusiasts of all experience levels, and will be open to all seed types," said Stephanie Hankerson, educator at MnSEED. "Every seed has a story," says Dawn Lamm, coordinator of the Como Community Seed Library, "and in-person seed swaps allow for these stories to be exchanged." More at <https://www.comoseedlibrary.org/>. MnSEED is hosting this event as a part of National Seed Swap Day, which has been celebrated since 2006 in the U.S.; however, seeds have been integral to communities long before.

MnSEED emerged during the pandemic and its emphasis on native pollinator plant seed saving has fueled many other seed and native plant programs such as The Bee Line along Pierce Butler Route in the Frogtown and Midway neighborhoods of St. Paul. More information about the MnSEED seed saving project can be found at northerngardener.org/mn-seed-project/.

REMEMBERING RONDO IN MUSIC FEB. 5

The Music & Arts Series at Hamline Church presents "RONDO '56: Remembering St. Paul's Black Main Street" on Feb. 5 at 7 p.m. This event is a portrait in music, stories and archival photos of St. Paul's thriving Black neighborhood in the '40s and '50s, before it was sliced down the middle to make room for Interstate 94. It will star T Mychael Rambo, Thomasina Petrus, Charmin Michelle and Dan Chouinard, plus a stellar band and feature songs from Louis Jordan, Dinah Washington, Nat King Cole, Mahalia Jackson, Big Mama Thornton, Memphis Slim, the Drifters and more. Stick around for the post show community conversation with refreshments featuring show creator Dan Chouinard, cast members and grown-up children from the Rondo neighborhood.

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Minnesota Tool Library moves Saint Paul Branch

The Minnesota Tool Library is excited to share tools and trade skills in a new location for the 2023 lending season.

In December volunteers were busy helping their local cooperative lending library relocate. Its new digs at 1010 Dale Street North are just a hop, skip, and a jump away from the Prior Street branch; but will provide significantly increased accessibility and allow the nonprofit to better serve its members within the North End, Frogtown, Rondo, and Como neighborhoods. There will be an open house event in early February.

The Saint Paul branch of the MN Tool Library opened in 2017 in the basement of the PriorWorks Building and has been providing tool loans, DIY classes, and shared workshop space for the community ever since. "We've been very fortunate for the support of the Hamline-Midway and Saint Anthony Park neighborhoods as we set-up shop on Prior. The St. Paul branch started out serving about 300 local households, and now more than twice as many members use the branch for their home improvement needs, small businesses,

and community projects. Before we closed our doors in Mid-December for the move, the St. Paul branch had already processed 13,690 tool loans," noted Executive Director Kate Hersey. "Our growing operations and constraints at Prior made the move necessary; but it was really important that we found a space nearby where we could maintain and honor the community relationships we've built here in the Midway. We look forward to seeing familiar faces from the neighborhood when we open our doors at Dale and hope to engage and empower even more Minnesotans through sharing in the new year."

The Prior location officially closed its doors on Dec. 19 to finish up the move and resumed operations Jan. 6. Up-to-date information on operating hours, the open house, and current volunteer opportunities can be found at www.mntoolibrary.org. The Minnesota Tool Library is a member-based, volunteer-driven 501(c)3 non-profit organization. MTL believes in empowering one another, reducing waste, and improving communities by sharing tools, trade skills, and shop space.

TIDBITS

CORP HONORS MARK KOENIG

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, recently named Mark Koenig of St. Paul, Minnesota, as its 2022 hall of fame inductee. Over the course of his 41-year career, Koenig served in various roles with significant responsibility and impact to include: active-duty military engineer, construction resident engineer and contracting officer's representative, the chief of safety and security, the chief of emergency management and, most recently, chief of construction.

SCHOOL BOARD LEADERS

During the Board of Education's Annual Meeting, board members appointed the following to officer positions for 2023:

Chair: Jim Vue

Vice-Chair: Jessica Kopp

Clerk: Halla Henderson

Treasurer: Uriah Ward

The following board members will serve as directors: Chauntyll Allen, Zuki Ellis and Jeanelle Foster.

DOSSMAN PROMOTED

The Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) is proud to announce the promotion of Renay Dossman to President and CEO by the NDC Board of Directors. Dossman has served as President of NDC since 2019. Under her guidance, the growing NDC team continues to provide the learning, framework, and support to enable entrepreneurs from all over the world to launch new and thriving businesses. The NDC family of business owners receive opportunities for help with funding and grant applications, marketing, social media, and mental health services while weaving their way through the recent COVID-19 pandemic and other recent social impacts. NDC Board chair, Lachelle Cunningham said, "As we enter a new year and celebrate our 30th anniversary, we stand steadfast in our commitment to Renay's leadership and serving future entrepreneurs. Together we will continue to transform and disrupt systems that impact racial and economic opportunity."



ALLIANZ FIELD >> from 1

A responsible governmental unit – in this case the City of St. Paul – uses an AUAR as a planning tool, to understand how various development scenarios will affect the community when a larger project is proposed or is in process.

The Snelling-Midway project was one of the first for St. Paul to use an AUAR process. Other projects since then that have used AUAR processes include the redevelopment of the former Ford Motor Company plant into Highland Bridge and the Hillcrest Golf Course redevelopment on the city's East Side.

The first AUAR for a project is a pre-development document, examining how different development plans could affect the surrounding community environment before any development occurs. An AUAR update is then done every five years until a large project is completed. The document released in December is Snelling-University's second AUAR.

The AUAR looks at an array of potential environmental impacts – including on traffic, wildlife, water resources, historic resources and air, light and noise pollution.

The process is designed to look at the cumulative impacts of anticipated development scenarios within a given geographic area. The AUAR document uses a list of questions adapted from the EAW form, but provides a level of analysis of typical urban area impacts comparable to an EIS. Environmental analysis information from an AUAR can be used to inform local planning and zoning decisions.



Read the entire 61-page AUAR on the Monitor website.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The first Minnesota United Stadium and Mixed-Use Urban Village Alternative Urban AUAR was approved in 2016.

The study area is 34.43 acres, located just north of Interstate 94, bounded by St. Anthony, Snelling and University avenues, and Pascal Street. Staff from city departments worked with consultants from Stantec and SRF to update the AUAR.

The study outlines what has been completed to date, and what work is remaining. At Snelling-Midway, the 20,000-seat Allianz Field has been built and is operating. Streets, parking and public areas were completed.

But the anticipated mixed-use development, to be led by Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC, hasn't happened yet. The latest plans approved by the city date from May 2016. While city staff did see a vision for a new development scenario in July 2020, no new plans have been submitted to the city. That means the 2016 plans are still technically in effect. The AUAR includes both the 2016 plans and

the 2020 proposal.

"Should (Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC) submit redevelopment applications under a new development scenario, the (city) will evaluate whether the applications are consistent with the 2016 Snelling Midway Redevelopment Site Master Plan or will require amendments to the 2016 Master Plan," the AUAR stated. Staff

did determine that the new development proposal would be consistent with the plans submitted as part of the 2016 study. It also put residential development on the Pascal-St. Anthony parking area.

One idea that would have to require a city zoning change is the idea of putting a large dynamic display screen at the site. The screen "would feature various types of programming for display including community night-out movies, showing live performances at community festivals, public service announcements and advertisements, visual art, and live broadcasts of home and away soccer games." It's not a permitted use.

Here's what else could change. The 2016 plan called for 620 multi-family dwelling units. The 2020 anticipated scenario is for 948 units. A 400-unit hotel was envisioned in 2016; 100 rooms were cited in 2020.

The commercial building area envisioned in 2016 was for 1,000,000 square feet of office area and 421,100 square feet of retail, including an 800-seat cin-

ema, a 50,000-square-foot fitness club and 39,000 square feet of bowling alley space. The 2020 scenario includes 802,680 square feet of office space and 241,425 square feet on general retail.

The 2016 plans call for the park area extending from the stadium to extend all the way to University. The 2020 plan has commercial development on that block.

The 20,000-seat soccer stadium was completed. The AUAR notes it has the capacity to expand to 25,500 seats.

New structure heights would be 35 to 230 feet under the 2020 scenario, as compared to 70 to 290 feet in the original plans. Parking space numbers decrease from 4,720 in the 2016 plan to 3,204 in the 2020 scenario.

One area studied is transportation. The newest study indicates that the 2020 redevelopment scenario would generate fewer motor vehicle trips than anticipated in the 2016 plans. But there is also a caveat.

"Due to a combination of the COVID-19 related travel pattern impacts and lack of any development during the previous five-year period, new traffic data and intersection analysis were not completed as part of this AUAR update. Therefore, this AUAR update is intended to provide an overview of current development assumptions as compared with the previous development assumptions," the AUAR stated. The traffic studied is daily traffic and not event traffic. Traffic studies will be updated as development occurs.

It also notes that an event transportation management plan for events at the stadium was developed and implemented as part of the 2016 study.

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"Supporting the Monitor is one of many ways for us to support our neighborhood.

Our local newspaper allows families in the neighborhood to learn of Career Pathways Secondary School and our individualized learning paths for students in grades 6-12. We want our neighbors to know who we are as a school and why we are special. The Hamline Midway neighborhood is part of our school's identity. Career Pathways recently invested \$2,000,000 in remodeling our facilities as a commitment to the Hamline Midway neighborhood.

We're proud to be a part of it and represented in the Monitor."

~ Liz Lonetti of Career Pathways

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Home

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MONITOR SPECIAL SECTIONS

2023

JANUARY due Jan. 2, pub Jan. 12

Health & Wellness
School Guide

FEBRUARY due Jan. 30, pub Feb. 9

Summer Camp Guide
Tie the Knot
Employment

MARCH due Feb. 27, pub Mar 9

Home Improvement
Aging Well

APRIL due April 3, pub April 13

Home & Garden
Drive & Ride

MAY due May 1, pub May 11

Home & Garden
Summer in the City

JUNE due May 26, pub June 8

Summer in the City
Aging Well
Paws & Claws

JULY due June 30, pub July 13

@ University Ave.
Summer in the City

AUGUST due July 31, pub Aug. 10

Back to School
Summer in the City

SEPTEMBER due Sept. 1, pub Sept. 14

Back to School - Health focus
Aging Well

OCTOBER due Oct. 3, pub Oct. 12

Home Improvement
Voters Guide

NOVEMBER due Oct. 30, pub Nov. 9

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Development UPDATE

By JANE McCLURE

PROJECT AT FORMER SCHOOL BUILDING

A Merriam Park development project, which hit some delays, is moving ahead. The St. Paul Planning Commission Jan. 6 approved a conditional use permit and variances for the Marshall Avenue Flats at 1619 Dayton Ave.

The project will be build on a parking lot north of the former Richard Gordon School building. The new six-story building will be at the southeast corner of Marshall and Fry Street.

The conditional use permit is to allow a building of up to 75 feet tall. Variances are needed for setbacks. The Planning Com-



mission approvals are final unless they are appealed to the City Council within 10 days.

The site is zoned for traditional neighborhoods 3 use. The school building, which dates from 1911 and has been used as office space since the 1980s, will eventually be split from the planned new building.

The property was rezoned in 2020 and received the same conditional use permit and variances. Because of COVID-19 related delays, the project has not gone forward as quickly as planned. The permit and variances would typically expire in two years if a

project doesn't go forward. The Jan. 6 action gives the developer more time. The project did get one extension from city staff.

Project financing, increased construction costs and the need to go through a historical review for the school also delayed the project, which is to start in 2023.

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY GETS LOT

Concordia University will be able to purchase a longtime parking lot from the city, for \$170,000. The St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), Dec. 14 approved conveyance of the lot at 410 N. Griggs St. from the city to the HRA. After acting as a pass-through for the lot, the HRA will then sell the lot to the university.

The City Council approved the final sale, for \$170,000, Jan. 4. The sale proceeds go to Midway Peace Park improvements.

The property at the northeast corner of Griggs and St. Anthony Avenue was part of

the property that is now Midway Peace Park. The park is just north of the parking lot. It is adjacent to the parking area used by the building at 393 N. Dunlap that is owned and occupied by Concordia. Concordia also uses the 410 N. Griggs property for parking.

The Dunlap building, long known as Central Medical, was purchased by the university more than four years ago.

The sale will be by use of a limited warranty deed from the city to the HRA to Concordia subject to the terms and conditions. The city obtained a property appraisal. The value is limited by an easement over the property which currently allows Concordia to use it for parking.

The city is currently obligated to maintain the property including snow removal, but its use is limited to one parking spot for the park, as the rest of the property is used by Concordia for parking. The price represents a negotiated price which takes the limiting easement into account.

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