



Senator Pappas honored >> 13

'I JUST DO IT'

Born with spina bifida, senior enjoys swimming on high school team in St. Paul

By JAN WILLMS

Swimming is a big part of Nate Leber's life. The Cretin Derham Hall senior started swimming at seven, and today is a member of the school's swim team and has been all through high school.

Nothing extremely exceptional, except that Nate does not have the use of his legs. He was born with spina bifida and uses a wheelchair.

"We tried using a walker when he was younger, but it was too much of an effort, so he uses a wheelchair," said his mom, Lisa Datta, a Como resident.

She said Nate took swimming lessons at the Courage Center after he had seen his younger brother take water babies lessons. "After a couple years of lessons, Courage Center had taught him all they could. They asked if he would like to join a team they had," Datta said. "They said it was a good way to meet people, so we went ahead. We tried different things at Courage Center: archery, martial arts, track and field but the swimming stuck."

I JUST DO IT >> 5



Nathan Datta practices at St. Catherine's Butler Center. Datta is a part of the swim team at his high school, Cretin Derham Hall, and participates in national competitions through the Courage Center. (Photo by Terry Faust)

April named Limb Loss Month in Minnesota during action day at State Capitol



Mobility clinic participants demonstrate agility and strength during the "So Every BODY Can Move MN" event. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

THOSE WITH LIMB LOSS PUSH BACK AGAINST 'NOT MEDICALLY NECESSARY' DURING DAY AT CAPITOL

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

There are over 35,000 Minnesotans living with limb loss, and thousands more living with limb difference and mobility impairments. Many are unable to access prescribed orthotic and prosthetic care due to a lack of insurance coverage, forcing individuals and families to incur huge out-of-pocket costs.

Some of their stories were shared at the state capitol on Wednesday, March 13, 2024.

The day-long event, called "So Every BODY can Move Minnesota" drew more than 100 advocates for two bills affecting people with limb loss and limb difference.

The goal of the two bills is to change the climate of insurance denials for orthotics and prosthetics prescribed by phy-

sicians for the health of their patients.

NOT MEDICALLY NECESSARY

Elsa Keeler is a retired pediatrician. Five years ago, she was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer that required a full leg amputation. She received a prosthetic leg with a microprocessor knee,

LIMB LOSS >> 2

An 'oppressive' experience: 57 hearings, 80 court orders and 12 parenting time schedules



VOICES AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE

By Tesha M. Christensen

Family court judges haven't been able to solve issues, and now mom on welfare is paying for special master

What do you do when 11 judges and referees, 20 therapists, 12 mediators, two parenting consultants (with 37 directives), one custody evaluator, and one guardian ad litem haven't been able to resolve a family court case?

Lexi* would like to be out of family court after 57 hearings over 12 years. Instead, she's seen the Minnesota Who's Who list of family court professionals since she filed for an order for protection and a divorce when she was three months pregnant with her second son.

Despite being well below the federal poverty level, Lexi has been ordered by a

Ramsey Court judge to pay for a special master to resolve parenting time disputes. Essentially a private judge, special masters charge \$400-\$500 an hour. Lexi's two sons, now 15 and 11, have refused to see their dad for nearly three years. They've been refusing to get out of the car at drop-offs far longer.

When the boys started running away from school to avoid being picked up by their dad and police were called to retrieve them and enforce parenting time, they added another family therapist to the mix of professionals. She began by meeting only with the parents. From those meet-

ings, she ordered their dad to complete a number of steps to better his parenting skills and take responsibility for his actions.

He has not completed them.

Instead, he has filed multiple motions with the court requesting new professionals to review the case. In the last year alone, they've had seven judges and referees assigned to their case, and an order from over a year ago has yet to be written. He asked for - and got ordered - a brief focused assessment with a psychologist at

OPPRESSIVE EXPERIENCE >> 6



Local filmmakers part of 43rd annual Minneapolis St. Paul film festival

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Use your annual Midway Chamber Directory as a guide to shop local

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HOME & GARDEN Recycle your leftover paint with PaintCare

PAGE 8



Coach Adam Warden led a mobility clinic in the capitol rotunda on his running blade. Warden is a dedicated multi-sport athlete and coach for Wiggle your Toes, Courage-Sister Kenny Institute, and the Protez Foundation. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



Holding Governor Walz's declaration are (left to right) lobbyist Sam Walseth, Wiggle your Toes founder Aaron Holm, So Every BODY Can Move organizer Teri Kuffel, and mobility advocate Tom Degree. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

LIMB LOSS >> from 2

which was expected to last five years. Keeler is an active outdoors-person who loves to paddle in remote places like the Boundary Waters Canoe area. Her first prosthesis began to wear out after three and one-half years. When her doctor wrote a prescription for a replacement with a waterproof micro-processor knee, the claim was denied as "not medically necessary."

“

People needing external orthotic and prosthetic devices should have those same privileges, too.”

Elsa Keeler

These are three words that every person living with limb loss or limb difference quickly learns to dread. Being denied an orthotic or prosthetic device prescribed by one's physician brings a range of feelings including frustration, disappointment, shame, and anger.

Like many advocates throughout the day, Keeler told stories about non-disabled relatives who received hip and knee replacements routinely so they could maintain their previous lifestyles. Artificial hips and knees are internal prosthetic devices. Keeler said, "People needing external orthotic and prosthetic devices should have those same privileges, too."

BILLS RECEIVE BI-PARTISAN SUPPORT

It's estimated that about 500 Americans lose a limb every day. Limb loss can affect anyone at any time. Senator Karin Housely (R) co-authored the senate bill, and met with advocates including several orthotics and prosthetics tech students from Century College, which is in her senate district.

The chief author of the senate bill is Senator John Hoffman (D), whose daughter Hope Hoffman was born with spina bifida. Her neurological condition has required multiple surgeries and prosthetic devices. Along the way, her family has had to push back against insurance claim denials that added to the frustration of living with a congenital condition.

The bills before the house and senate are asking to amend current Minnesota law. They ask that state insurance plans be required to provide coverage at a rate equal to the federal Medicare program.

Insurance premiums across the board would only be expected to rise 39 cents per member per month, on average. Thirty-nine cents per month would make it possible for amputees to receive a waterproof limb to use while showering, or op-



Bill co-author Senator Karin Housely (R). This proposed legislation has received bi-partisan support. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

timize their ability to bike, run, swim, or play any other ambulatory sport..

The final speaker in the rotunda was Governor Tim Walz. For the third year, the governor declared April as Limb Loss Month in the state of Minnesota.

MOVEMENT IS MEDICINE

In the last activity of the day, coach Adam Warden of the non-profit Wiggle your Toes led a mobility clinic with games for kids, and high intensity exercises for participants of all ages.

According to data from the Amputee Coalition, half of adults with disabilities get absolutely no aerobic exercise, and children with disabilities are twice as likely to develop obesity as those without.

By contrast, people with disabilities who are physically active are more likely to be employed, advance in their careers, and have improved physical and mental health.

Seven other states are introducing similar legislation for fair insurance compensation this year, and five others passed similar legislation in 2022 and 2023.

To learn more about the bills before Minnesota's house and senate, go to www.msopp-mn.com. The home page has a Call to Action. If you wish, you can push a button to email your Minnesota legislators and show your support of House File 3339 and Senate File 3351.



Two young athletes listen to speakers in support of legislation that will shape their futures. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Musician focus of local filmmaker's MSPIFF film fest entry

'Laurel Massé: How Can I Keep From Singing' took nearly two decades

By JAN WILLMS

A film that has been long in the making will premiere during the Minneapolis Saint Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF) running April 11-25 at the Main Cinema, 115 SE Main in Minneapolis.

Local filmmaker Reilly Tillman has crafted a long and growing connection with a member of the vocal jazz group, the Manhattan Transfer, into a film that explores her early career, her time with the group, the challenges she has faced and the redeeming qualities of her voice and perseverance.

Tillman has footage that he started shooting 18 and a half years ago to create the documentary "Laurel Massé: How Can I Keep From Singing?"

"My first exposure to the Manhattan Transfer was when I was a freshman in high school," Tillman recalled in a recent interview. "Their song, Single Operator, was playing in the top 20. I loved that song but did not explore the group any further." In his junior year, Tillman was part of a swing choir that did a version of "Java Java," a song from the Manhattan Transfer's first album. In college, Tillman said he was visiting a friend and heard someone playing their album. "I couldn't believe I had not discovered how great they were," Tillman said. "I ran out and purchased the album and found that all the members of the group were fantastic singers with a distinctive style. Laurel's solos, the purity of her voice, and the lushness of her tone resonated with me. I started reading about them and found that Laurel had left the Manhattan Transfer. It was not until five years later that I found a copy of her first solo album in New York. Then I was really hooked."

That summer, Massé performed at a jazz club in Minneapolis half a block from Tillman's home. By this time he had attended enough of her concerts that she recognized him, and she joined him and a friend at their table. "I thought 'Okay, now we are friends.'"

Tillman completed his first documentary film on a drum and bugle corps.

"In 2004, I was looking for a new project," Tillman said.

"I had bought some of Laurel's CDs, and her tour de force solo album called



Reilly Tillman (at right) started filming over 18 years ago for his recently released film on Laurel Massé (at left). The documentary will be shown during this year's Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival April 11-25. (Photos submitted)

'Feather an Bone.' It was mostly a Capella, recorded in a beautiful music hall in upstate New York. She sang ancient hymns and spirituals, mostly unfamiliar songs. It was different from what she had done. She took poems and put them to music. The very last song had bagpipe music, and at one point Laurel sang like a bagpipe. She vocalized to sound like an instrument."

Tillman said he started thinking that Laurel, her life and music would be a wonderful subject for his next film. "I knew her music and career and a lot of her story, so I sent her a copy of my first film, and she was just on board. It took no additional coaxing," Tillman said.

He started shooting in 2005 at her home in New York. Tillman was introduced to her friends Jay Unger and Molly Mason, whom he called world-class American Roots musicians. "They run a summer music camp where Laurel teaches, and so in 2018, I went with her to the camp and spent a week filming."

"I thought it would make a nice foundation for the film to span the week's activities in the camp throughout my film, but in different split-up segments. It gives it more apparent structure," Tillman said.

He said Massé was a dream to interview. "I got so much interview footage."

Tillman said he thinks the most challenging parts of doing a documentary are knowing when to stop and doing the editing. He went through all the interviews and transcribed them, picking out the most significant. "It is quite a process," he said.

"Today a film is never finished," Tillman noted. "In the digital age you can

make changes forever. You finally have to say "This is the finished product I will show to the world.'"

Tillman has acknowledged a proclivity to music-themed projects. His previous documentary is "Madison on Tour," a film about a two-time world champion drum and bugle corps. Tillman joined a brass drum and bugle corps in Minnesota after he completed the film. "I have a lot of choral singing, musical theater, symphonic and marching experience in my background," he said. Tillman graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a B.A. in communications with an emphasis in radio, TV and film. He is currently the deputy director and education director at Film North in Saint Paul.

"There is something to be said about filming what you know," he commented. "Initially I was going to hire someone else to edit my film on Laurel, and this person helped me sort through the footage and was going to start editing, but was overwhelmed with work. I realized I knew Laurel so well, and her story so well, that of course I had to edit the documentary. And that worked out for the best."

Tillman said he had to pick a subject for his films that will keep him so engaged and interested that he will not get tired of it. "I have to be willing to make sacrifices I would not normally make. With this film, I never get tired of looking at the footage, and I am so grateful that is the case." Tillman's next steps with the film are to work on distribution. He said he plans to go through the BBC, since Manhattan Transfer was a superstar group in Great Britain and most of Europe.

FILM FESTIVAL APRIL 11-25

By JAN WILLMS

The 43rd annual Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF) at the Main Cinema, 115 SE Main in Minneapolis will include 140 feature films from more than 100 countries and cultures, according to MSP Film Society Executive Director Susan Smoluchowski.

"We are unveiling our new website which lists online all the films that will be shown at the festival for people to peruse at will," she said.

Finding that selection of films and preparing for the festival is nearly a year-long process. "We give ourselves a couple of weeks after the festival ends before we start working on the next one," Smoluchowski said. "But nowadays the preparation overlaps very significantly with everything else because we are programming all five screens, so it's a monumental task."

She said seven programmers, led by programming director Jesse Bishop primarily work on MSPIFF but also Cine Latino, and numerous other events held throughout the year. "We get well over 1,500 submissions for MSPIFF through the platform we use, or people we know and don't know just send us films," Smoluchowski said. "We watch all of them."

Of the 140 features selected for the festival, only about 20 percent of them are submitted. "All others we find around the world at different festivals," she said. Smoluchowski, who is on the team of programmers, said they each travel to a number of festivals but also are able to watch a lot of films online to pick selections.

The opening night film is "Sing Sing," a movie about the upstate New York prison and a theater rehabilitation program for its inmates. Oscar nominee Colman Domingo stars as an inmate imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, who finds the theater program offers him hope. The closing film also deals with rehabilitation through theater. "Ghostlight" tells the story of Dan, a construction worker who finds himself drifting apart from his wife and daughter. He finds solace as he joins a community theater production of Romeo and Juliet. "The actors are in real life a family of mother, father and daughter," she noted.

A special event during the festival is the awarding of the Al Milgrom award to famed cinematographer Sir Roger Deakins, whose range of films run from the "Shawshank Redemption" to "Bladerunner 2074" to numerous works with the Coen brothers. Deakins has been nominated for 16 Oscars and has won two. Deakins and his spouse, James, will participate in three events at the film fest.

"We've got a new film by Agnieszka Holland, who was one of Al's favorites," Smoluchowski remarked. She was referring to Al Milgrom, who was a part of MSPIFF for decades. The film is "Green Borders," and is about the migration on the Belarus and Polish border. "It tells about the people coming through to get to western Europe and the corruption of the border guards in both countries."

For all information on MSPIFF, including ticket sales, parking, a schedule of films and events, go to mspiff.org.

'No One Asked You' mixes abortion and comedy

By JAN WILLMS

Award-winning documentary filmmaker Ruth Leitman calls her latest film "The Lovely Beast."

"It was a beast and a bear to make," she reflected.

Her film, "No One Asked You," is a documentary about legendary Minnesota comedian and activist Lizz Winstead and the path she has taken for the past several years focusing on abortion rights. Winstead, co-creator of The Daily Show, leads her group Abortion Access Front (AAF) across the country to help women and clinics in their attempts to access and pro-

vide abortion services. The film will show at the Minneapolis Saint Paul Film Festival (MSPIFF) at The Main Cinema, 115 SE Main in Minneapolis.

Leitman felt the issue of access to abortion needed to be looked at with some humor, and she started filming Winstead on her tours across the country. She filmed for six and a half years.

"The film coming out now is so important," Leitman stated. "We're able to help Lizz and the AAF build the movement and galvanize audiences."

✦ READ THE FULL STORY online at www.MonitorSaintPaul.com



Minnesota comedian and activist Lizz Winstead is the subject of the documentary "No One Asked You."

"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.

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

~ Liz Lonetti of Career Pathways

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

BUILDING A STRONGER MIDWAY

BY CHAD KULAS,
Midway Chamber of
Commerce Executive Director
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With the April issue of the Monitor, many of you will also receive the annual Midway Chamber directory. At a minimum, I hope you will at least look through it to see what we want to emphasize from this past year. But what I really hope is you use it to discover new places and keep handy to easily look up information.

Years before I started working at the Midway Chamber, I remember getting a copy delivered to my house. This was back in the days when phone books were still a thing and I kept it next to them, above the fridge. When looking for a new restaurant I knew would be local, I would grab it before looking at the Yellow Pages. An added

USING THE ANNUAL DIRECTORY AS A GUIDE

bonus – if a business is either listed in the directory or advertising in it, it means they are supporting the local community.

Every year I write an introductory article explaining some highlights of the year and the state of the neighborhood at the time. In past years, this has meant writing about the outpouring of support after civil unrest, the rebuilding of the damaged properties, and the continual changes we see to the Midway (transit lines, Allianz Field, and many more).

As the Midway Chamber had not created a strategic plan since 2019, we were due. So, this year for the article I wrote about the themes and thought process that went into our new plan. Like all organizations, it's good for the Chamber to step back and think about how we are serving others and our mission. We are going to be a better and more focused organization because of the work, and we thank Mighty Consulting for keeping us on task through the process.

The directory also is filled with photos from the past year, with many from our events and ribbon cuttings. It may be cliché to be a Chamber of Commerce and talk up the business openings, but they truly are a sign of those who are excited to put down roots in our neighborhood and help build community. When businesses are owned locally, the money stays here. Many of these small businesses, which can include franchisees, show support by donating to nonprofits, youth activities, and fundraisers. Others can open their space to nonprofit events too. If you want to see our small businesses succeed, please shop local.

As the year unfolds, photos will be taken and businesses will open which will be included in next year's directory. I'm curious to see what the themes of this year will emerge, and look forward to sharing them with you next spring.



Look for this year's directory with your paper, at local businesses and on our website.

Engaging the next generation of news consumers

GUEST COLUMN

BY CHUCK PETERS
Ambit founder



Social media and the internet have fundamentally disrupted how news is consumed and how that news is monetized. News consumers are increasingly reading their news on social sites, enabling social platforms to reap the benefits while leaving traditional media organizations to fend for themselves.

As a result, we've witnessed recent layoffs and major cutbacks at traditional media organizations, such as the LA Times, Vice Media, Sports Illustrated, and BuzzFeed, to name a few. This is not an aberration, but a consequence of a decade-long change in news consumption habits.

Traditional media organizations have tried to adapt. More newspapers offer subscriptions and put their content behind a paywall. Others have tried increasing the power of their digital ads. Some media companies, such as BuzzFeed, leaned into social media, centering their business model around redirecting traffic from social media to their website to monetize using their own digital ads. This worked for a time, but ultimately failed when social media platforms reconfigured their algorithms to deprioritize news.

To make matters worse, a recent Pew Research article found that Americans are not following the news as intently as in previous years. Only 38% of Americans

say they follow the news closely, compared to 52% in 2018.

How do we solve this problem? More specifically, how do we ensure the long-term viability of the media industry by reengaging the next generation of news consumers so they can be contributing members of our community?

Steve Jobs, the cofounder of Apple and one of the best to understand customer experience, said the following at the 1997 Apple Developers Conference: "One of the things I've always found is that you've got to start with the customer experience and work backwards for the technology. You can't start with the technology and try to figure out where you're going to try to sell it."

This mentality has helped propel leading tech companies forward, but can be applied in other industries as well, as Eric Ortiz argued in a recent Southwest Connector opinion piece. (Read it yourself at www.swConnector.com/eric-ortiz/.)

Traditional media has been asking the question, "How can we get more people to read our product?" However, to engage the next generation of news consumers, we need to ask the question, "What type of a product can we design that news consumers will want to use?"

We should not expect the next generation of news consumers to pick up the morning paper or turn on the 11 o'clock news as previous generations have.

Instead, the next generation has shown they prefer to consume their news in a format similar to social media. Although it wasn't designed to be a news source, social media is the second most common source for Americans to find their news, ahead of newspapers, local TV, and network TV.

Social media users prefer the convenience, speed, and social aspects of consuming news on social platforms. As a result, 32% of TikTok users under the age of 30 now use it as a primary source of news, a 23% increase from 2020.

While social media has undeniably played a role in reshaping news consumption, it presents serious challenges. A Pew study found users' number one dislike about consuming news on social media is the inaccuracy of information. Pew also found those who depend on social media for political news have less political knowledge than most other groups. This is no surprise given anyone can build an audience on social media platforms regardless of their credentials.

The prevalence of misinformation and disinformation on social media is a serious concern, as is the negative impact it can have on polarization, radicalization, and mental health concerns, to name a few.

However, as Frances Haugen, the former Facebook Product Manager, said in her 2021 testimony to Congress, "These problems are solvable. A safer, free-speech respecting, more enjoyable social media is possible."

I agree. It's possible to design a platform for news content using a consumer-focused approach, as Jobs calls for, benefiting both the consumer and the news organization without sacrificing the quality of the information or the safety of the users.

In fact, Ambit Media Company is a new tech startup I've launched for Minnesotans to connect with local content from trustworthy sources, including the Southwest Connector, while implementing safeguards to protect against online harms

AMBIT & TMC PUBLICATIONS CO

TMC Publications CO and its three newspapers – the Southwest Connector, Longfellow Nokomis Messenger and Midway Como Frogtown Monitor – are partnering with Ambit. Aiming to build a better online dialogue, Ambit connects Minnesotans to local information from trusted sources.

This new social media platform has verified posts from sources that include Streets.mn, Lived Experience Advocacy Network, Frogtown Tuned In, MinnPost, and Better Minneapolis.

Discussion groups include Housing & Homelessness, Multimodal Transportation, Big Money in Politics, Minnesota Climate Initiatives, Minnesota's Cannabis Industry, Elections 2024, Roads & Infrastructure, and Revitalizing Downtown Minneapolis.

Sign up and be sure to follow our channels on <https://ambit.community/>

common on social media.

Ambit uses the tools of social media to bridge the gap between traditional media and the next generation of news consumers while compensating journalists for the posts shared on our platform.

Social media has fundamentally disrupted how news is consumed, but the news industry can not only survive, but thrive, if we take a consumer-focused approach to redesigning local news.

Prior to starting Ambit, Chuck Peters was a Big Four Consulting Manager in the Data & Digital Trust practice advising the Big Tech industry through the dynamic internet regulatory landscape to create safer digital experiences for everyone.

WANT TO REACH 47,000 PEOPLE? YOU CAN – WITH EACH EDITION OF THE MONITOR.

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Story ideas always welcome.

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

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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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Celebrating Rondo royalty: reflections on history and values

PLANTING SEEDS

BY DR. ARTIKA TYNER,
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On March 9, 2024, history came alive as our community united to commemorate the release of "Rondo: History and Values" at the Rondo Community Library. The collaboration between local youth and community elders has given rise to a timeless treasure. This anthology commissioned by Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute provides invaluable reflections on Rondo's past and illuminates the pathway of social change for future generations of leaders.

HISTORY OF RONDO

The Rondo community has a rich cultural heritage of unity, hope, and faith. During the early to mid-20th century, African Americans made Saint Paul, Minn. their home. They found refuge in the Rondo community, which is an almost two-square-mile area extending from Rice Street to Lexington Boulevard and from University Avenue to Selby Avenue. Rondo Ave. served as the nexus of community connections with Black businesses, churches, and schools. By the 1960s, 80 percent of African Americans in Saint Paul lived in Rondo.

During the late 1950s, the very existence of Rondo was threatened with the construction of I-94. Nationwide, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 impacted Black communities like Rondo because new highway systems were being built at a rapid pace. Unfortunately, in Rondo, the



The release of "Rondo: History and Values" was celebrated at the Rondo Community Library. This anthology includes reflections on the past and looks to the future. (Photo submitted)

highway went through the center of the community. This economic hub, which was evidenced by a vibrant Black neighborhood with hundreds of businesses and a self-sustaining Black ecosystem fueled by cooperative economics ("ujamaa"), was destroyed.

Before the highway was built, the streets of Rondo were bustling with shopping, music, and entertainment, which was evidenced by over 300 Black-owned businesses. With the construction of the highway, these businesses were effectively decimated. The highway also devastatingly eliminated the possibility of any future wealth creation. The hope-filled neighborhood had been filled with beautiful homes that were destined to be inherited by the next generation. With the new highway construction and the exercise of government power to seize private land for public use (eminent domain), Black families lost their homes and the possibility of building generational wealth. Seven hundred Black-owned homes were demolished.

One in eight African Americans lost their homes due to the construction of I-94, which resulted in a \$270 million home ownership equity gap in Rondo.

RONDO VALUES

Despite these roadblocks and impasses, one thing that has remained the same is the importance of honoring Rondo values. Elder Marvin Roger Anderson of the Rondo Center of Diverse Expressions outlined eight core values that reflect Rondo's rich cultural heritage and hope for the future. According to Elder Anderson:

WORK: Work defines us, and as descendants we honor our ancestors for their fortitude to survive slavery, never receiving pay for the toil and work that helped build this country. We do the jobs that need to be done, and we do not let others define how we should feel about an honest occupation.

HOME OWNERSHIP: A home is a castle, and owning your home is the ultimate American Dream, the cornerstone of the family, security in tough times, evi-

dence of your labor, and the basis of your wealth.

RELIGION: Hang on to your African roots, incorporate them into your chosen course of worship in the new world, and integrate them into your daily routines to teach lessons, ease suffering, relay messages, and confirm the equality of all before God.

RESPECT: Learn and respect your heritage, the history of your people, and pass it on.

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE: Your goal is to amass economic capital through a job or jobs working with your hands and mind for economic independence and a better quality of life.

SOCIAL INTERACTION: It is good to be alone, and solitude can be a beautiful thing. However, the moments you will really remember to the fullest will be those spent with other people.

EDUCATION: Education opens the doors for African Americans and is the one thing that cannot be taken away.

HOPE: The day will come when Blackness no longer signals a higher risk than Whites of premature death, impoverishment, unemployment, educational gaps, incarceration, victimization, homelessness, and police harassment; all vestiges of racial discrimination will be reduced. You must believe in this or face a life of depression and despair.

The next chapter of Rondo's history is still being written as a new group of innovators and creatives are activating hope. Black entrepreneurs are building businesses and serving in the community. Black students are organizing for change. Rondo will continue to rise with renewed hope and soar to new heights due to its fervent commitment to upholding Rondo community values.

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.

'I JUST DO IT'

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When Nate started middle school, he joined a swimming team there, and then joined the team at Cretin Derham, which includes freshmen through seniors.

Datta said Nate has competed competitively in national swimming meets through Courage Center, with meets being held in Madison, Wis.; Colorado and Atlanta, Ga. "He usually finishes first or second, which is exciting for him," Datta said.

On the regular school swimming team, he used to come in last but more recently has placed ahead of some of the younger swimmers. "He is getting bigger, and he has done some weightlifting, so he can keep up with the kids a little better. It's kind of exciting to watch."

According to Datta, being in a wheelchair and having to propel himself has also helped Nate gain upper body strength.

Datta said that when Nate was a freshman, she thought in the back of her mind that the other team members might resent Nate's being a slower swimmer, since some of the swimming involved relay races. "But I have never heard any negativity towards him," she said.

She pointed out that the swim team has not only provided the physical exercise of the sport, but also a way to be part of something. "A couple of times we have not been able to get a handicapped bus for meets, and I told the coach I could drive Nate. But he said it was important that Nate be on the bus as a part of the team, so he has really pushed for that."

Nate, who has been hanging out with his younger brother and a foreign student from Kazakhstan who has been living with the family, takes his participation in swimming pretty much for granted.

"I don't really think about what I like



Despite not having the use of his legs, Nathan Datta has been a member of his swim team for all four years of his high school career. "His resilience, as well as the support of his teammates, has been the key to his success," observed his mom, Lisa Datta. They live in Como. (Photo by Terry Faust)

best about swimming," he said. "I just do it."

He practices every day except Sunday, and it has become a routine for the household. Datta said there are breakfasts and pasta parties after the swimming sessions.

When he graduates, he is hoping to go on to college. "We're looking at an online college right now," Datta said. "He's not sure what he wants to do, so he will get his electives out of the way."


Datta said although Nate is usually the only wheelchair swimmer, they do see other boys with wheelchairs swimming. "This happens more than you think," she said. "No one makes special accommodations."

And Nate does not ask for any. He is a kid who likes to swim - period. "I think that if there was a message to Nate's story," Datta said, "it is to normalize seeing people who are disabled, and making room for them in society."


She said Nate will continue swimming with the Courage Center. "We are very fortunate to have something like that," she added.

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OPPRESSIVE EXPERIENCE

>> from 1

a cost of \$5,000 and a special master, who required an initial deposit of \$7,000. Their last parenting consultant cost \$18,000 to get fully caught up on the case, and the fees grew from there.

Lexi has lost track of the exact total she's spent over the last 13 years paying for attorneys and professionals (which included a few stints where she represented herself to save money), but it is over \$300,000. One parenting consultant alone cost \$48,000.

"I have \$200 in my bank account right now," she stated.

Lexi has found it hard to work around the varying parenting time schedules (they've had 11) and court hearings. It isn't something employers want in an employee, and so she's been doing part-time work from her home.

"I want my life back," said Lexi. "They keep me trapped in this chaotic place because they want him to parent. But they have taken away my constitutional right to parent. I wasn't the one who did anything wrong and neither did the children."

HOW DOES A CASE LIKE THIS START?

Derek* and Lexi met at a party in 2002. She was 26 and he was 28. They dated two years and married in a lovely September ceremony. They welcomed their first son in 2008, and lived on a quiet Roseville street. Inside the house, however, it was anything but peaceful. "He'd go red," Lexi recalled. "He started throwing things at me and made threats to my life." She never left Ethan* alone with him.

In January 2012, after discovering massive amounts of child and adult pornography on their home computer, she fled to her sister's house. He called her 97 times in less than one hour, making threats on the recordings. She was granted a two-year order for protection (OFP). He broke it immediately, continuing to call and text her. "There were absolutely no consequences," Lexi said.

She moved, entered the Safe at Home program and got an extension on the OFP, hoping that would protect them. Lexi slept with all the lights on in the house. While some professionals called her "hyper-vigilant," the therapist she saw trained in domestic violence (DV) conducted a lethality evaluation with her and determined her safety fears were justified. A man's threats and past behavior are the surest indicators of future violence, according to domestic violence experts.

As with most couples who divorce in Minnesota, Lexi and Derek used a mediator to iron out the details of their financial split and custody issues. They agreed to use a parenting consultant (PC) to resolve additional disputes, a process that grew in popularity in Minnesota at the time to keep families from returning to court over various issues such as school choices, vacation schedules, and extracurricular options.

The PC didn't think that Derek could manage parenting both kids at the same time, and so he ordered that Ethan see his dad for three-hour stretches followed by a one-hour stretch with Mason*. Lexi was responsible for the considerable transportation back and forth, and paid for the necessary supervisors. The kids spent a lot of time in the car traveling back and forth. Holidays involved the same hectic schedule.

"I spent my whole holiday catering to Derek's holiday," Lexi observed. This meant that neither she nor the kids could spend holidays with her family in South Dakota or even see her sister's family one hour outside the Twin Cities.

At one, Mason was diagnosed with rare, non-malignant mass. He was in and out of the ICU with treatments that lasted seven days at a time. In addition to caring for her sick baby, she also had to balance care for her four-year-old son – and still

make sure that Derek got his supervised parenting time in.

And despite being on immune suppressants with a doctor's order to avoid groups of children, the PC and Derek insisted that Mason attend ECFE

classes with his dad in the neighboring city, exposing him to the many germs there. He kept getting sick and running fevers that were over 104 degrees, requiring further hospitalization.

Their PC at the time ordered that Derek could contact Lexi by phone and text in order to talk about the children, despite the order for protection that prohibited it.

"The PCs almost polarized things more rather than helping," Lexi remarked. "They tell me it will make him a better parent. I'm still waiting for that better piece."

INTERVENTIONS HAVEN'T HELPED

Over the years, Derek has gone through domestic violence programs, including one through Tubman. A therapist was brought in to teach him age-appropriate environments for children. He's attended parenting classes. They've both been ordered to attend the Bridging Parental Conflict class, and they use the locally-owned Our Family Wizard app for communications.

"None of it has helped," said Lexi.

A mental health evaluation found Derek had a thought-processing disorder, paranoia, obsessive-compulsive issues, and a personality disorder. He's like a poorly-wired computer that can't be re-wired.

Their second PC testified that Derek was focused more on his own needs – fairness and what he was entitled to – as opposed to what was in the kids' best interests.

There were no issues discovered during Lexi's mental health evaluation. Yet, over the last 13 years, Derek, his attorneys and other professionals who never even met her have said she is "high conflict." Few of the professionals have had training in domestic violence as it wasn't previously required in order to be certified as a mediator, custody evaluator, parenting consultant, judge, referee or special master. Instead, most have training as attorneys.

A federal law, termed Kayden's Law after a child killed by her father, would require judges, referees and others working on family court cases to have training in domestic violence, child abuse or coercive control, but it has yet to be implemented in Minnesota.

"What is 'fair?'" asked Lexi. "The courts have put undo financial stress, ordered me to pay for supervisors, phones, Our Family Wizard, and medical insurance. They imputed me with a salary I have never made. All the while, he sold our family house and made money and bought a bigger one, and his business is thriving. Is that fair? The constant money-draining litigation has hurt the whole family over the last 12 years. Even when they found that he is a vexatious litigant and ordered him to pay, he didn't and there were no repercussions. Our judges never revisit that.

"If the roles were reversed, I wonder if I would be treated the same. I cannot pay for a Special Master or a BFA. The retainer for both cost more than what I make in half a year. And yet I am ordered to do it because the courts refuse to hold him accountable. The courts are a pay-to-play game."



Family law remains primitive in the belief that children are always best served by having a relationship with both parents regardless of the child's right to safety and autonomy."

Dr. Catherine Barrett

HE STARTED BITING THROUGH GLASS

Ethan was three when he bit through a water glass while talking to his dad on the telephone. He started chewing through his shirts. Between ages six and eight, paid transporters dropped Ethan off at his dad's house. He laid on the floor when he got back and wouldn't get up. Mason left a vibrant kid, and returned such a different kid that the transporters questioned if his dad was drugging him, and shared their concerns with the PC.

Ethan began having trouble reading, and showed signs of having a brain injury that required OT and PT. By second grade, he had fallen behind in reading and math. He was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of the domestic violence, and an individualized education program (IEP) was created at school. After supervised parenting time was lifted and he began doing overnights with his dad, he was diagnosed with Persistent Depressive Disorder, anxiety, and Child Affected by Parental-Relationship Stress.

Mason also had an IEP focused on speech and stuttering.

Their PC ordered them to do exchanges at a family friend's house six times a week because her ex-husband accused her of being intimidating at exchanges. The PC didn't check with the homeowners before making the order.

"He writes stuff that sounds plausible, but it is all fiction. If any of the professionals would look at the facts instead of taking it at face value, they would see that it isn't real," remarked Lexi.

Then a guardian ad litem ordered exchanges at a police station .9 miles from Ethan's school. It would take Derek 30 minutes to drive less than a mile to pick up Mason, making Lexi late to work.

He wouldn't remember to bring their son's medication or to give it to him. She'd have to arrange to meet him again to get the medication. He didn't return winter jackets. One year, they went through 12 jackets. "Thank goodness for Cornerstone, family and friends," she said. "They kept giving me more jackets."

Later, they started doing exchanges in a gas station parking lot, and then things were switched to Derek's home. Lexi was ordered to open the doors and leave the car so her ex-husband could talk to the kids, despite a therapist pointing out that she was at high-risk due to Derek's past threats against her life. She tried to always bring a third party to witness things, and Derek accused them of intimidating him, as well. (When she started taking video of the exchanges to show what was actually happening to people who weren't there, she was court-ordered to stop.) The boys shut the doors and refused to go while she stood outside and encouraged them to go. Exchanges lasted hours.

'A FULL LIFE IN 50% OF THE TIME'

"We've lived every schedule in the system," said Lexi.

For many years, the boys had a different parenting time schedule and saw their dad at different times. It was tough on their relationship. The times they saw their dad varied according to the day, and

FIERCELY EMBRACED

A new Minnesota non-profit is working to reform Minnesota's family court system. Fiercely Embraced is led by survivors who provide support to others.

COERCIVE CONTROL IMPACTS CHILDREN

- Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten victims.
- Though often thought of as a precursor to physical violence, coercive control can include physical tactics such as assault.

- The impact of coercive control on children mirrors that of the mother. Like the mother, children experience the male batterer's imposition of rigid gender roles, low levels of sexual abuse and physical abuse (e.g. touching), and isolation that fly under the radar of social services, doctors, and other professionals.

- A major tactic used by abusers engaging in coercive control is to "weaponize" the children by having them spy on their mother or taking custody from the mother in court. Mothers are frequently put in the position of choosing between their own safety and the safety of their child.

- Within family court, perpetrators can adeptly use coercive control to unjustifiably manipulate narratives, turning the tables on their victims and, in many cases, successfully skewing the court's perception of events.

- Perpetrators of coercive control are more likely to be deficient, if not abusive, as parents. Children whose mothers had been assaulted by their male partners are more likely to be directly abused.

- Coercive control has a negative impact on children's school performance due to trauma and a resulting inability to engage in socially complex behaviors because of rigidly controlled gender roles.

- Coercive control does not necessarily end with separation of the parties. Domestic violence may escalate after separation or take new forms such as increasing emotional abuse or financial abuse. And sadly, can even lead to murder by the abuser.

LIFELONG IMPACTS ARE PREVENTABLE

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), a long-running study at the University of Minnesota, has found that children who grow up in environments that expose them to abuse, as a witness or as the abused, that experience toxic stress or are exposed to untreated mental illness or substance abuse are more likely to have mental illness or substance abuse issues as adults.

CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR ESCALATES

- Offenders who exercise control over their partner's daily activities are more than 5 times more likely to kill them than other domestic abusers.

- In a remarkable 20 percent of domestic homicides, the murder was the first act of physical violence – but these were almost always preceded by coercive and controlling behavior.

- In Minnesota, 11 children whose parents were involved in family court cases have died since 2008. These include Autumn Hallow of Elk River and brothers William and Nelson Schladetzky of Minneapolis.

- Mikayla Olson was murdered in 2007 during her first unsupervised visit with her father.

- Shannon Cortez Gooden of Burnsville shot and killed police officer Paul Elmstrand, officer Matthew Ruge and firefighter/paramedic Adam Finseth on Feb. 18, 2024 with seven children in the house. He had been in family court with two former partners who both requested orders for protection that were denied.



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REFORM FAMILY COURT

Fiercely Embraced believes family courts in Minnesota need to change to make a better society for everyone. They point to ongoing domestic violence and a Pay-to-Play mentality that are not benefiting families. They want to stop seeing orders that force people into homelessness and poverty. "Once you are in, there is no end until a child turns 18," say Fiercely Embraced advocates. "The cottage industry of paid professionals ordered by family judges are detrimental. Judges need more training in domestic violence and coercive control, and so do guardians ad litem (GALs)."

Information from Fiercely Embraced, www.fiercelyembraced.org

Coercive control impacts all areas of a child's life

**WHAT IS A SPECIAL MASTER?**

A special master in Minnesota family court cases is a legal professional appointed by the court to assist in the resolution of complex cases. They act as a neutral third party. Special masters are responsible for managing and coordinating the various aspects of a family law case. They gather and evaluate evidence relevant to the case, and make rulings. They charge \$400-500 an hour.

WHAT IS A REFEREE?

Under the Minnesota Rules of Civil Procedure, a referee is essentially an appointed judge. They technically operate under the supervision of a judge, who must sign off on their orders, but there are rarely situations where they are not signed off on. Referees typically have experience in the area of law to which they are appointed (i.e. family, probate, juvenile, or other special court). In comparison, judges are either chosen in nonpartisan elections or appointed by the Governor of Minnesota when there is a judicial vacancy.

WHAT IS A PC?

Parenting Consulting is an alternative dispute resolution process authorized by MN Statute Rule 114.02 (a) (10). PC decisions are binding on the parties. Often, PCs are also attorneys but some are licensed therapists. PCs are not mandated reporters of child maltreatment. Fees range from \$250 to \$500 an hour.

CONDUCT RULES

Judges and referees in Minnesota are not prohibited from belonging to the same professional organizations that attorneys, mediators, Guardian Ad Litem (GALs), custody evaluators, Parenting Consultants, Special Masters, and others who charge for their services are. This is standard in other states to maintain impartiality and avoid kickbacks. Professional organizations include The Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) and the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC).

OPPRESSIVE EXPERIENCE

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transfer times ran into meals and bedtimes.

Ethan's therapist stated that he needed a sense of stability and predictability, which included a consistent schedule, regular bedtimes, fewer transitions, and consistent visits with his brother, as well as the ability to resume his regular activities which were being interfered with by the inconsistent parenting time schedule.

In 2016, a judge ordered 50/50 parenting time with a 5-2-2-5 schedule, keeping sole legal custody with Lexi.

Their dad didn't allow them to attend parties on "his time" or see their friends. They couldn't attend Boy Scouts events or do other activities during "his time."

He took their phones away and wouldn't let them use their school tablets to contact friends or family.

Ethan told his mom, "I have to live a full life in 50 percent of the time."

"That was hard on him," said Lexi. His friends tried to rearrange their birthday parties and events so that they fell on mom days.

'PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME GO'

Ethan told his principal that his dad drove the kids to Wisconsin, bought a knife, and set it on the center console where the kids could see it. It scared him. He pushed Ethan sometimes, and trapped him at other times. He punched Ethan in the chest. He'd threaten to take things away if he told anyone what happened.

Ethan wrote on school assignments, "I can't go to my dad's. Please don't make me go." He asked his therapists to not make him go. He told his school principal that he was scared to go to his dad's house.

Mason reported to his therapist that his dad hit him and his brother with a closed fist.

Two child protection cases were opened. Like many cases that involve parents in family court, CPS staff determined they could get services in family court and family therapy was ordered. The CPS cases didn't prevent Derek from having parenting time.

In September 2020, both boys walked to their mom's house. They described their dad's behavior as bizarre, erratic, and frightening.

Two and a half years ago, the boys started leaving school to avoid going to their dad's house. Their dad got a court order for police to retrieve them.

The younger boy was told by school staff and a police officer that he would be placed in a foster home or a facility, and not able to see his mom if he didn't go with his dad. He went that day. But the next time he was supposed to go to dad's house, his older brother came to school and snuck him out. Two law enforcement agencies and a state patrol helicopter joined 30 school staff to search for the boys, who were located four hours later at a friend's house.

Law enforcement was called eight times in September 2021 to assist Derek in exercising his parenting time.

Eventually the school and law enforcement filed motions with family court to move parenting time exchanges away from the schools, citing safety concerns and the use of resources.

After these incidents, Mason struggled with feeling safe at school, and it was difficult to get him to school on time. He had 17 tardies in two months.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGY AND FORCED CONTACT

The boys have since refused to go at all. They want to know when they get to say they've had enough. They want the court to let them make the decision to be done with parenting time at their dad's house. In Iowa, a child's opinion is factored in at age 11, but there is no policy in Minnesota for when a child's preference matters. Instead, court rulings continue to prioritize contact with parents, with one going so far as to imprison a mom from Iowa whose daughter refuses to see the dad she said sexually abused her. (See past Voices Against Family Violence stories detailing Dani's case on our website.)

The rulings of forced contact from those involved in family court go against standard psychological advice, according to clinical forensic psychologist Dr. Catherine Barrett of Los Angeles, Calif., who has spoken nationally about reunification therapy and camps.

"Nowhere in the literature of psychology does it state that forced compliance improves a relationship. When a parent persists that a child should be forced to reunify against their will, the best interest is not in the child," stated Dr. Barrett.

She points to a confirmation bias in family court that believes women coach children to make up allegations of abuse, and then acts on that belief that children are lying about abuse. "We need to listen to kids," said Dr. Barrett. "Kids don't make this stuff up." According to a study by Dr. Joan Meiers and George Washington University Law School that was funded by the National Institute of Justice, in family court allegations of abuse are not believed 75 percent of the time. "The confirmation bias is that victims are lying," said Dr. Barrett.

"This is the generation of voice and technology," she observed. "These kids aren't being coached."

Dr. Barrett serves as an expert witness in family court and has read through many custody evaluations in the eight years she's been doing this work. The reasons why children don't want to see a parent are usually in those reports, she observed, but the evaluator reaches different conclusions from the data and pathologizes the parent the child wants to be with (who is usually the mother). "The behavior of the father isn't even on the table to look at," she said. "It gets completely ignored."

Dr. Barrett is concerned about the harm that courts are doing by not understanding coercive control. She said, "It is undeniable as proven through research that a child's right to be safe is undermined by the minimization of abuse reports. Courts often maintain the parent-child relationship at all costs, contributing to the perpetuation of abuse by choosing to ignore it."

"Family law remains primitive in the belief that children are always best served by having a relationship with both parents regardless of the child's right to safety and autonomy."

SUPPORTING DAD

Derek and his string of attorneys have regularly accused Lexi of "alienating" the boys from their father.

Professionals stated that both parents needed to learn to get along, and said that both were creating the problem. Her therapist was disregarded because he sided with her and believed her when she detailed the power and control dynamics of the relationship during and post separation.

When Lexi brought up issues or asked that Derek follow the rules in place, she was scolded. "I'm creating issues because I'm trying to hold him to things," she said.

Two years ago, Lexi learned from a letter written to her attorney that Derek was getting remarried. The letter demanded that she drive the kids to his house, leave

the 12 year old and eight year old in her car, hand the keys over to him, and find a way home.

She was told to lie to the boys and not tell them where she was driving them when she brought them to an exchange.

Lexi worked with therapists and came up with a plan: she drove the boys three hours north to attend their dad's wedding. She walked them in and then waited in the hotel lobby, far from the ceremony. Derek later wrote in an affidavit to the court that she interfered with his wedding and wrecked his day.

"The kids are not going, but it isn't me that made that decision," said Lexi. "They're just done."

They've also had to attend therapy to repair the mother-child relationship because the kids have been angry at Lexi for not listening to them, and for "forcing" and coercing them to go to their dad's.

They have pointed out that there's something wrong if their dad needs to involve the police to get them to go with him.

"How much is enough?" asks Lexi. "I have done all the things. I've had the top of the top on my case. When do they decide enough is enough? I can't afford it. It would be one thing if any of this stuff has helped. But it hasn't."

WHAT IS A SPECIAL MASTER?

Minnesota is testing out a new program using special masters in complex family court cases. Essentially a privatized judge, a special master has the authority of a judge and fees are \$400-\$500 an hour. They aren't supposed to be used for cases like Lexi's, but that didn't stop a judge from ordering it.

Lexi has in forma pauperis (IFP) status with the court in recognition of her low wages and need for state assistance programs. She was ordered to pay \$2,450 to the special master immediately as a deposit and \$1,750 for the brief focused assessment. That's a substantial part of her annual income.

She provided documentation of her income to the special master, who ordered the payment to herself and the therapist doing the BFA be made anyway. In court filings, Derek accused her of blocking the process and keeping him from his kids because she didn't make the payments.

Lexi doesn't own a house and isn't sure how she can pay her rent. Her retirement accounts are empty, in part because she had to assume the \$170,000 in medical bills from Mason's medical issues. She's on a payment plan with her attorney.

Meanwhile, Derek lives in a \$550,000 house that he owns, and has three cars. Derek pays \$162 a month in child support, although she's had the two boys full-time for nearly three years.

"I want to rebuild my life and be financially stable, but the court orders keep preventing that," she said. "I have literally nothing left and he does - and they keep adding all these other professional fees. Is that justice? Or is that abuse perpetrated in a different way?"

AN 'OPPRESSIVE' EXPERIENCE

"This whole experience has been oppressive," said Lexi.

They've come full circle again, as he's been ordered to go through another psychological exam, one that looks at his inability to retain information and learn if there is a biological reason for why his narrative keeps changing.

"They need to come up with some kind of solution so we can be out of this chaos loop," said Lexi. "There are no checks and balances."

She added, "This will be the 57th hearing I've had. And it doesn't look like it will end anytime soon."

**Editor's note: In writing the articles in this series, I have reviewed dozens of court documents, and reports by professionals. In recognition of the sensitive nature of these articles, we have opted to refer to people by their first names or aliases, and have not used details that can be used to identify the family.*

RECYCLE YOUR LEFT-OVER PAINT WITH PAINTCARE

PaintCare accepts all brands of paint, stain and varnish

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Did you know there's an option for recycling leftover paint in Minnesota? That's right, recycling, not just disposing of leftover paint.

Since 2014, the non-profit PaintCare has been partnering with local paint stores in Minnesota to reclaim and recycle paint products through more than 260 drop-off sites across the state – and more than 100 of those sites are in the seven-county metro area.

The American Coatings Association (ACA) is a national trade association representing the industry, including manufacturers. ACA created PaintCare as an alternative to paint disposal 14 years ago. Think of it as an industry-led paint stewardship program.

Oregon was the first state to establish a PaintCare program. Since that time, California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Maine, Minnesota, New York, Rhode Island, Washington, and Vermont have enacted legislation to do the same, and Illinois will soon join the ranks.

A key element of the legislation is that all retailers in participating states must charge a fee that covers the cost of collecting and managing left-over paint.

Look at your receipt next time you buy paint or another coating product; the fee is based on the size of the container purchased. It is often, but not always, listed separately on a printed receipt.

- 1 gallon or smaller: \$ 0.49
- 1-2 gallons: \$ 0.99
- 2-5 gallons: \$ 1.99

FIND A DROP-OFF SITE

Go to the interactive map at www.paintcare.org/drop-off-sites to find the drop-off location nearest you.

Jacob Saffert is the PaintCare program manager for Minnesota and Illinois. He said, "Leftover paint is typically the largest volume product collected by municipal household hazardous waste programs. From the data we filed with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency last year, PaintCare collected about 900,000 gallons of paint across Minnesota in 2022. That's pretty typical for us."

In Minnesota, PaintCare's contracted waste haulers transport paint to a recycler in Fridley to process the paint they collect. There the paint is sorted by color, filtered, and blended to create an assortment of standard colors. The gallon and five gallon containers of recycled paint are most-



Jill Carmody is a senior manager at the Habitat for Humanity's Minneapolis ReStore. They are both a drop-off site for leftover paint products, and a retailer for the Amazon brand of recycled paint. Carmody said, "PaintCare has made it easy for people to recycle their left-over paint, which is the right thing to do for the environment." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

ly sold to Habitat for Humanity Re-Use Stores; the colors cannot be re-tinted.

When asked about why the paint industry was early to get on board with a paint stewardship program, Saffert said, "One benefit the industry saw was that if you're proactive, you get a seat at the table

to make sure the final program is one that works for everyone."

DEALING WITH OIL-BASED PRODUCTS

According to Saffert, about 80% of paint products collected by PaintCare are water-based and 20% are oil-based.



At the ReStore, there are 20 different colors of recycled paint to choose from at \$18/gallon or \$90 for a five-gallon pail. Colors cannot be re-tinted. Carmody said, "Sometimes you just don't need all those choices. We sell two shades of white, three shades of grey, and a nice selection of 15 other colors at a great price." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Oil-based products are more complicated to dispose of because there aren't any recyclers that can deal with them. Household Hazardous Waste sites make efforts to resell them, but Saffert estimates that only about 10% of what counties collect actually gets re-used by consumers. Oil-based paint that can't be reused is typically burned for energy.

Oil-based paints have higher levels of VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and stronger odor than their water-based counterparts. Oil-based paint clean-up requires chemical solvents, and turpentine and paint thinner should never be poured down the drain.

The industry is phasing out oil-based paint products for these reasons.

BETTER STORAGE, LONGER LIFE

Paint lasts longer when properly stored. Choose a dry location that won't be subject to extremes of temperature and humidity, and make sure containers are sealed.

PaintCare sites accept all brands of leftover house paint, stain, and varnish. Containers must be five gallons or smaller, and customers may not drop off more than five gallons of paint per visit. Leaking, unlabeled, and empty containers are not accepted at drop-off sites. Make sure all paint containers have original lids and labels. The program includes container recycling for both plastic and metal paint containers

Home

CRISIS HOTLINE

Call the Minnesota Day One Crisis Hotline at 1-866-223-1111 if you or someone you know is seeking shelter due to a dangerous relationship or needs to create a safety plan.

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Proceeds from the plant sale support Master Gardener community and youth programs in Ramsey County. Cash, checks and credit cards are accepted.

FROGTOWN GARAGE SALE MAY 3-4

The Friendly Frog Events announce its Frogtown Community Garage Sale to benefit seniors living in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul takes place annually on the first Friday and Saturday in May, at 411 Blair Avenue, St. Paul. This year's sale will take place on Friday, May 3, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday, May 4, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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LOCAL LANDLORD IS CRAZY ABOUT GREEN

by PATRICIA OHMANS
Frogtown Green

Not every landlord inveighs against fossil fuels, but then again, Dale Howey isn't your average landlord. As the owner, manager and environmental cheerleader-in-chief of Green Rock Apartments (and a tireless Frogtown Green volunteer), Howey wants to put sustainability into urban living.

Since 2000, Howey has been buying up what he calls "crappy homes" in Minneapolis' Elliott Park neighborhood and then adding insulation, electric appliances and more, to shrink his properties' energy consumption.

Tenants in Green Rock's 146 units receive free LED light bulbs and lithium batteries to reduce personal energy use. Structural improvements like solar panels, white reflective roofs, high efficiency boilers, energy-efficient doors and windows, a geothermal system and heat pump units in many units reduce tenants' utility bills overall. Arrays of solar panels are allowing Howey to sell excess energy back to the power company, which can offset the cost of the panels and installation. "I don't have an electric bill," Howey says proudly, "and some tenants' bills are like \$20!"

Energy isn't his only focus. Howey is a die-hard "free-cycler" who says he "fights like crazy to keep things out of the dumpster." Green Rock apartment recycling areas include bins for metal scraps, light



bulbs ("which sometimes contain mercury") and electronics, which he and his staff recycle, so his tenants don't add unnecessarily to area landfills. Even plastic bags are recycled, although Howey tries to reduce tenants' plastic consumption by providing compostable trash bags and even dog poop bags.

The Green Rock sustainability manifesto includes a commitment to urban gardening. "We like to say our dirt is your dirt," Howey says enthusiastically. The buildings' compost bins give interested tenants a place to recycle their food scraps,

while nearby vegetable gardens maintained by Green Rock offer the urban gardeners a place to "play in the dirt."

An active volunteer with Frogtown Green's tree-planting program, Howey works sustainability and environmentalism into almost every interaction and conversation he conducts. He has purchased an electric charging station for his St. Paul church, and installed charging for electric cars at his own home in Roseville.

For Howey, environmentalism is a passion, a necessity, and a great big calling. "I wanted to figure out what we could

do to leverage our assets to change the culture," Howey explains in one of his YouTube videos (yes, he's on YouTube, at "Crazy Green Landlord").

What about rents and turnover?

As a businessman, Howey can't ignore the realities of the rental market. He maintains that tenants appreciate his emphasis on the environment, and repay him by maintaining stability in his rentals. "We've had tenants stick with us for 10 years or more," he asserts. Howey has also found that the city of Minneapolis is a willing partner in reducing expenses. He's gotten financing help for many of the improvements made through the city's Green Cost Share program, an effort to improve environmental health by matching investments in solar and energy efficiency projects. (Minneapolis.gov/green-cost-share)

Whatever the upfront cost, Howey maintains that the payback is substantial—and that he would do it even if it weren't. Not all landlords are eager to make the changes he has made, but Howey says he's not worried about what other people do.

"I can't change what anybody else is doing, but I can change what I'm doing as a landlord. Let's get busy and make a future for the world we all live in," he concludes.

Frogtown Green is a resident-led and volunteer-powered environmental initiative in St Paul's most diverse neighborhood. They plant trees, cultivate gardens and work toward a healthier environment. If you'd like to know more, browse frogtowngreen.com or call 651-757-5970. Patricia Ohmans is an environmental health educator and co-director of Frogtown Green.

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HAMLIN HEADLINES

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PEACE BUBBLES

BY MELVIN GILES
peacebubbles@q.com



"Mistakes are a fact of life. It's the response to the error that counts." Nikki Giovanni

"Undoubtedly, we become what we envisage." Claude Bristol

Hello Monitor readers,

Spring has arrived and is springing more light, more greenness, more beauty, and more good changes for 2024, even in the shadows of worldwide revengeful wars, some unethical USA lawmakers, an up-and-down economy, a few irresponsible corporations and businesses, and climate shifts spinning us into fearful divided unnecessary and preventable chaos and health crises. Yes, the madness, dramas, and traumas will slow down, however, probably not until after November's presidential elections. In the meantime, we can breathe together and focus on the goodness instead of being focused on known untruths, lies, and fears of gloom and doom, which we are being fed.

For example, let's celebrate the amazing happenings. Congratulations, Minnesota State University (MSU) Women and Men Basketball Championship Division 2 titles! Both teams won after overcoming serious obstacles and overwhelming odds. Mankato and MSU did Minnesota proud!

There were other great happenings last

A TOUGH MESSAGE FROM A JEWISH MAN

month moving into the month of angels, blooming flowers, and hopefulness that things are and will continue to improve. Improve, not be perfect. It has never been perfect and it never will be. As I watched reruns of Easter movies I'm always amazed, particularly at how people throughout history lose their faith then regain it in good times and quickly lose it again during not so good or dark times. We are having one of those not good times now. I encourage us to keep the faith and keep hope alive. It is darkest before dawn; and, morning is coming. Believe and focus on the positive and not on the fear. And, be and share the good changes you want to see and live for yourself and for our children and generations to come.

With that said, I invited my brother from parents of different faiths to share some heavy words that we need to hear as we continue to struggle with what to do about inhumane images of suffering and dying babies and destructive genocide of a Nation of People and of the human right of a Nation of People to feel safe from harm and terrorist attacks. Again, it's amazing that we can rescue animals and protect corporation's equipment and machines, B.U.T (Behold the Underlying Truth), we will not stop to rescue and save humans on both sides. Instead, U.S.A. continues to send weapons of mass destruction based on outdated and apartheid deals. This is truly madness when we witness shameful acts that we were told never, never to forget so it would not happen again to any people!

NOW, A TOUGH LOVE MESSAGE FROM BROTHER

ART SEROTTOFF:

The carnage on human bodies is nightmarish. The devastation of buildings and infrastructure is complete and appalling. We are witnesses to horrific events in Palestine/Israel. I am searching for ways to comprehend this and solutions that save lives.

To comprehend, I looked to our own past in the U.S.A. It seems that we have experienced events with similar root causes: the uprising after George Floyd was murdered, the Dakota War, Nat Turner's Rebellion, the many uprisings after Dr. King was assassinated, the Rodney King protests, Ferguson, etc., etc. People committed violent acts because they were desperate, had lost hope and had no place else to go. I believe this situation is magnified manyfold in Gaza.

I am Jewish. My family strongly supported Israel. They taught me Jewish values of justice and protecting humanity. I strongly believe that the State of Israel has lost sight of these values. For me, it is not condoned by our values to blockade over 2 million people. It is not condoned to be the gatekeeper of their electricity, food, medical supplies and ability to move about. It is certainly not condoned to occupy their land, destroy their homes and capriciously detain and incarcerate family members. The values I learned condemn restricting food, medicine and fuel essential for survival.

This must stop.

The solution is not more weapons, more force, more destruction. More Israeli oppression attempts to put a lid on boiling over resentment. This is not a solution. It is clearly temporary, and it cannot work. Israel can "destroy Hamas." It can only create more

terrorists.

As a staunch supporter of Israel and provider of 20% of Israel's military budget as well as weapons, we, in the U.S.A., are complicit.

In following the Jewish values that I learned, I believe the USA must act differently. Move away from increasing oppression and violent carnage and toward respecting everyone's humanity. To this end we need:

- U.S. support for the UN as it calls for an immediate ceasefire.
- Open routes of access for humanitarian supplies to Gaza.
- Setup of safe zones for civilians in Gaza.
- Resuming access to water and electricity as well as fuel for medical facilities in the Gaza Strip.
- Demanding real accountability for violations of human rights and international law.
- Real moves to end the occupation and apartheid system, and
- Real moves to demand equality for all living under Israeli control.

THANK YOU, ART FOR SHARING FROM YOUR JEWISH PERSPECTIVE.

I have hope that the seeds of Divine Grace and Human Love will grow in us this spring and summer and things will start improving and that the Arc of Justice will leap forward under, over, and through our economic obstacles, border difficulties, and political divisions. We are all the chosen ones to make a positive difference together. Happy spring and keep hope alive within yourself!

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)!

PEOPLE

ANNIKA GRASSL

The Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities announces that Annika Grassl, of St. Paul is one of just 30 Minnesotans currently participating in an advocacy training course, Partners in Policymaking. This free, nationally acclaimed program is for adults with developmental disabilities and parents/legal guardians of younger children with developmental disabilities. This eight-month program runs from September to May and through informative and interactive sessions, the program teaches leadership and advocacy skills and the process of developing positive partnerships with elected officials and other policymakers who make decisions about disability supports and services.



Grassl, who was born with cerebral

palsy, defied doctors who said she may never walk, talk, or feed herself. Because of a strong support system and proactive treatments, Grassl has been able to overcome large obstacles her entire life. She credits the advocacy of others for her success. She hopes by being part of this program she can also be an advocate for those who need support the most.

Since its inception in 1987 almost 1,200 Minnesota self-advocates and parents have become stronger advocates by participating in group exercises and teaching from experts in the field of developmental disabilities. Classes cover the history of disability and self-advocacy movements, inclusive education, supported living, and competitive employment. Individuals are given tools to influence county, state, and federal legislative processes.

With May graduation from the program approaching, Grassl is excited to learn from leaders in the field of disability advocacy. She believes making strong connections and better understanding policy will prepare her for a future full of advocacy for herself and others.

For more information, browse <https://mn.gov/mnddc/pipm/>. Deadline to apply is July 1, 2024.

DR. JOE GOTHARD

St. Paul Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Joe Gothard will be the next superintendent of Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) in Madison, Wis. Gothard attended school and spent most of his education career in Madison before coming to Minnesota in 2013. He has served as superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) since July 2017, and is credited with leading the district through the COVID-19 pandemic and his strategic direction in the recovery efforts, including stabilizing enrollment after several years of declines. Most recently, he was named the 2024 National Superintendent of the Year by the School Superintendents Association (AASA).



"Dr. Gothard has been a strong leader for SPPS, and we are grateful for his nearly seven years of service to this community," said Halla Henderson, Chair of the SPPS Board of Education. "At the same time, we are excited he has the opportunity to continue his career and return to his hometown with his family."

DR. JOHN THEIN

Dr. John Thein will serve as Interim Superintendent of St. Paul Public Schools. Dr. Thein has over 50 years of experience in education, including 17 years as Superintendent of Roseville Area Schools. He previously served as Interim Superintendent for Saint Paul Public Schools in 2016-17. He most recently served as Interim Superintendent of ROCORI Public Schools in Cold Spring, Minn.



Dr. Thein will start on May 20 and serve until a permanent superintendent is hired. As Interim Superintendent, he is not eligible to apply for the permanent superintendent position.

"Passing the baton back to Dr. Thein is a familiar feeling after I received it from him in 2017," said Dr. Gothard. "Dr. Thein knows Saint Paul Public Schools well, and I am confident he will provide the steady leadership our community needs until a full-time superintendent is hired." Get updates on the superintendent search at spps.org/superintendentsearch.

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MAKE SNELLING AVENUE SAFER

Neighbors want MnDOT to do something now

By JANE MCCLURE

How safe could Snelling Avenue be for people on foot or bicycles had plans dating back several years been implemented? Members of Hamline Midway Coalition don't want those plans gathering dust on a shelf at the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

A safer Snelling is the goal of an effort that includes area district councils, as outlined in a letter sent to the Minnesota MnDOT April 1, 2024. No hoped-for improvements are in MnDOT's 10-year plan for St. Paul projects, which dismays neighborhood activists and members of St. Paul Planning Commission Transportation Committee.

The committee reviewed projects April 1 with MnDOT Metro District North Area Manager Molly McCartney. Committee members asked for an update in six months.

Snelling is State Highway 51. It is a major truck route through area neighborhoods. But it also goes through commercial nodes and residential areas, near schools and institutions.

The Snelling improvement effort is led by HMC, which represents neighborhoods north of University Avenue and

south of Pierce Butler Route. District councils from Como, St. Anthony Park, Union Park, Macalester-Groveland and Highland have signed on in support. The combined population in the areas represented by the six councils tops 100,000, according to the letter.

The letter is also going to local and state elected officials.

"How can we get this back on the agenda?" said Kevin Sands, a member of HMC's Transportation Committee. He said community members are willing to lead walking tours and hold community meetings to discuss their concerns.

One point HMC has made is that neighborhoods south of I-94 have obtained needed improvements, including medians and new bike and pedestrian accommodations. Two projects are planned in Highland and Macalester-Groveland this construction season, and a third project is in MnDOT's 10-year plan.

Other members of area district councils' transportation committees agree, noting how traffic speeds up on the Snelling viaduct over the railroad tracks.

The Planning Commission committee members also took note of the situation. "When can we get MnDOT to do something?" said Planning Commissioner Brian Martinson. He noted the level of detail in the shelved plans and the unanimous support from elected officials.

McCartney said that while she doesn't



When can we get MnDOT to do something?"

Brian Martinson



Martinson said he and his family once bicycled from their home in Macalester-Groveland to the State Fairgrounds, along Snelling. It's not an experience they would repeat.

An example cited by HMC is the 2012-2013 Snelling Avenue Multi-Modal Planning Study. That study made many bike and pedestrian safety suggestions for Snelling between I-94 and the State Fairgrounds.

Another bike and pedestrian safety plan was prepared in 2014-2015, when MnDOT brought local stakeholders together to make bike and pedestrian safety plans for the stretch of Snelling between Hamline University and the State Fairgrounds.

By 2017, MnDOT had prepared fully engineered plans for a safe route. Those plans were also removed from the

have a good answer, she has made MnDOT leadership aware of the desire for improvements. MnDOT staff are aware of the safety problems on Snelling and are reaching out to the district councils.

"We're trying to figure out how and when we bring projects back," she said.

MnDOT website. Advocates were told that any changes would be delayed until the Snelling viaduct is replaced in 20 to 30 years.

While the city's draft bike plan calls for a separated bike facility between Hewitt and Como avenues, that could also hinge on when the viaduct is redone.

HMC pointed out that the most recent work on Snelling was in late 2023, when more than 300 large new traffic signs were installed between West 7th

Street and Larpen-teur avenue at a cost of \$425,000. The new signs included big new stop signs and one-way signs, and at least 80 new "Do Not Enter" signs. No signs were added to improve pedestrian crossings.

HMC called the 2023 project "another disappointment on Snelling Avenue after years of neglected plans for improvements."

"The size and placement of these signs is a clear reminder of MnDOT's primary focus on maintaining Snelling Avenue as a highway, rather than what it functionally is: a 30-miles-per-hour city arterial through residential neighborhoods and commercial districts."



We are trying to figure out how and when we bring projects back."

Molly McCartney



United Village developer proposes 'viable' development at site

Neighbors want to make sure new hotel, restaurants and office don't turn their backs on community

By JANE MCCLURE

Several variances for a planned restaurant pavilion and office building at the United Village development go to the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) at 3 p.m. Monday, April 15. A temporary parking lot approved last year by the St. Paul City Council also needs a variance.

After waiting for years for the former Midway Center "superblock" to be redeveloped, there is strong community interest in what lies ahead. Yet there is also pushback over the building design and placement on the site. Neighbors are also interested in future, non-soccer activities at the stadium and adjacent Great Lawn.

The number and type of variances have met questions from members of Union Park District Council's land use committee. Some committee members have been especially critical of the two-building restaurant pavilion's design.

If the variances are approved, devel-

oper Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC could start on the buildings this summer. Each would be under construction for more than a year.

The committee vote came after a March 14 presentation on the overall United Village development, led by Minnesota United FC owner and United Village developer Bill McGuire.

More than 60 people attended the information session about the development, held at Allianz Field. UPDC and Hamline Midway Coalition hosted the event, which included city planning staff and city council members Annika Bowie and Mitra Jalali.

A theme throughout discussions of the United Village development is that the new development needs to be part of the surrounding community, and not turn its back on the adjacent neighborhoods. It's a comment that frustrates McGuire. He defends the design and the need to plan for a viable development.

"I can't believe you would actually think that," McGuire said.

McGuire outlined the three upcoming United Village commercial projects. One is the eight-story, 16-unit hotel and attached parking ramp, which won Planning Commission approvals March 15. (See related story below.) Construction is expected to start in 2025. The lease for the McDonald's

restaurant on part of the development site expires at the end of this year.

McGuire described the planned loon sculpture plaza at Snelling and University. Final grading and piers for the loon statue will go into place next month, for installation this year. The loon is being built in California and will arrive in Minnesota in four trucks this summer. An all-abilities playground east of the soccer stadium is under construction.

The other upcoming developments are the office building and restaurant pavilion.

What's less clear is when proposed housing and more retail will be built. One factor is the market for development financing, which McGuire described as "terrible." Attendees at the community meeting said housing is an important part of the overall development.

Other parts of the development are moving ahead first. The office building will be four stories tall, above a single level of underground parking spaces. It will have first floor retail/restaurant space. The office building is adjacent to an interim parking lot that won St. Paul City Council approval in September 2023.

The parking lot requires one variance to a standard lot size. The underlying traditional neighborhoods four zoning requires that surface parking areas and

entrance drives accessory to a principal building may occupy no more than 60 feet of the total lot frontage. The lot proposed has frontage on Spruce Tree Avenue, Shields Avenue and Snelling Avenue, well beyond 60 feet. The UPDC committee recommended approval with the condition that the lot's interim status be upheld, and that the site is developed in five years.

The restaurant pavilion will have two side by side buildings, one of 6,500 square feet and the other of 3,000 to 3,500 square feet. The smaller building is to the north, with the larger one south of it.

The buildings in total require variances. United Village project Consultant Mike Hahm explained that most of the variances are needed due to the design of the two restaurant buildings, to accommodate storage and "back of the house" operations. But committee members said they want the building designs to include ample windows on both buildings. District council members criticized the pavilion buildings' design as not being particularly inviting when viewed from the east, given the lack of window and door openings.

The committee recommended approval of a request to not have the two pavilion buildings anchor the Simpson Street corners at Spruce Tree Street and Shields Avenue, allowing them to be set back. But the committee rejected variances for window and door openings for the two buildings.

Commissioners concerned about 'car-centric design' at hotel

By JANE MCCLURE

A driveway dispute at the United Village development must be resolved by the St. Paul City Council. Developer Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC in March obtained seven of eight requested project variances and a conditional use permit for a planned eight-story, 160-room hotel on University Avenue between Asbury and Simpson streets.

The rejected variance is for driveway access between Asbury and Simpson streets, along the front of the hotel. University is a Ramsey County road, and county officials have indicated they won't allow additional curb cuts there.

Union Park District Council is supporting the appeal, after initially taking no position on the request. Support is with

the understanding that the developers will come back to the district council to discuss appropriate driveway design, including materials and landscaping.

The hotel will be north of the Allianz Field Major League Soccer stadium and the Great Lawn area. An attached parking ramp facing Simpson will be five stories tall and have 300 stalls. The hotel will have a restaurant. The first level of the parking ramp will have as many as four small retail spaces.

The conditional use permit is needed for a building of 90 feet. The site's traditional neighborhoods four zoning allows 75 feet. The variances are for entrance placement, a long driveway and drop-off along the front of the building, setbacks, and various window, door and facade design requirements.

The Planning Commission spent more than two hours debating the variances in March. Much debate centered on the front driveway and the potential for motor vehicle-pedestrian conflicts. The hotel will be close to the Green Line Snelling station for eastbound trains.

Planning staff had added several conditions to the variance including use of the driveway by passenger vehicles only; use of the driveway as a one-way westbound access; placement of a direct pedestrian connection between the sidewalk along University and the primary hotel entrance; placement of a landscaped buffer between university and the driveway; and approval of plans by the St. Paul Department of Public Works.

But commission members were concerned about safety, and voted down the variance request.

Another issue is how much the orig-

inal site master plan has changed over time. Some commissioners said that the hotel isn't consistent with the master plan for the area. They recalled the extensive community process used to develop a master plan for the 34.5-acre superblock between Pascal Street and St. Anthony, Snelling and University avenues. Part of the plan called for the Great Lawn to extend all the way to University.

"It's hard to see the preferences of the developer considered over the preferences of the community," said Commissioner Jake Reilly.

Commissioners also questioned if the driveway as planned would be repeat of other area problem sites, including the Taco Bell drive through on North Snelling Avenue and the ill-fated Starbucks drive-through at Marshall and Snelling avenues.

"This is a very car-centric design," said Commissioner Brian Martinson.

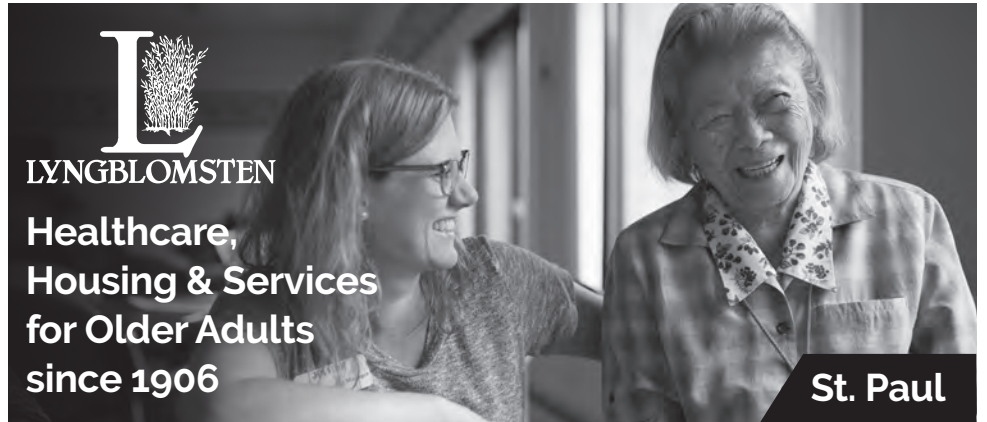


SEN. PAPPAS METRO STATE ALUMNA OF THE YEAR


During its annual Breakfast at the Capitol held in March 2024, Metro State University recognized Senator Sandy Pappas as its 2023 Alumna of the Year. She is shown above at right with Metro State President Ginny Arthur. The honor is awarded by the Metro State Alumni Board of Directors to recognize graduates who have meaningfully engaged with both the university and the community.

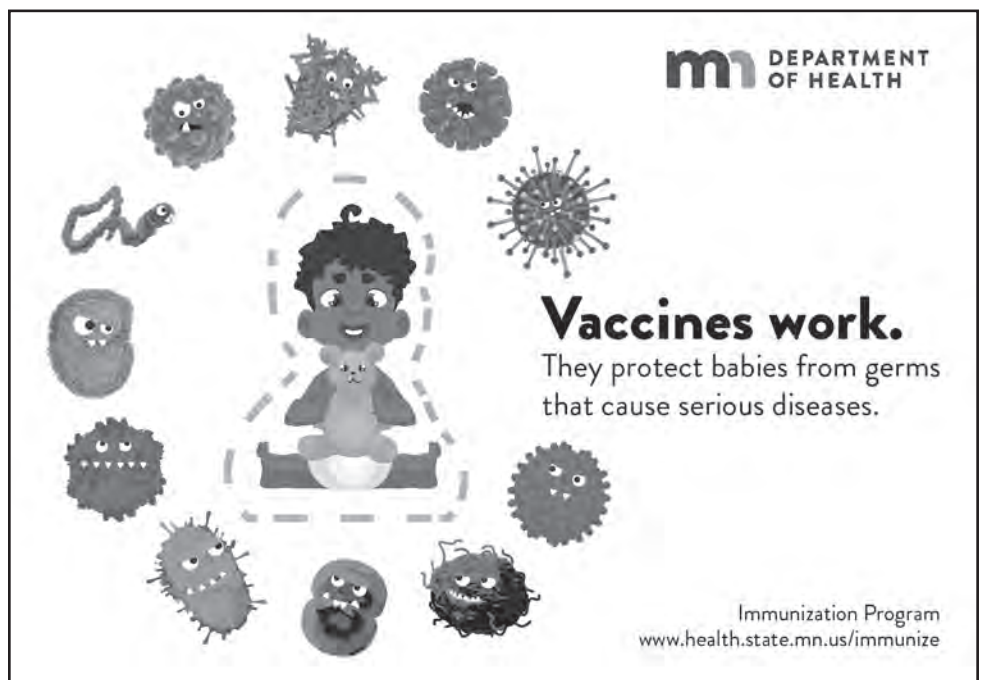
Sen. Pappas, a member of Metro State's Class of '86 and a 40-year member of the Minnesota State Legislature, is well known as an advocate for higher education and a champion of Metro State. She is credited with securing the resources and support necessary to develop the university's GROW-IT Center, a year-round learning hub for scientists, students, and the community to advance urban food production, healthy food access, and environmental sustainability. She has served as a member of the university's adjunct faculty, is a past member of its Alumni Board, and is the long-time host of the university's Breakfast at the Capitol, the very event at which she was honored. Sen. Pappas also served as chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee from 2007 to 2011.

In accepting her award, which she said is "a great recognition of my longtime support for Metro State," Sen. Pappas credited the university with enabling her to complete her education, saying, "When I was 19, I ran away to California, and then I came back as a community activist and got married. I had already been elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives by then, but I did not want to finish my degree. At Metro State, I could take evening classes, get credit for things I'd done in my work life, and it really seemed like a flexible place to complete my degree." (Photo submitted)



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Citywide Clean-Up

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Meet us at Hamline Park on April 20th
9:00-11:30am.

Future Clean-Up Events:

- Saturday June 1st, 9-10:30am
- Saturday July 13th, 9-10:30am
- Saturday August 10th, 9-10:30am
- September date TBD
- Saturday October 12th, 9-10:30am

Follow our calendar for details on these and all HMC events!



**COMO PARK
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



BY ERIC ERICKSON
Social studies teacher

Students inspired, challenged working on school play

THE JUNGLE BOOK

Audiences in the Como Auditorium were treated to three entertaining performances of "The Jungle Book" during mid-March. English teachers Suzie Myhre and Michael Youle-Ellering were co-directors of the annual spring play.

Choir teacher Huy Tran served as the play's technical director and was inspired by the experience. "Many students took on new challenges that they never faced before, and others displayed leadership skills by mentoring newer performers and crew," Tran said.

Cast members included Charlie Ernst, Koda Karan, Liam Donegan, Lillian Mae, Jonathan Newman, Lucia Rossell, Roman Rivers, Genevieve DeGaetano, Mitch Pelzer, Mykah Brooks, Zachary Prince, Gao-sue Vue, Nia Tenbrook, and Klay (Kim) Paw.

Stage manager Freddy Gray led the crew consisting of Clara Dunne, Lila Kopp, Bean Bougie, Millie Huth, Alex Buhr, Levi Kallhoff, Allison Yang, Charlie McCabe, Charlie Dahl, Art Batista, Sofie Hobson, and Gen Meyer.

WASHINGTON D.C.



The cast of "The Jungle Book" takes a curtain call in the Como Auditorium after their final performance on March 16. (Photo by Greta Seppanen)

Twenty-nine seniors currently studying AP Government and AP Economics recently spent a week in Washington D.C. as part of the national Close Up program.

Como student highlights included study visits to national monuments and memorials including Jefferson, FDR, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lincoln, World War II, Vietnam, and Korea. There were also study visits to museums of the Smithsonian, Arlington National Cemetery, and different Washington D.C. neighborhoods.

On Wednesday, March 6, Como students visited Capitol Hill for an unforget-

table day. They observed the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee discuss federal initiatives regarding sustainability and recycling. A swing by the office of Senator Bernie Sanders resulted in a photo with the popular 2020 presidential candidate.

Senator Tina Smith hosted the Como students outside her office for an engaging 20-minute meeting with student-generated questions. Senator Cory Booker also greeted the group and took a selfie with the Como contingent.

From those highlights all occurring

in the Senate's Hart Office Building, the group was escorted into the U.S. Capitol by Amy Klobuchar's staff for a 20-minute meeting with Minnesota's senior senator. Klobuchar provided insight into legislation she's currently sponsoring, discussed the political landscape that Congress is navigating, and answered student questions.

After a lecture in the Supreme Court Chamber, Congresswoman Betty McCollum provided students information about the budget and her views on Israel and Gaza. Then students witnessed the entire House of Representatives vote on six bills to continue funding the federal government.

STATE HISTORY DAY QUALIFIERS

Eleventh grade U.S. History students who represented Como at the St. Paul Regional History Day on March 16 advanced to Minnesota History Day.

Abas Kawo and Felmata Obsa qualified for state in the Group Documentary category for their film "Harka Fi Harma Muraa Anolee," about the oppressive rule of the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik in the late 1800s-early 1900s.

Devin Fruen advanced to state in the Individual Exhibit category "Exploring Counterculture History: Analysis of Punk and Hardcore and their Impact."

All regional qualifiers will gather for Minnesota State History Day on April 20 at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

CLEAN UP AND PARTY

**DISTRICT 10 COMO
COMMUNITY COUNCIL**



BY SHEVEK MCKEE
Executive director
district10@
district10comopark.org

EARTH DAY CLEAN-UP AT COMO PARK

D10 Como Community Council partners with the City of Saint Paul to host the Como Park location of the Citywide Spring Clean-up. We'll meet at the Pavilion Saturday, April 20, 2024 9-11:30 a.m. and provide cleanup supplies to get you going!

ART CRAWL INCLUDES COMO STREETCAR STATION

The D10 Como Community Council will host 8 Como artists to showcase their work at the Como Streetcar Station during the Saint Paul Art Collective's Spring Art Crawl Saturday, April 27 12-6pm. This event will also include a FREE dance class for commu-

nity members at 4pm from Body Watani.

FREE PICNIC DINNER MAY 4

The Como Community Council will be hosting our Annual Pick Up & Party event at Orchard Rec Center (875 W Orchard Ave) May 4 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. Whether you come with your neighbors or come to meet your neighbors, we would love to see you there!

Join us at the Orchard Rec for a free picnic dinner, Color X by Now Make Art, live music, local organizations, community drain stenciling, and (back by popular demand) the Sweet Frucci Ice Cream Truck! We will also have pick up soccer, baseball and softball games and workshops put on by Saint Paul Parks and Rec, Blackhawk Soccer Club and the NEW Como Ball Teams. Join your neighbors for a night of fun and games! Everyone is invited to this free event!

COMO GARAGE SALE MAY 16-19

D10 Como Community Council is once again coordinating a community sale weekend from Thursday, May 16 to Sunday, May 19. If you would like to be included in our map, please sign up before May 10.

EMERALD ASH BORER OVERVIEW

At our March 6 D10 Como Community Meeting we welcomed Adam Strehlow, Urban Forester, St. Paul Parks and Rec - Forestry, to give us an overview of the city's EAB history and response, and what to expect in 2024. View the recording, and find other past presentations, here on our website: District10ComoPark.org/Recorded-Presentations

D10 COMMUNITY MEETINGS/EVENTS SCHEDULE

- April 16, 7 p.m. - D10 Como Community Meeting - 3rd Tuesdays
- May 1, 7 p.m. - D10 Como Community Meeting - 1st Wednesdays
- May 21, 7 p.m. - D10 Como Community Meeting - 3rd Tuesdays
- June 5, 7 p.m. - D10 Como Community Meeting - 1st Wednesdays

D10 meetings are hybrid on Zoom and at the Como Streetcar Station (1224 Lexington Pkwy). All D10 community meetings are open to the public and have space for community members to bring topics for discussion.

Find more information and sign up for these events and more on our website: District10ComoPark.org.



At the March 19, 2024 D10 Como Community meeting, they welcomed Tyrone Minor, owner of the Mali Center (and F.I.T. Lab), who introduced them to the new Mali center, coming to the Como/Front/Dale area in June. More at www.themalicenter.com. Grand opening planned for June 15 from noon-2 p.m. at 576 Front Ave.

EVENTS

SUPPORT WOMEN DURING INCARCERATION

Members of the community are invited to a free event at Central Baptist

Church (420 N. Roy St., Saint Paul) on Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m. to noon for Hope and A Future: Supporting Women During Incarceration Through Reentry. Learn more about how to support those who return to our community.

NEW MUSIC SERIES

RenegadeEnsemble is excited to announce the lineup for the 2024 Vanguard New Music Series, a set of four concerts focused on highlighting the depth and breadth of the new music scene in the

Twin Cities. Held at Zion Community Commons in the Midway, the series is a celebration of local composers in a variety of styles ranging from experimental to world music to jazz. Find details at www.renegadeensemble.org/performances.

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