



The Green Line averaged over 44,000 riders a day last year. (Photo by Terry Faust)

## Ridership was setting records... then there was a pandemic

*Metro Transit says it is a good thing fewer people have been using light rail since March*

By CHLOE PETER

Normally, a summer day in July or August would mean big business for the Metro Transit Light Rails. Twins' games would bring in riders to Target Field or concert goers might take the light rail to US Bank Stadium or the Target Center. Even just summer activities in local neighborhoods, would bring in business to the Green or Blue Lines. Local families often use the light rail for groceries, doctor's visits, or entertainment like going out to dinner. But, the light rail lines have been seeing fewer riders since COVID-19, and Metro Transit says that's a good thing.

"We want people to exercise social distancing. A packed car does no one any good," said Metro Transit public relations manager Howie Padilla.



According to Howie Padilla, there are only about 5-6 riders a car right now.

In the last few years, Metro Transit has seen record ridership. The number of riders continued to go up until the pandemic. Last year, there were more than 14 million riders on the Green Line which averaged at 44,000 riders each day. And, on the Blue Line, there were more than 11 million riders with an average of over 32,000 on a given weekday.

METRO TRANSIT >> 6

## MODERN-DAY ABOLITIONIST

*How life experiences brought Jason Sole to where he is today*

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Jason Sole is feeling peaceful these days. The former drug dealer, street gang member, and three-time convicted felon has succeeded in turning his life around. With criminal justice degrees under his belt, he is focused on creating a radical new definition of criminality – and policing – so there can be justice for all.

In his 42 years, Sole has done some bad things, and taken some hard knocks for them.

Raised on Chicago's South Side, Sole was born into poverty in 1978. His father was (and still is) a heroin addict, and his mother struggled to raise their three young children on her own.

Tired of being poor, Sole joined a local gang at 14 and quickly moved up through the ranks selling drugs. He came of age in the early years of the War on Drugs, introduced by then President Richard Nixon.

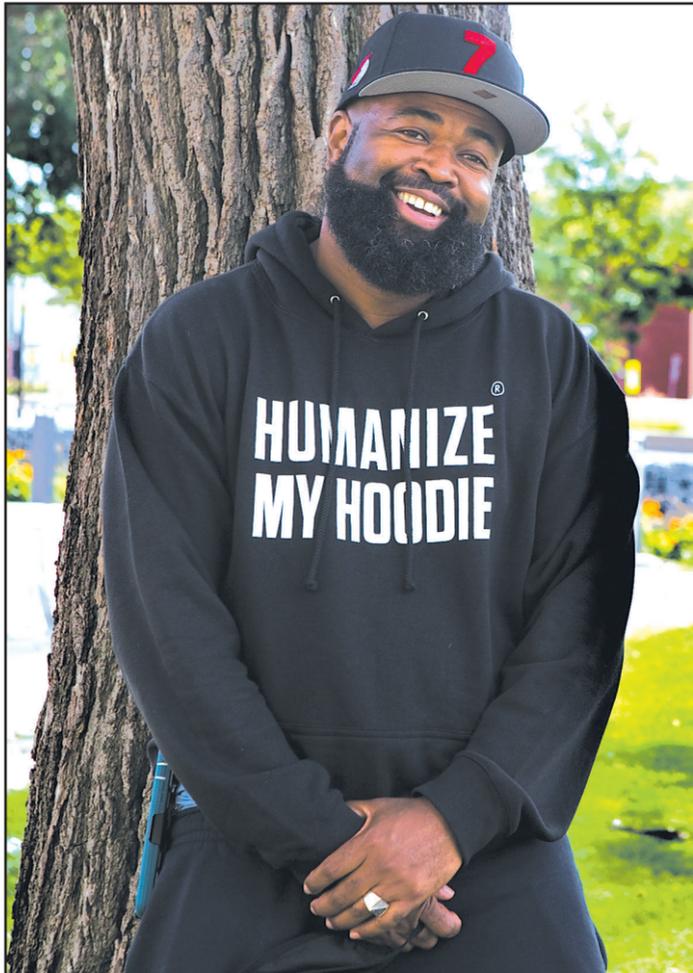
Sole said, "We'd never heard of 'mass incarceration' back then, it was just our world. I could see that something wasn't right, but I didn't have the language for it yet. Police officers pulled me over where ever I went, constantly asking me for ID since I was a kid. I didn't have any ID yet, and this happened to every Black guy I knew. I was upset at the world, upset at the police, upset that my gang friends were dying before they were old enough to go to high school."

### Black in a mostly-White school

When he turned 16, Sole's mother shipped him off to relatives in Waterloo, Iowa – hoping to save his life. He was on the all too familiar trajectory of a Black man likely to die young.

Sole said, "You have to understand that a gang is not a play thing. It has structure; there were leaders and soldiers 500 deep in my South Side neighborhood. If I was going to survive, I had to make a plan because there were no outlets."

Sole went from the nearly all-Black public school system on the South Side of Chicago to the nearly all-White Waterloo school district. He became captain of the basketball team



Hamline University adjunct criminal justice professor Jason Sole calls himself a survivor of the War on Drugs. He went from being a soldier on the streets to being a scholar, and said, "Once I understood the law, everything changed." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

in his new high school, and set a track and field record while maintaining good grades. He's a tall guy, a really tall guy, and a naturally gifted athlete. Sole said, "I was smart and good at sports, but I was stigmatized for being a gang banger from Chicago. That label limited my opportunities."

When he graduated from high school, Sole went home to his family in Chicago. He had enlisted in the Air Force, passed all of their admissions exams, but ultimately was rejected for having had childhood asthma. According to Sole, "Most of the kids in my neighborhood had childhood asthma; I hadn't used an inhaler since eighth grade."

Sometimes Sole wonders how things could have played out differently. He said, "I tried to join the Air Force, but I became a soldier on the streets instead."

### Vacation turns to probation

He worked a few low-paying jobs in Chicago, before deciding to get a fresh start in St. Paul. He had a friend he could stay with here, but conceded, "My friend wasn't exactly living his best life."

Soon Sole wasn't either. At 19, he was caught with an unregistered firearm. The legal age for carrying a weapon in Minnesota is 21. He said, "I came to St. Paul on vacation, and got stuck here on probation." Jason Sole's long journey through the criminal justice system had begun.

At 21, he was convicted of second-degree possession of a controlled substance. By the time Sole was granted early release, he knew the only way he would ever succeed was to get an education.

ABOLITIONIST >> 5

## Reinventing farming in the city

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

What do Green Zebra, Black Russian, and Amish paste tomatoes have in common? They are all a type of heirloom tomato offered to customers by Joan James and Coleen Gregor, co-owners of "A Backyard Farm."

Spouses Joan and Coleen started their urban farming business 11 years ago, determined to share the experience of farming fresh, high quality organic vegetables with other city dwellers. Their home in Mac-Groveland is filled to bursting with seedlings, especially in March when as many as 4,000 tiny plants are under grow lights in the basement – ready for an early start each planting season.

That jump start is one of the guiding principles behind the success of "A Backyard Farm". Imagine a full-on, food production system in your back yard that is productive from mid-May through the end of October. How is this possible with the relatively small yards most home owners have in the city?

"A Backyard Farm" works from the square foot gardening method, where a different vegetable or herb is planted in every square foot of a 4 x 8 foot bed. That means that 32 different plantings are being rotated throughout the growing season, with early, mid, and late summer harvests.

In their partnership, Joan is responsible for sales and marketing. She does a site evaluation for each prospective client, determining if the site receives at least seven hours of direct sun daily. She said, "You can still grow a garden with less sun than that, but the plants won't produce abundantly like we want them to."

Once a client signs up for the season, they receive a plant list with 75+ different plant varieties to choose from. They also choose whether they want a raised bed that sits on the ground, or one that is elevated on sawhorses for easier access.

Joan explained, "We use cedar to construct all our beds, so they last at least 15 years. We also install everything the customer could possibly need: rabbit fencing, deer fencing, drip irrigation."

REINVENTING >> 16



BACK TO SCHOOL: Virtual learning about Mississippi River

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City 'desperately' needs help from other levels of government, says Jalali

PAGE 12



Free open-air musical, theatrical shows offered in Ham-Lex

PAGE 13

# Back to School

## Mississippi River connects teachers from 'The Headwaters to the Delta' despite COVID-19

*The Virtual Mississippi River Institute blends online and hands-on outdoor learning*

Last February, more than 30 educators from Minnesota and Louisiana were looking forward to a special river journey. They were making plans to come together on the banks of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities for the 16th annual River Institute, an intensive, highly experiential

with their peers across America, scrambling for online learning resources and strategies to use for distance instruction. CGEE, drawing on the an extensive multimedia and video archive about the great river, quickly adapted the institute to a breakthrough hybrid format that combines online

on education as well as distance learning, plus a huge online media library. Out of COVID-19 chaos, we created a new model of professional development that celebrates and educates students about our most important river. And from the results, I'd say this is only the beginning."

CGEE's The Mighty Mississippi (http://electronic-field-trips.wyes.org/), an award-winning public television special about the Mississippi featuring student reporters, gave Institute participants a rich documentary introduction to the river from its

headwaters to Gulf. This program was complemented by three of CGEE's modular online multimedia learning programs about the Mississippi and its watershed: the wide-ranging Waters to the Sea® Mississippi River Adventure program (https://waterstothesea.org/mississippi/); Big River Journey Online (https://bigriverjourneyonline.org/), which focuses on the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities region and was developed in collaboration with the National Park Service; and Adopt

MISSISSIPPI RIVER >> 3

## Keep Hamline-Midway healthy!

We're excited to open our campus to students and guests. To keep us all safe, we require visitors to:

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Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education (CGEE) in St. Paul offers free online learning resources and strategies that combine online and hands-on experience. (Photos submitted)

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# Back to School

MISSISSIPPI RIVER >> From 2

a Drain Interactive (<https://waterstothesea.org/AADInteractive/>), which engages citizens and schools in reducing urban water pollution by keeping harmful debris and pollution out of storm drains.

"CGEE is an international leader in creating interactive educational resources that are free for educators everywhere to use, and many of them focus on the Mississippi River," Fredin continued. "We have hours and hours of online activities about multiple subjects in our award-winning Waters to the Sea® programs about North American waterways."

"Learning to use Waters to the Sea® is always an important part of the River Institute," said Robinsdale School of Engineering and Arts Program Coordinator Cara Rieckenberg, who has led CGEE Rivers Institutes for nine years. "But by the end of the school year, everyone was tired of sitting in front of their computers all day. So, we created a virtual institute that used video conferencing for building community, presentations by content experts, and sharing among participants. Exploring CGEE's online learning resources were balanced by

several hours of outdoor, hands-on activities each day. This hybrid approach to distance learning really resonated with our 50 participants, who are excited to use the same strategy with their students this fall."

The successful hybrid River Institute program will be offered again this fall with a special focus on the Mississippi Delta region. It will be available to teachers nationwide at no cost.

"I will use the Waters to the Sea website with students - a lot. Our students do a Mississippi River Project each year and [the] web adventure touches on so many great topics. I'm planning to rewrite much of my curriculum in order to incorporate much of this," said Katie Humason, middle school science teacher at Minnehaha Academy.

"Inquiry activities are possible! Connecting students to their actual environment is possible! There are lots of resources available if we're willing to look!" remarked Anwatin Middle School science teacher Laura Kimball.

Educators were inspired by the connections they made with colleagues across the Mississippi's enormous watershed, despite only interacting with each other via video conferencing.

When asked about the top



Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education (CGEE) quickly pivoted this spring to help teachers and students to learn about the Mississippi River. (Photo submitted)

take-aways she left the Institute with, Mill City Museum Education Curriculum Coordinator Wini Froelich said, "Students can handle a lot more depth and scaffolded activities digitally than I thought. CGEE is pretty amazing. The stories of the Mississippi are varied and vast. It is alright to have a narrow focus at one point but make sure to consider it as "One River" as well."

"The collaboration with other teachers in Minnesota and

Louisiana on this topic is an eye-opening experience," said a New Orleans Middle School teacher. "As a teacher from Louisiana, I realized there is much more to the Mississippi River... [Our students] have not learned all about the watersheds and how precious the Mississippi really is from North to the South."

"We're excited about the impact that our new hybrid Institute had on educators," Fredin said, "especially in a time when these

skills and resources are more important than ever."

In addition to Waters to the Sea® Mississippi River Adventure (<https://waterstothesea.org/mississippi/>), CGEE has an extensive archive of interactive, multimedia educational resources available for free online that span the country from Hawaii to Texas to Georgia to Minnesota (<https://www.hamline.edu/education/cgee/youth-resources.html>).

## Hamline Midway Early Learning Coalition



By JESSICA KOPP  
earlylearning@hamlinemidway.org

## Join us once a month

Hi neighbors! We are a group of residents and organizations who work to address the needs and experiences of youth 0-14 in our community. For the near future we're planning to meet virtually every third Wednesday of the month between 2:30-4 p.m. Our next meeting is Sept. 16.

Our experience has taught us we can do more to support youth in our community when we do it together so we're excited to invite our neighbors to drop us a line at [earlylearning@hamlinemidway.org](mailto:earlylearning@hamlinemidway.org) and/or join us at an upcoming meeting so we can get to know each other.

## Murray Middle School scholarship winner



John Mbanda (left), a former Murray Middle School student and 2020 Highland Senior High School graduate, is the first recipient of the \$1,000 e2 Jon Schumacher Scholarship Award. He was nominated by former teacher, Tim Chase (at right). During the SAP Community Foundation Board (Zoom) meeting, John Mbanda, Jon Schumacher, and Tim Chase took a moment to reflect on how each of their lives were enriched by the experiences of the years spent working with the e2.4 environmental education class. Mbanda will be taking a gap year to visit his homeland, Rwanda, before entering his freshman year at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. (Photo submitted)

## In Brief

### Reading Partners moves online with Connects

In addition to offering its traditional in-person one-on-one literacy tutoring where it is safe to do so, Reading Partners is launching a new online tutoring program. Reading Partners Connects is an innovative online program that will allow Reading Partners to continue to partner with schools and provide volunteer-led one-on-one literacy instruction to students in situations where school campuses are closed to volunteers or where students are in blended learning environments. Learn more at [www.readingpartners.org](http://www.readingpartners.org).

### Hamline grants for underserved students

Hamline University School of Education recently secured a \$250,000 Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER Fund) grant from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE). The HSE GEER funds will provide

additional financial stability and increase access to technology for students of color, indigenous students and students with disabilities, and it will support faculty mentoring and curriculum development to better serve these groups of underserved students.

Hamline University has selected five undergraduate students to be the first recipients of its George Floyd Endowed Scholarship. The recipients from the senior class are: Damyn Hultman, a social justice major from Duluth, Minn.; Savior Allen-Knight, a philosophy major from St. Paul; and Yasmin Hrisi, a political science and global studies major from Apple Valley. The other awardees are Hamline University sophomore student Ilhan Omar, a legal studies major from St. Paul, and classmate Khalif Ahmed from Saint Cloud. Ahmed has yet to declare a major.

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- Free breakfast & lunch available
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- English language learning services
- School culture that emphasizes relationships, community building, leadership and character growth.

# The Motley Conversation

**Monitor**

Join the conversation, and let us know your diverse and varied thoughts on the issues that affect your neighborhood. Send letters and guest commentaries to [news@MonitorSaintPaul.com](mailto:news@MonitorSaintPaul.com) or call 612-345-9998.

## COVID-19 friendly entertainment in the Midway

Summer is winding down again, but this year it probably feels different. While many rejoice at cooler temps and yearn for the crispness in the air, in a year where a pandemic is causing people to go stir crazy and where chances of getting sick go down dramatically when outside, many are concerned about what the colder temperatures will bring. Soon, the backyard, over-the-fence meet-ups will be less comfortable as more layers are added.

From an economy standpoint, there is also concern. Many businesses have been aided by the nice weather as customers can enjoy the outdoors. What happens when those options go away?

Before we officially give way to the cold months, take advantage of the weather and spend some quality time outdoors. You don't need to head "up north" to a cabin to enjoy the great out-

doors; you can find plenty to do in and around the Midway. Here are some upcoming ways to leave the house and find entertainment.

### Hit the patio

Many restaurants are only offering outdoor seating, so they will soon be faced with a decision – go to take-out only or re-open the dining room. While you still can enjoy dinner without a patio heater, make it to one of the many patios in the neighborhood. Urban Growler Brewing in particular has made a reputation for ensuring a safe, clean place for diners.

### Go to the zoo

The Como Zoo re-opened in July. It remains one of the only free zoos in the nation and is at its best when you can walk around outside on a nice day. My family went to the zoo and Como Town for my daughter's birthday in August and got to experience shorter lines and all the

### Building a stronger Midway



By **CHAD KULAS**,  
Midway Chamber  
of Commerce Executive Director  
[chad@midwaychamber.com](mailto:chad@midwaychamber.com)

usual animals. The Como Zoo remains one of the best deals in town.

### Golf

Golf has been one of the most popular activities this year. It's easier to do and keep a social distance and you're outdoors. There are many courses in the area to choose from, and many beginners have been wanting to pick up the sport this year (if they can get golf clubs, which have been hard to find).

## Tips on how to reduce stress

The year 2020 has been an absolute insane ride, especially here in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. It's felt like a seemingly relentless torrent of negativity, disasters, frustration, and isolation for a lot of people. We've been glued to our phones and computers more than ever, to stay up to date with the latest happenings and stay connected to friends.

Chances are, you've been spending A LOT of time in "fight or flight" mode the past six months. When we're in this state of high alert and readiness, we often feel heightened anxiety and emotion. We have difficulty focusing, and trouble sleeping.

It's overwhelming.

You can't stop thinking about things out of your control, dreading the future or what might happen next. This isn't a mental state anyone can tolerate

for long. The "fight or flight" part of your brain – the amygdala – has been working overdrive lately. It's time to spend some time resting this part of our brain. We need a break from "fight or flight."

Here's a couple practical tips to help make this transition possible, a little at a time.

1. Set some designated "No screen" time during the day, for at least an hour at a time. We need to turn off the constant input. Social media is an absolute energy vampire, that we simultaneously can't get enough of but also wish we didn't use at all. Turning off your phone or screen lets you focus 100% on the task at hand. Stop looking down, and start looking forward again. Be present in the moment!
2. Get out in nature. Spending time in nature, like on a hiking trail, the woods, a lake,

### Guest columnist



By **CHRIS LOMEN**,  
[rippleeffectcf@gmail.com](mailto:rippleeffectcf@gmail.com)

or even just your garden – has been proven to lower stress! Being in nature reduces blood pressure, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones. Our bodies do not function well under the constant influx of stress hormones. Go outside for half an hour. No phone. You'll feel better. Make this a new ritual every few days, or at least once a week.

3. Get some exercise. Specifically, some lower intensity exercise like walking, biking, swimming, jogging, or rowing. This

### Little Africa Festival online

What about the events we still can't go to in person? For the past six years, the Little Africa Fest has taken place live in Hamline Park. This year, the event has gone virtual Sept. 20-24. Attendees can join the festivities and listen to music and embrace African cultures and heritage. When I first heard about the virtual fest, I was happy they could do it but disappointed I would be missing out on the food. But then I found out about the Little Africa in a Box program where you can get food from African immigrant-owned restaurants during the festival. There will be a different restaurant each of the five nights and attendees can pick up the food prior to the start. I can't wait to bite into the first sambusa.

In Minnesota we know the summer isn't endless and we know what's coming. Give yourself a few more outdoor memories for 2020 before you bring out the shovel and boots.

## A Prayer for White America

Guest  
columnist



By **REV. DR. RON BELL**,  
[ronaldbelljr@gmail.com](mailto:ronaldbelljr@gmail.com)

When morning comes  
and the lingering stench of  
teargas  
burning wood and burned  
rubber fills the air  
Will you remember me?

When the sounds of sirens like  
vicious hyenas  
and the wings of helicopters like  
circling giant vultures  
are replaced only by the silent  
crackling of broken glass under  
your feet  
will you remember me?

When your streets are  
unrecognizable  
and the businesses you owned  
for years in my community are  
now long gone  
turned to rubble and stone  
will you remember me?

Will you remember me  
when your bleak boarded-up  
windows and doors  
are no longer painted with  
brilliant color filled graffiti  
graffiti that calls for an end from  
the vicious injustices  
that society  
has imparted upon me.  
Will you remember me?

I need to know.  
Because long after you file your  
property insurance claims  
receive settlements and rebuild  
your businesses from those  
same  
stained broken rubble and stones  
using government backed grants  
and loans

I will still be gone.  
So, will you remember me?

*Rev. Dr. Ron Bell is the minister at Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church.*

## Letters to the Editor

### Thanks for reporting

Dear Editor:

Your article, "Provide repair vouchers instead of tickets" was wonderful - if not voucher - I wish the police would approach the driver with a little more kindness - if

the stop is for a minor offense, the police would offer a warning and let the driver go.

Keep up the good work!

PS - I'm sending the article to Gov. Walz - hope it is ok. I am 92. I want to volunteer in some way - but I am limited - so through my contribution I'll let you get the "right"

news out.

Helen Hanson  
Como

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your recent reporting on the killing of George Floyd, the protests and riots that followed, and the impact of this on our community. We appreciate it and stand with you and others pursuing justice, peace, and racial

equality. Thank you, too, to Kathy Sundberg and Ginkgo Coffee for their longstanding commitment to these community values. Lastly, we so appreciate the diverse and inclusive coverage of our community — and always enjoy reading and reflecting on Peace Bubbles...!

Sincerely,  
Hayley Bush  
Merriam Park

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### Story ideas always welcome.

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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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**Redemption through education**

In December 2006, Sole received his bachelor's degree in criminal justice while serving time for his third felony offense. The prison allowed him two hours to attend his commencement ceremony. When he walked across the stage at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Sole said, "The place exploded in cheers. I got my redemption in that moment."

He continued to study the criminal justice system in graduate school.

Sole said, "I endured years of imprisonment, and a lot of trauma (including being shot) before I figured out how I wanted to live my life. I'm grateful for the per-

spective I have, grateful for the grace, grateful for my wife and daughters, grateful to be alive. Most people in my old neighborhood ended up dead or in jail for a very long time. I was one of the lucky ones."

**Better solution than police and prison**

Dr. Jason Sole is now an adjunct professor in criminal justice at Hamline University, and a national keynote speaker and trainer. He has served as president of the Minneapolis NAACP, been a faculty member at Metropolitan State University, and is creating liberation programs for people of color across this community. He believes there is a much better solution to crime prevention than the present-day system of policing.

In 2013, he received a Bush Fellowship and focused on reducing recidivism rates among juveniles in Minnesota. In 2016, he published, "From Prison to Ph.D: A Memoir of Hope, Resilience, and Second Chances."

In 2018, he was recruited by Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter to be director of the newly created Community-First Public Safety Initiatives. After the mayor spent \$900,000 hiring additional police officers in 2019, Sole resigned on Martin Luther King Day.

He does not regret his decision, saying, "Look what happened! There was more gun violence in Saint Paul last year than ever before. Adding to the police force didn't make anybody safer; it actually made us less safe. We can hold people accountable without putting them in cages."

Sole continued, "Abolishing the police doesn't mean there won't be accountability for people who harm others. Divesting from police means that money can be used to house the unhoused. Divesting from police means that we can provide culturally specific drug treatment for those struggling with addiction. Divesting from police means that we can provide more jobs and better training to youth. We need to invest in people on the bottom rungs of society. That's where real change will come."

**Humanize My Hoodie**

There are many ways that Sole stands up to the system, and challenges the status quo. Not long after 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was fatally shot while wearing a hoodie, Sole started

teaching his college classes wearing one. The goal was to help his criminal justice students get more comfortable with a black man dressed that way.

Sole's ongoing "Humanize My Hoodie" Project is designed to end the senseless police killings of Black and Indigenous People of Color; to reinforce the truth that Black men in hoodies are valuable human beings not meant for target practice. Along with his high school friend, fashion designer Andre Wright, Sole turned the "Humanize My Hoodie" project into a movement with their custom designed sweat-shirts, art installations, and workshops.

For more information on Jason Sole's work and the "Humanize My Hoodie" movement, visit: [www.humanizemyhoodie.com](http://www.humanizemyhoodie.com)

**Bike riding skills and repairs offered for free**

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Do you want to improve your bike riding and repair skills before the snow flies?

The Lexington-Hamline District Council is partnering with the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota and Concordia University to offer several bike events through the end of September. Bikes and helmets are provided, and there is no cost to attend.

Bike MN Education Coordinator CJ Lindor said, "We're offering these events to encourage people to ride their bikes more often. We chose our meeting spot near the Skyline Tower in hopes of reaching residents from neighborhood high rises, and others who might have limited access to bikes and bike education."

For safety, physical distancing will be practiced at all times at these events - but socializing is encouraged. Participants and instructors must wear face masks. Advance registration is suggested, because attendance is capped for COVID safety.

Two program assistants

(18+) are needed for the classes and community rides. A stipend is available for each assistant. Contact CJ Lindor at [cj@bikemn.org](mailto:cj@bikemn.org), if interested.

The Adult Learn-To-Ride classes are meant for adults who have not previously ridden a bike, or who feel unsteady and need extra help. One-hour group lessons will offer a structured learning sequence with trained instructors in a traffic-free setting.

The Community Group Rides include free use of bikes and helmets during the ride, or you can bring your own. These are for adult riders interested in urban biking. Participants get an overview of bike safety. Ride leaders accompany participants through neighborhoods, explaining best routes for transportation and recreation. Rides are planned for approximately five miles at a moderate pace comfortable for all riders, and last about 90 minutes.

In the Mobile Bike Repair Clinic, experienced bike mechanics welcome walk-ups for

bike repairs and adjustments, with limited parts provided at no cost (as available). Sizing, shifting, braking, wheel adjustments and other repairs are provided on a first-come-first-served basis. Bike owners cannot leave bikes unattended before or after repairs are being done - you must stay with your bike.

**DATES:**

Sept. 9 from 5:30-7 p.m.: Community Rides

Sept. 10 from 5:30-7:30 p.m.: Mobile Bike Repair

Sept. 22 from 5:30-6:30 p.m.: Instruction for adults

Sept. 23 from 5:30-7 p.m.: Community Rides

Sept. 24 from 5:30-7:30 p.m.: Mobile Bike Repair

All activities meet/start at the Ries Tower on the Concordia University North Campus: 393 Dunlap (corner of Griggs and St. Anthony avenues).

These activities are funded through Met Council grants with the goal of reaching recently arrived immigrants, people of



The group rolled out, maintaining physical distancing while practicing safe bike skills in traffic. First stop on the night's ride was the Express Bike Shop on Selby Avenue, a community partner with the Lexington-Hamline District Council. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

color, persons of lower income, and women.

The bikes being used are from Erik's Bikes. The company has donated 80 bikes to Bike MN so far, and their bikes are used by approximately 15,000 riders each year. They have also donated two 24' trailers for transporting bikes to teaching locations throughout the state.

Lindor said, "I appreciate being able to support people learning to ride, or finding new and different ways to use their bikes. We always get a range of people on our rides and in our

classes. There's more to learn about biking than balancing and pedaling. I enjoy sharing skills that can help people be less fearful about riding in traffic, and more enthusiastic about riding in general.

"As the Bike MN education coordinator, I'm usually on the front lines delivering classes. I had early, positive experiences with biking and I love sharing that with people who might be learning later in life. A bike is a simple, powerful machine, and it can take you just about anywhere."

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# Ridership was setting records... then there was a pandemic

>> from 1

Most of these were local community members in everyday use. But now, it's common to see only five or six riders per car. Metro Transit encourages riders to find another way to get to their destination during the pandemic. If a trip is not a necessity or if there is another form of transit available to use, Metro Transit would prefer riders do not use the light rails and save the seat for someone who absolutely needs it.

"Our priority is the same as it's always been - to provide a safe environment for our riders to their destination," said John Humphrey, who is Deputy Chief Officer of both the Green and Blue lines.

## COVID-19 plan

Metro Transit also put a plan in effect to keep riders safe. Light rail cars are fogged with a sanitizing solution each night in order to ensure that every surface is completely clean. Face masks are required even on the platforms. The website instructs riders to social distance, practice good hygiene and to stay home if they are ill. More on their COVID-19 plan can be found at [metrotransit.org/health](http://metrotransit.org/health).

"All of our decisions are made with our riders' and staff's

safety in mind," Padilla said. "We're in this with the community."

The light rails have provided the community with another option of transportation since 2004. This has caused property values to go up, pollution levels to go down, and traffic to decrease, according to Metro Transit.

## Housing vouchers offered

Metro Transit is working with the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) in order to pass out vouchers for rental spaces that homeless riders can use. The LRT is used by homeless people as a place to sleep, especially in the winter. These vouchers will provide shelter for those riders in need. The decision to displace homeless riders from the trains in August of 2019 received mixed reviews from the community, but Metro Transit's Homeless Action Team says it is still working to find more of a permanent solution to homelessness even through the pandemic. They've put more than 100 people into housing and have given out \$1.8 million in assistance.

"The light rail is not a replacement for a bed or home. We're working on getting people into more permanent housing," Padilla said.

## Volunteers cleaned to get light rail back up and running

The community has also given back to the Blue and Green lines. Metro Transit representatives mentioned that they would not be able to reach record amounts of ridership by the special event riders alone. Local community members have been the ones to use the light rails most throughout the years.

Another example of this is when Humphrey visited the Lake Street Station, 2310 Lake Street East, to check on the line after



"Our priority is the same as it's always been - to provide a safe environment for our riders to their destination," said John Humphrey, who is Deputy Chief Officer of both the Green and Blue lines. Because of COVID-19, ridership is down this year. BELOW is the new method customers use to buy ticket.



the first three nights of the Uprising. When he arrived, he found that community members were already there. Volunteers were cleaning graffiti and debris off of the tracks. They asked Humphrey for more ways to help in order get the light rail back up and running.

"The community was incredibly appreciative that the train was up and running the day after," Humphrey said. "We don't operate in a vacuum. We're out there with the community."

Metro Transit aims to provide easier access to essential spaces during this time, and, to provide reliable transportation even if that means less riders for the time being.



Since opening in 2004, the Blue Line has offered folks an alternative way to get to doctors' appointments, grocery stores, and restaurants. With the addition of the Green Line in 2014, people can travel from the downtown St. Paul to the airport via downtown Minneapolis. (Photo by Terry Faust)

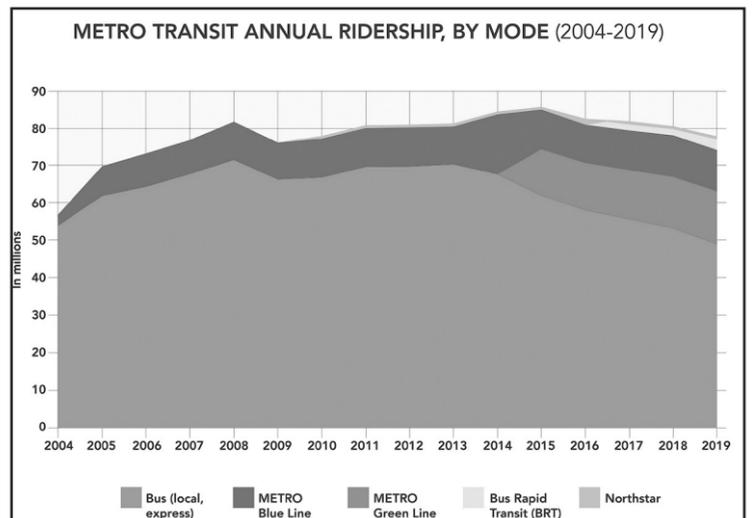
## Expanded bus, light rail service coming in September

Upcoming schedule changes will provide riders more options and space when traveling on buses and trains. The changes taking effect on Saturday, Sept. 12, will mean that many local bus routes, the METRO A Line and the METRO C Line will have about as much service as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. The METRO Blue Line and METRO Green Line will offer 10-minute service throughout most of the day. Because of a significant drop in demand, around 50 express bus routes will remain suspended and the Northstar Commuter Rail Line will continue to operate on a limited, weekday-only schedule.

In July, ridership on local bus routes and the METRO A Line and METRO C Line was down about 50% compared to the same month last year. Light rail ridership was down about 75%. Increases in local bus and light rail service will help riders keep a safe distance on buses and trains as more people return to transit.

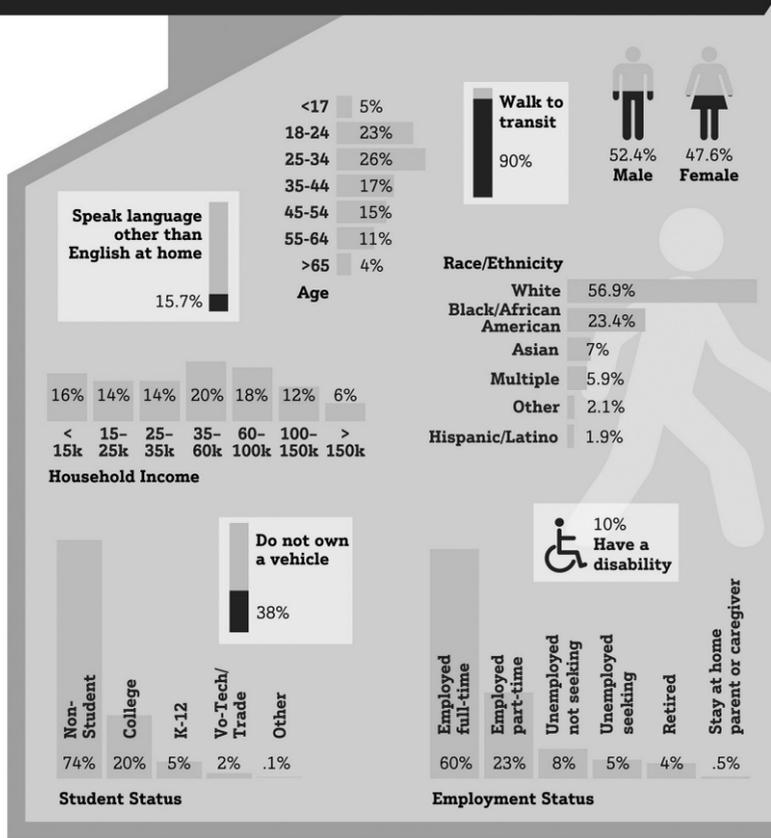
Other notable changes taking effect on Sept. 12 include:

- On Route 63, bus stops will be eliminated or relocated and several new shelters will be installed.
- Route 54 will begin serving a new transit center at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport's Terminal 1.
- Routes 7 and 68 will be extended to provide residents in south Minneapolis and St. Paul better access to services.
- A new route, Route 363, will replace routes 361 and 365 with express trips between Cottage Grove and downtown Minneapolis via downtown St. Paul.

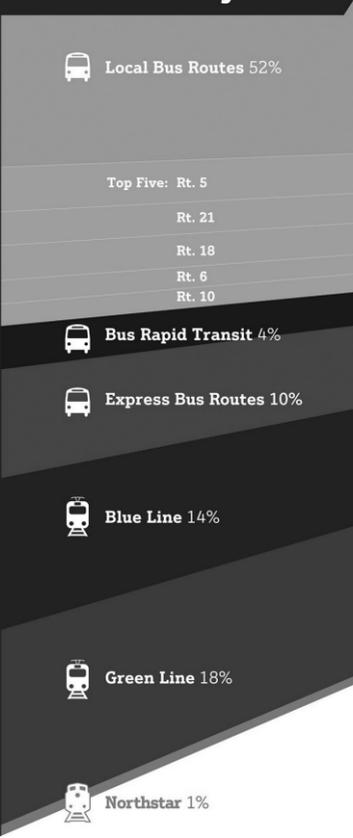


## Metro Transit Riders

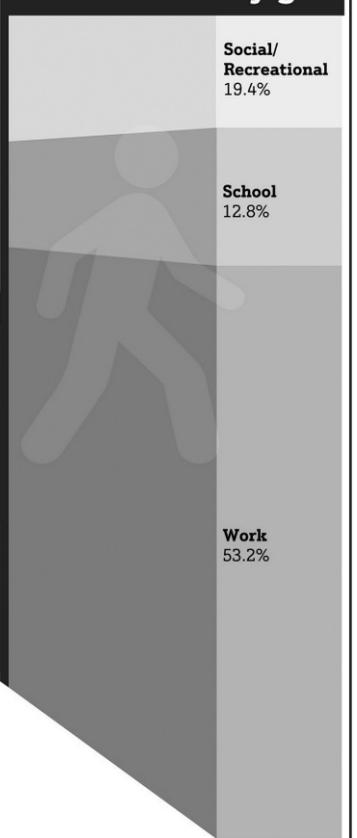
### WHO rides?



### HOW do they ride?



### WHERE do they go?



# Wondering about PPP loan forgiveness?

Chamber hosts session focused on steps businesses can take next

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

As a B Corp, Sunrise Banks believes it is their social responsibility to help their community, according to Senior Vice President Chris Albrecht. This year, that has involved handling 1,800 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans worth \$215 million.

Over 80% were under \$150,000 and 50% were under \$50,000, she said. "We really were hitting our mission of taking care of our community and small businesses," said Albrecht during a Midway Chamber of Commerce Zoom meeting focused on PPP loans held on Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2020.

In all, \$11.3 billion was distributed in Minnesota before the PPP loan program closed on Aug. 8, money that helped keep Minnesota employed, observed SBA's Minnesota District Office Director Brian McDonald.

After the initial \$349 billion was claimed within two weeks, another \$310 billion was released. Of that, \$130 billion remains, according to McDonald. There is speculation that it may be released for additional loans, which could be granted to those who received loans in the first round, or it could be distributed to specific groups of businesses hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic such as restaurants or musical venues.

"It was really a remarkable effort by the lending community," said McDonald. "We've heard a lot of comments about how

helpful it was."

National SBA representatives visited the Midway area in August to hear from local businesses, including Elsa's House of Sleep, Deneen's Pottery and Urban Growler.

Initially, the PPP loan program provided money to cover expenses over an 8-week time frame with a 2-year repayment period at 1% interest. Also, at least 75% had to be spent directly on payroll. Other forgivable expenses included mortgage interest, rent, and utilities.

The rules were adjusted on June 5. The biggest shift was providing funds for a 24-week period, and stipulating that at least 60% (versus 75%) needed to be spent on payroll in order to get full loan forgiveness.

The repayment period was also expanded to five years. Those who received a loan prior to June 5 can request that their borrower change the repayment period from two to five years, pointed out McDonald, but need to get that in writing.

The Small Business Administration is overseeing the PPP loan program. "The SBA used to be one of the best kept secrets of the federal government," said McDonald. "We're a small agency with a big mission."

The SBA was created in 1953 as an independent agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns. It offers training and financial assis-

tance. It is also helping businesses damaged by civil unrest with disaster loans, particularly for those that were uninsured or underinsured or suffered economic injury.

## How to get loan forgiveness

Since the PPP loan program closed, the focus has shifted to loan forgiveness, said McDonald.

The 25 people who attended the virtual session on Sept. 3 were ahead of the curve, according to McDonald.

"It is important to work with your lender," he advised. The loan forgiveness paperwork will be submitted through the lender. Some will do this online and some with paper applications.

"Stay in touch and keep the lines of communication open with your lender and trusted partners," McDonald stated.

Local CPA Kevin Sullivan pointed out that businesses can manage this process themselves, use their in-house bookkeeping or hire an outside consultant to pull together the necessary documentation needed for loan forgiveness. SCORE is local resource with volunteers that assist small businesses ([www.score.org](http://www.score.org)) with loan applications, as well as marketing and other strategies.

Once a loan forgiveness application is submitted, a lender has 60 days to submit it to the SBA, which then has 90 days to approve it. Businesses have 10 months to submit paperwork for the loan forgiveness.

## UP NEXT

The Midway Chamber of Commerce is offering the following free online workshops:

- Parents: Surviving and Thriving in the School Year, Thursday, Sept. 17, 3-4 p.m.
- Economic Development: Recovery, Tuesday, Sept. 22, 8-9 a.m.

Upcoming in-person events:

- Midway Walking Tour, Tuesday, Sept. 22, 3-4 p.m.
- Business After Hours, Lake Monster Brewing patio, Tuesday, Sept. 22, 4-5:30 p.m.

While there has been speculation that the government may offer wholesale forgiveness, right now everyone who received a

PPP loan needs to fill out an application for forgiveness, clarified McDonald.

Sullivan shared information from the American Institute of CPAs. Qualifying payroll costs include:

- Salary, wages, commissions or similar
- Cash tips or the equivalent
- Payment for leave
- Allowance for separation or dismissal
- Housing allowance or stipend
- Payments for group health-care benefits including group health care coverage
- Payment of any retirement benefits
- Payment of state and local taxes assessed on the compensation of employees

Those with salaries over \$100,000 are excluded, as are those who are not U.S. residents and those who work as independent contractors.

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Public Comment Welcome!

## Development Committee

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## Transportation Committee

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Monday September 14, 6:30-8:00 pm

\*Note date change due to Labor Day holiday

## Environment Committee

Held Every 4th Monday

Monday September 28, 6:30-8:00 pm

Email [info@HamlineMidway.org](mailto:info@HamlineMidway.org)  
for a link to join online meetings  
by computer or phone!

## Hamline Midway Investment Cooperative!



Hamline Midway Coalition is exploring the opportunity for community members to invest in commercial real estate. Our goal is to capture the energy and resources of neighbors to work together to make real change in the neighborhood.

On August 19th, we hosted a learning session with 3 panelists who shared why community wealth building is needed and how a real estate investment cooperative can be created. Stay tuned for additional webinars, outreach, and ways to get involved as this project moves ahead!

You can view the presentation online and are encouraged to take a survey. Find the link here:

[www.hamlinemidway.org/investment-coop](http://www.hamlinemidway.org/investment-coop)

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## Welcome Alec Armon!



Alec is HMC's Community Project Coordinator. Alec was raised in Rochester and graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Madison where he studied Political Science and Latin American Studies with a focus on public policy and economic justice. Alec believes in the power of participatory democracy to foster inclusive community development and is looking forward to working alongside the community on neighborhood initiatives that ensure all residents are represented. Alec will be focusing his efforts on a number of initiatives in the neighborhood- reach him at [Armon@HamlineMidway.org](mailto:Armon@HamlineMidway.org).

# Aging Well

## How are seniors adjusting to COVID-19 pandemic?

### Local organizations offer various resources

By CHLOE PETER

A senior who regularly attends luncheons and games group at Hamline Midway Elders, 1514 Englewood Ave., reflected to one of the staff about how her time during the pandemic was going. She mentioned that she was used to living alone, but that COVID-19 had brought on new challenges. Talking on the phone just wasn't the same for her. She used to have a group or class that she went to each day, but now, once a week was normally all she had.

Hamline Midway Elders (HME) is a non-profit organization that aims to provide volunteer and professional service to seniors in their own homes. HME was founded in 2001 in order to focus on its own local seniors. Hamline Midway Elders is also a part of The Living at Home Network, a Minnesota program that supports community-owned and non-profit organizations that help the state's seniors live at home.

The adjustment to most events now happening online was also a difficult switch for

some. Many seniors needed to order groceries online for the very first time. Or, use telehealth for medical appointments instead of going in. Laurel Collins, the program director for Hamline Midway Elders, mentioned that with libraries, community centers and the YMCA closed, it became even more difficult for seniors to find ways to connect without needing to figure out Zoom or Skype.

"Some seniors are not comfortable using computers and smartphones, so this can be difficult," Collins said. "Pre-COVID-19, our program had offered in-person classes like exercise, yoga, knitting, and we held monthly luncheon events that were well-attended. These opportunities to be together are greatly missed."

But even with the challenges presented to them, Collins believes that the seniors in the community are resilient. Many have reached out to family, friends or neighbors for help. Groups like the tai chi instructors, who are seniors themselves, adapted their class to be held online and have

continued since April. Many have ordered books through the contactless program offered at the St. Paul library or are getting more time outside.

Even though none of the in-person classes are being held at this time, HME continues to help seniors with rides to essential medical appointments, grocery and other deliveries to their homes, and assistance with yard chores. Their staff and volunteers follow Minnesota Department of Health guidelines related to wearing masks at all times, washing hands and wiping down the office or car, limiting interaction with people we are helping.

"Now, with COVID-19 precautions, we still visit by phone or Zoom, or from outside their front door!" Collins said.

HME still encourages the community to still take part in helping seniors. Cards can be sent in to HME's address and will be distributed to the seniors that they visit. They also organize groups to help the seniors with their yard work or look for volunteers to be drivers. To be a part of these groups, contact HME at 651-209-6542.

"Reach out to your older

*"Reach out to your older neighbors, ask them how you can help."*

~ Laurel Collins

neighbors, ask them how you can help. Maybe it's picking up library books for them or helping with outdoor housework or yard chores," Collins said.

In planning ahead, Collins fears for how many difficulties there still are to come.

"Winter in Minnesota can isolate people with the struggles of getting around, and I fear that this winter may be a tough one if we still have pandemic precautions in place," Collins said.

Especially at the beginning of the pandemic, transportation was very challenging for the seniors. Minnesota winters will most likely make it even more difficult for seniors to get to the places they need whether it be for groceries, medical visits, or for activities. Collins encourages people to reach out to offer help to anyone in the community, not



Laurel Collins of Hamline Midway Elders

just the seniors.

"All humans need contact and care, but some are more isolated than others. A community that is aware of its members and reaches out to all is a happier and healthier community," Collins said, "The pandemic has shown how important it is for all of us to come together to get through this!"

ADJUSTING >> 19



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## Aging Well

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Another option is making an appointment for a free one-on-one/ no obligation meeting with a licensed Medicare agent at Twin Cities Underwriters. The meeting can be on the phone or in person at any of the three company locations: Roseville, Bloomington or Inver Grove Heights.

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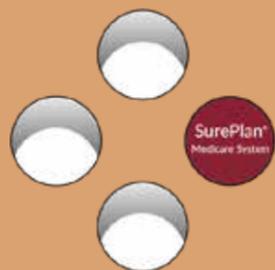
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ADJUSTING >> from 12

## LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

Larvel Bunker, the co-owner of Comfort Keepers Twin Cities, (275 4th St. E., Suite 345 in St. Paul), believes that loneliness is a big struggle for many seniors during the pandemic. Socially isolated seniors have a greater risk of mental and physical decline while socially engaged seniors have higher levels of physical, mental and cognitive functioning according to a study done by Forbes. Social interaction may even slow Alzheimer and Dementia patients' decline, according to the National Institute of Health.



Larvel Bunker

Comfort Keepers Twin Cities provides in-home, non-medical care for seniors and other adults in need of assistance with daily activities. They have more than 700 offices nationwide, and serve the local communities in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Along with daily assistance, Comfort Keepers Twin Cities provides 24-hour home care, dementia and Alzheimer's disease care and end-of-life care.

"Feelings of isolation are universal and far reaching, especially during the statewide Stay at Home order. Some seniors found themselves walled-off even from residents within their own buildings, which although necessary for safety, could not have been easy on seniors and may have lasting effects on some," Bunker said.

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**LANDSCAPING**

# Hamline Midway / Como

## Community members investing in commercial real estate through new REIC

The Hamline Midway Coalition is exploring the opportunity for community members to come together and invest in commercial real estate through a Real Estate Investment Cooperative (REIC). A REIC allows for residents to become members and pool their dollars and invest in commercial and residential real estate projects; Hamline Midway will be focused on commercial real estate.

Hamline Midway officially



launched its REIC engagement efforts in mid-August and already has over 50 people ready to become members and invest.

For Hamline Midway, there is an opportunity to capture the energy and resources of neighbors to work together to preserve and incentivize a curated mix of diverse businesses in our community.

### Hamline Midway Coalition



By KATE MUDGE  
kate@hamlinemidway.org

The organizers will continue early outreach and engagement through October to assess

feasibility and identify a steering committee. The plan is to start accepting pledges as early as late winter, 2020.

Hamline Midway will not be the first REIC in the country; in 2011, Northeast Minneapolis started a REIC and nationally there are REICs around the country including New York and California.

Existing REICs point to local control of real estate decisions and incentivizing small local businesses as being the main reasons for starting an investment cooperative. There is the poten-

tial for investors to see a return on their investment and additional benefits include providing an opportunity for everyday people to learn about investing and make decisions about their neighborhood.

This effort received technical and financial support from Creative Enterprise Zone and Council Member Mitra Jalali's office. For more information about the initiative or to get involved, check out the Hamline Midway Coalition website: <https://www.hamlinemidway.org/investment-coop>

## DISTANCE LEARNING FOR ALL

St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) started the school year with staff training on Monday, Aug. 31. On Sept. 8, instead of Como students walking through the school's new front entrance and into classrooms, they logged in for distance learning from home.

It's a challenging way to start an academic year, but with COVID-19, public health has been prioritized.

Science teacher Robyn Asher felt relief with the SPPS decision. "Starting the year in distance learning relieved so much of my anxiety around safety fears for our community. We don't know enough about COVID-19 long-term effects and the health of students, staff and families is most important," Asher said.

Jill Wielgos, an English Language Learner teacher, is optimistic that distance learning can be effective for as long as it's needed.

"Understandably, the district, teachers, families, and students rushed to adapt last spring, and did a pretty solid job," Wiel-

gos said. "But I'm hopeful that we'll have more structure in place this fall with the time to prepare. We can control some aspects of this otherwise tumultuous experience, which should bring structure to our students' lives."

The desire for structure is strong. Missing our regular routines has challenged all of us, in society and in our schools.

As a junior last spring, Justine Wulff missed daily instruction and interactions. She hoped to start her senior year with at least some in-person learning.

"The decision to go all online for the beginning of the year was much to my disappointment, but I understand that the school year will have to be different than past years due to the pandemic," Wulff said.

Delaney Register-Brown was initially disappointed to get the news about distance learning. She has come around to appreciate the safety aspect, but her experience with distance learning at the end of her junior year was challenging.

"I found it very hard to feel

### Como Park Senior High School



By ERIC ERICKSON  
Social studies teacher

motivated. I struggled to keep social contact with my peers, which made me feel really sad and alone," said Register-Brown. "I'm hopeful that we will be back in school at some point this year, so I will at least get to have some fun senior year experiences as opposed to being stuck at home."

Senior Mabur Bility shared that she supports distance learning for this fall, even though she longs for school routines. "I was very happy with the district decision. I have not been affected by COVID-19 personally, and I would like to keep it that way," Bility said.

As for extracurricular activities, a modified athletics schedule was approved by the Minnesota State High School League



New signs are ready to welcome Como students back – whenever in-person classes are deemed safe by state metrics and SPPS. (Photo by Eric Erickson)

(MSHSL) with fall sports commencing on Aug. 17.

Soccer, cross country running, girls tennis and girls swimming are under way at Como and across the state with new safety protocols in place.

Football and volleyball were moved back to spring with a plan to play from mid-March through mid-May. Like everything else these days, the situation is fluid.

## Election Sept. 15 for board vacancy in District 4

### Special elections

Community members in South Como or Energy Park can vote online until 5 p.m. on Tuesday Sept. 15 in a special election to fill a vacancy on the District 10 board.

To request a ballot: Fill out the form at [www.district10comopark.org/ballot.html](http://www.district10comopark.org/ballot.html).

Who can vote: All residents age 16 or older who live in Sub-District 4 are eligible to vote. So are authorized representatives from a business or nonprofit organization with a physical location in Sub-District 4. The Sub-District 4 boundaries are Dale on the east, Snelling on the west, and the two sets of BNSF railroad tracks on the north and south.

The winning candidate will serve until April 2021, filling the remainder of the term left vacant by Bob Jacobson, who is moving out of District 10.

### Coffee shop to get STAR Loan

The proposed Sacred Grounds Community Coffee Shop, on Front and Milton, is one of 20 projects that was expected to receive Neighborhood STAR funding when the City Council voted Sept. 2 (after the Monitor deadline). The funding –

a \$37,500 grant and a \$37,500 loan – would help the 28-seat coffee shop finish construction of the retail space and adjacent patio at 883 Front.

The refurbished building most recently housed a Buddhist temple; it started as Fireside Corner (which evolved into Fireside Hearth & Home). Neighborhood STAR money finances capital improvements for economic development in city neighborhoods. Money comes from the city's half-cent sales tax.

### 6 Projects Seek CIB Funding

Six projects in District 10 remain in the running for 2020-21 funding from Saint Paul's Capital Improvements Budget. Roughly three dozen proposals overall are competing for a share of the \$1 million that is available. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 14; final recommendations are scheduled to go to the mayor by Sept. 30. Proposed projects in District 10:

- A marked crosswalk outside Como By the Lake apartments, 901 East Como Blvd.
- Informational kiosks and trail improvements in Como Regional Park
- Security cameras and other

### District 10 Como Community Council



By MICHAEL KUCHTA,  
Executive Director  
[district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org)

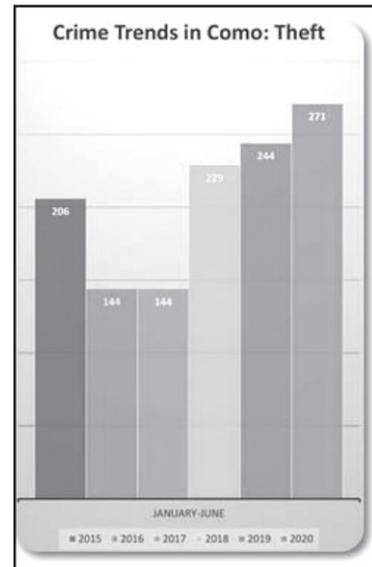
safety features along the lake's bicycle and pedestrian paths

- A dog park in Como Regional Park
- Exterior signs for Northwest Como Recreation Center
- Snow-making equipment for a 5K loop of Nordic skiing on the Como golf course

### Crime in Como rises

Crime in Como is up in almost every category in the first six months of 2020, compared with 2019, according to city statistics. Nonetheless, Como remains one of Saint Paul's safest neighborhoods.

Residents, visitors, and businesses reported 463 crimes in District 10 from January to June, a 17.2 percent increase from



crimes compared with the same six-month period of 2019. That is in line with crime in Saint Paul as a whole, which increased by 16.8 percent from 2019 to 2020, according to preliminary reports compiled by police in the city's Crime Incident Report Dataset.

Among categories of crime that increased in Como were confirmed reports of gunshots; robbery; burglary; domestic assault; and theft, driven by a 40.5 percent increase in stolen vehicles.

The only major category where reported crimes decreased was narcotics arrests.

Como, however, remains one of the city's safest neighborhoods. That is true in actual numbers of crimes and in crime rates, based on population. The neighborhood continues to have the third-lowest crime rate in Saint Paul, a ranking that has not changed. Only Highland and Macalester-Groveland have lower crime rates.

More details and charts are available on the District 10 website: Search for "Crime is Up in Como".

### Call or link into D10 meetings

Join board meetings either by video conference or by phone.

To obtain links, phone numbers, or other access information, send a request by email to [district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org). Or, call 651-644-3889. Upcoming meetings:

- Board meeting: Tuesday Sept. 15
- Neighborhood Relations: Tuesday Oct. 6
- Land Use: Wednesday Oct. 7
- Environment: Wednesday Oct. 14

All meetings begin at 7 p.m. Whenever possible, agendas and other relevant documents are posted in advance in the "Board News" section of District 10's website: [www.district10comopark.org](http://www.district10comopark.org)

# City 'desperately' needs help from other levels of government, says CM Jalali

37 businesses completely destroyed of 330 damaged during civil unrest

By JANE McCLURE

About 330 St. Paul businesses sustained \$73 million in property damage and \$8.8 million in lost inventory and other assets during the civil unrest following the murder of George Floyd. St. Paul City Council members, meeting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, heard the grim news Aug. 12.

Minneapolis is still tallying its losses, but estimate places the number of damaged or destroyed businesses at more than 700.

Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis Police sparked nights of property damage, vandalism and theft. Some businesses were burned to the ground, while others were looted or sustained other property damage.

St. Paul Economic Development Director Martin Schieckel outlined the losses to businesses, which had already been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and Department of Safety and Inspections staff began immediate outreach to affected businesses. Businesses have been helped in finding financial and technical resources and getting permits for repairs or demolition.

Thirty-seven businesses were totally destroyed, according to Schieckel. About half of those are national chain businesses and aren't seeking city help.

Most of the losses were sustained along University Ave., al-

though businesses in many other neighborhoods were also hit hard.

Midway Center had businesses looted and set ablaze. It will be demolished.

Ward Four Council Member Mitra Jalali, whose ward was among those hit hardest by damages, said the city "desperately" needs help from other levels of government.

But state and federal assistance hasn't been forthcoming. President Donald Trump in July rejected a disaster declaration request for Gov. Tim Walz. Walz has said he'll try again.

During a June special legislative session state lawmakers failed to pass a measure offering \$300 million in assistance. The PROMISE Act passed the House, but stalled in the Senate.

## How estimates were made

Schieckel gave the HRA Board an outline as to how damages were calculated. The damage estimates are based on a formula estimating the repair costs necessary to bring a property back up to the previous standard, repairing and replacing damaged portions as needed. For each business the percentage of the business real estate that was damaged by the civil unrest was scrutinized. In cases of fires, the St. Paul Fire Department made the estimate as part of its standardized operating procedure.

In cases where the percentage damage to real estate was

substantive or generally over about 10 percent, city staff classified the buildings as either "major" damage, or "destroyed." This included 37 properties and businesses. Three data points were used to come up with a repair estimate. City staff looked at total above-ground square footage of the establishment as recorded in the Ramsey County Assessor's office data, and Fire Department reports on building damage. City staff also interviewed area construction firms to figure out an appropriate per-square-footage estimate for rebuilding in the current market, which was \$425 per square foot.

When estimating damages, city staff also used other factors. In cases where the damage to real estate was minimal, a blanket rule of \$10,000 was assigned as impact for businesses affected. This was used as an amount to cover time and materials for boarding up the windows, repairing the windows and window frames after boarding, cleaning up graffiti, repairing other low-level vandalism, and other additional costs incurred as a part of the unrest.

"Some businesses in this category surely exceeded the \$10,000 threshold for real estate damage, while others were below it, but as a baseline, it seemed about right," a city staff report stated.

## Resources for help

Council members are con-



America's Best within the Midway Marketplace suffered damaged during the civil unrest in the Midway, and was one of the businesses along University Ave. damaged. In all, about 330 businesses were damaged in St. Paul. (Photo by Tessa M. Christensen).

cerned about resources only going so far. Earlier this year the city worked with community and foundation partners to set up the \$3.3 million St. Paul Bridge Fund. That provided assistance for families and small businesses that were struggling as a result of the pandemic.

St. Paul already is facing cuts to its budgets, with decreased revenues due to the pandemic. Schieckel said the city is helping businesses find other resources.

Ramsey County is offering small business grants of up to \$10,000, through a program that closed Aug. 21. The We Love St. Paul/We Love Midway grant program and Midway United are

also offering support. The federal Small Business Administration is offering loans.

Other private, state and federal program were available, but have closed applications.

The city is also offering technical assistance in the form of legal services, business mentorship, and assistance with design and planning, volunteers, relocation and insurance assistance.

"We at the city of St. Paul, we might not have all the resources, we might not have the perfect resources, but we are here to help," said Ward Three Council Member and HRA Board Chair Chris Tolbert.

## { Monitor in a Minute }

By JANE McCLURE

### Charter school prompts debate

Hmong College Prep Academy has won St. Paul City Council and Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) approval for conduit financing, on a 4-3 margin Aug. 26. But elected officials warn that future requests for funding other charter school projects won't be approved until a study can be completed.

Council members have long brought up the need to look at the cumulative impacts of charter schools on the city's property tax base and impacts on the public school system. Parents in Midway have organized a group, Parents for St. Paul Schools, to raise similar issues. Charter schools provide education options but as they continue to pop up in St. Paul, properties are taken off of the tax rolls in some cases. Hmong College Prep Academy, which is located in Como neighborhood, found itself in the crosshairs as it sought funds for a needed expansion.

Council members Amy Brendmoen, Rebecca Noecker, Dai Thao and Chris Tolbert voted for the financing; Mitra Jalali, Jane Prince and Nelsie Yang were against. But even supporters said the city needs to look at charter school expansions and conduit bond requests before there is another vote.

City officials have approved three such requests since 2012, in some cases taking properties off of the property tax rolls.

For Hmong Prep, approval means issuance of \$36 million in conduit revenue bonds. The bonds are issued at no financial risk to the city. They are typically used by colleges, universities and charter schools. Another \$7 million for the school's expansion will come from the St. Paul Port Authority.

The project allows the school

to build a new middle school, outdoor play area and a skyway over Brewster Street.

Enrollment in St. Paul Public Schools is an issue several council members cited. Another is the level of public access to a soccer dome at the school.

During debate Aug. 26, some council members questioned why Hmong Prep continues to take on students, to an enrollment of 2,350. Prince said the school's growth sounded like "it's kind of out of control."

Opponents to the conduit financing had other points. Yang led the charge in questioning school officials. A vocal supporter of the St. Paul Public Schools and the St. Paul Federation of Teachers, Yang questioned Hmong Prep Superintendent Christianna Hang about her salary and teacher salaries.

For Jalali, a major concern is that of having charter schools move into her Fourth Ward. Schools often look to take over vacant commercial and industrial sites, taking those properties out of contention for jobs creation and off of the tax rolls. One suggestion Jalali made is a zoning study for schools. While the city has zoning requirements for colleges and universities, there are no such requirements for K-12 public schools, other than site studies.

Thao defended the school and its work with Hmong students. He questioned whether racial issues were involved in some council members' questioning.

### CORRECTION

In the August *Monitor*, on page 12 due to a typographical error, the amount for funding for Twin Cities German Immersion School project was incorrectly stated. The correct amount is \$5,000. We apologize for the error.

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# Open-air music, theatrical shows in Lex-Ham

The Sunday Soirée series sponsored by Lex-Ham Community Arts offers free open-air performances by local musical and theatrical artists at 5 p.m., every Sunday at 1184 Portland Ave. Audience members should bring their own chairs and practice safe physical distancing. Masks are encouraged but required.

The line-up, at for the early part of September is:

- Sept. 6: Piano works with Kathryn Lien
- Sept. 13: Members of the Lex-Ham Community Band performing a mix of music.
- Sept. 20: A staged reading of *Over the River and Through the Woods* by Joe DiPietro.

All kinds of musical and theatrical styles provide live perfor-



mance in this safe, outdoor setting – making it possible to continue celebrating the arts during COVID. (Photo above of Bebe Keith and Bill Swanson provided by Lex-Ham District Council)

## In Brief

### New pastor at Jehovah

The Rev. Dr. Joshua Miller is the new pastor at Jehovah Lutheran Church in St. Paul, installed in an online worship service Sept. 6. Video of the installation rite at JehovahLutheran.online remains posted for viewing.



Miller holds a doctorate from Luther Seminary in St. Paul in systematic theology and has been teaching in the religion department at Augsburg University in Minneapolis since 2011. Jehovah Lutheran, at 1566 Thomas in St. Paul, is a congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It has been a fixture in the Midway neighborhood since its founding in 1923.

### Ice cream social Sept. 11

Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas, will host a free ice cream giveaway in its parking lot from 4-7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 11. Everyone is welcome to drive through the parking lot to receive up to four cases of ice cream bars per vehicle, all free. Each case contains six boxes of six individual-serving ice-cream bars. The truckload of free ice cream is from Ruby's Pantry (rubyspantry.org), a provider of affordable food. Ruby's, based in North Branch, Minn., gathers and sorts surplus food from manufacturers, distributors and producers and delivers it monthly to pop-up locations in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

### Free computers through Workforce TechPak

Ramsey County Workforce Solutions, in partnership with Tech Dump/Tech Discounts and Northstar Digital Literacy, has launched the new Workforce TechPak initiative to provide technology to those experiencing unemployment due to COVID-19. The packs, which include refurbished computers pre-loaded with helpful job-finding and training information will also be distributed by Ramsey County and city of St Paul Libraries. This program is made possible through the Ramsey County RISE program, which is funded by the Federal CARES Act. The program launched Aug. 1 and will run through Dec. 31, 2020. Each TechPak contains a refurbished laptop, a hotspot for internet access, and QuickStart guides which support the user's virtual training experience. More at [www.ramseycounty.us/techpak](http://www.ramseycounty.us/techpak).

## { Development Roundup }

By JANE McCLURE

### Kimball court

Kimball Court, which provides supportive housing in Hamline-Midway, can be enlarged with a new conditional use permit. The St. Paul Planning Commission July 20 approved a new conditional use permit for the facility at 545 N. Snelling. The decision wasn't appealed to the city council within 10 days, so the permit stands.

The permit allows the housing facility to expand to 555 N. Snelling, a commercial building housing small businesses including Star Foods Market. The small commercial building would be torn down and a new four-story structure built. The expansion allows Kimball Court to increase its number of residents from 79 to 98. Kimball Court currently has 54 single-room units with shared bathrooms and 12 single-room units with kitchens. The expansion would allow more living spaces where residents can have their own kitchen access.

Kimball Court was built in 1925. It was originally a hotel, known as the Kimball Hotel and Hamline Hotel over the years. It later served as housing and eventually became a single-room occupancy facility owned by Wilder Foundation. Wilder sold the building in 2010 to Beacon.

In 1986 the Planning Commission issued the property a conditional use permit for a 76-room boarding house. This was at a time when the commission was debating whether boarding houses and single-room occupancy dwellings should be phased out by the city. Since then the property has been rezoned for traditional neighborhoods, as part of larger series of Zoning changes along N. Snelling.

Chris Dettling is director of housing development for Beacon.

He told the Planning Commission Zoning committee that a new management company is overseeing Kimball Court. Beacon also has contracts to provide mental health and casement management services for residents.

### Taco Bell decision appealed

Hamline Midway Coalition has appealed the St. Paul Planning Commission's approval of a condition use permit to rebuild Taco Bell at 565 N. Snelling Ave. As of the *Monitor* deadline, no appeal hearing date had been set.

On Aug. 7, the Planning Commission reversed a July Zoning Committee recommendation that the permit be denied, on a 10-3 vote. A similar margin prevailed as the commission voted down a motion to deny the permit.

Taco Bell owner Border Foods sought the permit so that the existing restaurant, which was damaged during civil unrest in May, could be razed and rebuilt. Border Foods has since cleaned up, made repairs and reopened Taco Bell. If the appeal is upheld, Taco Bell could still continue to operate the restaurant as is.

City staff has typically recommended denial of the requests for a new permit tied to reconstruction of Taco Bell. This time around the recommendation is for approval, based on changes to the drive-through lane location 61 feet away from the nearest home.

Commissioner Adrian Perryman took issue with statements from community members about "undesirables" in the area, noting that the statements target youth of color. He said those issues cannot be blamed on Taco Bell as there are other businesses in the area. "We shouldn't put this all on Taco Bell," Perryman said.

## Perfect Little Library Addition

# Marketplace

Want ads must be received by the Monitor by Oct. 5 for the Oct. 15 issue. Call 651-917-4183 for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at [www.MonitorSaintPaul.com](http://www.MonitorSaintPaul.com)

**Monitor Want Ads** are \$1 per word with a \$10 minimum. Send your remittance along with your ad to *Monitor Classifieds*, 5139 34th Ave. S. #17097, Minneapolis, MN 55417. Ad copy can be e-mailed to [denis@monitorsaintpaul.com](mailto:denis@monitorsaintpaul.com), or call 651-917-4183.

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# Frogtown

## NEW MURAL EXHIBITION sustains fight for justice

Four murals created in the wake of George Floyd's murder have been re-introduced to the public at 825 University Ave. With messages like "Keep on Pushing We Can't Stop Now," this exhibition is an effort to help continue the momentum and movement towards justice.

The project is a collaboration between the Victoria Theater Arts Center (VTAC), Model Cities, and the Ramsey County Historical Society - three very different groups who came together to support community healing.

Both VTAC and Model Cities had had murals created on the plywood of their boarded up windows in the days of unrest this past June. Created by professional muralists Alex Smith and Witt Siasoco, as well as community youth, the murals are vibrant expressions of community energy. Colorful and powerful, they blaze with the fires of hope and justice. So, when it was time for the murals to come down, discussions began on how to preserve and display them in the community.

"The uprising was reaction-

ary and immediate," said Aki Shibata, co-chair of the VTAC's community engagement committee, "We wanted the voices of Black and POC artists to be supported by the community and help sustain the movement."

The VTAC's interior is uninhabitable, as it is currently a construction zone. The western exterior wall, however, which faces Model Cities' "pocket park," was an ideal home for these murals. Highly visible from University Ave. and the Victoria Light Rail Station, the murals are accessible to motorists, transit riders, and pedestrians alike. Planning kicked into high gear to get the murals up as soon as possible.

One big question arose: How to protect these one-of-a-kind pieces of art from the elements? They're painted on OSB - a material that's designed primarily for indoor use, and especially vulnerable to water. The paint itself is also delicate, and there was worry that these pieces would degrade quickly if left in the elements. Luckily, the Ramsey County Historical Society had the solution: bowling alley wax. A long-time



A neighbor looks at the mural exhibit at 825 University Ave. (Photo by Tyler Olsen-Highness)

favorite of preservationists, the wax protects without altering the materials it's applied to.

The organizations pooled their resources for installation and materials, and VTAC had volunteers ready to help with the efforts. On Aug. 8, a team of community members delicately applied the wax to the murals. On Monday they were installed by two professional theater car-

penters who are currently out of work due to COVID-19 closures.

All three organizations see this as exactly the kind of collaboration and project that can help their community's fight for equity. The art is beautiful, big, and from the heart. The location is on the border of Frogtown and Rondo, both of which have experienced systemic oppression throughout their history. The art-

ists who created them are from the neighborhood. The hope and passion behind the art is palpable and contagious.

"We're so happy we can allow community members the opportunity to experience this magnificent showcase of art and reflect on its true meaning!" said Kizzy Downie, CEO of Model Cities.

MORE PHOTOS >> 15

### Progress in the struggle

Hello Midway Como Frogtown Monitor readers,

This month I'm sharing two proverbs and words of encouragement and wisdom that I find helpful in navigating through our 2020 season of pandemics.

The first proverb comes from the Red Cross African America HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention course from the mid-1980s. "When Spider Webs United, They Can Tie Up A Lion"; it's an Ethiopian Proverb. The Red Cross wanted to emphasize that when government agencies, non-profits, businesses, health organizations, and community work in cooperation that together they could tie up the devastating and deadly impact of HIV/AIDS.

Today is no different, in regards to COVID-19.

We have to rise to work together in a cooperative, respectful, and on-going manner. It's not about agreeing 100% with a COVID prevention method or about giving up our values or having our rights violated; however, it is about taking a breath and doing the Right Thing. It took awhile to tie up HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 will take longer than we want; however, it was authentic and selfless versus fearful and selfish leadership that made the big difference. Out of authentic and selfless leadership weaved compassion, empathy, and science, which tied up HIV/AIDS. We can tie up COVID-19 working together with shared-leadership on equitable levels.

Hopefully, you have heard these words of encouragement and wisdom before:

### Peace bubbles

By MELVIN GILES  
peacebubbles@q.com



### Lessons from geese

As each goose flaps its wings it creates an "uplift" for the birds that follow. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

**Lesson 1** - People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

**Fact 2** - When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front of it.

**Lesson 2** - If we have as much common sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

**Fact 3** - When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies to the point position.

**Lesson 3** - It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each others' skills, capabilities, and unique arrangements of gifts, talents, or resources.

**Fact 4** - Geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

**Lesson 4** - We need to make

sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values and encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking we seek.

**Fact 5** - When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

**Lesson 5** - If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong

The lessons from the wise geese are great methods for us to practice together and to live them as best we can. Mayor M. Carter III and others often quote the late-dear Paul Wellstone, "We Do Better, When We All Do Better"! Brother George Floyd's killing has been lifting us up all

across the country and around the world. Uprisings and televised revolutions are struggling and moving forward demanding and proclaiming that Black Lives Matter; and more and more people are hearing it and beginning to understand the toxic history as told by a white supremacy myth and a false imposed narrative of Blackness and of the intentional lies about the artful, skillful, and beautiful people from Africa. The time is now to correct the wrongs of the past and present.

We have to be easy on ourselves, however, we have to be honest and truthful with ourselves too. Busting out of denial is very, very hard, particularly when we try to do it alone and deny and ignore the lessons from geese.

My second proverb is from Fredrick Douglass: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." Have an uplifting and a meaningful learning-struggling September!!!!!! Peace.

### Frog Food by Z Akhmetova



### Explore a Frogtown Pollinator Garden

#### Take a self-guided tour of Monarch City

Flowers, butterflies, and bees: oh my! For a fun ending to a warm August, visit Monarch City and take a self-guided tour. Butterflies and bees love this brightly-colored garden full of native flowers, located at West Minnehaha Park and Rec Center, 685 West Minnehaha Ave.

Beginning at the corner of Grotto St. and Minnehaha Ave., enjoy more than 3,000 square feet of gardens. Posted signs will help you identify and learn about the variety of plants in the garden.

Think every yellow flower is a sunflower? Think again! Sunflowers are annuals, and the yellow flowers you'll find at Monarch City, like the Cup Plant or the Compass Plant, are perennials, so they grow back every year by themselves. Pollinators like butterflies and bees are vital to our food supply, and at Monarch City you can learn about them at your own speed.

Frogtown Green is a 10-year old, resident-led and volunteer powered initiative to make Frogtown the greenest and healthiest neighborhood in St Paul. The organization began with the successful campaign for Frogtown Park & Farm (now a St Paul city park) and has broadened to include several community gardens, a tree planting goal of 1,000 new trees for Frogtown homes, and more.

"We've been working on pollinator gardens in Frogtown for the last four years, so come see the fruit (or, more accurately, flowers) of our labors!" urge organizers. For information about Frogtown Green, visit [www.frogtowngreen.com](http://www.frogtowngreen.com).

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ABOVE Muralist Alex Smith works on the Radical Love mural. AT RIGHT Community members carefully apply wax to the murals to preserve them at 825 University Ave., near the Victoria Light Rail station. (Photos submitted)

**Attention all Makers and Artists:**

Let neighbors know about your art and how they can support you. We're adding a monthly section for home-based artists, crafters and small storefront businesses. Stay top-of-mind by investing in a campaign.

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SPRINGBOARD for the arts

## Your health is STILL our priority!

The Lloyd's Pharmacy building was destroyed during the riots last month, but we are pleased to announce that a temporary satellite location is now open at **694 Snelling Av. N., Suite A.,** where we can service all your pharmacy needs.

Lloyd's Pharmacy will continue to serve our longstanding customers from the Hamline Midway neighborhood at this new location while we start the process of rebuilding Lloyd's at the original site from the ground up.

*We appreciate the many kindnesses and messages of support we have received in the past month. It makes us even more committed to this community. Rest assured, that Hamline-Midway is our home and we will be back to serve you at Snelling and Minnehaha once again.*

**- Jim Stage, Lloyd's Pharmacy**

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NMLS# 363923 EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

# Rebuild Repair Recycle

## Reinventing farming in the city

>> from 1

tion, a trellis on one end of the bed for climbing crops, and specialized soil mixture. All of this is theirs to keep as part of the first year's cost."

Coleen is, by her partner's description, a vegetable savant.

She was born and raised on a farm in southern Minnesota, back when farm families grew and preserved the majority of their own food. She still believes in living that way, even in the middle of the city.

Another guiding principle of "A Backyard Farm" is that peo-

ple should know and trust where their food comes from. Joan said, "There was just another salmonella outbreak on the west coast. Food safety, in my opinion, is not going to get better any time soon. I haven't bought a bag of lettuce from a grocery store in more than four years. We freeze about 75% of what we grow, and can the rest. We have a standing freezer, and eat out of it all win-

ter long."

Joan, Coleen, and their staff of up to 10 farmers coax a formidable harvest out of each backyard garden for their clients. They currently care for backyard gardens across the Twin Cities metro area, regularly working 8-12 hour days to keep up with the planting, mentoring, and maintenance.

Some clients want to learn to garden better. Coleen is available to help them as a garden mentor, meeting once or twice a month. In that situation, the health of the garden is up to the client but Coleen is there to offer guidance. Joan explained, "Using our intensive method, each plant has to be "trained" to stay inside its square. It's a little like having a puppy."

If a client signs up for weekly maintenance (and no mentoring), the health of the garden rests on the farm team. On the regular maintenance schedule, all customers have to do is look for the weekly harvest neatly packed on ice in a cooler outside their door.

Joan said, "There are environmental benefits to the client on several levels. We start all our own plants with organic, non-hy-

bridized seed from Seed Saver's, Johnny's or Baker Creek. We source our compost and worm castings locally. The client's carbon footprint is reduced by not having to drive to buy fresh, organic vegetables."

In a year without a global pandemic, "A Backyard Farm" would be offering classes to many different school and community groups. Joan said, "Our business had grown to the point where about 50% of our income came from teaching, but of course that's all on hold right now. Another big change this year is that clients are more careful about making big purchases. Maybe a new client will invest in one garden bed, when they really wish they were ordering two."

Still, it has been a good season. Joan said, "I have an heirloom tomato on my dining room table right now that must weigh four pounds. It's one of my favorite heirloom varieties, called Brandywine. It's a real beast - kind of misshapen, pink on the inside, just delicious." For more information, email [gardens@abackyardfarm.com](mailto:gardens@abackyardfarm.com).



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 RAMSEY COUNTY



Coleen Gregor (left) and Joan James (right) with one of their signature garden beds. The co-owners of "A Backyard Farm" are dedicated to growing healthy food in the city. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

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