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Como Ball fills void left by closing of Midway Baseball

## Kids baseball coming back

By JANE MCCLURE

Play ball! A group of dedicated Como area volunteers want young baseball and softball players to get onto the diamonds this season. The nonprofit Como Ball Youth Baseball and Softball Association's mission is to bring children's and youth baseball and softball back to the Como, North End, Frogtown, Hamline-Midway and St. Anthony Park neighborhoods.



Former Twins player Joe Mauer played for Midway Baseball teams as a child.

The association plans to offer in-house and traveling teams for young people ages 6-15. Most activities will be at Como Park Senior High School, North Dale Recreation Center and Northwest Como Recreation Center.

Como Ball leaders wish to fill the void left by the closing of longtime area program Midway Baseball. Midway shut down in January 2023. It's also an effort to rebuild youth and ultimately prep programs that were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It could be an uphill battle, as more sports and pastimes compete for the attention of young people. But organizers

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# FROM FATHER TO DAUGHTER



Matt and Ashley Lloyd have purchased the family hardware store from Ashley's dad, Kendall Crosby. They plan to continue offering free popcorn and friendly service. Plus, the beloved pets will be around, including Cleo the German shepherd (above), Lila the Rottweiler, Stanley the big black cat, and Makita the tortoiseshell cat. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

## Got a broken vacuum? Take it to A-1 Vacuum

By JAN WILLMS

In 1952, Salvador "Sam" Battisto started a vacuum shop in his basement. Today, his son Russ and granddaughter Gina are continuing to operate A-1 Vacuum Cleaner Company (2575 Fairview Ave., Roseville), providing sales, service and repair to Twin Cities customers.

"I have pictures of myself at five years old, playing with vacuums," Russ Battisto said. "When I was in high school, I started working part-time. That's what Gina did, too. We have all gotten our hands dirty over the years. And now we have the third generation in the family business."

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## Don't worry. Kendall's, the friendliest hardware store in St. Paul, will stay the same as ownership transitions.

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Kendall Crosby remembers being at a conference in Atlanta, Ga. and sharing the mission statement for his St. Paul hardware store: "To go above and beyond customer expectations."

The presenter took the paper he was reading from, crumpled it and threw it away.

"What does that mean?" the presenter asked.

Kendall remembers feeling surprised. And then realizing the presenter was right. They needed more than that.

He decided that day their focus would be on treating their customers

with friendliness.

"From that moment on, I changed my process," recalled Kendall. "Friendly meant friendly. Period. From that moment on we hired friendly, we did business with vendors who are friendly, no matter what." That included customers.

"A mean old man yelled at [my daughter] Ashley once and made her cry. I remember telling my wife, Alexandra, that friendly meant everyone. The next day the crabby old mean man came back. This time I was ready. He growled at me. I told him our vision: Friendly. If he wasn't friendly, he had to leave. Friendly customers only. He let me have it. He was mean! I stood my ground. He never came back. And word spread fast after that. I think the crowd started cheering!"

### A CINDERELLA STORY

On Jan. 2, 2024, the "Friendliest Store in Town" at 840 Payne Ave. officially passed from Kendall to his daughter, Ashley Lloyd and her husband, Matt.

"We've always felt it's a Cinderel-

la story," remarked Kendall. "Ashley and Matt are so very excited. It's a dream come true."

Kendall sold his first store, the one at 978 Dale Street, to his son Josh in 2017. He had opened that location as a True Value in April 1992 when he was 28 years old, becoming the youngest hardware store owner at the time in Minnesota.

Kendall took over the 50-year-old Payne Avenue hardware store owned by the legendary Bill and Gladys Godwin in 2005, and it became an Ace Hardware Store. The structure at Payne and Maryland dated to 1942.

Kendall started working at a hardware store when he was 14, beginning at his local hardware store in West St. Paul. He turns 60 this year, and now lives in Highland Park.

As a parent, Kendall focused on teaching his four children "how to work and how to count money," and he encouraged them to forego college and instead go

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New leaders in St. Paul on school board and historic all-female city council

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COLUMN: Getting the paper to your front door just got harder

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SUMMER CAMPS Plan ahead for fun this summer

PAGE 2



## SUMMER CAMPS

### A FEW TIPS AS YOU PLAN KIDS' SUMMER REC

• **Ask for recommendations.** Speak with fellow parents and trusted friends about where they send their children. Personal recommendations can be very helpful, providing firsthand insight into a particular camp or program.

• **Explore all options.** Camps come in more flavors than ever before. Certain camps may be faith-based ministries while others may focus on particular sports. Band camps and art camps may appeal

to creative kids. Also, there are plenty of general-interest camps that offer various activities without narrowing in on any particular one.

• **Determine your camp budget.** As varied as program offerings may be, camps also can vary greatly with regard to cost.

In addition to camp, remember to plan for some free days so children can just enjoy some downtime. Such days can break up the monotony of a routine and provide kids and families time to relax together.



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## HAMLIN HEADLINES



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## NEW LEADERS IN SAINT PAUL



Newly elected St. Paul Public School Board members Yusef Carrillo, Carlo Franco and Erica Valliant, and re-elected member Chauntyll Allen, were sworn in on Jan. 9, 2024. They join returning members Jim Vue, Halla Henderson and Uriah Ward on the seven-member Board of Education. Following the ceremony, the board elected the following officers: Chair Halla Henderson, Vice Chair Uriah Ward, Clerk Erica Valliant, and Treasurer Yusef Carrillo. (Photo submitted)



Members of the first all-women St. Paul City Council include: (left to right) Ward 1's Anika Bowie, Ward 2's Rebecca Noecker, Ward 3's Saura Jost, Ward 4's Mitra Jalali, Ward 5's HwaJeong Kim, Ward 6's Nelsie Yang, and Ward 7's Cheniqua Johnson. A majority of the councilmembers are women of color, and all are younger than the age of 40. The women were sworn in at the inauguration ceremony on Jan. 9, 2024, at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts. The three returning councilmembers: Councilmember Rebecca Noecker, Ward 2, begins her third term; Councilmember Mitra Jalali, Ward 4, begins her third term; and Councilmember Nelsie Yang, Ward 6, begins her second term.

## KIDS BASEBALL

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are confident that their new program will meet a need.

Como Ball President and founder Cory Klinge is working with a volunteer board. He and Como Park High School baseball coach Ian Zangs are among those leading the charge to get the program underway.

Volunteers are encouraged by the interest shown and welcome more young ball players.

Registration began in January and ends March 14. Registration is via Google Form and Square this season. The program is to start in mid-May and run through July.

The intent is to offer co-ed coach pitch for up to age 8; ages 9-10 baseball and softball in-house; ages 11 and 12 baseball and softball traveling; 13 and under baseball and softball traveling; and 15 and under baseball and softball traveling.

Como Ball had one team in fall 2023. The boys finished 3-4-1.



Klinge's 15-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter have played in-house and traveling baseball and softball. He has coached them both. The family was most recently involved in Highland Baseball.

Klinge called the closing of Midway Baseball "disappointing and devastating." He added, "Parents and children had to

scramble to find other options."

Midway Baseball was a program of the Dunning Boosters, based at Dunning Field/Dunning Recreation Center in Lexington-Hamline neighborhood. Teams began playing for Midway in 1990. Minnesota Twins star and new Baseball Hall of Famer Joe Mauer got his start with Midway.

Midway grew from 60 to as many as 350 participants during its history. But the program struggled in recent years with declining numbers. The 2020 season was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We wanted to stay in St. Paul and we saw a need for another option," Klinge said. The goal is for a middle-ground program, between the small-scale, casual teams and the very expensive traveling team options that leave some families out due to costs.

The program doesn't see itself as a replacement for St. Paul Parks and Recreation teams, but as an alternative that is more structured and offers a more consistent coaching experience. The intent is for players to play equally and grow in their experience.

The \$100 fee covers two practices and two games each week, a jersey and cap. Traveling team fee is \$300.

Want more information? Go to [comoball23@gmail.com](mailto:comoball23@gmail.com) or checking Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100092567177893>

A website is under construction and goes public March 1, at [www.comoball.com](http://www.comoball.com).

## Hotel and ramp coming to former Midway Center superblock

By JANE MCCLURE

With much of the former Midway Center superblock now owned by one party, redevelopment is moving ahead. The sale of more shopping center property to Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC in late January clears the way for projects including a hotel with restaurant and an attached parking ramp.

The hotel and ramp require a conditional use permit and six variances. An application to the city was anticipated as this issue of the Monitor went to press.

The Union Park District Council (UPDC) land use committee reviewed the hotel and needed variances Jan. 22. The hotel would be located along University between Asbury and Simpson streets. The hotel and its parking ramp would form an ell shape, which would face a lawn. The lawn in turn would be north of the Great Lawn for the Allianz Field stadium.

UPDC hasn't taken action on the permit and variances yet, and won't do so until a formal application is filed with the city. Hamline Midway Coalition is also expected to weigh in, as the structure is right on the border between the two planning districts.

The conditional use permit is for the height of the hotel's west facing wall, from 75 feet to a proposed 90 feet. The other walls doesn't require a permit as designed.

The parking structure would not exceed the 75-foot height limit.

The master plan for the property proposes a height of 100 to 180 feet for the planned hotel, which was supposed to be in the southeastern part of the property.

Mike Hahm, project consultant, said the variances are viewed as minor. One is for the entrance along University. The city limits that vehicular entrance to 60 feet; the request is for the entrance to extend the entire length of the hotel's front, for a full building east to west loop. This would be for guest unloading and loading. Those vehicles would enter on Simpson and exit via Asbury.

A second variance is for the building entrance to be placed in the middle of the structure's main floor. The city requires new structures to have entrances that "anchor" a corner.

An eave design for the west wall of the building drives the third variance request.

The fourth variance is to allow the hotel to be set back 44 feet south of University, rather than the standard 10 feet. This setback increase is needed to accommodate the necessary drive up and drop off area. The setback is also needed so as not to move a large transformer box for Green Line light rail.

The city has minimum standards for the percentage of door and window openings on new structures. The variance

requests are needed to comply with the interior design for hotel rooms and for ground floor spaces in the facility. The fifth variance is to the city's standard for door and window openings, on the east and west side of the hotel. Rooms will be along hallways and the interior design doesn't allow for more windows. The sixth variance is for window and door ground floor openings on the east and west sides of the structure.

Land use committee members questioned the number of variances, and why the master plan didn't take the hotel design issues into consideration.

The size of the parking ramp also raised questions. The ramp will be shared by other businesses on the large block and isn't solely for hotel use. Shared parking facilities are part of the master plan, which won city council approval seven years ago.

Hahm noted that other aspects of the area redevelopment are proceeding, including environmental cleanup and site preparation for the University-Snelling sculpture plaza and the all-abilities playground on Pascal Street.

What will allow more projects to move ahead is the Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC's 54.4 million purchase of properties in the block bounded by Pascal and St. Anthony, Snelling and University avenues.

RK Midway Shopping Center LLC is



View of United Village from the northeast

the seller. It is part of New York-based RD Management LLC.

The purchase includes former Midway Center properties as well as the Snelling-University southeast corner lot, a small building that has housed or houses a variety of businesses including a locksmith, sandwich shop, check cashing business and carryout pizza place, and the longtime Midway Center McDonald's.

McDonald's, the multi-tenant business building and the former Midway Perkins/Big Top Liquors building were planned in the late 1980s, as part of the revitalization of Midway Center. Plans originally called for three fast food restaurants there. The plans faced community opposition as well as skepticism from some city planners and Planning Commission members. One big issue was drive-through traffic entering and exiting via University.



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 [tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com](mailto:tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com).

# GETTING THE PAPER TO YOUR FRONT DOOR JUST GOT A LITTLE HARDER

## TOO MUCH COFFEE



BY TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN  
Owner & Editor  
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Being a small business owner has its good and bad days. In late December 2023, we got some tough news.

Independent Delivery Service (IDS), a staple in the Twin Cities for 40 years, was shutting down effective almost immediately.

Founded in October 1973 by Mike Depe, IDS offered an alternative delivery for third class mail and newspaper inserts. They moved to 440 W Minnehaha Ave. in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul in 1989, occupying a 18,000-square-foot building that provided garage space for 20 fleet vehicles, warehouse space for deliveries, and office space for sales and other staff. At one time, IDS was among the largest alternative distribution services operating in the country. They had more than 50 employees and subcontractors delivering over 50 million pieces per year. Account representatives Mike Tierney and Paul Overson worked at IDS for decades, as did operations manager Brian Amundsen.

Mike Depe (shown at right) died in October 2020 at age 71, and his daughters Bridget Teigland, Heather Favre, and Charlotte Snegosky took over the operation of IDS on top of their other responsibilities.



Last year, MyVillager newspaper in Highland Park decided to stop using IDS to deliver to front doors. They dropped down their print circulation and opted for paid subscribers who get the paper in the mail. Previously, they had been delivering 60,000 papers throughout St. Paul and nearby cities of Lilydale, Mendota and Mendota Heights, with a few thousand papers in the Longfellow neighborhood of south Minneapolis. They shifted their focus to their website, as have other newspapers who are adapting to sur-

## PICK UP A COPY

If you're anything like me, you love a good local read. Check out these newspapers that still print physical copies (and also have e-editions online). We're collaborating with them with on delivery:

- 1) Northeaster, 31,700 copies, every other week, Northeast Minneapolis
- 2) St. Paul Publishing: St. Paul Voice, Downtown St. Paul Voice, South St. Paul Voice, La Latina Voz, 37,500 copies, once a month
- 3) Community Reporter - nonprofit, 13,000 copies, monthly, West 7th Street area in St. Paul
- 4) TMC Publications: Longfellow Nokomis Messenger (22,000 copies) in Minneapolis and Midway Como Frogtown Monitor (23,500 copies) in St. Paul, monthly; Southwest Connector (25,000 copies), twice a month in Southwest Minneapolis

## OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSPAPERS

- Alley, non-profit, once a month in Phillips neighborhood, Minneapolis; door-to-door delivery and stacks at local businesses

- Hill and Lake Press, non-profit, once a month in Kenwood, Lowry Hill, Cedar-Isles-Dean and East Isles in southwest Minneapolis; 9,000 copies delivered by mail
- North News, non-profit owned by Pillsbury United Communities, once a month to 14 neighborhoods of North Minneapolis via 400 public bulk drop sites and paid home subscriptions; runs year round internship program for area high school students
- Park Bugle, non-profit, once a month in St. Anthony Park, Lauderdale, Falcon Heights and Como Park, St. Paul; delivered to subscribers by mail
- Southside Pride, once a month, 10,000 copies, stacks at south Minneapolis businesses
- Villager, every other week, based in Highland Park, St. Paul; delivered to subscribers by mail

## PRINT NICHE PUBLICATION

- Access Press, non-profit, monthly, Minnesota's Disability Community News source, delivered to subscribers by mail and at businesses throughout the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota. (\*Note: editor is Jane McClure of St. Paul, who also writes for the Monitor and Villager.)

When you blanket a neighborhood like we do, the paper goes to all ages, all races, and all ethnic groups. There is no discrimination. We require no payment. Local businesses support the writers, printing, and delivery through ad sales.

And we do it because we believe it is vitally important.

Newspapers, as my children hear often, are fundamental to democracy, and neighborhood newspapers are a great equalizer. These small little papers are creating community with each issue that comes out.

You might say, they are community. So, when the Northeaster, St. Paul Publishing, Community Voices and TMC Publications CO (my group of three newspapers that reach over 150,000 readers each month) heard that IDS was shutting down, we came together.

The Neighborhood and Community Press Association folded years ago as the once-strong group of about 40 papers dwindled. But we're reviving a coalition.

We know we're stronger together.

We're working to keep on some of the carriers who used to deliver for IDS and have walked these city streets for years with a bag of papers slung over their shoulders. For some of them,

this has been their main job. For other carriers, it

is a side gig meant to add something extra to their household income. We have retired folks working as carriers. Parents and children learning the ins and outs of newspaper delivery. People appreciate the flexibility of the gig. They like the fresh air and appreciate a job that moves their body.

If you want to join our group of carriers, send a note to [delivery@tmcpub.com](mailto:delivery@tmcpub.com).

As we work out the kinks of this new system, please be patient with us. Let us know if you got your paper – and if you didn't. Thank your carrier.

Share your thoughts on the neighborhood and newspapers. Email [tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com](mailto:tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com).

vive. The MyVillager shift came on the heels of a string of local newspaper closures over the years that included North St. Paul-based Lillie Suburban Newspapers (folded September 2019) and the Southwest Journal (shuttered in December 2020). Forum Communications closed papers in Woodbury, Cottage Grove and Hastings, and those have been jump-started online.

There have been other delivery companies that have come and gone over the years, including Lloyd's Delivery, which delivered for the Longfellow Nokomis Messenger and Midway Como Frogtown Monitor for years, and because of that we had hired IDS to deliver roughly half of the Messenger and Monitor newspapers for the last two years. (And they had delivered our newspapers at other times over the last few decades.)

In late fall, IDS learned that the Star Tribune and Pioneer Press were discontinuing their free weekend products, the small editions with lifestyle content, cou-

pons and sale flyers. It was a decrease in about 100,000 weekly deliveries for IDS. The owners decided they couldn't sustain such a decrease in business, and announced they were done as of Dec. 31.

That left four of us neighborhood newspaper in the lurch, those of us still getting newspapers to people's front doors the old-fashioned way: a newspaper placed door-to-door by a carrier walking from house to house in all kinds of weather.

Why do we still want to deliver this way?

We do it because we want everyone to get a paper, to have the same information and news no matter whether you own or rent, have a big house or a small one, make a lot of money or just get by.



Lonnie Bosby is part of our delivery crew in St. Paul.

SUPPORT DELIVERY TO YOUR HOUSE. CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION OR TAKING OUT AN AD. MORE DETAILS AT [WWW.MONITORSAINTPAUL.COM](http://WWW.MONITORSAINTPAUL.COM)

## LETTERS

### GUN THEFTS FROM CARS ARE ON THE RISE

Gun thefts from cars are on the rise, but there's an easy way to end this trend: safe storage. Lawful gun owners don't want their weapons to end up in the hands of criminals, but that's what is happening here in St. Paul and across the nation.

Most often these guns are taken from

cars where owners have left them unsecured.

Ten years ago, less than a quarter of gun thefts nationwide were from cars. In 2020, more than half of them were, according to an Everytown for Gun Safety analysis of FBI data. And that's true in St. Paul, where the police department confirms that stolen guns are most often taken from cars.

Gun owners can ensure their firearms don't end up stolen by using a trigger lock, lockbox or portable gun safe when they

leave their guns in their cars. Securely storing firearms prevents them from being used by others to take their own lives, being accidentally discharged by children or used in criminal activity.

But safe storage isn't just a way to reduce crime and prevent tragedy. In St. Paul, it's also the law. Chapter 225 of St. Paul City ordinance which was amended in May makes it illegal to leave both loaded and unloaded firearms unattended in locations where another person can gain access unless they are secured with a lock-

ing device.

As a resident of Hamline-Midway and a parent, I would ask any lawful gun owners in the neighborhood to do your part to keep our kids safe and our neighborhood crime-free. If you leave your gun in your car, keep it locked! Please don't give anyone a reason to break into cars looking for a gun. Follow our new city ordinance!

Cassandra Quam  
Hamline-Midway

# Monitor

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News for you!

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](mailto:tesha@monitorsaintpaul.com). Unsigned letters will not run.

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

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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**BUILDING A STRONGER MIDWAY**



BY CHAD KULAS,  
Midway Chamber of  
Commerce Executive Director  
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At a recent Midway Chamber meeting, we hosted the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) commissioner, Matt Varilek. He started last June when former Commissioner Steve Grove left to become publisher/CEO of the Star Tribune.

Varilek is very comfortable in his role acting as the bearer of good news on our economy in Minnesota. While some are eager to criticize Minnesota or our economy, here are some important numbers to remember.

Minnesota has had six straight months of job growth and we have never had as many jobs than we do now (3,008,000). Recently, CNBC ranked Minnesota as the fifth best state for business, and we are first in the nation for business survival rates after five years at 57.6%. A map shows we have a significant increase in new business applications (especially compared to most states), and are opening more businesses than we are closing.

While taxes are everyone's favorite talking point against Minnesota, we rank 13th lowest among states in business taxes as a percent of the GDP (best in the Mid-

**THE ECONOMY OF OUR STATE**



(Left to right) Ramsey County Commissioner Rena Moran, Midway Chamber Executive Director Chad Kulas, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Matt Varilek and Ramsey County Director of Workforce Solutions Ling Becker chat on Jan. 31.

west). A recent study by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy also reported we are the best state for a metric called tax fairness, meaning low-income households pay less of their income in taxes compared to high-income households.

Minnesotans love their lists and rankings, especially when we look good. But DEED knows not to rest easy on the successes we've had as there is always a need to improve. Two areas of real importance are broadband access and child care.

Access to the internet has been compared to basic needs like electricity and indoor plumbing. And for people without easily accessible internet, they could fall behind others in their careers, job searches and efficiencies in their personal lives. While US News and World Report ranks Minnesota the #1 state for internet access in the country, we do not want to fall behind. The state legislature passed \$100 million in broadband infrastructure support and Minnesota received \$652 million from the federal government to expand broadband services.

Childcare can be an enormous barrier for people looking for work, and DEED is finding ways to help. In the FY 24-25 biennium, DEED has \$15 million for childcare and \$3 million in FY 26-27. This funding will help create childcare slots through grants to communities for new or expanding childcare businesses, facility improvements, worker training, attraction, retention and licensing, and other strategies to reduce the childcare shortage.

Minnesota is outperforming the rest of the United States, but that doesn't mean the country as a whole is doing poorly. In fact, a report by Axios states that the U.S. GDP grew 2.5% in 2023, making it the best G7 country for growth for the year. And early reports are the U.S. will head the list once more in 2024.

There's always going to be work to do and ways we can improve. Despite the rhetoric, it is important to remember data and the strategies implemented to make our communities better.

**PLANTING SEEDS**



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

Feb. 1 marks the beginning of Black History Month. This is an important opportunity to learn, grow, and lead. It is an invitation to learn about the valuable contributions of Black leaders in shaping the course of U.S. history. Our nonprofit, Planting People Growing Justice, visits schools during Black History Month to read our collection of diverse books and share key lessons from history. During each of our Black History Month visits, I start with the question: "Who founded Black History Month?" Over the years, I have yet to hear a correct answer from students, parents, teachers, or administrators. I receive a range of answers from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to Rosa Parks, or even Ruby Bridges. Some local Saint Paul students have even called out: Mayor Melvin Carter III. I applaud the initiative to share these responses since this is a remarkable list of Black leaders. Yet, these responses reflect an imminent need to educate our youth about the origins of Black History Month

Black History Month was founded by

**A READING JOURNEY CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Dr. Carter G. Woodson. He was a historian and author who established the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History during the summer of 1915. Later in 1926, Dr. Woodson launched Negro History Week. His goal was to celebrate and honor Black achievements and build a legacy of change.

Throughout February, I will continue my mission of visiting schools, donating Black books, and teaching lessons on Black History Month. I will begin by sharing about the 2024 theme which is: African Americans and the Arts. This signifies the important role of Black creatives in using the arts to reimagine the world and build a brighter future. In addition, I will introduce unsung Black heroes and heroes who are featured in my latest books.

Have you heard of the Underground Railroad conductor who helped to free 1,000 enslaved African Americans?

John P. Parker was born into slavery, but he believed freedom was a birthright - no one had the right to own another human being. His passion for justice led him to not only buy his freedom, but also help others gain theirs.

Parker was a conductor on the Underground Railroad in Ohio. He would cross the Ohio River into Kentucky to help enslaved people gain their freedom.

This work was very dangerous, and Parker could have been imprisoned or killed. But he took the risk time and time again. Between 1845 and 1865, he helped free about 1,000 enslaved people.

Did you know there was a group of Black healthcare professionals known as the "Flying Black Medics" that flew to deliver services to communities in need?

Dr. Leonidas Berry comes from a long legacy of activists who see a problem and work with others to create a solution. Dr. Berry fought for equal access to healthcare for African Americans. In the 1960s, he worked with a team to create the "Flying Black Medics." The group of medical professionals flew from Chicago, Ill. to a poor community in Cairo, Ill. They delivered medicine and offered treatment. They also built a medical clinic

Did you know the first Black female U.S. Secretary of State previously served as a national security advisor?

Condoleezza Rice grew up during segregation in Birmingham, Ala. There was a constant threat of violence from White racists. Her childhood friend was a victim of the bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church in 1963. She was determined to reach her dream of obtaining a quality education. Her parents taught her that education would open up windows of

opportunity. She worked twice as hard to reach this dream. From 2001 to 2005, Rice worked as a National Security Advisor. Then she was appointed to the U.S. Secretary of State in 2005. She served in this role until 2009. She advised the president on foreign policies and helped to address conflicts globally.

Black History Month is an invitation to learn more about United States history. These book recommendations can serve as resources on your learning journey:

- "Black Achievements in Activism: Celebrating Leonidas H. Berry, Marley Dias, and More," by Dr. Artika R. Tyner, Lerner (2023)
- "Black Achievements in Politics: Celebrating Shirley Chisholm, Barack Obama, and More," by Dr. Artika R. Tyner, Lerner (2023)
- "The Untold Story of John P. Parker (First But Forgotten)" by Dr. Artika R. Tyner, Capstone (2023)

For additional book recommendations, you can visit: <https://bookshop.org/shop/plantingpeoplegrowingjustice>

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.

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## FROM FATHER

>> from 1

right into the family business. Ashley and her brother Josh took that route, while the other two didn't.

"I'm teaching my family how to do wealth," said Kendall. He doesn't have cash to hand to his children, but he worked to pass along business skills and a business he had built.

The third generation of Crosby family members is learning the ropes at Kendall's. Matt and Ashley are parents to two boys: Axel, age 9, and Kaden, age 7. "I'm excited to bring my boys in and teach them how to put things together," said Ashley. A few weeks ago, the whole family put 100 shovels together. She knows they'll learn those skills, along with marketing and people skills, while participating in the family business.

### BUSINESS LESSONS

At eight years old, Ashley recalls being tasked with selling suckers. She got rid of each and every one. When she told her dad, he asked for the \$2 she had earned from each one. "I gave them all away. I didn't know I was supposed to ask for money," she recalled with a laugh. It was a business lesson that sticks with her.

She didn't plan to work at the hardware store. Instead, Ashley wanted to do something with animals, and got a job at a dog boarding facility as a teenager. They roped her into hardware store shifts by telling her that she could bring her dogs to work. Her rottweiler, Tulla, became a store favorite, and Ashley realized that she loved working with people, too.

Over the years, she's helped arrange animal adoption days at the hardware store, continuing to meld together her interests. When she graduated from South St. Paul High School in 2006, she decided to focus on the hardware store.

### A PRETTY COOL FUTURE

Matt is a fourth generation East Sider and graduated from Johnson High School in 2001. He joined the staff at Kendall's Hardware store in 2005, after having worked at a bunch of other jobs. "I was always a worker bee," said Matt. "When I started working at the hardware store, it was the perfect fit." It's a benefit to be a person of many talents at a hardware store.

Matt and Ashley met at Kendall's, and now live in St. Paul Park.

"These guys started working together as a team and a love story blossomed out of that," said Kendall.

Three years ago, they approached Kendall and started moving towards purchasing the store from him.

Kendall pointed out that they're buying the store from him. It isn't something he's giving them. His ability to retire is based on money from the sale. He's happy to say that he doesn't have any debt.

"This has been my life," remarked Kendall. "You know some people have flower gardens. This has been my flower garden."

He isn't sure what the next phase will bring for him. But he'll start with spending time at his lake house in the woods. He's been walking slower as his brain adjusts to a different pace.

"My biggest stress will be gone, and that's kinda cool," said Kendall.

"I can see the future for them and it's going to be pretty cool."

### 'WE NEVER SAY NO'

The East Side may be St. Paul's second poorest neighborhood, but the hardware store is well-loved and supported. A small store their size typically sells \$150-\$175 a square foot, observed Kendall. The average Ace store is \$250 a square foot. Kendall's is \$525 a square foot.

Sixty thousand cars a day pass by the Phalen/Payne intersection. To make the small store function best, they have designated seven department managers who work full-time positions. These employees



Kendall's daughter, Ashley Lloyd, wasn't sure she wanted to go into the hardware store business until she realized she could meld her love of animals with the hardware store work. Retired store pets include BeBe the Rottweiler and Eleanor the Puggle. Still around are Stanley the big black cat (above on the counter with Ashley), Makita the tortoiseshell cat, Cleo the German shepherd, Lila the Rottweiler, and Bandit the Puggle. More photos online at MonitorSaintPaul.com. (Photos by Tesha M. Christensen)

manage ordering and stocking for their departments. Previously, their computer system might have said they had something in stock when they didn't. The new system has eliminated those errors and helps them track the 38,000 individual SKUs in the store. Plus, now merchandise is put away within 2-4 hours instead of sitting on the floor for a week.

When customers enter Kendall's, they are greeted by a staff member who helps them find exactly what they're looking for by walking them directly to it.

"People are always going to need to buy something. They want to get in, get what they want, and get out," said Matt. The way they compete with the larger box stores is by helping people find what they want quickly, and making sure they have a great experience while they're there.

The East Side gets attention for negative things, Matt observed, but he believes that if you treat people well, they will treat you well. "I believe in this community," he said.

"People feel like they are at home when they come in and shop here," said Ashley.

They're also known for special orders. "We never say no," said Ashley. "If a customer asks for something, we say we can get it."

### PROACTIVE VERSUS REACTIVE

The 5,300 square foot, three-story building at Phalen and Payne cost \$2 million and took seven months to build. The timing didn't quite work out, so they were out of business for three months. They kept paying their employees so they didn't lose them, and it was a tight time.

Kendall has never had a back-up option, and the stores are where he worked to build wealth for his family. They designed the new building to do \$1 million in sales a year. Last year, the store did \$3 million.

Paying their staff more has been a part of their business model. They took the minimum wage and added \$2, and are now at a starting wage of \$16 an hour.

Pay increases to \$17 at 60 days, and \$18 at 90 days. "Sales went up when the hourly wage went up," remarked Kendall.

He told staff, "The more you sell, the more money we all make."

When they expanded into the new building, they added staff, growing from four to 23. "We've had to learn how to hire and fire," observed Matt. That's when they added the 30/60/90 day check-ins, and they found that made a huge difference in how much turn-over they had.

And while many advise against it, they hire friends and family.

Every Wednesday they have a potluck for staff.

Kendall is grateful to Ace for the tips and ideas they share among their hardware stores. "Ace will be here 100 years from now," he remarked.

"I've accomplished what I wanted to accomplish. I wanted to be a real hardware store, and being an Ace Hardware Store is the best thing we've ever done."

Ace advised stores to begin selling online, and offered the software necessary to do it so Kendall's Hardware was already managing online sales when COVID-19 hit. They were poised to fill the growing demand for online sales and delivery. The store is two minutes from Interstates 94 and 35E, and now delivers throughout the Twin Cities, including Edina and south Minneapolis.

"People are brand loyal," stated Kendall. "They like their Ace Hardware stores."

"We've always had a vision of being proactive versus reactive," said Matt.

Ace advised them to sell grills, and although they take up a lot of space, they made room. They've been popular items, and this year they've brought in even more to sell.

### COOLEST STORE AWARD

There are 5,800 Ace Hardware stores scattered across the United States. Each year, 400 earn the Pinnacle Award. For the last three years, Kendall's has earned that coveted spot. And in 2023, Kendall's received the Ace Coolest Store Award, beat-

### ALOT IN 5300 SQUARE FEET

It was difficult for Kendall to say goodbye to the original hardware store at Payne and Maryland that he bought from Bill and Gladys Godwin in 2005. So, the building constructed at Payne and Phalen mimics the design and layout of the original one. They brought desks and chairs from the old building that had been erected in 1942, and found a home for them in the new building. They also brought the old signs — and Kendall created some new ones.

In the basement at Payne and Phalen, there is the old safe from the former hardware store building at 1200 Payne. For 50 years, it housed the original Winter Carnival uniforms and outfits.

There are six church pews from the Bradshaw Funeral home on Payne that used to be Carlson Funeral Home. When the building was demolished to make room for the community center/library at Payne and Maryland, they scrapped all but the six that Kendall took. Because they were so long at 16 feet, no one wanted them, Kendall observed. Today, they have a few upstairs in the pool room and some downstairs in the conference room.

The conference room is also home to 100-year-old stained glass from the funeral home at Payne and Maryland that used to be at the entrance to the chapel. "They don't make that color anymore," said Kendall.

Each wall in the building is painted a different color. The colors were chosen from old color chips from a paint store on Grand Avenue from the 30s.

They're happy to do a show and tell. "Matt is always taking customers downstairs to see and hear stories. The customers are always so surprised. We can see the basement? I've always said, who doesn't want to see the basement of a hardware store. Our basement is made and designed to be seen by everyone," said Kendall. "It's a Real Hardware Store. Blood and all. It actually has a pulse. Owners, employees, customers, friends. That's what makes something real."

ing out the much larger stores who have gotten it in the past. Matt and Ashley attended the awards ceremony. "It was pretty humbling," said Matt. "It was an amazing experience to be recognized like that."

In addition to being friendly, artwork by Kendall hangs throughout the building, directing customers to housewares, paint and more. The front 'Windows by Alexandra' are known for their creative displays, with props that are made in-house. Kendall's wife, Alexandra, had worked at Macy's and Dayton's doing window displays, and enjoyed designing them at the hardware store. This year, Ashley and her aunt, Tina Wasson Poletes, took them over.

Ashley and Matt don't expect to make any big changes at the store, and say it's business as usual. Customers can still expect the free popcorn, and stop to say hello to the two store cats (Stanley and Makita) and store dogs (Cleo and Lila).

Their repair shop downstairs is a busy department with about seven people repairing windows and screens. True to their nature, they rigged up a slide on the stairs that can be flipped up and out of the way to make it easier to transport things up and down.

For some, the hardware store is their first job, and they work there while in high school or college. "It's such an honor to be able to mentor kids and be a strong part of the community," remarked Matt.

And perhaps the best part of working at a hardware store?

When people come in with a problem and they're able to pinpoint just what is needed. "We get to be the savior of the day," said Matt.



**MORE PHOTOS** @ MonitorSaintPaul.com



A-1 VACUUM >> from 1

Battisto family has been fixing and selling vacuums for 72 years in St. Paul area

According to Battisto, the company has moved several times over the years, and has both expanded and retracted the business.

From its beginnings in Salvador's basement, the business moved to the east side of St. Paul, then to Summit and Rice, then to University and Rice and then to University and Dale, where it remained 40 years. In 2015, the operation moved to its present location.

"We downsized when we moved here," Battisto said. "We used to do wholesale and retail, but our warehouse space went from 20,000 square feet to 2,000 square feet, which makes it hard to do the wholesale. We don't warehouse as much as we used to, so we went to a fulfillment house for our wholesale."

Battisto said that although the business still does a large amount of maintenance and repair, the demand is not there today for used and refurbished vacuums.

"The industry has really changed. Fifty years ago there were lots of dealers and door-to-door salesmen. Dad started by selling Hoovers door-to-door. Now it's heading towards what I call the 'toaster industry.' If you buy it and break it, you throw it away. You don't repair toasters, and it's becoming the same way with vacuums. There is not as much repair in the different brands as there used to be."

He said repair is still a big part of A-1 Vacuum's business, however, as he pointed to a line of vacuums in the store all waiting to be fixed. "We have a variety of brands we sell," Battisto said. "We specialize in Miele and Riccar and several other lines. We don't specialize in the ones we can't fix. It's against our philosophy to do that."

He said a lot of the big box stores specialize in vacuums that get thrown away if they break. "We are against that," he con-



Russ Battisto (right) and his daughter, Gina Battisto, had a steady stream of customers on Dec. 21. Even their dog, Bubba, joined them on the sales floor. Russ said sales were good for the holiday season. (Photo by Terry Faust)

tinued. "We try to keep the landfill from getting filled any faster than it has to."

He said Miele is the main brand the company sells because of its longevity. "I had one myself for 22 years, and now my sister-in-law has it. It's still running."

According to Battisto, Kirby is still one of the best vacuums on the market. "It's a little heavy, but it can be repaired. Riccar is another one that you can buy and fix it when needed and keep it running. There are quite a few out there that can keep going."

Until recently, A-1 Vacuum had five employees. Battisto's wife just retired. Besides Battisto and his daughter, two other employees are repairmen, but one is being groomed for sales and management.

"Gina does everything as far as the of-

rice, sells, takes care of customers and does repairs if she has to. I do the same thing," Battisto said. He plans to retire in about another year.

He said four sisters had also been a part of the family business, but they have drifted on to other endeavors.

The store carries racks and racks of parts for vacuums with bags, filters and attachments. Besides the store providing repairs, Battisto said there are also customers who have found an old vacuum and might just need a new filter to get it running.

"Someone might have bought a new vacuum at Target, brought it home and taken it out of the box and put it together. They don't know anything about it, so when it breaks down they get rid of it.

They've never heard of us," Battisto said.

But someone else comes along, finds that vacuum sitting on a curb and brings it in. "They'll say they found this vacuum, and wonder if I have a filter for it. And it's back running."

"They might find a vacuum in a dumpster," he said. "The dumpster diving industry is thriving."

Overall, however, that happens with only a few of the vacuums no longer in use. Battisto said there used to be 30 or 40 dealers in the metro area, and that is now down to 10. "The same thing with our association in the United States; there used to be 2,000 dealers and now, only eight."

Battisto said the "buy it, break it, throw it away" mentality has led to the decreasing number of dealers in the vacuum industry. "Things just naturally change," he noted, "and will continue to change. You're forced into being flexible."

"Take health issues. You're healthy and can do everything. But if your health changes, you do what you can and adjust accordingly. It's the same thing in business. You might fight it a little bit, but sooner or later you react to it."

A-1 Vacuum Cleaner Company is open Monday and Friday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Thursday 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and closed Sunday.

"Mondays and Fridays are quiet in the afternoon, so we decided to close a little earlier," Battisto explained. "Our big time is during lunch; it's the strongest part of the day."

"I don't think customers expect a small family business to be open later," he said. They also have the store's website at their fingertips.

Battisto admits that the buy it, break it, throw it away mentality is where the industry is heading. "But I hope it never fully gets there," he said.

Mark Rivard

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# GET THE LEAD OUT!

by PATRICIA OHMANS  
FrogTown Green

Back in November, our FrogTown household got a letter from the city's water agency – Saint Paul Regional Water Services – that suggested we should be concerned about lead in the buried water pipes that bring water from the street line to our house. Did you get that letter, too?

If your house – like ours – was built before 1946, then you, too, may wonder if you take steps to “get the lead out.” Lead's health effects include harm to kidneys and red blood cell damage in adults, but the main concern is its effect on our kids. Children who have elevated lead blood levels often have trouble with paying attention, learning, and achieving in school.

Hence, the concern on the part of the St Paul Water Service (SPRWS), about lead in some St Paul water pipes. “SPRWS treats water to minimize corrosion in the service lines and therefore exposure to customers,” explains Racquel Vaske, assistant general manager. “But the best way to minimize lead exposure is to eliminate service lines of this material.” The process will take about a decade and cost of \$300 million, according to Vaske.

## WHAT'S IN MY PIPES?

Do your pipes have lead in them? You can check, and see when they are likely to be replaced, by searching for your address on a map maintained by the SPRWS. (Just Google “Lead-Free SPRWS,” and click on the “service materials map,” then enter your address. Or, go to [stpaul.gov/lead-free](http://stpaul.gov/lead-free), and follow the prompts.)

When I did this, our home address showed up as a purple rectangle, which means that our service line has lead in it and will be replaced. As areas are scheduled for replacement work, households will be notified by mail. Don't want to wait? If you want to remove your private



<p><b>1</b> Homes built before 1978 (when lead-based paints were banned) probably contain lead-based paint.</p>	<p><b>3</b> Lead can be found in some products such as toys and toy jewelry.</p>
<p><b>2</b> When the paint peels and cracks, it makes lead dust. Children can be poisoned when they swallow or breathe in lead dust.</p>	<p><b>4</b> Lead is sometimes in candies imported from other countries or traditional home remedies.</p>
<p><b>2</b> Certain water pipes may contain lead.</p>	<p><b>5</b> Certain jobs and hobbies involve working with lead-based products, like stain glass work, and may cause parents to bring lead into the home.</p>

lead service lines earlier than scheduled by SPRWS, you can qualify for a low interest loan to have the work done on your own.

In the meantime, there are easy steps we can take to reduce exposure to lead in water, including rinsing out the filter and aerator on our faucet to remove any small particles, and letting our water run for 60 seconds the first time we turn it on. SPRWS will also test household water for free; you can pick up a sample bottle at 1900 Rice Street, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

## WORRY LESS ABOUT WATER

But hey, when it comes to lead, it turns out that it's not just water, or even primarily water, that we should be concerned about. There are other, more fre-

quent sources of lead in our households. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), lead can be found in many places in our homes.

By far the most common source of lead that affects young children is from paint. Lead-based paints were banned for residential use in 1978, but homes before 1978 are likely to still have some lead-based paint on the walls. Toddlers love to explore and put things in their mouth, including paint chips or dust, when they play around painted walls or windowsills.

Like many FrogTown homes, our house was built in the early 1900s, when lead based paint was all there was. Our home had been painted many times before we bought it in 1981. But when our kids were small, we kept them away from

even slightly peeling paint surfaces, and we immediately swept and mopped up the dust generated from home renovation projects.

## LEAD IN CANDY?

Lead is also found in some unlikely places in our homes. Would you believe, in spicy candy? “Certain candy ingredients, such as chili powder and tamarind, may be a source of lead exposure. Lead can get into the candy when drying, storing, and grinding the ingredients are done improperly,” according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Do you or your family members shop for traditional remedies at one of FrogTown's many import markets? The CDC also urges caution around children and traditional remedies from other countries, such as daw tway, a digestive aid used in Thailand and Myanmar (Burma). Analysis of daw tway samples showed they contain as much as 970 parts per million of lead. Greta and azarcon (also known as alarcon, coral, luiga, maria luisa, or rueda) are Hispanic traditional medicines taken for an upset stomach, constipation, diarrhea, and vomiting, or for teething pain in babies. The lead content in these remedies can be as high as 90%, the CDC warns.

## TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE LEAD

Lead is found in many places in our homes, but if we take care, it needn't present a problem. If this article raises your concern about lead in your water pipes, contact the Saint Paul Regional Water Service, 651-266-6820. If you think a member of your family might have lead in their blood from any source, talk with your doctor or health care provider about getting their blood tested. This simple test should be free, and treatment can eliminate the problem.

The Ramsey County public health department has grants to help families reduce their exposure to lead. If you would like a “lead check” – an inspection of your home to assess for lead hazards – call the public health department at 651-266-1199.

*FrogTown Green is a resident-led and volunteer-powered environmental initiative in St Paul's most diverse neighborhood. Patricia Ohmans is an environmental health educator and co-director of FrogTown Green.*

## Broken Window?

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# Kendall's

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*"The truth is that which feels right and good and loving. Love doesn't hurt. It feels really good." Oprah*

*"You're not supposed to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong no matter who does it or says it." Malcolm X*

*"Liberation means you don't have to be silenced." Toni Morrison*

Hello Monitor readers,

Welcome to magical February with the awesome extra Leap Day of Feb. 29! Happy Black History Appreciation Month!

I've been wondering about the word "woke." What does it mean, in regards to our political system and the 2024 president vote? I've been confused about if the word is good (awakening to truth of the forming of America) or if the word "woke" is bad (promoting lies about the forming of America). We have until November (including state primaries) to choose to vote for a president who will uphold the values and principles of the desired foundation of We the People, Of the People, For the People. We know back in the early 1770s that we were a divided forming country of choosing to be a democracy or monarch rule/dictatorship. Likewise, we had to choose again in the 1800s between White supremacy rule or the desired unfolding democracy for all people. The GOP was championing democracy at that time, which ironically, the DFL affirmed and

# LOOKING AT A NEW YEAR

made law in the latter half of the 1900s. Now 2024, again, we have a divided country and a national presidential election along with local, county, and state voting opportunities for democracy or something different. Please, breathe and know that your/our vote is really about the world we want our kids and great and great-grandchildren to inherit.

Dr. King's "I Have A Dream" speech always reminds and affirm that "one day little Black boys and girls will be holding hands with little White boys and girls." And, that his children would "live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character," which is becoming a reality every day and in particular, each voting year. Yes, it is in our Leap Years that our nation advances and stretches the Arc of Justice & Peace or pauses to uphold the outdated White supremacy fearful thinking and biased policies of being great again, which keeps Indigenous, Black, People of Color and Women in their place of disempowerment. For example, health, economical, housing, transportation, and employment inequalities and disparities. Fortunately, I believe things are changing for the better, for instance women in sports!

Let's start the New Year of 2024 with optimism and hope of overcoming, rising, and shaking-off the drama, blaming, and bullying that divides our lawmakers and reflects on our wonderful Country. Yes, we can and yes, we will, do better, together!

**A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE FROM THERESA (AKA: QUEEN TEA)**

"As a local astrologer, I enjoy studying the cycles of life in rhythm with astronomy. The theme I selected for 2024 is Transition and Transcendence. In times of change,

our community pulls from rich cultural traditions to keep us grounded as we rise through the transition. One of my favorite traditions involves looking to the light in our hearts for guidance. Despite our varied backgrounds, I am reminded that we are unified under one sky, and that brings me joy.

"There is a total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. Connecting with our community youth and elders to view these types of events either outside or on the NASA website is a great way to make memories. According to the Smithsonian Magazine, "Total solar eclipses are quite rare. On average, one will occur at a given location every 375 years. In the lower 48 states, the last visible total eclipse occurred in 2017, and, before that, in 1979. Your next chance to witness this phenomenon within the contiguous United States won't be until Aug. 23, 2044."

Whether or not you join with the community or observe the eclipse by yourself, I invite you to take some intentional time for reflection and community service. This is a great time to create a time capsule, plant a tree, and start our collective journey toward 2044."

For more information, check out "Nine Dazzling Celestial Events to Watch in 2024" by Margaret Osborne in the online Smithsonian Magazine <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/> (Jan 2, 2024). Thank you, Queen Tea!

**NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION**

And, a New Year's Resolution repeated suggestion from me from the Greening Frogtown Jan.-Feb. 2020 newspaper:

"I'd would love St. Paul to make a new Year's resolution to decrease violence in our communities. Can you imagine the positive

**'BEACONS OF HOPE'**

Melvin Giles, along with Gita Ghei, and Anura Si-Asar, has received a \$10,000 grant from Forecast Public Art. As a long-term BIPOC Rondo-based artist, Giles knows his community is strong, adaptive and beautiful. But, it can be easy to forget sometimes in the face of how other people see their neighborhood and label it as "low-income" and "at risk." He wants to create a prototype of a sculpture called "Beacons of Hope" and use the prototype as a touchstone for conversations about loss and love and healing and peace in his community. Giles is an artist liaison for the Rice Street Visioning Study with Forecast and Ramsey County, and was a Forecast 2020 Messages of Hope Mini-Grant Recipient.

changes in our schools and work places?

"A New Year's resolutions with the common focus of increasing the peace and decreasing the violence in our area would be a powerful and intentional act of kindness and compassion. You can start by just taking 15 seconds a day to repeat a peace message. For example, 'May peace prevail on my street. May peace be in my child's school. May there be peace in all of Frogtown and Rondo.' Each day you can add more seconds, as well as another peace thought.

"And, here is a next step - peace actions you can take: 1) Seek peace within yourself and others. 2) Reach out in service. 3) Protect the environment. 4) Respect diversity. 5) Be a responsible citizen of the world."

Keep the good thoughts and send compassionate energy to troubling and warfare places globally and be inspired to act locally for Mother Earth. Thank you.

*May Peace Be In the Rondo, Frogtown, Hamline/Midway, Como, and Surrounding Communities... May Peace Be In Our Homes & Communities... May Peace Prevail On Earth (MPPOE)!*

**DISTRICT 10 COMO COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

BY SHEVEK MCKEE  
Executive director  
district10@district10comopark.org



**COMO COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVES**

D10 Como Park partners with the American Red Cross and the Como Zoo & Conservatory to host community blood drives at the zoo. Drives are held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Space is limited, reservations required.

- 2024 Drive Dates:
- Wednesday, March 6
  - Thursday, May 23
  - Tuesday, Aug. 6
  - Tuesday, Oct. 15
  - Wednesday, Dec. 18

With so many still working from

# FIVE BLOOD DRIVES PLANNED

home, workplace blood drives have all but vanished, affecting the Red Cross' reserve levels. Community blood drives are the perfect opportunity to take a break from the home office or start a trip to the zoo!

There are also opportunities to volunteer at the check-in table. The drives are split into two shifts of two volunteers each, 9 a.m. to noon and noon to 3 p.m. It's light work and a great way to connect with another neighbor. Find registration and more details at

[District10ComoPark.org/BloodDrive](https://District10ComoPark.org/BloodDrive)

**D10 ON-DEMAND**

Want to be in the neighborhood loop but aren't able to attend our monthly meetings? Through the miracle of modern technology, most of our Como community meeting presentation recordings are available to view on our website. We have

19 recordings from 2023 alone, and many have links to the presentation slides and other resources.

**JOIN THE BOARD IN 2024**

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.

It is highly recommended that you join us at some monthly meetings (schedule below), which are always open to all community members, before making the decision to commit to a board position.

These positions serve two-year terms, through April 2025. To get on the ballot, fill out an application at [District10ComoPark.org/Elections](https://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 1. The election ends April 15. If you have any questions or would like to know more about being a board member you can reach out to [district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org).

**D10 COMMUNITY MEETINGS/EVENTS SCHEDULE**

- March 6, 7 p.m. - D10 Como Community Meeting - 1st Wednesdays
- March 19, 7 p.m. - D10 Como Community Meeting - 3rd Tuesdays
- April 3, 7 p.m. - D10 Como Community Meeting - 1st Wednesdays
- April 16, 7 p.m. - D10 Como Community Meeting - 3rd Tuesdays

D10 meetings are hybrid on Zoom and at the Como Streetcar Station (1224 Lexington Pkwy); you can find meeting details on our website: [District10ComoPark.org](https://District10ComoPark.org). All D10 community meetings are open to the public and have space for community members to bring topics for discussion.

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**COMO PARK  
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



BY ERIC ERICKSON  
Social studies teacher

# NORDIC SKI TEAM SUCCESS

Despite a lack of snow this season, the Cougar Nordic ski team has been able to compete in meets on courses where snow-making machines are utilized. The Twin Cities Nordic Conference Meet took place at Theodore Wirth Park in Minneapolis on Jan. 26.

Coaches and captains reported that team performance and camaraderie were excellent. Sophomore Henry Simmons placed third overall earning all-conference. Sophomore Ben Clark and junior Niko Turnure received honorable mention.

**YELLOW BUSES ARE BACK**

The new year began with the return of yellow school buses for Como students who live more than a mile away. The last time school-busing was fully furnished at Como was March of 2020 before distance learning was initiated because of the pandemic.

While all students returned to in-person learning in the fall of 2021, there weren't enough school bus drivers available to supply all routes. The district shifted to reliance on Metro Transit, with students receiving city bus passes.



Nordic ski team members out on trail at Wirth Park in the Twin Cities Meet. (Photo submitted)

The changes to Metro Transit busing came with challenges including earlier, longer walks to bus stops and a rise in safety concerns.

Many families adapted schedules and found ways to drive their students to school. Many students faithfully boarded the city buses to and from school. But overall, student attendance decreased from pre-pandemic levels and tardiness

increased.

With staffing for school bus drivers rebounding, the gradual restoration of routes for high school students began in the district during 2022 and 2023, with service reaching Como Senior High last month upon the return from winter break.

Early indications reveal an increase of timely arrivals and less-stressed students.

**MUSIC CONCERTS**

The Como choirs held their winter concert in the Como Auditorium on Jan. 24. A variety of popular selections and diverse genres were featured under the direction of first-year Como teacher Mr. Huy Tran.

"Singing and adapting to a new teacher is not an easy thing to do," Tran said. "But these choirs did it with grace and had an amazing concert!"

Ms. Katie Miller, a second-year Como teacher, directed the instrumental concert on Jan. 18. "The beginning band performed for their first time," she said. "The jazz band and advanced band dug into some challenging music, and the orchestra has resurfaced after a multiple-year hiatus."

**COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE NIGHT**

A major stressor in the college application process is completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid.) High school seniors and their families must navigate it to be eligible for grants, loans, and selected scholarships that colleges may offer based on financial need.

A revamping of the FAFSA this year has streamlined elements of the form, but delays in its availability until late December mean many still need to complete it. Como's Career Pathways Center, in coordination with the counseling department, provided FAFSA support and college information for families and students on the evening of Feb. 7.

## TIDBITS

**HIGHLAND FRIENDSHIP CLUB**

Highland Friendship Club (HFC), a St. Paul-based nonprofit that provides social and learning opportunities for teens and adults who have disabilities, has created a new full-time staff position, the Community Engagement Manager. Mari Marks Mondanelli has been appointed. Highland Friendship Club was founded in 2002 when two St. Paul moms realized there was a gap in community services available to teens and adults with disabilities. What started as a walking club on Saturday mornings has grown to include more than 30 classes each week in fitness, music, art, book clubs, outings to museums, sporting events and so much more. HFC serves about 200 members and relies on support from community partners and donors.

**PUBLIC TRANSIT LISTENING SESSION FEB. 22**

The Hamline Midway Coalition and Union Park District Councils are hosting a special listening session in partnership with leaders from Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council on Thursday, Feb. 22, from 6-7:30 p.m. at Bethlehem in the Midway, located at 436 N Roy St. This conversation will feature key transit leaders including Metro Transit General Manager Lesley Kandaras, Chief Operating Officer Brian Funk, and Metropolitan Council Transportation Chair Deb Barber. "We encourage all community members to attend this event and play a role in shaping the future of public transit in the Midway. From the Green Line to the A Line and more, your insights and feedback are crucial in creating a public transportation system that serves the needs of our diverse community," say organizers. To register for the event and to submit your questions in advance, please visit [tinyurl.com/midway-listening-session](https://tinyurl.com/midway-listening-session).

**METRO GOLD LINE CONSTRUCTION**

The new Bielenberg Bridge over I-94 that opened in November connects the cities of Oakdale and Woodbury, and will have dedicated lanes for the METRO Gold Line bus rapid transit corridor scheduled to open in 2025. The METRO Gold Line is a 10-mile BRT line serving Saint Paul, Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, and Woodbury with dedicated bus-only lanes (PDF) being constructed generally north of and near Interstate 94. The Gold Line will provide frequent, all-day service in both directions. There will be 16 stations with enhanced features, four park and rides, and connections to new upgraded trails and sidewalks. The corridor's western terminus will be across the street from Saint Paul's Union Depot Station served by METRO Green Line light rail, which shares trackage with Blue Line light rail in downtown Minneapolis. The eastern terminus will be Woodlane Drive Station in Woodbury.

**RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES SUMMIT**

The first-ever convening of communities divided by the federal highway system happened in St. Paul Oct. 12-14, 2023. The Reconnecting Communities Summit gathered leaders from across the nation, and is part of a national restorative movement that will help advance policy and investment in revitalizing communities of color experiencing residual negative impacts of transportation policy. "The story of Rondo is the story of communities across the country. Highway projects have devastated thousands of households," said Reconnect Rondo Executive Director Keith Baker. "AASHTO is committed to improving quality of life by working toward a transportation system that serves the needs of every community safely, equitably, sustainably, and efficiently," said Joshua Rodriguez, Director for the AASHTO Center for Environmental Excellence (CEE), which sponsored the event.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

This publication is participating in a readership survey for the Midwest Free Community Papers Association. We'd love it if you would take a few minutes to answer some questions for us about your readership and shopping habits.

Anyone that completes the survey will be automatically entered into a drawing for a \$250 VISA gift card

NOTE: There is a limit of one entry per household.

Scan the QR code below to be taken to the survey or login via this web address:

<https://www.research.net/r/MFCP24>

All responses will remain confidential, your name will not be added to any list and we will never contact you.

**HURRY!**  
Deadline for entering is closing fast!!

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**Spring Cymanfa Ganu (Welsh Hymn Sing)**

**Sunday, March 10, 2:00 p.m.**

St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church  
2323 Como Ave., St. Paul

Karen Wojahn, directing  
Joshua Lindgren, organ

Welsh cakes with tea from Wales follow. (Free)  
Welsh leek soup about 5 p.m. (\$5/bowl).  
Parking lot across side street.

Questions & Soup Reservations: Mary Morris Mergenthal,  
[mary.mergenthal@gmail.com](mailto:mary.mergenthal@gmail.com) or 612-670-8510 (calls/texts)



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Ice sculpture artist Andrew Bently and his children, Booker and Skye, pose with grasses of ice. His whimsical ice plants delighted participants.



It helps to have a dad who played hockey. Young Leland tried his skating moves while his dad, Dalvin Seamster, watched.

**SPRINGBOARD ON ICE**  
 DREW ADULTS AND CHILDREN FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH TASTY FLAVA CAFE FOOD AND PRINTING EXPERIENCES BY STREETCORNER PRESS ON SATURDAY, JAN. 20, 2024. OTHER EVENT SPONSORS INCLUDED READY GO, THE COZY COAT DRIVE, AND TWIN CITIES NATIVE LACROSSE. (PHOTOS BY TERRY FAUST)



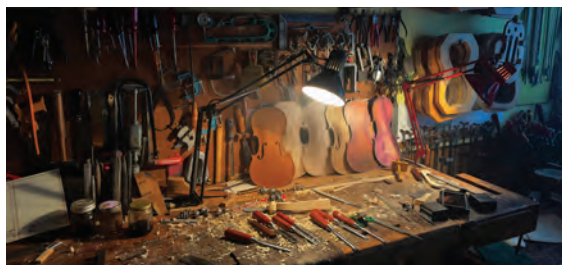
Springboard for the Arts Community Development Director Ricardo Beaird exhibited his s'mores-making abilities before a warm fire.



For first-time skater Catalina Rincon (at left), Eugene Sandel of Brownbody was on hand to show how to get back up after a fall.



**Travel the cosmos at the Bell Museum.**



**Secrets from a Forest**

Daily show times through February 16

Don't miss the innovative new planetarium show, *Secrets from a Forest*, led by the artistic vision of award-winning nature photographer Jim Brandenburg, award-winning director Neil Lucas, and featuring members of the Minnesota Orchestra. The original production illuminates the creation of the Stradivarius violin and tells an inspiring story of the intimate relationship between artistic expression and the natural world.



**Space Fest 2024: Celebrating our Star**

February 16-18

Have you ever wondered how hot the Sun is or what makes our star special? Explore these questions and more at the Bell Museum's sixth annual Space Fest! We'll have hands-on activities, guest speakers, and demonstrations throughout the weekend as we celebrate our closest star.



**Space Fest Sensory Friendly Saturday**

February 17, 4:30-6:30 pm

Join us during Space Fest for a special late afternoon Sensory Friendly Saturday! Explore the museum, play interactive games to learn more about the Sun, and enjoy a brief planetarium show at 5:30pm—all with lowered lighting, quieter sounds, and fewer visitors.

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

