



Seniors invited to stroll around Como before park opens

PAGE 7



Minnesota Governor's Candidate Forum on the New Environment

PAGE 8



Despite glitches, La Familia Tapatia restaurant is an instant hit

PAGE 10

# Midway Como

# Monitor



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## Gordon Parks High School celebrates 10th anniversary in March

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Gordon Parks High School (GPHS) plans to celebrate its 10th anniversary in March with a week of special events.

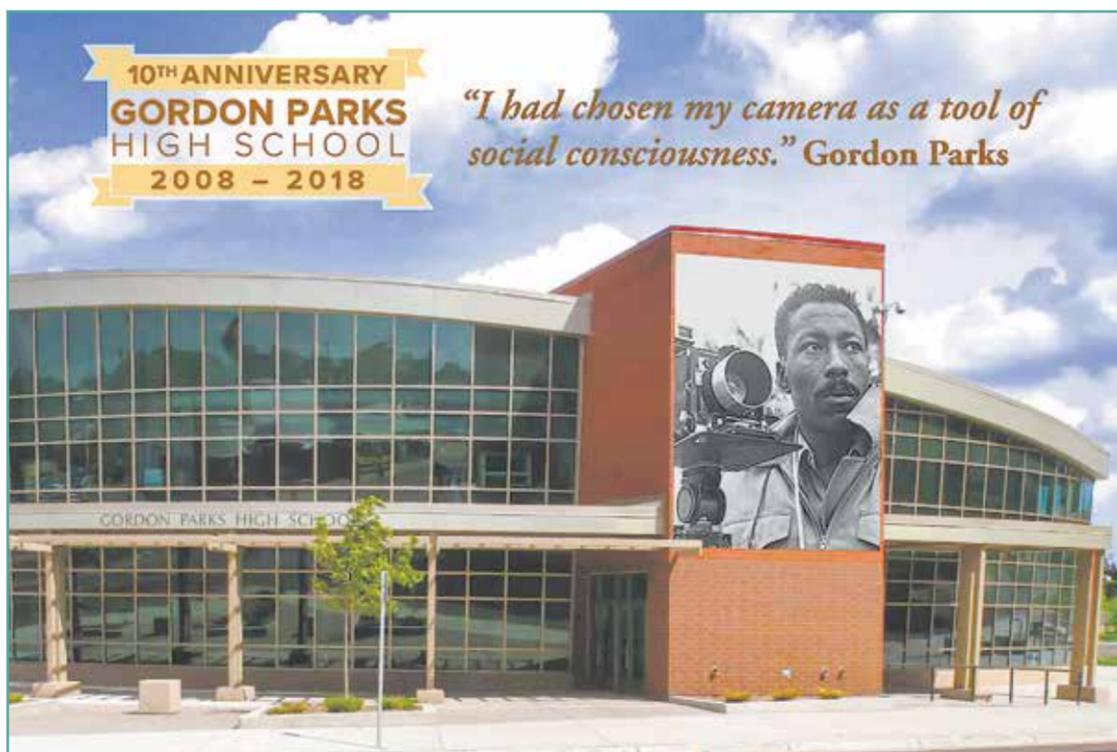
GPHS is the largest of seven alternative day school programs in the St. Paul Public Schools district. Founded in 1991, the school was originally called the St. Paul Area Learning Center. It was renamed the Unidale Alternative Learning Center after the local strip mall it operated in. When the rented space became too small, the district constructed a new \$7.5 million, 34,000-square-foot facility.

"We re-named ourselves from Unidale to Gordon Parks High School after moving from the corner of University and Dale to 1212 University," recalled GPHS Curriculum and Media Arts Coordinator Paul Creager.

The new school was dedicated on March 6, 2008, just one day and two years after school namesake Gordon Parks died at age 93.

"Our interest in naming the school Gordon Parks was built around his legacy of living in St. Paul, and using the arts to transform his life and fight against racism and classism," explained Creager.

"Since that time, our staff



Gordon Parks High School carries on the legacy of Gordon Parks through flexible programming and media-infused courses and curriculum. (Photo submitted)

has led internal reform to create a brand of alternative instruction that attempts to reinvest student interest in lifelong learning. After a decade of this work, we have many more miles to go to reach our goal, but we want to recognize accomplishments."

### Carrying on the legacy of Gordon Parks

St. Paul native Gordon Parks' life and work as a photographer, film-maker, writer, and civil rights activist provides the school with a model for the thoughtful, active, and successful citizens staff are dedicated

to helping students become, according to the 10th-anniversary website [gordonparks10.blogspot.com](http://gordonparks10.blogspot.com).

The school offers flexible programming, media-infused courses and curriculum, a supportive advisory program to help keep students on track for

"Our interest in naming the school Gordon Parks was built around his legacy of living in St. Paul, and using the arts to transform his life and fight against racism and classism."

— Paul Creager, GPHS Curriculum and Media Arts Coordinator

graduation, and a host of community partnerships, internships, and job support activities that use Gordon Parks' life as an inspiration and guide.

As a small, orderly, and friendly school, staff work to make it impossible for students to be invisible or to get lost in the shuffle.

Gordon Parks High School is proud to carry on Parks' legacy by infusing media activism and the arts into core subject areas. Like Parks himself, the staff strives to help students choose the most effective intellectual "weapons" that will transform their prospects and the world.

Students can fulfill state and district graduation stan-

Continued on page 13

## Russ Stark resigns from City Council to work for Mayor Carter

By JANE MCCLURE

Residents of St. Paul's Ward Four will have three City Council members in succession in 2018. Ten-year incumbent Russ Stark leaves the City Council in mid-February to serve as Mayor Melvin Carter III's point person on environmental policy and sustainability.

Stark said that he's eager to take the spot in the Carter administration. The issues he'll be working on are ones he has championed while on the City Council. His council accomplishments include getting the city's first bike plan passed and helping to guide Green Line light rail construction.

The remaining City Council members will select an interim Ward 4 member in the days ahead. As the *Monitor* went to press, two people had announced for the interim seat. One is Hamline-Midway resident Samantha



Russ Stark (Photo courtesy of the St. Paul City Council)

Henningson, who has served as Stark's legislative aide for the past decade. The second is John Van Hecke, a St. Anthony Park resident who was a founding member of the think tank Minnesota

2020. He is a former member of the Snelling-Hamline Community Council.

Ward Four includes all of Merriam Park, Hamline-Midway and St. Anthony Park neighborhoods, and parts of Como, and Macalester-Groveland.

In St. Paul, interim council members typically are appointed with the understanding that they won't seek the seat on a permanent basis. Both Van Hecke and Henningson have said they would not run in an election if appointed. The special election is expected to be held in August along with the primary for state offices.

The process of choosing an interim replacement moved quickly as the vacancy was posted in late January, and had a Feb. 2 deadline. A new council member could be appointed Feb. 14 and seated by Feb. 21. Stark's last day on the council is Feb. 16.

The person elected in August could take office immediately and would serve through 2019. 2019 is when all seven council seats are on the ballot. As of *Monitor* deadline, no one had announced a campaign for the permanent seat.

City Council members in St. Paul are considered to be part-time and are paid \$63,000 per year. His new full-time salary in the mayor's office is \$105,000.

Stark admitted that he has mixed emotions about leaving the City Council, but that he is excited to take on a new role.

Stark is now one of Carter's three top staff members, along with Deputy Mayor Jamie Tinchler. Stark's new title is "chief resilience officer," and he'll be working on issues including reducing the city's carbon footprint and the implementation of organized trash collection.

Carter has also named Toni

Newborn as his chief equity officer and Tarek Tomes as point person on innovations in government. All three positions are first of their kind in city history.

Stark said in his final council newsletter that while the chief resilience officer post is a new position in St. Paul, similar positions have been created in more than 100 cities around the world to better position themselves concerning climate change and emergency preparedness. He said the job's tasks will be shaped by the mayor and the community. "The questions I am already asking include: What more can St. Paul do to lessen our carbon footprint? What will make our City more resilient to coming changes? What future climate-related changes could affect St. Paul, and what should we start doing now to get ahead of these issues?" said Stark.

# Park names whittled down to three after community vote

Gordon Parks High School students play role in shaping and digging into park's history by collecting votes

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Again and again, students at Gordon Parks High School (GPHS) have worked to make sure citizens are involved in the journey to transform a vacant lot next to their school into a five-acre park.

GPHS, along with the Skyline Tower apartment complex and Union Park District Council, expressed concern about the park name selection process being planned by the city earlier this year, pointed out Curriculum & Media Arts Coordinator Paul Creager.

"As a result, we helped organize a process that resulted in a huge increase in community participation, with numerous voting sites in the neighborhood adjacent to the future park," said Creager. "We want to empower community."

## 512 vote on top three names

The school served as a voting location for students and parents, as well as for nearby Midway residents.

Citizens were asked to give input on 15 possible park names. These 15 names originated from several community engagement activities in 2016-2017, where over 100 name ideas were gathered. Of those, 15 names met city of St. Paul criteria and were the most popular, including: All Nations/New Nations, Family (Lakota: Tiospaya or Tiwahe), Freedom, Gordon, Green, Harmony, International, Lexington-Hamline, Midway, Mosaic, Peace (Arabic: Salam), People (Somali: Bulsho), Union, Unity (Sanskrit: Samadhi) and University.

The voting process whittled the 15 options down to the most popular five in November: Peace Park, Midway Park, Mosaic Park, Tiwahe Park, and Unity Park.

At two meetings in December, one held at Skyline Towers and the other at the regular Union Park District Council Board meeting site, citizens agreed to forward three names to the city's park and recreation commission.

The community voting process resulted in 512 votes being cast for Peace, Unity, and Midway.

St. Paul parks and recreation will recommend to the city council one name this month.

In the past, students have referred to the park as Three Ring Gardens after its long history of housing circuses, while the city labeled it Lexington Commons.



Gordon Parks High School English teacher Jamie Tomlin collects ideas for park names during a student-led event on the future park property held in 2017. These names were then whittled down to 15, then five, and finally three that were forwarded to the parks and recreation department. The three finalists were Peace, Unity, and Midway. In all, 512 votes were cast on the names. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

In 2016, with \$1.5 million from the city's 8-80 Vitality Fund, The Trust for Public Land put together the purchase of the three parcels that will become a 5-acre park as part of the group's focus on more green space along the light rail line. The land was then conveyed to the city.

The park is still in the fundraising stage, and will hopefully be developed in late 2018.

Students and neighbors envision a playground, outdoor classroom/amphitheater, indoor gardening space and a community orchard at this property that sits 17 feet higher than University Ave. and offers a unique overlook of nearby treetops and rooftops.

It will be a park that champions open space, equity and access.

According to a green space assessment, just 2.3 percent of the area is dedicated to parkland, although parks make up an average of 15 percent of St. Paul. The new park will be within a 10-minute walk of more than 2,600 residents—including the residents of Skyline Tower, who are largely East African immigrants.

## Student engagement

"Our work on the future park at Griggs is an example of civically

engaged storytelling-approaches to curriculum," remarked Creager. "Highly engaging, state-standard aligned curriculum is available in the community around a school and doesn't need to be purchased from Pearson Inc. and Scholastic. For students, interaction with this park project boosted their sense of civic agency, and familiarity with the processes of championing community change."

Creager added, "For the educators involved, the project gave us an opportunity to apply learning in a relevant, tangible way, and show that schools can play a vital role in the communities where they are located."

GPHS remains dedicated to staying informed regarding ongoing park work through the Trust for Public Land and city of St. Paul.

Although 17-year-old Ladia Allcorn will graduate this spring, she plans to come back and assist with the park. "I'm not done," she said. "That park isn't built yet."

The park caught Allcorn's attention the very first day she at-

tended GPHS as a sophomore, and ever since she's been working to make the park a reality. She's so glad for the opportunity through GPHS to get credit for "doing something amazing like this." Working through the process of getting a park created has been an eye-opener for her.

"I'm ready for that park to be built," said Allcorn. She's excited for the day when she can bring her kids to the park and let them know she helped make it happen.

It is a park that the school and nearby community need, according to Allcorn, who recently helped garner votes on the park name. Personally, she favored the name "Our Park," because, as she explained, "It's everyone's park."

Allcorn pointed out that parks are beneficial in many ways, and she's looking forward to students being able to have a space to spread out a blanket, take a break from school, and enjoy the mental health benefits associated with green space.

"They deserve that," stated Allcorn, who observed that this park might be something small

for others, but it's something big for them.

## Soil analysis at park site

GPHS students have also begun collaborating with Kat Hayes, an anthropology professor at the University of Minnesota, and her grad students.

"The future parkland has a unique history, and some of the soil is relatively undisturbed," stated Creager.

Students have done archaeological mapping projects on the property.

The archaeology curriculum includes components such as biology modules using bone casts and teaching bones from the university's anthropology department labs. A demonstration was given on LIDAR (light detection and ranging), a noninvasive way to record and assess the site, as well as a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) module, that gave students a chance to see how this technology is used in the field.

Students also learned how archaeologists set up sites and document everything in 3D space.

Under the direction of GPHS science teacher Joel Abdella, students have recently begun conducting a soil analysis project.

This project and the future park space has "helped begin years of science and social studies curricular inquiry," said Creager. "These projects also create a shareable class experience that will help inspire more taxpayer support to leverage policymaker involvement with thoughtful school change, and inspire students and staff to keep pushing for the educational reform our schools need."

Creager added, "Kat is also an incredible fit for us because she brings a deep background of exploring sensitive racial and economic histories into archaeological inquiry."

Participants appreciate this project because it involves so many things—historical research, contemporary social relevance of urban planning, questions of environmental justice, applications of science and math to real-world problems, and thinking about how to commemorate the past.

# Stadium noise variance raises ire of residents on social media

By JANE MCCLURE

A blanket sound level exemption for the new Allianz Field Major League Soccer stadium was set to return to the St. Paul City Council for a vote Feb. 7 at City Hall. If the exemption is adopted, home games, league events, exhibition games and city-sponsored events at the new stadium will not need sound level variances. Because the variance is in a use agreement approved previously between Minnesota United FC and city officials, it may be all over but the shouting.

Joe Spencer, who works on special projects for the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED), said the exemption to noise regulations is in the use agreement approved last year by the city and Minnesota United FC.

Allianz Field construction is

underway at the northeast corner of Snelling and St. Anthony avenues, the former Metro Transit bus barn site and part of the former Midway Center property. It is expected to open to games early next year. Minnesota United typically plays 17 regular season games at home, if a look at recent schedules is any indication. Soccer games are on Saturday evenings, starting at 6:30 or 7pm and usually last two hours.

The first home game this year is Sat., Mar. 17. The last is Sun., Oct. 21.

Spencer called the exemption "simple and straightforward" and said it would "streamline" the event process for Allianz Field.

"It's not expected to be needed or used a lot," he said. Environmental studies conducted as part of stadium planning indicated that soccer games and

other events wouldn't be in violation of daytime sound level regulations. Nighttime noise limits kick in at 10pm. With soccer games typically starting at 7pm, it's not expected that games would go later than 10pm. Later play would only happen due to inclement weather, a television schedule-related delay or overtime periods.

If a concert or fireworks display is planned, those would need variances and would have to go to the City Council for approval.

Despite many concerns raised about the exemption on social media and in calls to council members Dai Thao and Russ Stark, only one person attended a Jan. 17 council hearing to speak in opposition. Hamline-Midway resident Stephanie Digby, who lives north of the stadium, was the only person to speak in op-

position. "I'm going to be suffering from noise pollution," she said. Digby said the variance feels discriminatory and that it is bringing further changes to what has been a quiet neighborhood.

"I feel there are many of us who have been completely ignored," Digby said.

A layover was approved Jan. 17 to give Union Park District Council (UPDC) a chance to weigh in. The Jan. 22 snowstorm forced the council to cancel a neighborhood meeting to discuss noise concerns.

Stadium noise has been an issue in neighborhoods around Concordia University's Seafoam Stadium. The sound from football games has carried as far north as Minnehaha Ave. in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood and south to Summit Ave. But those games end before 10pm.

"The assumption is that you

essentially cannot quiet fans down," Stark said of the soccer variance. Council members and Spencer noted that Allianz Field is designed in a way to mitigate sound. That is true of the stadium design as well as how the sound will be handled. Instead of large speakers at one end, as is the case at TCF Stadium at the University of Minnesota, Allianz Field is designed to have smaller-scale speakers that will be spread throughout the stadium.

Spencer said that the plan is to have Allianz Field be a "good neighbor" and mitigate sound as much as possible.

Questions had been raised as to whether or not the exemption would also apply to CHS Field in Lowertown, which is used by baseball teams including the St. Paul Saints. Spencer said that isn't the case.

# Snowstorm left parents worried as their children got stranded

Ten buses were in minor accidents; 20 buses got stuck—some students ended up being ferried home in police vehicles

By JANE MCCLURE

St. Paul's biggest snowstorm in several years has St. Paul Public Schools families fuming and school and city officials apologizing. Many students were affected by the Jan. 22 snowstorm, waiting at schools for late buses or stuck in buses on snow-clogged streets. More than 300 pre-K through eighth-grade students didn't make their trip home until 10pm to midnight. The last children got home after midnight, with some students ferried in St. Paul Police Department vehicles.

Between 50 to 75 special needs students, whom the district transports, were also impacted. The last of those students were home by 10pm. In some cases, bus drivers stopped to get food and water to bring onto the buses.

At Galtier Elementary (1317 Charles Ave.), the last students didn't leave until about 8:20pm. Teachers Laura Priebe and Darya Fidelman stayed late with the students, who watched a movie until the bus arrived. Principal Sharon Hendrix stayed and answered the phone.

Neighborhood Galtier parent Jacqueline Robinson pulled a sled of treats over for the students. Clayton and Kristin Howatt also assisted and helped push motor vehicles out of the snow.

"It was pretty awesome," Clayton Howatt said of the neighbors' efforts to help the stranded children.

But while parents and school faculty and staff stepped up to help in many cases, many parents were left waiting and wondering where their children were. Some parents said that had they known buses would be an hour or more late, they would have headed to schools to pick up their children. But doing so could have meant getting stuck on the way to schools, and then having no one at home when children arrived.

Frantic and angry parents, unable to reach schools and trying to use an inaccurate bus schedule app, have bombarded school officials with calls and emails. Many are praising bus drivers, and school faculty and staff who stayed into the night at schools with their children. They lay blame on district ad-

ministrators and the School Board and are demanding changes in communication and in snow day policies.

St. Paul Public Schools Superintendent Joe Gothard and Mayor Melvin Carter III apologized at a Jan. 23 press conference. Gothard said that when the decision had to be made at 5am Monday whether to close schools, the forecast called for six to eight inches of snow in St. Paul. Instead, more than a foot of snow fell as the storm tracked north. The heaviest snow was falling when schools were being dismissed. By midnight Jan. 22, the snowfall total at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport was 12.4 inches.

Gothard said that knowing what he knows now, he would have "definitely" made a different decision as to whether to close schools. "It breaks my heart that this happened."

By 10am January 22, St. Paul announced that schools would close early. That wasn't time for school buses, which typically pick up children at 2, 3 and 4pm. While the first buses were on time, about 400 of the 3 and 4pm buses were

running late. Ten buses were in accidents, and another 20 got stuck.

Thomas Berg, transportation director for St. Paul Public Schools, said Jan. 22 was the most challenging day of his career. "We were somewhat overwhelmed by the situation."

As problems worsened during the evening, school district officials reached out to the city for help, with snowplows and police deployed where needed. Carter himself visited Farnsworth Elementary in Payne-Phalen neighborhood and Wellstone Elementary in the North End. At Farnsworth, the mayor helped shovel out a bus.

Michelle Lyn Peterson's two children were more than two hours' late getting home from Capitol Hill Elementary. Their bus ride is usually 45 minutes. She lives in Como neighborhood, and the children's father lives on the East Side. While she typically doesn't approve of her son having his cell phone at school, Peterson said she was glad he could call her, and help other students contact their parents.

Peterson said she's proud of the way Capitol Hill students responded, with older students looking out for younger students on the bus. "While it was a really unfortunate event for many, we sometimes forget that our kids are amazing, caring and resilient individuals."

But if the snow storm was a time of stress and struggle, it was also one where many people looked for each other, something Carter cited at the press conference.

For most parents, the issue is communication, which is being looked at closely. Berg said that while the buses have GPS systems, those aren't always accurate. Bus drivers are supposed to call their dispatchers, who then call the school personnel to update the bus app. That wasn't possible in the weather conditions as driver struggled through heavy snow.

The school district works with nine bus companies.

## Monitor

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## Wondering How to Keep the Kids Active and Engaged This Summer?

Check out the March issue of the Monitor for a listing of local activities, camps, and classes for youth of all ages!

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Hamline Midway residents Wendy and Byron Kieser have had kids enrolled at Hamline Elementary (formerly Hancock) for seventeen years, and though the school's name has changed, some teachers remain as does the same strong sense of community.

Like many people choosing a school for the first time, they asked their friends for guidance. When someone suggested Hancock, they weren't sure but decided to go to the open house. They were impressed with the classrooms and programs the school offered and decided to try it.

When asked why they stayed, Wendy says, "We stayed because the teachers and staff quickly became an important part of the community that our entire family belonged to, not just the kids." She was also excited about the Hamline to Hamline Collaboration, "It's an amazing asset to Hamline students; it provided so many extra experiences from being on the Hamline University campus for swimming, mock trial, performing in Sundin Music Hall, to the tutors, and other university students that work in the classrooms."

The Kiesers sent all six of their children to Hamline for kindergarten and Carol Schjei, still a kindergarten teacher there, taught them all. Four of the Kieser children spent all their elementary

# Hamline Elementary School

By JESSICA KOPP

## Two campuses, one community—one Midway family's story



Joe Kieser, age 5, spent his entire elementary education under the cooperation between Hamline Elementary and Hamline University. (Photo provided)



Joe Kieser, age 18, is now a student at Hamline University. (Photo provided)

years at Hamline and at the end of this year, the family will attend their final Hamline Elementary "graduation," but that doesn't mean the family is leaving Hamline. Their son, Joe, has come full circle in this community—first as an elementary student and now as

a Hamline University freshman, majoring in mathematics.

It's easy for Wendy to see the arc. "Joe started at Hancock in 2004 and had creative and experienced teachers throughout; they kept him motivated and challenged. He made friends there that he still has today and because they all lived in the neighbor-

hood, they were able to do things together in and out of school."

Joe sees the value of a shared community, too. "The connection to Hancock helped me to get my first job at Hancock Rec Center," Joe said. "It was a comfortable environment, I was familiar with the building, and it was close to home. It made working at Hancock Rec a great first job. I have been back to Hamline Elementary this year doing service learning projects, and it is great to still see some of my former teachers at the school."

I asked Joe to tell me more about his journey from one side of Snelling Ave. to the other.

### Favorite memory?

"My favorite memory of Hamline University as a Hancock student is getting to eat in Sorin Hall. As an elementary student, an endless buffet was very appealing. I also remember working on special projects with Mrs. Grostephen and going to the university campus for mock

trial and swimming."

### Favorite teacher?

"My third-grade teacher, Mrs. Nguyen. She taught me many things about integrity and working hard. She was a good teacher because she knew when it was time to learn and when it was time to let kids be kids."

### Why Hamline University?

"I chose Hamline University because it's close home, has a small but close community, and of course going to Hancock allowed me to spend quite a bit of time on campus which made important connections to me as an adolescent. So far, my experience at Hamline has been wonderful. Both the staff and my fellow students are very open and inviting which just builds such a great community."

As a former Hamline (Hancock) Elementary student, Joe applied for and received the Hamline to Hamline Collaboration Scholarship. Only students who have attended the school and are planning to attend Hamline University are eligible. You can learn more about this scholarship and the partnership between Hamline University and Hamline Elementary at [www.hamline.edu/offices/wesley/hamline-to-hamline-collaboration](http://www.hamline.edu/offices/wesley/hamline-to-hamline-collaboration).

The Hamline Midway Library, 1558 West Minnehaha Ave., is your neighborhood connection with your community. Enjoy great programs, access the Internet, and stock up on books, CDs, and DVDs, all free with your library card.

This month, you're invited to join your neighbors by sharing words and drawings about nature that will inspire a community mosaic for the library. This project, Nature in the Urban World, is a collaboration between the Hamline Midway Coalition and the Hamline Midway Library. After Lori Greene of Mosaic on a Stick designs the mosaic, community members will have the opportunity to complete the mosaic in late March. Pick up a form at the library and submit your ideas to the library through Feb. 24.

The library will be offering Chair Yoga with Nancy Giguere on Thursdays, Feb. 8, 15, and 22 from 10:30-11:30am. All movement is done while seated or using the chair for balance. This program co-presented by the library and the Hamline Midway Elders Association.

Preschool Storytimes in English happen Fridays, 10:30-11am, with upcoming events on Feb. 9, 16, and 23 and Mar. 2 and 9. Storytimes feature stories, songs, puppets, and more. They're a great way for caregivers to bond with children and build social skills, listening comprehension, and letter and number recognition while creating a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Children of all activity levels are welcome!

The library is also offering Evening Storytimes on Tuesdays from 6-6:30pm, with upcoming storytimes on Feb. 13, 20, and 27.

Sat., Feb. 10, 1:30-3pm, the library presents the popular Science Saturdays program, where school-aged participants and their families can enjoy fun, hands-on science, and art activities. No preregistration necessary—just come by when you can. The theme will be Mirrors and Symmetry. Come print a symmetrical image for Valentine's Day! On Sat., Mar. 10, also 1:30-3pm the

# News from Hamline Midway Library

By CARRIE POMEROY

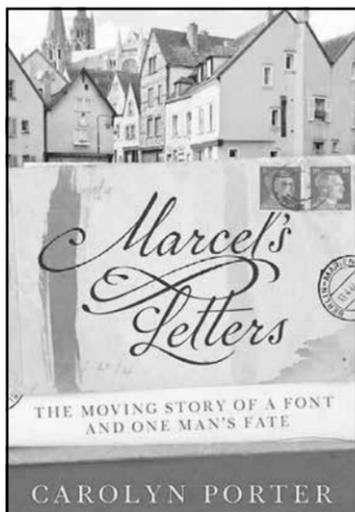
## Fireside Reading Series continues through the month

theme will be Wind and Air Experiments.

Word and Sound Lab continues at the library on Tuesday afternoons from 4:30-6pm, with upcoming sessions on Feb. 13, 20, and 27 and Mar. 6, 13, and 20. Poet Becca Barniskis and musician Nick Jaffe are offering this open studio workshop for youth grades 5-8. Explore the intersection of poetry, sound, and video, and experiment with making your own creations on iPads and other tech, to be provided. Participants can also bring their phone, laptop, tablet, or notebook. This activity, provided by a grant from the State Arts Board, is free and does not require advance registration—just show up!

The library will be offering Book Art, a great hands-on activity for adults, on Mon., Feb. 12, 6-7:30pm. Participants can learn how to fold books to create eye-catching sculptures.

The Friends of the St. Paul Public Library's popular, long-running Fireside Reading Series will also continue bringing some of Minnesota's most accomplished writers to the Hamline Midway Library in February. With cookies in one hand and coffee in the



Carolyn Porter will read from her book, "Marcel's Letters," as part of the Fireside Reading Series Wed., Feb. 14, 7pm.

other, you can cozy up next to the library's fireplace and experience great literature right here in our neighborhood.

On Wed., Feb. 14, 7-8pm, graphic designer Carolyn Porter reads from "Marcel's Letters," the story of her quest to unlock the story behind a bundle of beautifully hand-written letters she found in

a Stillwater antique store.

On Wed., Feb. 21, 7-8pm, the featured reader is Jon Lurie, presenting from his book "Canoeing with Jose." The book is a memoir of journalist Lurie's relationship with a smart, angry Lakota-Puerto Rican named Jose Perez, telling the story of how the two men embarked on a 2000-mile paddle from Breckenridge, MN to the Hudson Bay.

Continuing with the Fireside Reading Series on Wed., Feb. 28, 7-8pm, Kaethe Schwein reads from her mesmerizing post-apocalyptic debut "The Rending and The Nest." In Schwein's novel, 95 percent of the world's population has vanished without a trace, and the other 5 percent must struggle to survive in a ruined world.

Check the library website at [www.sppl.org](http://www.sppl.org) for information on this series, and plan on coming early to these presentations—seats go fast!

The Novels at Night Book Club meets on Thurs., Feb. 15, 6:30-7:30pm. This book club aimed at adult fiction enthusiasts will discuss "The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry" by Rachel Joyce.

All St. Paul Libraries will be closed on Feb. 19 in honor of

Presidents Day.

The Show and Tell Book Club for grades 1-3 meets on Sat., Feb. 24, 1:30-2:15pm. Come share books and do fun literacy activities!

Also on Sat., Feb. 24, 2:30-3:30, spend time with Colonial Grandmother Flora making colonial crafts, playing games, and eating snacks in a Children's Colonial Sampler program.

The Start a Series Book Club will meet on Mon., Feb. 26, 4-5pm, and the book under discussion will be "Ghost" by Jason Reynolds. This book club is recommended for grades 6-8, and each month will focus on discussing the first book in a series.

On Wed., Feb. 28, 1-3pm, Jody's Documentary Film Series will feature "What I Want My Words to Do to You," directed by Madeleine Gavin, Judith Katz, and Gary Sunshine. Go inside a women's writing workshop, where women serving time, mostly for murder, create astonishing writing and tell how they got where they are. Then hear their words turned into a prison performance by actors Glenn Close, Marisa Tomei, and Rosie Perez. Enjoy the free film and snacks and stay for the post-film discussion facilitated by Jody. This program is a collaboration of the award-winning POV documentary series and the Hamline Midway Elders Association.

On Sat., Mar. 3, 1-2, the Saints and Sinners Book Club meets to discuss good mysteries. Contact volunteer G. Balter for book lists and more information at [gerribalter@gmail.com](mailto:gerribalter@gmail.com) or 651-224-5570.

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• For the second consecutive season, Como debate partners Stephen Boler and Jackson Kerr qualified for the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) State Debate Tournament. After placing second in the Section 4 meet during the first weekend of January, Boler and Kerr advanced to state competition at the University of Minnesota on Jan. 12 and 13.

The policy issue for debate this season was a resolution about public education and potentially increasing funding and regulation. Students were required to develop affirmative and negative arguments in preparation for 90-minute debates. Which side a team defends is based on a coin flip just before the debate. Presentations are made, cross-examinations occur, and rebuttals are offered. Judges evaluate the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the constructs, and a winner is determined.

Boler and Kerr, both seniors, appreciate the intensity and rigor of the state meet. They finished 18th in the state overall after pulling out a win against a Roseville team. More than their section medals and trophy, the debaters value the critical thinking skills and opportunity to examine public policy from multiple perspectives.

Juniors Henry Hansen and Peter Schik finished 7th in the Section 4 meet, earning honorable mention. They qualified for state as sophomores and are excited for another opportunity in 2018-19, along with five other returners. The Como debate team is coached by teacher Deb Hansmeier and assisted by Como alum Ian Johnson.

• Cadets from the Marine JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps) at Como continued their community service projects over winter break and into January. Over the holiday, the cadets coordinated a Toys for Tots campaign that brought joy to hundreds of kids and families in the area.

50 cadets volunteered to help run activities and lend support to students and families at Crossroads Elementary at their school carnival on Jan. 12. The carnival raises a significant amount of funding to support the Crossroads' 4th-grade summer camping trip. Sergeant

# News from Como Park High School

Compiled by ERIC ERICKSON, Social Studies Teacher

## Debate to State, Cadets in Service, fundraisers and Winter activities



Como Marine Corps JROTC cadets volunteered at the Crossroads Elementary School Carnival last month, setting up and supervising fun activities for students and families. (Photo submitted)

Major James Kirkland says that the spirit and service of giving back to the community is a critical element of the JROTC program at Como.

• All community members that enjoy an occasional meal at Chipotle are invited and encouraged to dine-in or take-out from the Rosedale Chipotle on Tues., Feb. 13 between 4 and 8pm. If customers tell the cashier they are supporting the Como Park Close Up Trip, 50% of the order price will go

to support Como's annual field trip to Washington D.C. and help students participate in the national Close Up program!

• Winterfest Spirit Week at Como is scheduled for the week of Feb. 12-16. Thematic dress-up days will be held all week and the coronation of the Winterfest Royalty will take place on Friday at the end of the school day in conjunction with a Pep Fest. Spirit Week concludes with the Winterfest Dance on Saturday evening,

Feb. 17.

• Como's next monthly parent seminar will be "Parenting in the Digital Age" on Tues., Feb. 27 from 5:30-8pm at the school. Parents will have an opportunity to discuss challenges of teens and technology while utilizing resources and developing strategies to help navigate the complexities of modern-day communications.

• Believe it or not, planning for the Class of 2018 graduation



The St. Paul Blades high school girls' hockey team and the Friends of Como Area (FOCA) boosters hosted a special day of outdoor hockey on Jan. 13 at the North Dale Rec Center. (Photo submitted)

party is already underway! On Wed., June 6 after the graduation ceremony downtown at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium, Como seniors will be invited to attend the annual all-night party to celebrate their accomplishments together as a class in a memorable, fun and safe environment.

If parents or community members are interested in helping, please join the next planning meeting on Feb. 21 at 6:30pm. The Como Park Booster Club that sponsors the event welcomes creative ideas, construction skills, raffle prizes and any help or support that you're able to provide. Any questions or interest can be directed via email to [comoparkboosterclub@gmail.com](mailto:comoparkboosterclub@gmail.com), or by attending the Grad Party Committee meeting on the 21st.

• With a committed and continual effort to raise money in support of Como student activities, the Como Park Booster Club is once again proud to announce that the annual Urban Growler Fundraiser is set for Sun., Mar. 11 from 4-8pm. The event is an annual, festive get-together for all those that want to help Como and enjoy some time in a renowned St. Paul taproom with good food. For more information, tickets, or volunteering, contact Ann Commers at [acommers@msn.com](mailto:acommers@msn.com).

• Andrayah Adams, a sophomore studying and playing on a basketball scholarship at St. John's University in New York, returned to the Como Park Gymnasium on Feb. 5 to have her #15 jersey retired at halftime of the Cougars' game. Adams scored over 3,000 points in her career at Como while leading the Cougars to their first two city titles. In her senior year, she led the girls' team to the 2016 state basketball tournament.

Adams is currently a top scorer for the Red Storm, averaging 11 points a game. She is working towards her degree in Sports Management. The jersey retirement was set to include tributes from her coaches, family, and former teammates. Look for photos and a story in the next edition of the *Monitor*.

• The St. Paul Blades girls' hockey team, which is the cooperative team for the St. Paul Public Schools, played the evening finale of a four-game series on Jan. 13 outside at the North Dale Rec Center. Teams from across the state descended upon the Como neighborhood for a fun, well-organized, uniquely Minnesotan event hosted by the Friends of Como Area (FOCA) boosters.

The Blades are an extremely young team this season. The girls from different schools have come together to improve and develop their skills while promoting the game of hockey to young girls throughout St. Paul. The Blades volunteer and coach at local rinks with youth teams throughout the season.

The Blades' new home rink is the Oscar Johnson Arena off Snelling Ave. They are grateful for the space and their own locker room on site. Four of the Blades attend Como including junior captain Gianna Gabrielli, junior Isabelle Hoppe, sophomore Anisa Smith and freshman Emilie Hanson.

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The ongoing history of the Minnesota State Fair kicks off District 10's 2018 Sunday Series on Feb. 25. State Fair director Jerry Hammer picks up where he left off last year: He'll share forgotten photos, facts, and stories about the Fair from the last 100 years or so—from 1920 until today.

The free presentation is Feb. 25, 1-2:30pm, in the Newman-Benson Chapel at Lyngblomsten, 1415 Almond Ave.

You can also put these upcoming Sunday Series presentations on your calendar:

- **The Next Step: Pedestrian Safety in St. Paul.** Drivers continue to run into pedestrians in higher and higher numbers. What will it take to stop that? Fay Simer, the city's new pedestrian safety advocate, and Sgt. Jeremy Ellison, who leads enforcement efforts in the citywide Stop for Me campaign, lead the discussion. The free presentation is Sun., Mar. 18 from 1-2:30pm.
- **Crime Prevention through Landscape Design.** Patty Lambers, crime prevention coordinator for the St. Paul Police, gives great advice about where to plant, where not to plant, and what to plant to make yourself, your family and your home safer. The free presentation is Sun., Apr. 15, 1-2:30pm.

### O'Reilly negotiates to run Lakeside Pavilion

A team led by veteran Twin Cities restaurateur Matty O'Reilly is in line to take over management of the Como Lakeside Pavilion. O'Reilly proposes to open "Spring Café" in the space previously occupied by Como Dockside and Black Bear Crossings. He is now negotiating lease and management details. City officials continue to project an April start date.

O'Reilly is familiar with the Como neighborhood: he opened Delicata, 1341 Pascal St., in summer 2017. He also is familiar with running a restaurant on park property: he operates the seasonal Red River Kitchen at City House, creatively using a food truck to revitalize a converted barge terminal on St. Paul's Upper Landing. O'Reilly and his team also operate Republic in Minneapolis' Dinkytown, and Bar Brigade in St. Paul's Highland Park neighborhood.

### Crime in Como dropped in 2017

Overall crime decreased 4.7 percent in Como in 2017, according to preliminary police data analyzed by District 10. Vandalism, burglaries, and thefts all were down, and there was no increase in assaults. Most notably, the neighborhood saw a sharp drop in auto thefts.

However, robberies and rapes increased. And, as was the case citywide, reports of gunshots also continued to increase, though not nearly as rapidly as in 2016.

You can find charts and more details on the District 10 website: [www.district10comopark.org](http://www.district10comopark.org). The site includes breakdowns on how much crime there was in the individual police "grids" in different parts of the neighborhood.

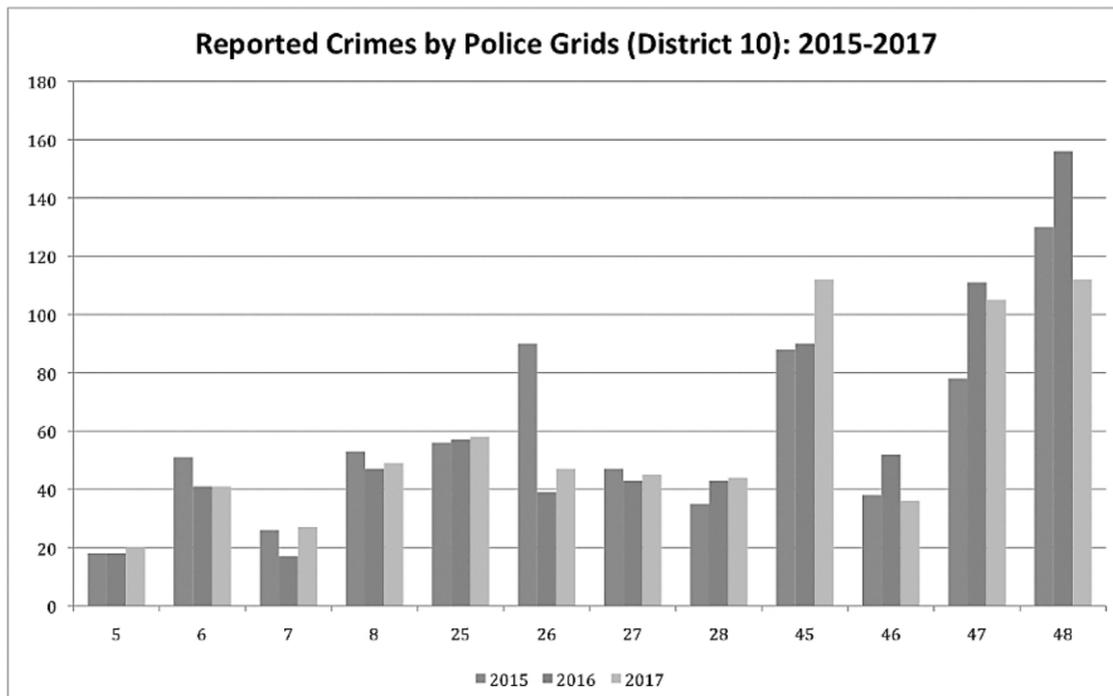
### Looking for relief from State Fair crowds

The Como Community Council

# Como Community Council Corner

By MICHAEL KUCHTA, Executive Director

## How much State Fair history do you remember?



Source: Saint Paul Crime Incident Report database

Reported crimes for 2015-2016-2017 in the 12 area grids that make up Como Dist 10. Combined, the area showed a 4.7% decrease in crime.

cil is launching a wide-ranging review of possible changes to parking, traffic, and city enforcement activities during the Minnesota State Fair.

The District 10 board approved six areas of action at its Jan. 16 meeting. The district council's Land Use committee developed the proposals, which are intended to study and limit the impact that State Fair traffic and activities have on the neighborhood.

Exploring the changes would include public meetings and surveys. The review also will require talking with and partnering with neighborhood residents, city staff and elected officials, State Fair management, and a variety of businesses, schools, and other institutions. The proposals would:

- Work with institutions and businesses in and near the neighborhood to make their unused parking lots available as shuttle lots or off-street parking, especially on weekends during the Fair. A survey taken during the 2017 Fair indicates there could be more than 3,000 unused parking

spaces available.

- Explore expanding the number of neighborhood streets in which parking is restricted to one side during the Fair. Streets to be considered are those west of Victoria between Larpenteur and Nebraska, and those between Lexington and E. Como Blvd., south of the lake and north of the railroad tracks. Currently, parking is restricted to one side of streets during the Fair in a many other parts of the neighborhood, primarily from Hoyt south and from Chelsea west.

- Explore expanding the existing Parking Overlay District to add all blocks between Hamline, Lexington, Arlington, and Larpenteur. This would allow homeowners to use their lawns for parking during the 12 days of the Fair. The current Overlay District extends roughly from Hoyt on the north, Chelsea on the east, Wynne on the south, and Winston on the west.
- Explore a wide range of traffic-calming tactics on residential streets during the Fair, including temporary speed reductions, speed bumps, barrels, stop signs, and other measures.

- Work with the City of St. Paul to implement universal and reliable enforcement of violations during the Fair, including vending, peddling, and parking.
- Clarify what types of signs and advertising residents, businesses, and institutions can use to promote off-street parking during the Fair.

You can find more details on the District 10 website: [www.district10comopark.org](http://www.district10comopark.org).

### Board supports 4 of 5 projects

The District 10 Como Community Council voted Jan. 16 to support four of the five infra-

structure projects that St. Paul is proposing for the intersection of Como, Front, and Dale. The projects are part of a \$350,000 Commercial Vitality Zone initiative that the City Council authorized in 2015.

The District 10 board voted to support:

- Painting higher-visibility crosswalks in all current locations, and painting stop bars ahead of the crosswalks, in hopes of discouraging drivers from encroaching on the crosswalks
- Painting green lane extensions across the intersection for the Como Ave. bike lanes
- Installing landscaping
- Moving the bus stop on northbound Dale from in front of the strip mall to the south side of the intersection (in front of John's Pizza Café)

The board did not support a proposal to eliminate the dedicated right-turn lane from southbound Como to westbound Front. That proposal would replace the lane by expanding the existing pedestrian island and shortening the crosswalk on Como.

The board's actions came after it conducted an online survey that received more than 525 responses. Details of the survey results and the proposed infrastructure projects can be found on the District 10 website: [www.district10comopark.org](http://www.district10comopark.org).

### Upcoming District 10 meetings

- Como Community Council Monthly Meeting: Tues., Feb. 20
- Environment Committee: Wed., Feb. 28
- Neighborhood Relations and Safety Committee: Tues., March 6
- Land Use Committee: Wed., March 7

All meetings begin at 7pm at the Como Park Streetcar Station, which is at the northeast corner of Lexington and Horton. Community members are always welcome to attend and participate. Whenever possible, agendas are posted in advance in the "Board News" section of District 10's website.

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# Seniors invited to stroll around Como before park opens

Senior Strolls offered indoors and outdoors from 9-11am on the first Tuesday

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

Seniors, take a stroll through Como Park Zoo & Conservatory before it opens to the public on the first Tuesday of each month.

Senior Strolls is a new, free program for the 55+ community that began in December 2017. It is funded through the Legacy Amendment.

"This new program is a great way to get active and social, with a little adult learning thrown in to spice it up!" said Como staff member Noah Petermeier.

## Activities in a beautiful space

The goal of the program is to encourage the 55+ community to engage in physical, social, and mental health activities in a beautiful space.

"We leave it up to the individual to choose how they wish to spend the time," explained Como staff member Matt Reinartz. "Whether they want to come and chat with a friend, walk for exercise, meditate, or chat with an interpreter and learn some new plant and animal information, the choice is up to each participant."

Enter through the Visitor Center main entrance during cold months. Doors open promptly at 9am and Como opens to the public at 10am. Participants may bring a caregiver who is not 55+.



"We receive positive comments from folks excited to be here without the crowds, and talking to the interpreters on an adult level," remarked Como staff member Noah Petermeier. (Photo submitted)

## Calmer atmosphere

"People enjoy having the space

open to them before public hours," remarked Petermeier.

"We receive positive comments from folks excited to be here without the crowds, and talking to the interpreters on an adult level."

In the cold winter months,

participants take refuge in the Conservatory, getting exercise at a comfortable temperature while still seeing lush greenery and plants from all over the world. There is a place for

guests to hang up their jackets.

When the weather warms up, and the snow and ice melt away, early entry will shift from the Conservatory to the zoo grounds. Those who participate will get to experience the zoo waking up as they leisurely stroll around the outdoor spaces.

## Guided learning

Volunteer interpreters answer questions and share fun facts with visitors as they stroll through the grounds that are calmer in the mornings before Como officially opens.

Interpreters stationed inside the Conservatory share information and answer questions about the specific gardens. "They will be able to help guide your learning as you stroll," observed Reinartz.

Como volunteer services department members at one station field questions about how people can get involved and volunteer their time at Como for those who are interested.

Right now the program is geared towards individual learning, but as it evolves organizers may include more structured learning opportunities, according to Reinartz.

Como also offers adult classes that provide more in-depth knowledge about plants, animals, and conservation. Browse the education section of at [www.comozooconservatory.org](http://www.comozooconservatory.org) or the Facebook page under events. Upcoming morning programs for adults include Orchid Odyssey on Apr. 21, Primate Enrichment on June 16, Japanese Gardens on Aug. 25, and Big Cat Enrichment on Oct. 21.



Interpreters stationed inside the Conservatory share information and answer questions about the specific gardens. (Photo submitted)

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Sunday 9:00am - 1:00pm

# Minnesota Governor's Candidate Forum on the New Environment

Article and photos by MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

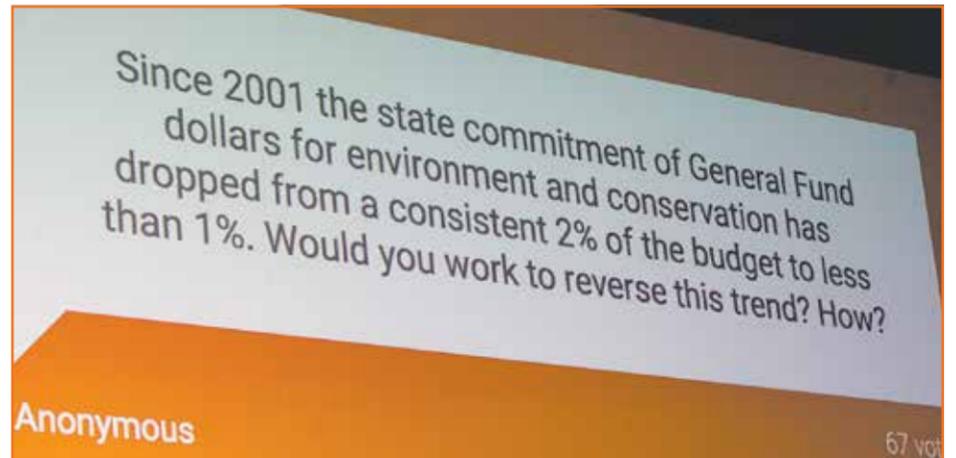
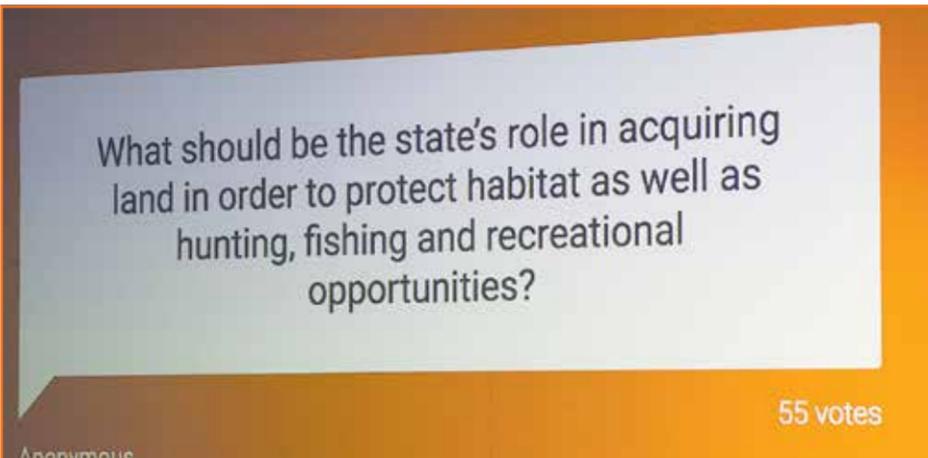
The Minnesota Governor's Candidate Forum on the New Environment was held Jan. 24, at Hamline University's Anne Simley Theatre. The six leading Democratic candidates for governor took the stage on a Wednesday evening in a forum hosted by 25 of the state's leading environmental

and conservation groups.

Regarding the absence of GOP candidates, Sarah Wolff, advocacy director for Minnesota Environmental Partnership, said, "We were very disappointed. We invited the six GOP candidates who had shown the most traction in their candidacies; three declined outright, and three



Participating in the forum were (left to right): former St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, State Representative Tina Liebling, State Representative Erin Murphy, State Auditor Rebecca Otto, State Representative Paul Thissen and U.S. Congressman Tim Walz.



Erin Murphy is a registered nurse and six-term legislator who works at the intersection of healthcare and politics. She said, "I became a nurse because I care about people. I went into politics for the same reason." Of the PolyMet Copper Nickel Mine proposed for Northern Minnesota, she said, "When we're pitting jobs against water—water should win."



Chris Coleman (left), three-term mayor of St. Paul said, "During my tenure in City Hall, we made environmental issues and sustainability top priorities. We have an environmental quality here in Minnesota that most states envy. We will have to fight like mad to keep it that way."

Tina Liebling (right) is a seven-term legislator from the Rochester area. She describes herself as a bold progressive, and the first DFL candidate ever elected from Olmstead County. She supports returning the percent of the state's general fund dedicated to environmental issues to 2%, or more if that's what it takes, to address the issues adequately. The dollar amount has slipped below 1% in recent years.

# ent held at Hamline University Anne Simley Theatre

did not respond.”

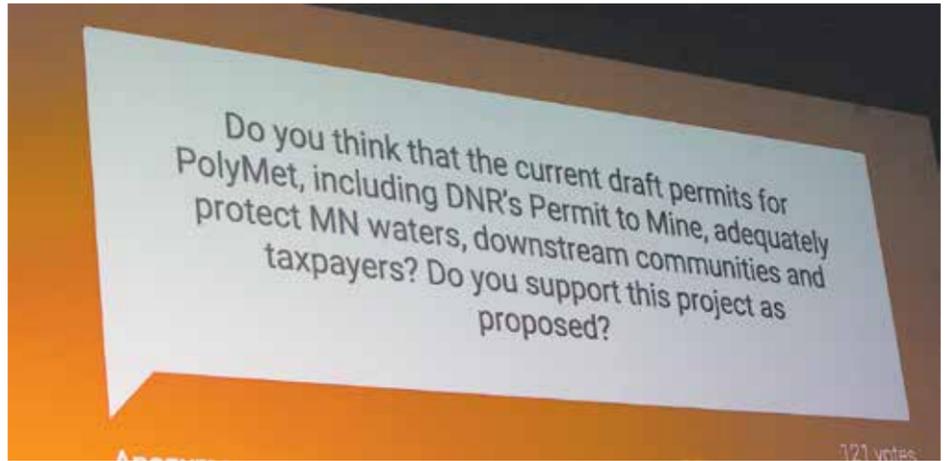
“The forum was called ‘Our New Environment’ for several reasons,” Wolff said. “The seriousness of environmental and conservation issues is increasing in our state. We have two high impact projects being considered right now: the Line 3 Pipeline and the PolyMet Mine. And, of course,

things have changed dramatically on the national front with the Trump administration’s actions.”

The public was asked to submit questions in five categories, or vote for their favorite question already posted online. The categories of questioning include air and climate, land, water, legacy and funding, and cross-cutting issues.



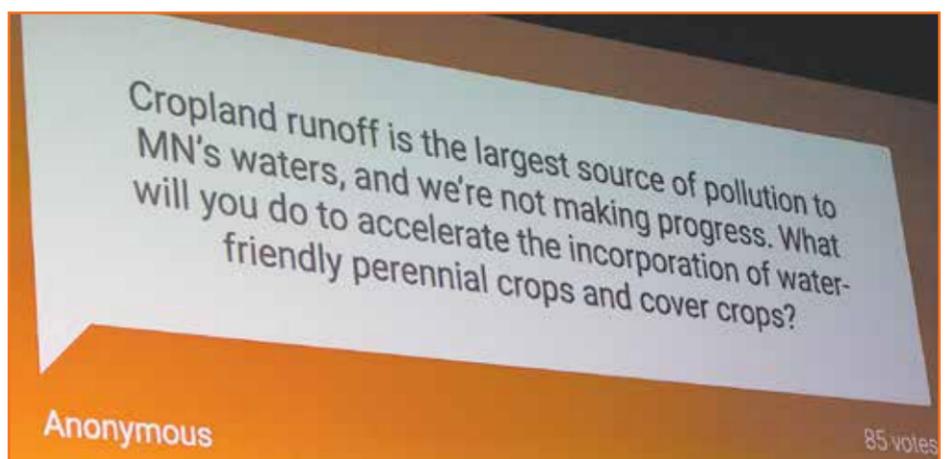
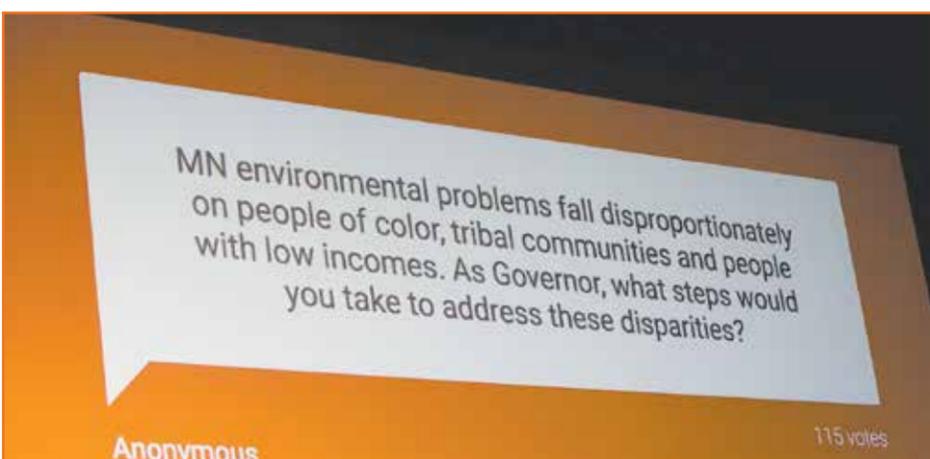
Photo left: The forum was co-moderated by Elizabeth Dunbar, who covers the environment for Minnesota Public Radio, and Dave Orrick, who reports on state government and politics for the Pioneer Press. More than 200 people heard the forum live, and it was streamed online to eight public satellite locations throughout the state.



Three-term State Auditor Rebecca Otto (left) exemplifies her commitment to the environment by having built her own energy efficient, solar-powered home, and driving an electric vehicle. Her Minnesota-Powered Plan proposes to create between 70,000 and 250,000 high-paying permanent clean energy jobs throughout Minnesota, revitalizing our economy without raising taxes.

Legislator Paul Thissen (center), a former speaker of the Minnesota House, said, “From my perspective, the two greatest issues we face today are climate change and Minnesota’s standing as the state with the second worst racial disparities in the country. I believe these two things are closely related.”

U.S. Congressman Tim Walz (right) has also been an award-winning social studies teacher and national guardsman—the most highly decorated soldier in the US Congress. He has served in Congress since 2006. Of the Enbridge Energy Line 3 Pipeline (proposed to carry 760,000 barrels of Canadian tar sands oil/day across Minnesota), he said, “I oppose this project because climate change is an emergency. The Line 3 technology is outdated, and delays the inevitable.”



# Despite glitches, La Familia Tapatia restaurant is an instant hit

By STEPHANIE FOX

It's just past noon when customers begin to line up at the counter at La Familia Tapatia, a new take-out Mexican restaurant at 1237 Larpenteur Ave. Opened the week after Thanksgiving, the place is already popular even though, in early February, there is still no signage of any kind on the nondescript building. A sign with the restaurant's name was to be installed at the end of January, but it arrived with a typo and had to be sent back.

Abe Ponce-Delgado, the manager and eldest son in this family-run business, said he is expecting a banner installed over the front door, very soon. "When we get signs," he said, "we'll be flooded."

The Ponce family had been running a taco truck, also La Familia Tapatia, for four years, setting up at the Sun Ray Shopping Center and at breweries. It had a loyal following, mostly from the Mexican community.

He said that the family was expecting a slow start at the brick-and-mortar restaurant when they first opened, thinking they'd have a few curious people wandering in at lunch and dinner. But, the word had already spread on social networks, especially the local Nextdoor pages, and they found themselves facing crowds of hungry fans from the first day.

"We got sold out of some things, and there was a line out the door. That's when we decided that we were going to put our main energy into the store and not just the food truck," said Abe.

They found themselves shorthanded, as well. "We called up friends and family who had any experience in restaurants and asked them if they wanted some part-time work," he said.

The head chef is Abe's mother Martha Ponce, who said she always had a passion for food. "I love to eat and love trying new foods," she said, and she fussed over preparing the lengua and tripa (cow tongue and tripe) for the next day's menu.

Martha, her brother and her husband (now her ex), were using Martha's recipes, inspired by the traditional foods from the Guadalajara region of Mexico. But, sometimes in business and with families, things don't always go smoothly. The food truck, said Abe, was "stolen."

"The thief wasn't a criminal, but my mom's ex-husband and brother," Abe said. The truck's title was in the brother's name.

"Technically, he owns it," he said. "We didn't have anything between us in writing. It was a word-of-honor thing. He has leverage on it. We don't even know where it is. It's frustrating."

"The truck was an old 1977 Wanabox food truck, in rough shape, but we needed it. It was our main income source. With it gone, we needed another truck, and it's hard in this economy to find money for small startups," he said.

But, they were lucky, finding an angel investor in Craig Ramsey, Abe's fiancé's business partner, who lent them money to purchase a new truck.

The family also decided that they needed a full kitchen to prepare the more complicated



Inside La Familia Tapatia, 1237 Larpenteur Ave. (Photo by Stephanie Fox)

dishes they'd sell out of the new truck. They started thinking of a brick and mortar solution.

The meats like the tongue and tripe need to boil for five or six hours before they are ready to chop, spice, cook, and stuff into tacos, burritos, and quesadillas that customers will be ordering, Martha explained.

"The intestines," she said, "need to be cleaned and cooked, and although I order 30 lb. of the meat, I end up with eight after cleaning and cooking," she said. "The tongue needs to boil for four hours then cooked and peeled and chopped."

She says she was surprised at the popularity of some of the more unusual meats among her non-Latin American patrons. "People are very open to ordering exotic meats," she said. "It's not just the Mexicans who are ordering these. They're popular enough that sometimes we run out."

Abe said that they looked at some locations but stumbled upon an ad on a business site saying, 'Kitchen for sale.' The space, on Larpenteur Ave., was perfect.

"Currently, both the kitchen and the food truck aid each other. The kitchen depends on the food truck, and the food truck depends on the kitchen, to repay the loan and pay the bills," he said.

Customer Forrest Kelley came to pick up lunch, the second visit for him. Like many in the area, he originally heard about it on the social media platform, Nextdoor. Kelley lives and works in the neighborhood, he said, and today, he's brought along a couple of co-workers who are eager to try some of the shop's specialties. Kelley, who ordered a variety of tacos, is already a fan. "The food is great," he said.

"They use quality ingredients," he said. "And they have this really good sauce used on the tortillas. It's not spicy. It's kind of smoky and rich. It's hard to describe, but I almost want to drink it."

Adam hopes that La Familia Tapatia faces a bright future. Right now, they'll have to jump through some legal hoops and city regulations before they know how much seating they can add. He also sees a possible expansion in the future. He said he wants the restaurant to have a casual atmosphere, almost like ordering from a food truck. "Except, it's inside," he said looking out the shop's windows on a new coating of snow.

Right now, the restaurant is strictly take-out, although there is some seating for those who are waiting for their orders.

"We'd like to add a couple of bistro tables and chairs outside when spring comes around. We also would like to open earlier,

offering a Mexican breakfast—scones, conchas, orejas (Mexican puff pastries), hot and iced coffee, and blended drinks.

For now, however, he said, the family will concentrate on serving homemade and honest food, the best Mexican food in the East Metro. And, he hopes, the banner will be up soon.

"I'm grateful that everyone

has been so supportive and patient with the transition from a food truck to a day-to-day brick and mortar. It's a different set of challenges, but I believe we've got a great team behind me and my mom," he said.

La Familia Tapatia, located at 1237 Larpenteur Ave. W. If the signs are not up, look for Gold Eagle Cleaners...it's next door.



Erensto Ponce cooks for the lunch crowd. (Photo by Stephanie Fox)



Customers line up for Mexican take-out. (Photo by Stephanie Fox)

# In Our Community

## Monitor

Send us your news! When you submit your press release it will be considered for the next print edition of the Monitor. You can also go to our website, [MonitorSaintPaul.com](http://MonitorSaintPaul.com) and enter your information in the online Event Calendar.

### Historic survey meeting Feb. 19

RESCHEDULED due to the snow-storm. A historic survey of properties in the Hamline Midway neighborhood is in process. Learn more about what's happening, why you should expect to see consultants walking the neighborhood taking photos, and how you might be able to contribute historical information. The meeting is scheduled for Mon., Feb. 19, 7:30-8:30pm, at Hamline University's East Hall in Room 106 (1492 Hewitt Ave.). Contact [ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us) or 651-266-8640 with questions.

### Openings now for toddler program

Central Lutheran School has immediate openings in its new toddler program for children age 16-33 months. The pre-K-8 school at 775 N. Lexington Pkwy. offers the program for parents who want to go back to work or for other family situations. More information is at [www.clssp.org](http://www.clssp.org). Or you can email [school@clssp.org](mailto:school@clssp.org) or call 651-645-8649.

### New Bible study at Jehovah Lutheran

A women's Bible study on the Gospel of Mark meets at 6:30pm alternate Wednesdays in the lounge at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Ave.

The basis for the sessions will be "The Gospel of Mark: The Jesus We're Aching For" by author Lisa Harper.

Meetings are set Feb. 21, Mar. 7 and 21, and Apr. 4 and 18. For more information, call Jeanne Watson at 651-645-2867.

Sessions are free. Refreshments are provided. All are welcome. On Feb. 21, a free soup supper at 5:30pm is available before the Bible study.

### Another fatality on the Green Line route

A pedestrian was killed Sun., Jan. 28 when she was struck by a Green Line train near the intersection of University and Pascal avenues, Metro Transit officials said.

The victim was 60-year-old Kim R. Heuer from Minneapolis.

The eastbound train hit the woman, who was standing between the west and eastbound tracks about 3:15pm. Officials do not know why she was in that spot. She died at the scene.

"It's a situation that obviously nobody ever wants to see happen," said Howie Padilla, Metro Transit spokesman. "It's a grim reminder that those warning devices and signs are there for everybody's safety."

Rail service stopped between Fairview and Western avenues after the accident, and buses were brought in to replace the trains. Train service resumed about 5pm.

Officials are investigating the cause, Padilla said.

The last fatal Green Line crash in St. Paul occurred July 19, 2017, when a train hit the car of Nicholas Redlin Westlake, 29, at the intersection of University Ave. and Eustis St. Another pedestrian was critically injured on Christmas evening at the corner of University and Prior avenues.

### La Leche League meets Feb. 13

The next meeting of the La Leche League of St. Paul Como-Midway will be held on Tues., Feb. 13, from 7-8:45pm. The discussion will focus on breastfeeding-related issues. Please contact Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more details. The March meeting will be held Tue., Mar. 13, at the same time.

### Register now for spring tennis

Tennis anyone?

Online registration is now open for spring tennis lessons for youth and adults offered by St. Paul Urban Tennis (SPUT) starting in mid-April. Programs for youth are offered at Central High School, North Dale and Eastview Recreation Centers. Adult programs are offered at Edgcombe Park and Central High School.

Spring lesson programs are once per week for six weeks. Youth programs are \$60 (financial assistance is available). Adult programs are \$75. To learn more or to register, go to [www.urban-tennis.org](http://www.urban-tennis.org).

Online registration for SPUT's six-week youth summer program will open Mar. 1. Classes will run June 18-July 26, Mon. through Thurs. each week, at sites throughout St. Paul.

For more information on getting yourself or your kids involved in tennis in St. Paul, visit [www.urbantennis.org](http://www.urbantennis.org) or call the SPUT office at 651-222-2879.

### Clothing giveaway scheduled Feb. 17

A clothing giveaway is scheduled from 12-3pm on Sat., Feb. 17, at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Ave. The church has been gathering items for refugees and others. If you have good used clothing or household items to donate, bring it to the church before or after worship at 10:15am on Sundays, or call the church 651-644-1421 to arrange another time. The drop site is indoors to the left at the Thomas Ave. entrance.

### Elders plan ongoing monthly events

A Knitting Group meets Mondays, 1-3pm at Hamline Church United Methodist, 1514 Englewood Ave. Hamline Midway Elders provides the yarn and needles along with some light snacks. The participants work on projects, such as making shawls to be donated to a local hospice or blankets for a child care center. But it has also become a nice social gathering for a group of 10-12 elders. New participants are always welcome.

The Reading Buddy program takes place on the first and third Wednesdays, 10:45-11:30am at Hamline Elementary School. The Elders' partnership with Hamline Elementary School and the Reading Buddy Program continues twice a month during the school year. The third-grade students enjoy reading to neighborhood elders, and the older adults love the interaction with the children. No experience is needed; they're just looking for older adults with a desire to interact with third-grade students.

On Wed., Feb. 28, 1-3pm, Jody's Documentary Film Series will feature "What I Want My Words To Do To You." This award-winning documentary goes inside a women's writing workshop at a prison—see and hear how they got there and why. No registration is necessary for this last Wednesday of the month film series. Enjoy the free film and snacks and stay for the post-film discussion facilitated by Jody.

Tai Chi Classes begin Mondays starting March 5 from 11:30am-12:30pm at Hamline United Methodist. Kathy Carlson leads this new eight week series. Tai Chi is a gentle exercise that increases flexibility and strength; improves balance; and reduces the pain and stiffness of arthritis.

A new series of exercise classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays will start Mar. 13, 1:30-2:30pm at Hamline Church. Joni O'Connell utilizes her Irish sense of humor to create a welcoming and motivating atmosphere to lead another 8-week gentle exercise series.

New participants are always welcome at any of the above activities. For more information on any of the above events, please contact Tom Fitzpatrick at Hamline Midway Elders at 651-209-6542 or [tom@hmelders.org](mailto:tom@hmelders.org).

### Free community playtime slated

Hamline Church United Methodist, 1514 Englewood Ave., hosts regular community playtimes for free play.

Toddler Tuesdays are 9:30-11am on the first and third Tuesdays of the month, through March. Enter through the alley

### Nguyen Moore to run for Commissioner

Jennifer Nguyen Moore has announced her campaign for Ramsey County Board, District 3. She said that as a Commissioner, she would lead through transparency, community engagement, relationship-building, and amplifying voices of constituents.

"As a woman of color and the daughter of Vietnamese refugees, I am running for Ramsey County Board to ensure that our community thrives, and not just survives. I am passionate about building healthy communities and equitable systems that benefit all residents in District 3 while breaking down barriers and being honest about the disparities and cycle of poverty that are real for many of our residents."

Jennifer is a life-long St. Paul resident, growing up on University Avenue and now living in the North End with her husband and 1-year-old daughter.

Nguyen Moore has spent her career advocating for racial equity and environmental jus-



Jennifer Nguyen Moore (Photo submitted)

ice, through work at public and nonprofit agencies. Additionally, she serves as a Ramsey County election judge and on two advisory boards for the state: the Environmental Justice Advisory Group with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Health Equity Advisory Leadership Council with the Minnesota Department of Health. She earned a Bachelors of Science in Environmental Policy and Social Justice at the University of Minnesota.

Ramsey County District 3 includes Falcon Heights and St. Paul neighborhoods of Como, Frogtown, Hamline-Midway, North End and Payne-Phalen.

door and come down to the Fireside Community Room for free play with your child or children. Refreshments and coffee are served.

Please check neighborhood groups on Facebook or on the church calendar before heading over, at [www.hamlinechurch.org](http://www.hamlinechurch.org), as they do occasionally cancel if another event needs the space.

Questions? Email [hamline-women@gmail.com](mailto:hamline-women@gmail.com).

### Emotions Anonymous meets Wednesdays

Do you often feel nervous, anxious, lonely, or fearful? Do you suffer from mood swings? Are you suffering from depression, panic attacks or crying spells? You can find help in a 12-Step Group called Emotions Anonymous (EA).

At EA meetings, they read EA literature and share how they are coping with emotional problems and how applying the 12 Steps of EA helps them find mental health.

The meetings are open to anyone who is seeking to achieve and maintain emotional balance. EA is not a religious group, and they welcome people of any religious affiliation or no religious affiliation. There is no cost to attend meetings. Only first names are used, and everything said at a meeting is confidential. EA meets each Wednesday, 7pm, at the Hamline United Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Ave. Use the rear entrance and ring the bell to gain admittance. The meeting is upstairs in Room 7.

### Bingo played every Thursday at Can Can

It's cold outside, and we love games! What better game than Bingo! Come in from the cold, enjoy some delicious pizza and drinks, and play bingo every Thursday night, 6-8pm at Can Can Wonderland, 755 Prior Ave. N., Ste 004. Bingo is \$1 per sheet per game and \$2 for the cover-all game. (\*Per MN law, you must be 18+ to play bingo.)

Bingo is hosted by and benefits Destination Education a Scholarship Foundation, an organization who strives to enhance and enrich the lives of youth in our community. Destination Education is committed to providing financial support to youth through scholarships and projects in the St Paul area.

Please check the website, [www.cancanwonderland.com](http://www.cancanwonderland.com), for the most up-to-date information!

### 'I Heart Hamline' scheduled Feb. 14

"I Heart Hamline" day is planned for Wed., Feb. 14, 9-11:30am, at Hamline Elementary School, 1599 Englewood Ave. It's like a regular Hamline Welcoming Day (tours, conversations with current families), with more treats, more activities, more time to hang out. No appointment is necessary; just drop in! Children are always welcome. School tours can be arranged for any time school is in session by calling 651-293-8715.

Continued on page 12

## In Our Community

Continued from page 11

### Packing toiletries for the homeless

Volunteers will sort and pack toiletries for the homeless and others at 5pm, Wed., Feb. 21, at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas in St. Paul.

HealthEast Care System's Caring Hearts program will deliver items to the homeless, and some items will be packed into "sock kits" for CrossingHOME, a ministry to recently released prisoners that maintains an office at the church.

Thrivent Financial has provided a grant to support this project. T-shirts are available for participants. Packing volunteers are also invited to a free soup supper at 5:30pm.

Meanwhile, the gathering of toiletries continues. Suggested items include toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, deodorant, combs, shampoos, lotion and children's vitamins; and small first-aid kits.

Leave donated items at the church before or after worship at 10:15am Sundays, or call the church at 651-644-1421 to set up another time.

### Music Under Glass last two concerts

"Music Under Glass" continues this month at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, 1225 Estabrook Dr. The Music Under Glass series allows everyone to escape the winter blahs inside the comfy confines of the Conservatory.

The concerts are held on select Sundays from 4:30-6:30pm inside the Conservatory. Beer, wine, pop, and light snacks will be available to purchase. There will be no concert on Jan. 28 or on Feb. 4.

On Feb. 11 Dusty Heart will define their lush sound with rich vocal harmonies merged with intimate layers of guitar, fiddle, and banjo.

FLOWTUS, who draws their influences from a plethora of genres that range from blues, country, punk, and folk will perform on Feb. 18.

### Grant given for dance residency

Alternative Motion Project received a \$10,000 Minnesota Regional Art Council grant to fund an eight-day dance education residency at Como Park Elementary School in January/February of 2018. Students will also attend a performance by Alternative Motion Project at The Lab Theater in Minneapolis in March 2018. The grants are part of the 2018 Arts Learning grant program.

An Arts Learning project is chosen to provide high-quality, age-appropriate arts education for Minnesotans to develop knowledge, skills, and understanding through the arts for children, youth, and adults.

### County schedules 2018 road work

On Jan. 23, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners approved more than 20 proposed construction and maintenance projects for

the upcoming 2018 season.

A project listing and details may be found at [www.ramsey-county.us/roadwork](http://www.ramsey-county.us/roadwork). Most projects will begin in the summer. Updates will be provided online and via an interactive map as construction season progresses—including detours and timelines. Subscriptions for email updates on projects are also available online.

Monitor area projects include:

- Resurfacing Lexington Pkwy. between James and University avenues in St. Paul and between E. Como Blvd. and Hwy. 36 in St. Paul and Roseville.
- Resurfacing of Como Ave. from Hamline to Lexington Pkwy.
- Sidewalk construction along Energy Park Dr. between Snelling and Lexington avenues.
- Sidewalk construction on Larpenteur Ave. between Galtier and Rice streets.
- Signal reconstruction on Lexington Pkwy. between Concordia and St. Anthony avenues.

### Wednesday soup suppers resume

Jehovah Lutheran Church resumes its Wednesday night soup suppers from 5:30-6:30pm beginning Feb. 21 and continuing through Mar. 21. Suppers are free and open to all. A free-will offering is welcome.

Information is available by calling the church at 651-644-1421. The church entry, which is handicapped accessible, is at 1566 Thomas Ave.

### Irish Gaela planned as fundraiser

The Center for Irish Music (836 Prior Ave.) and emcee Máirtín de Cógáin invite you to dress up in your finest, bring your friends, and join them for Éigse CIM, A Gaela Event, an evening in support of traditional Irish music on Sat., Feb. 24, 5-10pm.

Éigse [eg-shuh] is an Irish word used for festivals celebrating traditional Irish arts and culture. It is in this spirit that they gather for an evening to raise funds for The Center for Irish Music, Minnesota's only traditional Irish music school, dedicated to handing down the tradition.

The semi-formal evening event, emceed by award-winning Irish-born actor and storyteller de Cógáin, includes a traditional Irish dinner, a Celtic art-themed silent auction, raffle, and concert by the stellar traditional Irish music of the CIM Instructors who boast recording, award-winning, and world touring artists among their number. CIM instructors performing include Hamline-Midway residents Norah Rendell, Brian Miller, and Sean Egan.

Cost for the Gaela is \$75 for the dinner, reception, and concert; or \$25 (advance) for the reception and concert alone. Go to [www.centerforirishmusic.org/gaela](http://www.centerforirishmusic.org/gaela) or call 651-815-0083 for further registration information.

### Local resident in lead dance role

Como resident Sadie Woolman-Schlukebiehler has a lead role as Bess in the upcoming *Out on a Limb* production of "Once Upon a Dream."

The dance performance is

scheduled for Fri., Feb. 23, 7pm and Sat., Feb. 24, 2pm, at The O'Shaughnessy at St. Catherine University. Tickets are available at \$25 for adults \$20 for students and children and are available online at [www.oshag.stkate.edu](http://www.oshag.stkate.edu), by phone at 651-690-6700, and in-person at The O'Shaughnessy Ticket Office. Tickets also available at the door the day of the show.

The innovative 17-year-old *Out on a Limb* Dance Company and School (OOAL) will present this annual dance theater production with a cast of more than 80 dance-actors from across the metro area.

"Once Upon a Dream follows a distinctly different creative path from our former shows," notes Kim Martinez, OOAL Artistic Director, who co-founded the company and the school with Marcey Bolter Mastbaum in 2001. "In our past productions of shows like *Aladdin*, we have always relied on a safety net by basing productions off of well known iconic characters that provide an instant storyline and audience recognition."

### Hill named as Farm's Interim Director

Frogtown Farm has begun their search for a permanent Executive Director. During this transition period, they appointed Glen Hill as their Interim Executive Director.

Previously, Hill worked twelve years as Country Director for a Swiss Foundation and seven years as executive director at Minnesota Food Association. He also led Urban Roots as interim co-director during their successful transition to a new executive director and most recently worked as Development Director at Carpenter Nature Center. He also consults organizations, primarily newer nonprofits, in developing their philanthropic plans and strategies.

His years of nonprofit experience will guide Frogtown Farm and maintain our operations during our search for new leadership. If you would like to contact Hill, you may email him at [interimdirector@frogtownfarm.org](mailto:interimdirector@frogtownfarm.org).

### Events at Merriam Park Library

The Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave, is planning several events in the coming weeks.

A special "Behind the Curtain with Park Square Theatre" is planned for Tues., Feb. 20, 7-8pm. Join Park Square Theatre for an evening with cast members from the upcoming production of "The Pirates of Penzance." In this fresh twist on the classic comic opera, Gilbert and Sullivan are on a steamer bound for the New York opening of their new hit – a roaring farce of sentimental pirates, bumbling policemen, and hopeful young lovers. Unfortunately, they've left the score in London! They scramble to recreate the show with only the clothes in their trunks and shipmates for a cast.

Family Storytimes are planned on Fridays, 10:30-11am. Spend time sharing stories, songs, and rhymes with your child while building a foundation for reading success. Preschoolers, toddlers, and babies

are welcome!

"You Can Build IT!" is scheduled for Fridays, 3-4:30pm. Drop-in and build with a kit. Shadow puppets, Legos, PVC pipes or a surprise! For youth 6-11. Ages 8 and under need a grown-up to help.

Open Lab for Writers meets every Thursday, 10:30am-noon. There is no instructor. This is an opportunity to meet, discuss, or work on whatever you're writing. All styles welcome!

Tablet/Smartphone Help Clinics are scheduled for Thursdays and Saturdays, 11:30am-12:30pm. Help Clinics are for all tablets and smartphones. Bring your questions, problems, and concerns. If we can't answer the question, we'll find resources or organizations that can! No registration required.

Merriam Park Book Club meets Mon., Feb. 26, 6:30-7:30pm. The book this month is "End of Your Life" by Will Schwalbe.

### Beginning drum class offered Feb. 20

Women's Drum Center, 2242 University Ave., will offer a class in hand drums for beginners on Tues., Feb. 20, 5:30-6:30pm. The cost is \$10. Drums are provided. Visit [womensdrumcenter.org](http://womensdrumcenter.org) for more information.

### Food and Wine concert set Feb. 11

The Musical Offering presents its annual food and wine concert, Tastes of Home, on Sun., Feb. 11 at 3pm. The Musical Offering's 47th season, From the Heart of Europe, tours Central Europe through its music. Tastes of Home features chamber works by Polish, Czech, and German composers paired with the cuisines of their homelands. Tickets for Tastes of Home are \$60 (all-inclusive) and are available at [MusicalOffering.org](http://MusicalOffering.org) or by calling 651-523-2459.

The afternoon's program opens with Chopin's Polonaise for Cello and Piano followed by Erwin Schulhoff's Divertissement for Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon. The concert concludes with Louis Spohr's Nonet, a gorgeous and virtuosic piece on the cusp of German Classical and Romantic styles, featuring our wind and string players in equal measure. Before the performance, during intermission, and after, concert-goers can enjoy Polish, Czech, and German food and wine to complement the music.

All concerts of The Musical Offering's season take place in Sundin Music Hall on the campus of Hamline University.

### Spend your Friday nights at Can Can

Friday nights are full of action at Can Can Wonderland, 755 Prior Ave. N., Ste #004.

Tappy Hour: Group Tap Dance Lessons start out the Friday night from 4-6pm. Join tap dance instructor Ellen Keane of Keane Sense of Rhythm for group lessons in tap dancing. They even have shoes for you!

Karaoke for all ages hits the stage from 5:30-8:30pm. Karaoke has become a community tradi-

tion at Can Can. Come sing your heart out, enjoy the participatory sing-a-longs and spontaneous dance parties, cheer on other singers, and have a fantastic time. Have dinner, sign up for a song, and have a blast! Karaoke is hosted by the always amazing Silly Miss Tilly.

From 7-8:30pm, Jesters Comedy Improv brings their five-star performances to the stage at Can Can Wonderland! Since 2011, the comedians of Jesters Comedy Improv have been performing weekly improvisational, game-style comedy in Roseville, delivering 90 minutes of laughter to sold-out audiences every weekend. And now, they are at Can Can. Their fast-paced show delivers original jokes, never-before-heard songs, and completely-improvised comedic scenes based on audience suggestions and volunteers! [Almost] nothing is off-limits [within reason, people!] for this hilarious troupe, who will do just-about-anything for a laugh as they make up everything on the spot and compete for the coveted Jesters Championship Title. See the show. Be a part of the show!

The Retro Game Show takes the stage Fridays from 9-10:30pm. The Retro features local comedy celebrities! Ever wanted to play Let's Make a Deal, Match Game, Family Feud, or the Price is Right? Maybe you never wanted to play but wish you could have been in the audience. Retro Game Night will bring you all of your favorite game shows and a chance to compete for fabulous prizes. Or you can just watch.

Please check the website, [www.cancanwonderland.com](http://www.cancanwonderland.com), for the most up-to-date information.

### Free income tax filing help available

With tax season right around the corner, the non-profit Prepare + Prosper (P+P) encourages low- and moderate-income individuals and families to save money this tax season by filing their taxes for free to get their maximum refund. Individuals with an annual income \$35,000 or less and families and self-employed taxpayers with an annual income \$55,000 or less in 2017 are eligible to file their taxes for free through P+P. Their main office is located at 2610 University Ave. W and is open by appointment only. They also have other locations and multiple walk-in sites outside the Monitor delivery area. For a complete list of times or to make an appointment, go to [www.prepareandprosper.org](http://www.prepareandprosper.org) or call 651-287-0187.

From now until April 14, P+P's IRS-certified volunteers work one-on-one with taxpayers to help them claim all the credits they've earned. The nonprofit also provides financial services to help people save some of their refund, get connected to financial coaching, and answer money-related questions. In 2017, 534 P+P volunteers prepared taxes for 12,609 taxpayers who received more than \$24.7 million in refunds and.

Like last year, federal tax refunds will take longer for those receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC) due to a law passed in 2016, the PATH Act. In mid-February, the

Continued on page 13

## In Our Community

Continued from page 12

IRS will begin processing refunds that include the EITC and ACTC. Additionally, tax reform passed at the end of 2017 will not affect 2017 or previous year taxes filed this season.

## Neighbor Day planned for Mar. 23

Mark your calendars now for the 4th annual Neighbor Day event at Rondo Education Center (560 Concordia Ave.) on Fri., Mar. 23, 4-7pm. Celebrate the legacy of Fred Rogers by joining your city-wide neighbors for an evening of fun. There will be hands-on activities, youth performances, a community meal, the Metro State Dome (an inflatable planetarium), a bouncy house, inflatable obstacle course and more!

This free event is hosted by the St. Paul Public Schools' Community Education department. Their daily programs include Adult Basic Education, Adult Enrichment, Discovery Club, Early Child and Family Education, Flipside After School, Youth Enrichment and the Como Planetarium.

Neighbor Day is open to the public and all are welcome.

Please RSVP at <https://neighborday2018.eventbrite.com> so we know how many to expect. Walk-ins will also be welcome.

## State Fair to spend \$11.1 mil in 2018

The Minnesota State Fairgrounds will get \$11.1 million in improvements before the 2018 Great Minnesota Get-Together. In January the State Fair's board of managers approved \$7.2 million in capital work and \$3.8 million in maintenance projects for the coming year.

Included is the construction of a new restroom and a new pet exhibition and demonstration area on the north end of the grounds, significant improvements to the livestock complex including upgraded ventilation to the Sheep & Poultry Barn, scores of miscellaneous upkeep projects across the fairgrounds and more than \$3 million in

# CRWD to put \$7.2mil into Midway building

The Midway neighborhood will soon be a focal point for sustainable design, development, and education once Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) moves into its new headquarters at 595 Aldine St.

Construction on the \$7.2 million facility is scheduled to start in March, with a move-in date set for fall 2018. MSR Design is the architecture firm, and JE Dunn has been selected as the construction manager for the project.

The renewed building will utilize green building principles including stormwater management practices and energy efficiency measures to conserve natural resources, create a healthy workplace and protect the Mississippi River. Gathering spaces will also be available for community and partner organizations to use.

Plus, CRWD will create a community watershed learning center and will offer on-site educational opportunities to showcase its work to protect, manage



A rendering of the \$7.2 million facility, designed by MSR Design, that is to be housed at 595 Aldine St. It is being built by the Capitol Region Watershed District. (Rendering provided)

and improve water resources including Como Lake, Crosby Lake, Loeb Lake, Lake McCarrons and the Mississippi River. One of the community highlights will be a pocket park, combining the natural and built environments with interactive elements to draw in neighbors and visitors.

"CRWD is adopting the City

of St. Paul's Sustainable Building Policy, and the result will be a stunning remodeled building that will meet standards of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)," says Mark Doneux, administrator of CRWD. "Our new offices will provide a flexible workplace to accommodate our organization's growth

without the need to acquire additional building space. Plus, the uniquely designed workplace will provide all the space, equipment and support systems in one location that CRWD staff members need to excel at their jobs."

Since its inception in 1998, CRWD has leased office space in St. Paul.

improvements to the State Fair's utilities and transportation infrastructure. All projects are funded through State Fair operating revenue and grants from the Minnesota State Fair Foundation. The fair is financially self-supporting and receives no government aid of any kind.

Additionally, for 2018, the oldest attraction at the Minnesota State Fair, Ye Old Mill, has been sold to the fair, which will now operate the ride. "For 102 years and five generations, our family has owned and operated Ye Old Mill," John H. Keenan, Sr. said. "It has been an incredible experience sharing this tradition at the Great Minnesota Get-Together. We are so pleased the State Fair will continue this tradition for future generations."

## Peonies to cure your winter blues Feb. 11

The Bungalow Club will sponsor "Peonies—A Flower With History," on Sun., Feb. 11, 1:30-4pm, at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 1895 Laurel Ave. There will be a

refreshment break at 2:30. The event is free for Bungalow Club member and \$3 for non-members.

Nothing says springtime like blossoming peonies! The big, pastel flowers grow on large bushes and give off a cool floral scent. Peonies have a long history in Minnesota, starting with pioneers who brought the plants with them when they settled here. This presentation will focus on Minnesota's peony history with an emphasis on historic and heirloom peonies in the Arts and Crafts era.

The first presentation (1:30-2:30pm), "Minnesota's Grand Peony History," will introduce you to Minnesota's leadership in the peony world, including internationally known peony breeders and leaders of the American Peony Society. You will see original archive materials from the Brand Peony Farm, the first nursery in Minnesota, as well as from other world-renowned peony hybridizers such as Bob Tischler and the nurseries of Franklin, Lins, and Pfeiffer. Over 100 images will bring these long-lived and

historical flowers to life.

The second presentation, (3-4pm) "Historic and Heirloom Peonies from 1910-1928," covers an era of rapid advancement in the development of the peony in America—when the center of the peony world shifted from Europe to the U.S. Most peonies you'll see during the presentation are close to 100 years old. You might just recognize a "lost name" peony that has been handed down in your family.

The speaker is Harvey Buchite, who, along with wife Brigitte, owns the Hidden Springs Flower Farm in Spring Grove, MN. Buchite's interests include peonies, of which they grow over 600 varieties; alpine plants; day-lilies; hostas; and more. He has a horticulture degree from the University of Minnesota and is a popular speaker and garden writer. He is past president and board member of the American Peony Society and an active member of many local and national groups.

This colorful and informative presentation is sure to cure your cabin fever!

For more information on

the Bungalow Club call 612-724-5816, email [mail@bungalowclub.net](mailto:mail@bungalowclub.net) or go online at [www.bungalowclub.org](http://www.bungalowclub.org).

## NAMI holds partner support group

NAMI Minnesota (National Alliance on Mental Illness) sponsors a support group specifically for partners or spouses of someone who lives with a mental illness. The Partners and Spouses support group meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm, at Falcon Heights United Church of Christ, 1795 Holton St. (Holton and Garden). For more information, call Melissa at 651-354-0825 or Sara at 763-350-6502.

**NOTE: To have your community announcement or event considered for February Monitor listing, please submit your item before Feb. 26 for the Mar. 8 edition. Submit via email to [editorial@deruyter-nelson.com](mailto:editorial@deruyter-nelson.com).**

## Gordon Parks High School

Continued from page 1

dards requirements in many ways—from studying documentary film and nonfiction writing with the English department, to hands-on applied experiences in algebra and chemistry and community-based art, social studies, and environmental studies programs.

At Gordon Parks, students are expected to practice thinking in real ways as a part of their daily school experience. They are expected to be full participants in their own educations and to take themselves and their possibilities seriously.

GPHS offers a range of programs that meet the needs of about 200 students between the ages of 16 and 21, regardless of their current level of academic progress or educational

achievement.

The school offers an 8:30am start time, with flexible, year-round, academic programs. Since implementing a three-week grading and curriculum cycle, attendance increased by 100 percent although daily attendance is about 50 percent.

To meet student needs the school has social workers, counselors, special education teachers, educational assistants, and on-the-job training.

This wide range of support services encourages lifelong learning while taking into account family situations, parenting concerns, employment schedules, and housing issues.

The school is also home to an evening high school and offers online classes to accommodate full-time and dual-enrolled students, as well as students who are working.

The school is geared towards students who are pregnant or parents; struggling with

chemical dependency, mental health problems, or abuse; behind a grade level or two; limited in English proficiency; or homeless.

"We're not bad kids," remarked 17-year-old LaDavia Allcorn, who is a senior at GPHS. "People learn different ways. People don't all learn by sitting in a little box and writing all the time. For me, I can't sit there." Instead, Allcorn has gotten involved in the various projects at the school, including creating a park next door to the school, and also serves on the leadership team. She appreciates how school staff has encouraged her to get involved.

She'll graduate later this year, but she knows she'll be back. "I'm not done," said Allcorn. "I'm coming back to help this school."

## Celebration week events

Tues., Mar. 6 is slated as Gordon Parks Legacy Day at GPHS.

The day will include comments from the Parks family, as well as showing of "Half Past Autumn: The Life and Works of Gordon Parks."

On Wed., Mar. 7, "The Learning Tree Day," students are encouraged to create art projects that will be displayed at a gala on Friday. "The Learning Tree," a film written and directed by Gordon Parks in 1969, will be shown several times throughout the day. Community guests are welcome from 3-6:30pm.

Civic Engaged Storytelling Day is set for Thur., Mar. 8 with activities from 12:30-3pm. Mario Sprouse, Gordon Parks' personal music arranger for 25 years, will be among the special guests that day. Presentations will focus on the intersection of civic engagement, storytelling, and curriculum. History of GPHS curriculum about Parks' autobiography, "A Choice of Weapons," will be given.

Gordon Parks Gala at the St. Paul Hotel will take place on Fri., Mar. 10, 6-9:30pm. It will include a three-course meal, silent auction, live music, a vibrant student-led showcase of projects and performances, as well as curriculum highlights from the last ten years. Special guests include Mario Sprouse and Gordon Parks' son David Parks. The evening features acclaimed Twin Cities actor and playwright Ronald Collier, who will read selections of Parks' literary works.

Individuals tickets for the gala are \$100. Or sponsor a table for \$1,000; this includes five tickets for your organization and five tickets for students. Purchase tickets at [spps.org/gordonparks-tickets](http://spps.org/gordonparks-tickets).

Learn how community members, local businesses, and students can be involved in the celebration by contacting principal Traci Gauer at 651-744-1212.

# Development Roundup

By JANE MCCLURE

## Sign variance at the stadium?

Minnesota United FC's sign variance request for Allianz Field has been sidlined. The St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) sent the matter back to the drawing board Jan. 29. The BZA was poised to act on more than 4,000 sq ft of temporary and permanent signage above and beyond what city regulations allow. That's a huge variance over what is typically allowed.

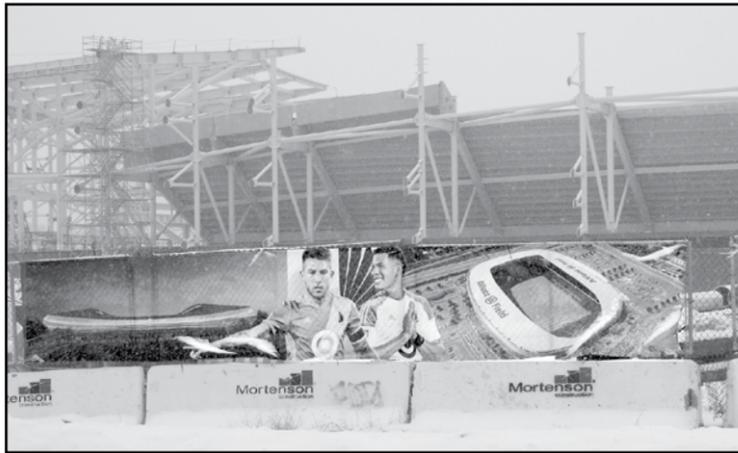
But on the advice of Assistant City Attorney Peter Warner, the BZA laid over the variance request, most likely until mid to late February. The board is asking that Minnesota United and Mortenson Construction sort out how much signage is temporary and how much is permanent, with the goal of separating those variance requests. The application before the BZA was sent back for more work.

Two different issues are being considered. The zoning code allows for up to 1,987.5 sq ft of permanent signage on the stadium property. The request is for 3,187.5 sq ft, for a variance of 1,200 sq ft. The team representatives contend a large amount of signage is needed for a building with multiple entrances.

Another issue to be considered is how much signage two future buildings along Snelling Ave. will need. If the soccer stadium is allowed to get a sign variance, Warner said future buildings will be limited in how much sign space they can have, or the stadium would have to lose signage that is already installed.

"When those buildings are developed, they'll need signs," he said. "It sounds like we've got a moving target here."

Then there is the temporary signage, which went up last year without a variance. It is the subject of the second variance request. Jerome Benner II of the BZA staff said the variance would



Just one of the signs that designate the stadium construction zone. There are 250 sq ft of signage allowed, but at one point, there was 3,237 sq ft on site—almost 13 times more than permitted by zoning. (Staff photo)

legalize the temporary signs.

Up to 250 sq ft of temporary signage is allowed in St. Paul, to typically identify a real estate agent and contractor. But 3,237 sq ft of signage went up at Allianz Field, requiring a variance of 2,987 sq ft. These signs are to come down once the stadium is completed.

BZA members said they need more information before they can act.

Under state law, a zoning request has to be acted on within 60 days. Otherwise, it is automatically approved. In this case, the deadline for action is Mar. 8. Only an agreement between the applicants and the city can extend the deadline beyond that.

## Capital maintenance spending

Spending almost \$3 million for St. Paul's capital maintenance needs in 2018-2019 may sound impressive—until the \$6.3 million in requests not met is looked at. St. Paul's Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee voted Jan. 8 to recommend 46 projects to the City Council for approval. More than 80 projects missed the cut.

How to better fund capital

maintenance and keep up with needs to repair city buildings and facilities is an issue in the ongoing redesign of St. Paul's biennial capital project review and approval process. One frustration raised in recent years by the CIB Committee is what committee members see as a lack of maintenance for some city facilities.

"Capital maintenance is obviously a very important part of what we do," said CIB Committee Chairman Noel Nix.

The committee is recommending \$1.5 million in projects in 2018 and \$1.498 million in 2019.

After the capital maintenance list wins approval from the City Council, most of the improvements won't be visible or prominent to the public. A task force of CIB Committee members met with city staff to review the 2018-2019 requests. The group had several meetings to review the proposals, said CIB Committee Chairman Noel Nix. Proposals this time around were limited to a maximum request of \$200,000 per request. A few requests had to be trimmed to meet that threshold.

The Departments of Safety

and Inspections (DSI), Parks and Recreation Police, Fire and Public Works submitted proposals. For Public Works, the requests are limited to facilities and don't include streets or bridges.

The parks department used a recent asset study, by the Ameresco consulting firm, to help develop its list. Studies of other city department capital needs and assets were completed after the 2018-2019 maintenance project requests were due, but will be used in future capital maintenance reviews.

Requests ranged from one proposal from DSI (new doors for the animal control building \$21,598) to more than 80 proposals from Parks and Recreation. Each department had to rank its own proposals. Como Golf Course had one of the largest requests recommended, at \$150,000 for new heating, ventilating and air conditioning. Smaller sums go toward zoo facilities for polar bears and large cats, and a sprinkler system for the carousel. Alas, the hooved animals or "hoof stock" and the frogs in the Como pond didn't have maintenance requests met.

## Grants awarded for projects

More than \$10 million in Livable Communities grants were awarded by the Metropolitan Council in January. The grants are for Twin Cities communities for brownfield clean up and mixed-use and innovative development that connects Minnesotans with jobs, school, transit, and other services and destinations.

"For more than two decades, the Livable Communities Grant Program has turned polluted land across the Twin Cities into fertile ground for economic growth and opportunity and invested in our local communities," Gov. Mark Dayton said in a statement. "These 2018 grants will create more than 2,100 jobs

and support the development of more than 1,500 new units of housing."

Grants are awarded competitively. Applicants are local units of government that participate in the Livable Communities program. One area project, near University and Victoria, is the Ain Dah Yung housing project for Native American youth. The project was awarded \$350,000.

The St. Paul City Council in January accepted additional Metropolitan Council funding of \$1.45 million for the Neighborhood Development Center's mixed-use project at the northwest corner of Dale St. and University Ave. The project involves the demolition of building sites and use a vacant lot that was occupied for years by a church.

## Mixed-use development eyed in West Midway

A mixed-use commercial-residential development is on the drawing boards for the West Midway, at 2103 Wabash St. Superior LLC has filed a conditional use permit with the city that is needed to change the mix of commercial/residential. The first-floor mix is supposed to be 80 percent commercial and 20 percent residential. Superior wants 10 percent commercial and 90 percent residential on the first floor. Commercial space would be located on the Montgomery St. side.

The property is zoned industrial and occupies the entire block face of Wabash from Montgomery to Myrtle Ave. The developers wish to convert the building from industrial to mixed use. It is zoned for industrial use and is in an area where other industrial buildings have undergone conversions for new uses.

The tentative public hearing before the Planning Commission Zoning Committee is Feb. 15 at City Hall.

# Classifieds

## Monitor

Want ads must be received by the Monitor by February 26 for the March 8 issue. Call 651-645-7045 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, 125 1st Ave. NW, PO Box 168, Minneapolis, MN 55369. Want ads must be mailed to the Monitor by Feb. 26 for the Mar. 8 issue. Ad copy can be e-mailed to [denis@deruyternelson.com](mailto:denis@deruyternelson.com). Call 651-645-7045 for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at [www.MonitorSaintPaul.com](http://www.MonitorSaintPaul.com)

## ATTORNEY

Creative Solutions With a Personal Touch. Legal Services in the areas of: Small Business, Wills and Trusts, Probate, Real Estate, and Family. Kirsten Libby, 855 Rice Street, Suite 100, St. Paul, MN, 651-487-1208 [www.libbylawoffice.com](http://www.libbylawoffice.com). B-18

## AUTO STORAGE

Secured auto and boat storage near Snelling and University. Short term or long term. Heated and unheated available. 570 Asbury Street. 651-641-0166. [hamlineparkstorage.com](http://hamlineparkstorage.com). 2-18

## EMPLOYMENT

Preschool aide or assistant teacher needed for summer camps from June 11-August 17. 6-8 hours per day, five days a week. Salary based

on education and experience. Please send resume to: [cplapcc@gmail.com](mailto:cplapcc@gmail.com). 2-18

Wanted - Exercise Instructor to lead class of seniors 3 or 4 times/mo. Call St. Anthony Park Area Seniors: 651-642-9052. 2-18

## LAWN CARE

Lawn/Snow Service, Yard/Gutter Cleaning, Roof Snow/Ice.. 651-688-9977. B-18

## OFFICE SPACE

Quiet, professional office space with free, attached parking. Single offices up to 10,000 sf. Building information available at [hamlinepp.com](http://hamlinepp.com). Contact Eric with Colliers at 952-837-3087. 2-18

## PAINTING

Interior Exterior Painting / Repair. Wallpaper Removal, etc. Gutter Cleaning. Insured. 651-699-2832. B-18

Painter Jim. 35 years experience. Small painting jobs wanted. 612-202-5514. 2-18

## TILING

Tiling by James, quality work, reasonable rates, free estimates and references. Contact James at [jrmagnuson7@gmail.com](mailto:jrmagnuson7@gmail.com) or [makahill@hotmail.com](mailto:makahill@hotmail.com). Telephone 612-799-8265. 2-18

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# West Midway fire station to get redeployed ambulance and fire engine

By JANE MCCLURE

As more housing developed along University Ave., and vacant industrial buildings are repurposed, St. Paul city leaders have called for more public safety resources for the West Midway area. More than a decade later, that request is becoming a reality.

St. Paul Fire Station 20, 2179 University Ave.—which serves parts of the West Midway, Merriam Park and St. Anthony Park—will get an ambulance to meet growing demand for medical services. A fire engine will be placed at the station, too. That's a result of a fire and medical services redeployment plan announced Jan. 22 by Mayor Melvin Carter III.

The move triples the number of rigs at Station 20. Only a ladder truck is there now.

Station 20 is targeted for replacement in the next few years. It is in an area with substantial new housing development and redevelopment of older industrial buildings, spurred on in part by the 2014 opening of Green Line light rail. For several years city leaders have discussed the need for more fire and medical service in that area.

Last year a fire department labor-management committee proposed moving Engine 7 from Station 7 (1038 Ross Ave.) to Station 20. The committee also recommended retaining the three rescue squads that Coleman wanted to eliminate. Stations 7 and 20 are not equipped with ambulances, so the committee suggested moving a reserve ambulance to each location.

The move provides a faster medical response to area calls. The closest ambulances are currently at Station 23 (1926 Como Ave.) or Station 14 (111 Snelling Ave. N.)

Station 7 will keep its current ladder truck and get an ambulance.



The fire station at 2179 University Ave. (Staff photo)

The changes reallocate about \$1.7 million but don't create additional budget needs. The shift of equipment and personnel wins praise for providing ambulances for two fire stations that don't have them. Demand for medical calls in the city far outpaces fire calls.

But the loss of a fire engine is a disappointment to East Side leaders, who contend they are losing needed fire protection. Carter announced the move not long after Ward Seven Council Member Jane Prince held a press conference protesting the loss of Engine 7.

Though she agreed with the need for more medical resources citywide, Prince opposed moving Engine 7, saying it is needed in the lower-income neighborhood around Station 7 which has many older wood frame houses.

Both the firefighters' and fire supervisors' unions support the changes, as does interim Fire Chief Butch Inks. "I appreciate the thoughtful approach that the St. Paul Fire Department, Local 21 and Local 3939 have engaged

in with the development of this plan," Carter said in a statement. "I'm confident that this plan will help meet our residents' needs, both on the East Side and throughout all of St. Paul."

The plan is being implemented now and doesn't require St. Paul City Council approval because it doesn't change the city's 2018 budget and the \$62 million allocated to the fire department. The council and former Mayor Chris Coleman agreed to lay over any reorganization decision until after Carter took office.

St. Paul Firefighters Local 21 stated support of the plan. "The consensus of this [labor and management] committee is to increase emergency medical services assets in the City of St. Paul. Without adding financial resources or personnel, this plan accomplishes that goal."

The shifts also mean the St. Paul Fire Department can keep all three of its rescue squads. Each of the rescue squads has a specialty, along with assisting at fire and accident scenes. One is an emergency response and a second is

chemical assessments at the scene of a leak or spill. The third rescue squad is dedicated to complicated rescues such as a cave-in. Coleman wanted to cut a rescue squad to meet the high demand for emergency medical services and add two super medic units. Super medic units allocate staff so that a station can operate a fire truck and ambulance at the same time. That means fire rigs are not tied up on medical runs and are avail-

able to respond to fire calls.

Coleman's recommendations were tied to a Fire Department study carried out by an outside consultant, TriData. The study, which was released last July, found that fires account for less than five percent of the department's emergency calls. The study called for changes in how medical services are delivered, noting the time and costs of sending out larger rigs.

## Get your 'groove on' at local rec centers

Register now at your local Recreation Center for these fun winter/spring activities:

**Northwest Como Recreation Center:** [www.stpaul.gov/northwest-comoRec](http://www.stpaul.gov/northwest-comoRec) or call 651-298-5813

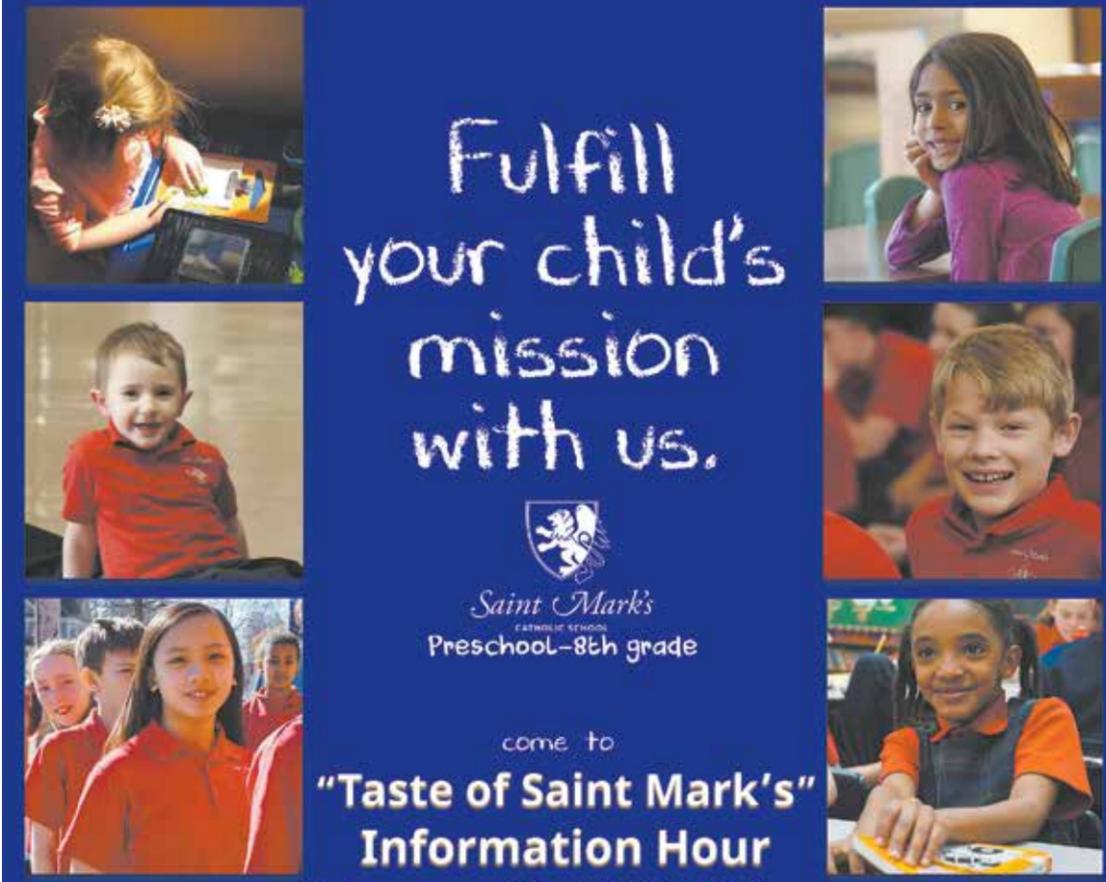
- Eating For Energy for Adults, Mon., Mar. 13, 6:30-7:30pm, \$10
- Trolls with Kidcreate Studio ages 4-9, Fri., Mar. 2, 1:30-3:30pm, \$25
- Babysitting Training ages 11-17, Thur., Apr. 5, 9am-3:30pm, \$60
- Geography Explorer ages 7-12, Wed., Apr. 11-May 2, 3:15-4:15pm, \$30
- Get Connected ages 5-12, Mon., Apr. 16, 3:15-4:15pm, \$20
- Plumbing Repairs for Adults, Wed., Apr. 25, 6-7pm, Free
- Family Open Gym begins Sun., Jan 7-Mar. 25, 3-5pm, Free
- Adult Indoor Soccer, Sun., thru Mar. 25, 5-6:30pm, \$5/week
- Senior Gamers (ongoing) Tuesdays, 1-3pm, Free
- Women's 35+ Basketball, Sun., thru Mar. 25, 6:30-7:30pm, \$4/week
- Men's 35+ Ice & Advil Basketball, 1-2:30pm, Sun., Feb. 11-Mar. 25, \$26
- Parents Night Out ages 4-12, Sat., Apr. 28, 6-9pm, \$7/child
- Artist Workshop Winter Ages 8-17, 3:15-5:15pm, Tues., Apr. 10-May 15, \$60
- Lego Machines ages 7-12, 1-4pm, Mon., Feb. 19, \$35
- Recorders ages 8-12, 3:15-4:15pm, Tue, Feb. 20-Apr. 17, \$50
- Softball Fast Pitch Clinic ages 9-14, 7-8:30pm, Tues., Feb. 20-27, \$20
- Art/Wine/Pizza for Adults, Mon., Feb. 26, 7-9pm, \$50
- Art/Wine/Pizza for Adults, Mon., Apr. 16, 7-9pm, \$50
- \*\*\*Shamrock Shake Dance, Fri., Mar. 16 for Ages 7-11 & their Guardian, 6:30-8:30pm, \$10

**Langford Recreation Center:** [www.stpaul.gov/LangfordRec](http://www.stpaul.gov/LangfordRec) or call 651-298-5765

- Hip Hop Dance ages 7-12, Tues., Mar. 6-May 8, \$65
- Ballet/Creative Movement ages 3-5, Tues., Mar. 6-May 8, \$75
- Tumbling ages 3-5, Wed., Apr. 11-May 16, \$40
- Minecraft EDU ages 6-10, Fri., Mar. 30, 1-4pm, \$40
- Splat with Kidcreate Studio ages 4-9, Fri., Mar. 2, 1:30-3:30pm, \$25
- Freezer Meals Workshop for Adults, Thur., Mar. 8, 6-9pm, \$90
- Vegie Basics Gardening for Adults, Tues., Apr. 11-24, 6:30-8pm, Free
- Pilates for adults, beginning and intermediate, ongoing Thursdays
- STEM Club ages 7-11, 6-7:30pm, Mon., Apr. 16-30, \$75
- Emoji Madness Art ages 4-9, 1:30-3:30pm, Mon., Feb. 19, \$25
- Zumba for Adults, 7:45-8:45pm, Mon., Apr. 9-June 4, \$60
- Bowling ages 50+, 9-11am, Fri. (ongoing), Free
- Walking ages 18+, 2-3pm, Fri., thru Mar. 30, Free
- Tot Time, Thursday mornings, 9-10:30am
- Soo Bahk Do, Thur., for ages 6-Adult, \$45/month (ongoing)

**North Dale Recreation Center,** [www.stpaul.gov/northdaleRec](http://www.stpaul.gov/northdaleRec), or call 651-558-2329

- Baseball Skills ages 9-12, Tues., Mar. 6-27, 7-8pm, Free
- Freezer Meals Workshop for Adults, Sat., Mar. 10, 9:30am-12:30pm, \$95
- Kids In The Kitchen ages 7-12, Sat., Feb. 24, 10am-12pm, \$35
- Minecraft Game Design ages 6-11, Fri., Mar. 2, 1-4pm, \$35
- Tumbling ages 3-5, Thur., Apr. 12-May 17, 5:30-6:15pm, \$40
- Vegie Basics Gardening for Adults, Sat., Mar. 17, 9am-3pm, Free
- Adult Ping Pong, Mon. thru Mar., 6:30-8:30pm
- Zumba for Adults, 9:30-10:30am, Wed., Apr. 11-June 6, \$60
- Awesome Drawing ages 6-12, 7-8pm, Wed., Apr. 11-May 16, \$60
- Awesome Preschool Drawing ages 3-5, 6-6:45pm, Wed., Apr. 11-May 16, \$60
- Baby Ballet ages 3-4, 12-12:30pm, Fri., Feb. 16-Apr. 27, \$50
- Preliminary Ballet ages 4-6, 12:30-1pm, Fri., Feb. 16-Apr. 27, \$50
- Homeschool Ballet ages 7-12, 1-2pm, Fri., Feb. 16-Apr. 27, \$90
- Sparkle Love with Kidcreate Studio ages 5-12, 9:30-11:30am, Sat., Feb. 17-24, \$50
- POWA Hip Hop ages 16-Adult, 9:30-10:30am, Sat., Apr. 7-May 26, \$60
- Digital Dating Violence Ages 16-Adult, 10-11am, Sat., Mar. 31, Free
- Men's Soccer, 9:30am-12:30pm, Sat., Feb. 10-Apr. 7, \$3/weekly
- Parent/Child Tot Time, Mon/Wed/Thur at 9am
- \*\*\*Lunch With The Bunny, Sat., Mar. 24, 11am-1pm, All Ages, \$2/person or \$5/family



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# Three-month schedule of Arab films underway at local colleges

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The non-profit organization Mizna, located at 2644 University Ave. W., suite #115, is a forum for Arab-American film, literature, and art. Mizna will be screening films about Arab and Arab American culture in five different locations over the next three months. This film festival tour, as they're calling it, is the first of its kind for the organization. Mizna has been sponsoring film festivals since 2003, but their films haven't traveled to multiple venues before.

The following films will be shown: "Tramontane" at Concordia College on Feb. 8; "As I Open My Eyes" at Hamline University on Feb. 23; "Mariam" (and a selection of other short films) at the College of St. Catherine on Mar. 9; "The Preacher" at Metropolitan State University on Mar. 23. All shows begin at 7pm. On Apr. 14-15, a touring mini-fest will be held at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University in out-state Minnesota.

Sponsors for the film series include the Knight Foundation, the Legacy Amendment, and the Minnesota State Arts Board.

Michelle Baroody is Mizna's film festival director and curator, and a Ph.D. student in cultural studies and comparative literature at the University of Minnesota. "Ours is one of the longest-running Arab films festivals in the country," she said. "Since 2003, our films have been a gateway through which community members enter to get involved in other programs at Mizna (writing activities, Arabic language classes, and drumming.)"

She continued, "We have a core of supporters for our film festival, but we look forward to bringing our films to more audiences in different venues this year. We're calling this festival a tour because we'll be traveling throughout St. Paul and beyond."

Students may attend films at all location for free, regardless of which school the student attends; there is a sliding scale for others including low income and seniors. Reservations are strongly suggested, even for free student tickets, and can be made online at [www.mizna.org](http://www.mizna.org). People are encouraged to arrive half an hour early, as tickets in the past have sold out. For more information, email [Jordan@mizna.org](mailto:Jordan@mizna.org).

"So much of life feels political for Americans since the 2016 presidential election," commented Baroody, whose father is Syrian American. "In truth, that's how it's always been for Arab-Americans—at least since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. There's an undeniable stigma against Arabs, Arab-Americans, and Muslims in this country now, and fear and confusion get perpetuated in the media. You can't ignore that something isn't right in the world. At Mizna, we want the community to know that people of Arab origin are much more than bombers, belly dancers, and billionaires."

Mizna is committed to presenting compelling Arab



Mizna Executive Director Lana Barkawi said, "We live in a society that paints Arabs, Arab Americans, and Muslims in broad, stereotypic strokes. Mizna exists so that people can see us expressed on the screen and on the page in our full humanity." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

The film festival is one of Mizna's two anchor programs. The other is their semi-annual literary journal by the same name. Since 1999, Mizna has published the only journal of Arab-American literature in the country. Featuring celebrated and emerging voices, the award-winning journal contains a breadth of stories and ideas. Subscriptions can be purchased through the organization's website. The most recent issue of Mizna can also be found at Moon Palace Books, Boneshaker Books, Subtext Books, Common Good Books, May Day Books, and the University of Minnesota Book Store.

Mizna Executive Director Lana Barkawi explained, "The Arab and Arab American population isn't large in Minnesota when compared to Michigan, New York, or Texas. But we're here, perhaps 600,000 of us, though the census data aren't exacting. The subscriber base for our journal is upwards of 600, and more than 1,500 people attended our fall Arab Film Series held at St. Anthony Main Theater. We're reaching people."

When asked to translate the meaning of the word mizna to English, Barkawi said, "It is a poetic term that refers to a desert cloud, one that holds the promise of rain and relief."

expression, creativity, and artistry. Their mission states that "For our community—so often written and spoken about—we are claiming a space to tell our stories and present our art. Mizna offers Arab and non-Arab audiences the chance to engage with cutting-edge Arab art

in all its power, beauty, complexity, and humanity."

Baroody concluded, "Art brings different perspectives and different audiences together. Of the various media that we work with, film may be the easiest to connect with. But film, narrative, and stories—

these are all things we can have a cathartic connection to."

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