

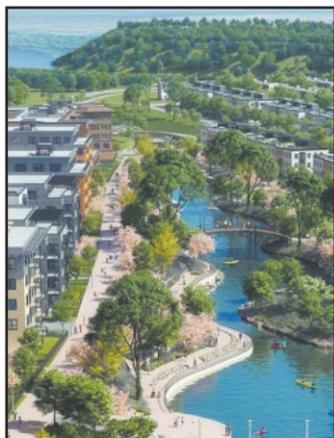
Back 2
School
at Como
Park High

>>9-10



REVIVING UPPER HIDDEN FALLS CREEK

Former Ford plant celebrates water in new development



By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

This summer, workers are building a channel and bridge that will connect a recreated upper Hidden Falls Creek with the lower falls at East River Parkway and Magoffin Avenue.

It's part of the redevelopment occurring at the former Ford Plant.

For nearly a century, the Ford Assembly Plant was a landmark in the Highland Park neighborhood. After it closed 10 years ago, the city of Saint Paul worked with area stakeholders and community members to develop a new plan for the 122-acre site. Ryan Companies, a national real estate



Ryan Companies Parks and Public Spaces project manager Mac Pegovac and Bob Fossum of CRWD check out the progress of the storm water management at the heart of the redevelopment project at the former Ford Assembly Plant property. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

developer with headquarters in Minneapolis, purchased the site in 2019. It is one of the largest land tracts open to redevelopment in the Twin Cities.

Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) has collaborated with Ryan Companies,

the city of Saint Paul, and many other partners to design a new mixed-use development there called Highland Bridge. The plan will implement clean technologies and high-quality design for storm water management, renewable energy,

energy efficient buildings and infrastructure. At its core is a water feature that will recreate the historic path of Hidden Falls Creek, and return clean, filtered water to the Mississippi River.

REVIVING HIDDEN FALLS >> 10

What is role of artists in community?

Ten Thousand Things helps people find common ground

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Marcela Lorca is the artistic director of Ten Thousand Things (TTT), a theater company whose work has been grounded in practices of inclusion, equity, service and accessibility since in its founding in 1990.

Like many other organizations, TTT has issued an anti-racism statement in this last turbulent year. Lorca said, "At TTT, we acknowledge that every theater, including our own, has a duty to investigate and dismantle white supremacy structures."

TTT productions have always been done without a stage; actors perform on the floor inside a circle of chairs, with minimal sets and live music. The troupe gives free performances in non-traditional theater spaces like homeless shelters, correctional facilities, low-income senior centers, after-school programs, women's shelters, and in rural towns across Minnesota — any place where people live without easy access to the arts.

In addition, they also perform for paying audiences at locations including Open Book in Minneapolis and North Garden Theater in St. Paul.

Wherever the actors perform, all the lights in the room are left on. Lorca said, "We don't preach easy answers to life's problems. Having the actors and the audience see each other is crucial to the way we work. We try to transcend perceptions of class, race, education and life experience that often divide people."

ROLE OF ARTISTS? >> 20



Ten Thousand Things Artistic director Marcela Lorca said, "This is a very difficult time, but it has required all of us to learn many new things." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Newly opened Black healing arts center damaged by fire

Afya Sanaa operating out of temporary space at 1276 University Avenue

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Afya Sanaa is a healing center and community space where Minnesotans who identify as Black, African, or African American can find the solace, safety and fellowship to start their journey toward healing.

Located at 1549 University Avenue West, in the heart of the Midway, the start-up organization celebrated its grand opening on May 8, 2021 — and was heavily damaged by a fire of unknown origin on July 16.

Co-founder and co-executive director Raeisha Williams said, "It took us two years to get to where we were.

The space was perfect for us, and we had spent more than \$50,000 on the build out. After the fire, the building was condemned.

"However, our vision with Afya Sanaa is to establish an open source model of ancestral, collaborative healing that can be put into action in every community.

"We are persevering. We will get through this."

Ancestral. Collaborative. Healing.

The name Afya Sanaa is Swahili for health and healing.

Williams, a third-generation Minnesotan, said, "The community healing we practice at Afya Sanaa is nothing new or revolutionary. It's what our ancestors have done for centuries.

"We had just completed our first six-week cycle of classes and were ready to start our second session when the fire struck. There was a lot of excitement in the community about what we were doing. We had all these specialized rooms in our space. We offered healing circles, massage, yoga, meditation, and many different styles of dance and creative self-expression taught by Black people, for Black people."

Why Black healing matters

Williams has walked every

step of the journey in creating Afya Sanaa with her mother, co-founder and co-executive director Rosemary Nevils. Williams said, "In 2019, my brother was murdered in North Minneapolis by gun violence. Out of our pain, my mother and I founded the non-profit Guns Down Love Up. It's a message campaign to end gun violence in the African American community across the Twin Cities. The campaign grew, and has a reach now as far away as Mississippi and Michigan.

"Afya Sanaa was birthed out of that pain, and the collective trauma of the Black community. My mom and I started practicing meditation, yoga, and better physical and

AFYA SANAA >> 7



What might development without displacement look like?

PAGE 2



MINDFUL CREATIVITY
William Kent Krueger,
Adoption Story project, more

PAGE 10



He wants to get more African Americans cycling in the Twin Cities

PAGE 15

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT

Neighborhood bus tour highlights possibilities

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

About two dozen people boarded a big yellow bus on a hot, sticky night to discuss the prospects for Development without Displacement in the Frogtown, Rondo, and Summit University neighborhoods. Frogtown Neighborhood Association (FNA) sponsored the bus tour through Frogtown and Rondo on Tuesday, July 27, 2021.

Six stops were included on the tour, and each raised a different question. While the questions were different, the answer was always the same: there is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Gentrification 101

Gentrification is a word (and an action) that has been around for a long time. When investments start to come into under-resourced communities like Frogtown and Rondo, current residents may be squeezed out due to rising taxes, rising rents, and a sense of no longer belonging.

New business owners, home owners, and renters become more interested in under-resourced neighborhoods once improvements are made.

While better access to public transportation, grocery stores, and other basic amenities are positive, FNA believes that gentrification equals displacement. Executive co-director Caty Royce said, "We know that development and investment are needed in our neighborhoods, but we believe that community members must be involved in the decision making process."

True affordable housing needed

Stop #1 on the bus tour was the Alatus project, which is slated to create 288 units of rental housing on a long-vacant piece of land just south of University on Lexington Avenue. It has gotten thumbs up from proponents of increasing housing density – but thumbs down from affordable housing advocates like FNA.

Under pressure from FNA, the project developer has agreed to set aside half the units for families earning slightly above 60% of area median income. That translates into monthly studio rentals of about \$1,100, in a community where 40% of families live on less than \$35,000 annually.

Saint Paul City Council members have criticized the Alatus project for lacking true affordability representative of incomes in the Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhood, but the development has not sought any form of public subsidy that would guarantee deeper affordability. The land belongs to the Wilder Foundation, and the future of the project is uncertain.

More opportunities for BIPOC developers

The second stop on the tour was a vacant lot on the southeast corner of Oxford Avenue and Marshall Street. The corner lot was home to a Model City eightplex until the 2008 financial crisis, when the city of Saint Paul had it demolished.

Tenecia Johnson and her husband Mike live directly across the street, in a home they have owned for more than 10 years. She said, "I grew up in this neighborhood. My husband and I have repeatedly expressed interest in buying the vacant lot,

IN THEIR WORDS

The Frogtown Neighborhood Association is part of a city-wide network of organizations that centers every aspect of their work around equity. Organizations within this Equity in Place (EIP) network understand that the problems plaguing our community are deeply rooted in systematic oppression and, as a result, have led to unjust patterns of resource allocation. FNA aims to correct these unjust patterns within Frogtown through grassroots initiatives created by community working for community.

~ From the Frogtown Neighborhood Association website

for the purpose of developing a 4-6 unit affordable housing project. We have enough equity in our home to finance this, but so far the city has been un-supportive. Essentially, they've said, 'We don't think this is the property for you.' We've been told the property is worth about \$140,000. The city sells a lot of lots, sometimes with homes on them, for \$1.

"We'd like to see them show more interest in working with BIPOC residents who are interested in being their own property developers."

What are community voices saying?

The next stop was the former Sears site, which consists of the vacant but still-standing 187,000-square-foot store and a 17-acre parking lot. This site was once part of the "Cornmeal Valley" section of the historically Black Rondo Neighborhood.

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT >> 3



FNA's Anti-Displacement Community Organizer Danielle Swift, said, "What makes me most excited about this project is the opportunity to be creative around affordable housing and community ownership. The city of Saint Paul will transfer ownership of 652 Sherburne to Model Cities. FNA will be a working partner in this project along with Hope Community's Housing Justice Center and Historic Saint Paul." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



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DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT

>> from 2

Hundreds of single family homes that stood there were taken by the state of Minnesota Department of Transportation under the right of eminent domain in the early 1960s and demolished. Sears filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and closed the store in 2018.

The property is just west of the Capitol grounds, and has long been considered one of the city's prime redevelopment properties. It has been bought by a New York development company called Seritage.

FNA and other housing advocacy organizations are working to get Seritage to listen to community voices in the early stages of planning and development. There is the potential for thousands of rental units to be built here, as well as mixed use retail, office space, and recreation opportunities. FNA wants to make sure that whatever is built will be of value to people already living in the neighborhood.

Stops four and five were properties in Frogtown awaiting redevelopment.

The tour ended at 652 Sherburne Avenue, where an eight-plex with historic value currently stands. The building is structurally sound, but it faced demolition several years ago. FNA organized the tenants to press for much-needed repairs from the landlord, and was recently awarded tentative developer status for the property. More improvements are coming soon.

To connect with FNA and learn more about their neighborhood justice work, go to www.frogtownmn.org.

Will demolished Midway Center be used for parking?

Over a year after fire, shopping center remains standing despite damage

By JANE MCCLURE

The fire-ravaged Midway Center faces an order to be demolished within 15 days at the Aug. 25 St. Paul City Council meeting.

While a building demolition permit for the shopping center at the southwest corner of University Avenue and Pascal Street is in process but when that could be issued isn't known.

The shopping center is expected to eventually make way for redevelopment including retail, office hotel and apartments. But one proposal discussed at a July 27 city legislative hearing calls for the building site, once cleared, to be used as interim parking space. Union Park District Council (UPDC) leadership, which has pushed for building demolition for more than a year, has concerns about the parking use.

Demo permits complicated

The city council earlier this year ordered that the former Big Top Liquors at Midway Center be torn down. It, too, sustained extensive fire damage. But it is still standing. In May city officials ordered a remove or repair order for the remaining shopping center building. But the June 18 deadline has passed.

The shopping center buildings sustained extensive damage May 28, 2020, following the murder of George Floyd and subsequent civil unrest. Businesses were forced to relocate or close, and were evicted. Four displaced business are currently in court over the evictions, contending that they shouldn't have had to move out of less-damaged sections of the building. They want to put a halt to any demolition



The center of the Midway Shopping Center was the most severely damaged by the fire on May 28, 2020. The shopping center remains vacant and boarded, with a fence around it, more than a year after the damage. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

proceedings.

A demolition permit for Midway Center is in process, attorney Bruce Parker told city staff. The application was filed in May and is in process. How long that will take is a question mark.

Steve Wagner manages code enforcement for St. Paul's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI). He explained that a permit to demolish a commercial building is more complicated than a permit for a residential structure.

Asbestos and lead?

One issue at Midway Center is the presence of asbestos through the building. Testing may have to be done.

A detailed study of the shop-

ping center, which opened in 1957, showed that other materials need to be removed before demolition, such as lead-based paint, refrigeration equipment, lights and other regulated wastes.

In 2016 properties around University and Pascal, including the parking lot at the northeast corner of Midway Center, were placed in Minnesota's Superfund Permanent List of Priorities. Inclusion on the list provides additional financial resources for pollution monitoring and cleanup, as well as determining the level of risk.

Contamination found there included soil vapor contamination from chemicals, including trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (PCE). In the

1990s what was called the Midway Plaza VIC site was located south of University between Snelling Ave. and Pascal. That contamination was linked to a now-closed area dry cleaning business.

Why the slow pace?

Another issue is the prospect of the building site being used as parking until redevelopment can get underway. If the building is replaced by a hard surfaced parking lot, Wagner said that kicks in a requirement for site plan review before parking could be allowed. A site plan is outside of the property code enforcement process.

"Our biggest concern as a district council is the time during which the building has remained standing," said Abdulrahman Wako, UPDC executive director. UPDC would like a firm timeline as to when the building would come down.

"We don't wish to see this dragged out any further," Wako said. UPDC is anxious for redevelopment, given the available of federal Opportunity Zone and tax increment financing (TIF) assistance.

Dean Cummings is chair of UPDC's land use committee. He wasn't able to attend the virtual hearing, but is anxious to see the building come down. "It's dismaying that it's taken essentially police action to force these billionaires to come to that conclusion after more than a year," he said.

UPDC's land use committee hasn't had a chance to discuss the notion of the building site being used as parking, even on

WILL MIDWAY CENTER >> 17

SATURDAYS AT SPRINGBOARD 2021

JOIN US FOR SATURDAYS AT SPRINGBOARD!
Join us at 262 University Avenue West for creative, family-friendly fun! Each Saturdays at Springboard event will be led by an Artistic Director and feature interactive art and opportunities for creation. Each event runs 1-5pm and is free of charge, all ages welcome.

AUGUST 7 & 14 — HOW WE STEWARD
Artistic Director Aki Shibata and a group of emerging artists lead community painting and performance surrounding environmental justice.

SEPT 18 & 25 — HOW WE IMAGINE
Save the dates for a closing set of Saturdays at Springboard, with programming led by TruArtSpeaks!

AUGUST 28 & SEPT 4 — HOW WE BUILD
Arts-US youth engage and lead activities in how we shape and influence the built environment around us with Artistic Director Anthony Galloway.

WWW.SPRINGBOARDFORHEARTS.ORG/SATURDAYS-AT-SPRINGBOARD/
Saturdays at Springboard are supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

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

WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE CONNECTING WITH US, YOUR COMMUNITY

You're smart.
You're curious.
You're interested in your community.
And you're reading the *Midway Como Frogtown Monitor*.
We're so glad you are.

We did our first ever circulation audit through the nationally known Circulation Verification Council (CVC) this year, and learned a little bit more about you and how much you value us.

CVC talks to people via residential and cell phone surveys, online surveys, email surveys, and social media surveys.

They specifically talked to people only in our distribution area about us, and asked how often people pick up a paper. A whopping 7 of 10 people who get the *Monitor* delivered to their front doors look at it each month.

Six of 10 people say they regularly purchase products or services they see from ads in the *Monitor* and its sister publication in South Minneapolis, the *Longfellow Nokomis Messenger*. That's a pretty high rate given the variety of places folks see ads. (And our propensity for pointing to the last place we saw something, which is usually Google for directions and hours!)

I was pretty excited to see that 2.1 people touch each copy that we print. That means you're passing the paper along to others. You're saying, "I read about this issue in the *Monitor* - check out the article." "Did you hear about what our neighbor is doing in her free time? Look at this *Monitor*." "I didn't know this was happening two blocks over until I read the *Monitor* - do you know?"

What I've always loved about newspapers is how they cut through barriers like how much money you make and what race category you fall into. The *Monitor* goes to every single house in our distribution area (you can see our distribution map on our web site). Big, small, old, new. It

Too much coffee

By **TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN**,
Owner & Editor
Tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com



is delivered to renters and homeowners.

Our demographics show that. Ten percent of our readers make under \$34,999, 15% earn \$35,000-\$49,999, 21% earn \$50,000-\$74,999, 17% earn \$75,000-\$99,999, 21% earn \$100,000-\$150,000, and 16% make more.

CVC also asked about education levels, and found that our readers value learning. Thirty-five percent have graduated from college and 18% have earned higher degrees.

We're happy to see that we have folks of all ages. We know kiddos, teens and college-aged folks don't read newspapers as much, and just 1% of those surveyed said they read the *Monitor*. But it starts to pick up as folks get older, start their careers, and start wanting to get more involved in their communities. The breakdown is: 16% are between ages 25-34, 22% between 35-44, 45% between 45-64, 12% between 65-74 and 1% over 75.

Know what those numbers don't show?

They don't show that Gen X, Y and Z aren't reading newspapers. Instead, we see that they are.

We used to hear that print was a dying medium and everything (including the ads that support it) was moving online. As a member of Gen X, which has been maligned for being cynics and slackers, I can attest to being disenfranchised with social media and I'm on there just enough to do my work and catch up with folks. But I am hearing



from more and more people that they need a break from device and want to have a paper product to page through. Plus, they're seeking out news about their neighborhood, and the only place to get that is via their community newspaper.

We're hearing that across all ages. It's not just a rumbling in the Twin Cities but a roar nationwide.

People want news they can trust. They can trust writers and photographers and sales reps that they bump into at the grocery store.

It's the kind of journalism I believe in. It's what I strive to provide in each edition of the *Monitor*.

So, thanks for reading us. Thanks for advertising your local business in our pages, and thanks for supporting neighborhood businesses with your purchases. Thanks for sharing story tips, letters, and events.

Thanks for passing our papers along to your spouses, children, neighbors, and friends.

Pay it forward

Of the news that feeds our democracy, 85% of it originates with newspapers. That's what a recent survey by the Pew Research Center found. You may see it on television, read it on Apple News or through your friend's Facebook feed, or hear it on the radio. But the majority of that news started with a newspaper journalist.

In addition to supporting the *Monitor* and other local papers, there's something else I'd like to ask you to check out.

Have you heard about the Local Journalism Sustainability Act? It's in front of Congress right

now, and we'd love for you to make a call or send an email in support of newspapers.

Read more at America's Newspapers: <https://newspapers.org/ljsa/>.

Unlike most things in politics, S.2434 and its companion H.R. 3940 has bipartisan support. The bill seeks to help local newspapers sustain financial viability through a series of three tax credits.

News Media Alliance President and CEO David Chavern said, "The Local Journalism Sustainability Act, through targeted tax incentives for consumers and businesses, would help ensure local news publishers continue to report on information that's necessary to an informed democracy. Access to fact-based, verifiable information is essential to a functioning democracy and is the fabric of our communities."

AFL-CIO Department for Professional Employees president Jennifer Dorning stated, "The Local Journalism Sustainability Act is critical legislation for journalists and other media professionals, including members of DPE's unions, working across the news industry at print, digital and broadcast outlets. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the essential work that these professionals do to keep our communities reliably informed. This legislation will help ensure media professionals can stay on the job and continue delivering news to their communities."

The bill would give tax credits for those who subscribe to newspapers, those who advertise and journalists. (See sidebar)

Knowing what's going on in our community is fundamental to our democracy.

LOCAL JOURNALISM SUSTAINABILITY ACT

1) Local News Subscription Credit.

This credit will incentivize Americans to subscribe to local newspapers or donate to local nonprofit news publishers.

- Five-year credit of up to \$250 annually.
- Credit covers 80% of subscription costs in first year and 50% in subsequent four years. To receive full \$250 credit, a subscriber would have to spend at least \$312.50 in the first year, and \$500 each of the following four years.
- Credit can be used to help support a donation to a nonprofit local news publisher.

2) Local News Journalist Compensation Credit.

This credit will provide newspapers, local digital only news publications, nonprofit local newsrooms, and commercial and public broadcasters the ability to retain and hire more dedicated local news journalists to improve their newsroom coverage.

- Five-year credit of up to \$25,000 per journalist in first year and up to \$15,000 in subsequent four years.
- Credit covers 50% of compensation up to \$50,000 in first year, and 30% of compensation up to \$50,000 in subsequent four years.
- Journalist must meet a minimum of 100 hours of work per quarter to qualify as an eligible employee.

3) Local Newspaper and Local Media Advertising Credit.

This credit will provide small business financial flexibility to spend on advertising in local news publisher and media.

- Five-year credit of up to \$5,000 in first year and up to \$2,500 in subsequent four years.
- Credit covers 80% of advertising costs in first year and 50% in subsequent four years.
- To increase flexibility, small businesses may utilize this credit to advertise with local television and radio stations, in addition to local newspapers, digital-only local news sources and nonprofit news organizations.

Correction

On page 7 of the July 2021 *Monitor*, we incorrectly identified a man in a photo as "Police Commissioner" Todd Axtell.

Also, we would like to point out that Chad Giblin is no longer with the University of Minnesota, but has launched his own company, Trees & Me, a tree care firm based in the Midway neighborhood.

We apologize for the errors.

Letter

I just completed reading the recent edition of the *Monitor*. What a wealth of positive information about our neighborhood! Would there be more like it. I live at Cornelia House at Episcopal Homes and look forward to your next edition.

Thank you,
Ruby Hunt

Editor's note: Ruby Hunt is former St. Paul Council Member and Ramsey County Commissioner.

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News for you!

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

Story ideas always welcome.

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

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The *Monitor* is for profit and for a purpose - and we don't sacrifice one for the other. We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that is both black and white, both/and. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing

social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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IT'S NOT FAIR: Dealing with the Delta Variant

Have you ever watched a movie where it seems like its coming to the end of the story—everything is working out perfectly—but you realize there's 45 minutes left so you know it won't work out perfectly (at least not yet)? That's how I feel these days as the Delta variant sweeps across the U.S., forcing us to undergo more restrictions once again. Just when we thought we were ready to "get back to normal."

There is also a sense of déjà vu from spring 2020, where very quickly our society shifted from COVID-19 being a story on the news (just another virus) to the biggest story of the world where we all had to dramatically change our daily lives. Many

organizations were preparing to bring everyone back to the office after Labor Day, but now we all fear what the case count will be as time goes on and assume that date will get pushed back—similar to how often the return date moved in 2020 until it was changed to "at home indefinitely."

Places that are going back around Labor Day in some capacity are schools. Many are mandating vaccines for students as well as masks, with some offering distance learning for families and students not comfortable with in-person.

Another place coming back is the Minnesota State Fair. While this belongs to all of Minnesota, it is a much more direct re-

Building a stronger Midway

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



lationship to our community as the fairgrounds are a quick bus ride away. Unlike last year where many of the plans were not yet finalized, making changes to the fair this year (and so late) certainly would throw a bigger wrench.

A recent report by the Minnesota Department of Health states that 85% of new cases are due to the Delta variant. While vaccinated people can still get the virus, the number is comparatively very small and symptoms are usually less severe.

On an optimistic note, Minnesota is doing better than most states with vaccination rates. At the time of my writing, we are tied for 15th with 53% of the total population fully vaccinated. Minnesota also has outperformed all of its neighboring states by at least two percentage points (and 13% higher than North Dakota). According to the Minnesota Department of

Health, as of Aug. 3 there were 69.2% of eligible Minnesotans with at least one dose (Minnesotans 16+). Vaccines for those under 16 are still under trial, but would be a big difference maker in the total population numbers.

Embrace yourself for more restrictions. Hopefully you didn't have a mask burning party earlier this year, as masks are required once again in more places. But one thing that remains true since the beginning of the pandemic is to be safe. Find ways to live your life and do your work (and support locally-owned businesses!) while being responsible for yourself and to others. We see that the COVID-19 story isn't over yet, but hopefully with the proper safety practices we can still get a happy ending—and soon.

Sidewalk poetry weaves together multicultural communities

Writers play a key role in fostering community engagement and building cultural bridges. Throughout history, writers have served as the architects of the future. Their artistry has been used to build a more just and inclusive society. According to the acclaimed writer, Chinua Achebe: "the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front."

The city of Saint Paul's sidewalk poetry initiative provides writers with essentially blank slates that are recording the collective voices of our city and celebrating its rich diversity. The Sidewalk Poetry Contest was launched by the city of Saint Paul in partnership with Public Art Saint Paul. It is part of the city's \$1 million sidewalk replacement project. It is an opportunity for emerging prose writers and experienced poets to be published in a singular forum and on a larger scale. Each winning entry will be stamped into sidewalks throughout residential

Planting seeds

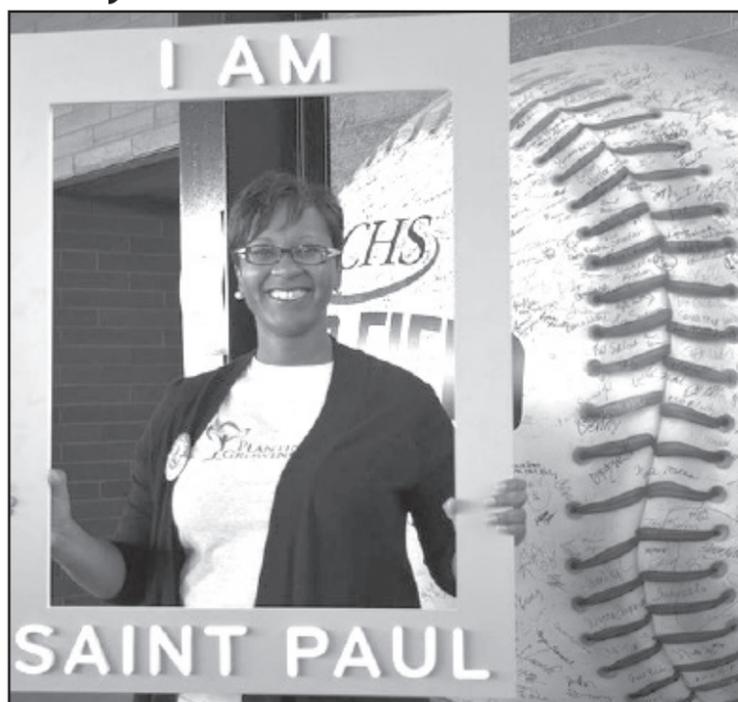
By DR. ARTIKA
TYNER,
dr.artikatyner@gmail.com



areas of the city.

Our Sidewalk Poetry project is one of only a very few in the entire nation. The project is beautifying our city. It also serves as an important and unique stand-alone art installation of 63-pieces. The poems are short but powerful expressions of the lives of residents, their dreams and aspirations, and the things that are important to them. The poems touch on themes encompassing African-American empowerment and overcoming grief and trauma to those with a distinctly whimsical touch.

I am honored to have been selected as a winner in our city's 2021 Sidewalk Poetry Contest. I chose to write about my hometown of Rondo and the transfor-



mative power of Afro-futurism.

"I AM...Rondo and connected to a rich cultural history of unity, faith, and purpose.

I AM...my African roots. I AM...freedom and justice."

My poem celebrates my Rondo heritage. Like countless other African American communities, the Rondo community was impacted by the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. The community was cut in half by the

construction of highway I-94. This led to displacement, loss of generational wealth, and small business closures. I combined this history with the journey of discovering my cultural roots in Africa. While in Ghana, I discovered my purpose and destiny.

Sidewalk poetry weaves together cultures and unites generations. Of the 1,000 that have already made their way to sidewalks, the poems foster intercultural dialogue. The poems provide individuals with an enriching learning opportunity to pause, reflect and grow. I am honored to have been chosen as a winner in the 2021 Sidewalk Poetry Contest along with such an esteemed group of writers.

Learn more about the Sidewalk Poetry Contest: <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/public-works/sidewalks/sidewalk-poetry>

Through her organization, *Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute*, Dr. Artika Tyner seeks to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach.

Time to reform how jailhouse informants are used in criminal cases

BY MIKE HANSEN AND JOHN KINGREY

The Minnesota Board of Pardons commuted Myon Burrell's sentence for the 2002 murder of sixth-grader Tyesha Edwards and attempted murder of Timothy Oliver. In arriving at their decision, the members of the pardon board cited the growing science of juvenile brain development as it relates to lengthy prison sentences. But there is another significantly troubling aspect to this case that bears examination: the use of jailhouse informants.

An independent panel that recently reviewed Burrell's case and made recommendations to the pardon board looked closely at the use of jailhouse informants in the prosecution. The members of the panel were troubled by the use of multiple informants who also testified in other unrelated cases, and by the fact that many of the informants were members of a rival gang who had motives to lie.

The deals with some informants were not made explicit, so

the judge could never know what benefit they actually received for their testimony against Burrell. Two of those informants have since admitted they lied at Burrell's trial.

Harvard Professor Alexandra Natapoff, the leading national expert on jailhouse informants, conducted her own independent review of the Burrell case. She identified several concerns: the use of multiple informants who may have colluded; repeat informants who knew how to manipulate the system and get information about the defendant with whom they were incarcerated; and the structural and psychological barriers to effectively evaluating the credibility of this sort of testimony.

The message from these independent reviews of the Burrell case is clear: It's past time for Minnesota to join the growing number of states that have added protections against false jailhouse informant testimony.

Unfortunately, the full extent of the activities of jailhouse

informants in Minnesota is unknown because prosecutors are not required to formally track and disclose it to defense attorneys. Defense attorneys are missing critical information that could cast doubts on jailhouse informants' motivations and credibility, and prosecutors are putting their convictions at risk by basing them on informant testimony that may later turn out to have been manufactured.

Community safety also is compromised when serial jailhouse informants can act with impunity. When the wrong person is convicted of a crime, an actual criminal is left free to commit additional crimes. Victims of an informant's own crimes are denied justice when the informant trades false information for leniency.

One of us — Mike Hansen — knows firsthand the damage an unreliable informant can do. In 2006, a jailhouse informant falsely testified that Hansen had confessed to killing his infant daughter. After six years of

wrongful imprisonment based on the lies of that informant, Hansen was freed from prison. But he will always carry the pain of being falsely accused and convicted of killing his own child.

There must be stronger protections when such inherently unreliable witnesses are used. In Connecticut, Maryland and Oklahoma prosecutors are required to track each case in which informants testify and their cooperation agreements, which is entered into a statewide database. This allows prosecuting attorneys to look up previous jailhouse informant activities before putting a potentially unreliable witness on the stand. Laws in these states, plus Florida and Nebraska, specify when and what types of information prosecutors must disclose to the defense. In Connecticut and Illinois, judges must screen jailhouse witness testimony for reliability before it is heard by a jury.

These reforms provide prosecutors with better information before putting a jailhouse informant on the stand and protect against expensive appeals and post-conviction claims alleging problems with jailhouse witness evidence. They also provide juries and judges with the knowledge they need to evaluate a jailhouse informant's credibility. Reforms protect the survivors of jailhouse informants' own crimes by preventing informants from getting unjustified deals.

Offenders need to be held accountable and the public deserves to have the confidence in our criminal justice system. We are working with all stakeholders to fix this broken part of the criminal justice system.

Mike Hansen is owner of *Kinship Collective Tattoo* in Northfield. He spent six years in prison for a crime of which he was fully exonerated in 2011. John Kingrey is former executive director of the *Minnesota County Attorneys Association* and current board co-president of the *Great North Innocence Project*.

Newest Cork O'Connor book coming Aug. 24

By JAN WILLMS

For his 18th novel in the Cork O'Connor series, Como author William Kent Krueger has written a prequel to the adult life of his Irish-Ojibwe private investigator. In "Lightning Strike" Krueger explores the adolescence of O'Connor and the individuals around him who become a part of the fabric of his life.

The book is set in 1963 and delves into two mysteries as well as the relationships that are at the core of the 12-year-old's life, particularly the relationship with his father, Liam, who is the sheriff of Tamarack County, the northern area of Minnesota where the O'Connor family resides, a short distance from the Anishinabe Reservation.

Although all of Krueger's books in the O'Connor series detail information about the Anishinabe tribe, none has addressed the injustice the Native Americans have experienced as much as "Lightning Strike."

"That's because conflict is at the heart of this book, and it is a conflict of cultures," Krueger said. "It affects the O'Connor clan because they have a foot in two different cultures, and Cork's father is outside the culture of his wife's family. So when the question of justice arises, and Liam is responsible, at least in his own mind, for justice in Tamarack County, he has to grapple with the vari-

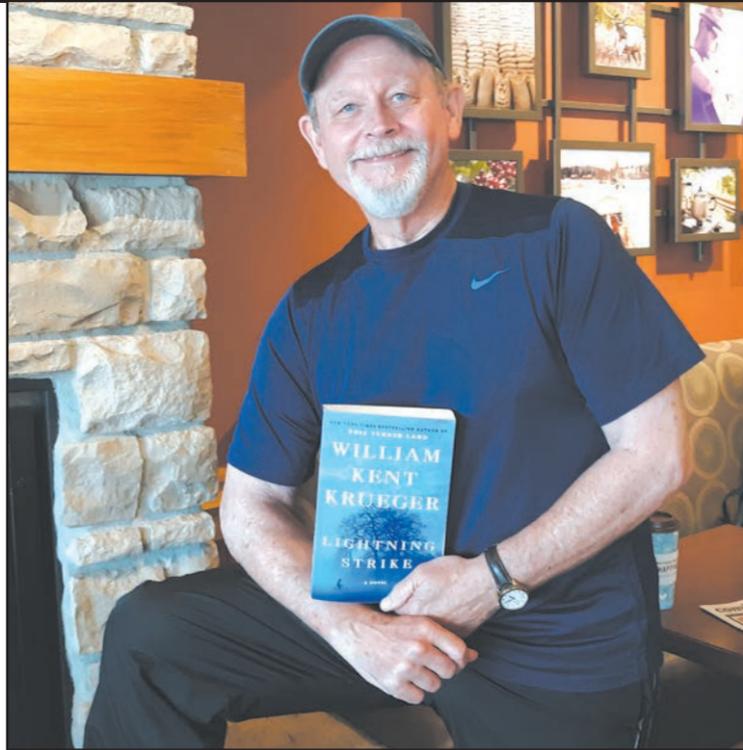
ous perceptions of justice which create conflict in him, conflict in his family and conflict between the two cultures.

"It is not a question of injustice, but a question of whose perception of justice prevails," Krueger continued. "In the view of Indigenous people, it is certainly the White form of justice that prevails – which then is seen as injustice. And it's hard to argue with that, particularly when you look at the background of the Relocation Act that tends to break up the community."

The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 was a United States law intended to encourage American Indians to leave reservations and their traditional lands, and to assimilate into the general population in urban areas. However, the act did not provide all the benefits and services promised, and many Native Americans became homeless and jobless and suffered from culture shock.

Krueger said that the majority of Indigenous readers who have contacted him have been complimentary. "I am sure there are Anishinabe out there who don't appreciate the writing. There is always the question of cultural appropriation, which is a huge issue these days."

He added, "I am always aware that I am not Anishinabe, and I'm a White guy writing about a culture not my own, so I



Como resident and author William Kent Krueger focused on the various relationships in his main character's early life in this newly released prequel. (Photo by Jan Willms)

try to get it right. I have friends in the Ojibwe community who read my books to make sure I haven't said anything stupid or worse, anything offensive."

How he decided to create Corcoran O'Connor goes back to the question of conflict, according to Krueger "When you're a writer, it is conflict that drives the story," he said. "In Romeo and Juliet, it is the conflict between the two families in which the star-crossed lovers find themselves caught. When I decided to set my stories up north, it

is a place of conflict – with the weather, the land itself and certainly in the cultures that live up there. I wanted to create a character who would represent these conflicts – Ojibwe and a European ethnicity. I finally decided on Ojibwe-Irish. I wanted to write about a guy who was so resilient that when life got him down, he would bounce back up like a cork, and the Irish Cork very easily became Corcoran."

Father-son story

Krueger said he did a more

Author wrestles with injustice to Anishinabe in 'Lightning Strike'

significant amount of rewriting on this novel than on any of the others he was written. "This was a father-son story, but also a son-mother and husband-wife story," he explained. "Several relationships were important for me to explore in this book. In the first iteration of it, I told it entirely from young Cork O'Connor's viewpoint, and it was too limited. I wanted to get his father's thoughts.

"That relationship of father and son is so important, and my first major revision was putting in the sections we see from his father's perspective. It brought a great deal more depth to the story than there was before," Krueger said. He also made revisions to include the relationships between other family members, the Ojibwe and O'Connor clan and the White populace and Liam.

"And I had to make sure the mysteries at the heart of it worked," Krueger added.

He said he was concerned about the pacing and suspense of the book. "Nothing really threatening happens for a very long time," he noted. "It is really about the puzzle and what the deaths are all about."

Krueger said that more and more, we are becoming aware of the travesty that has been part of

NEWEST BOOK >> 7

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IN MY HEART: the Adoption Story Project

Play about adoption becomes a graphic novel

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Seven years ago, Wonderlust Productions co-artistic directors Alan Berks of Merriam Park and Leah Cooper began inviting people from the adoption community to share their personal stories about adoption. When the story circles ended several months later, more than 200 adoptees, adoptive parents, birth parents, adoption social workers, foster families, siblings and others affected by adoption had participated.

From those stories, Berks and Cooper created a play called, "In my Heart: the Adoption Project." In 2016, it was performed at Mixed Blood Theatre by a 34-member cast and live band. The cast included professional actors along with members of the adoption community who had never acted before.

Cooper said, "We were often asked when we might remount the play, because it held so much meaning for people who saw it. A remount wasn't possible, but we tried to think of ways to share the play more broadly. The idea for a graphic novel came up."

She explained, "A graphic novel is closer to theater than film, because the reader gets to choose where their eye goes. There's something really special about a piece you can read and

touch and share with someone. That's different from the experience of seeing a play."

Berks added, "We'll always be people who love theater but because of this experience, everything we do will have more than one application moving forward."

From stage to page

The dictionary definition of a graphic novel is a story presented in comic-strip format and published as a book. After Berks and Cooper decided to adapt the play into graphic novel form, they asked actress and illustrator Becca Hart to draw a mock-up of two scenes – and they liked what they saw.

Berks explained, "Becca is a theater artist who spent her adolescence deep in graphic novels. She was uniquely fit to illustrate this project. We wanted the graphic novel to follow the play. The drawings are based on the original cast members, and the characters speak the lines that were spoken in the play."

He continued, "This is a collective story about adoption experienced from many different angles. Both the play and the graphic novel wrestle with that."

Difficult truths

Cooper, who is an adoptee, said, "We don't shy away from

difficult truths in our plays. There is a lot of joy in adoption, where almost everyone is acting out of generosity. But usually a child gets placed for adoption because their birth parents can't raise them. There is some sort of crisis. Many adoptive parents are also grieving their inability to conceive and produce a birth child. There can be feelings of grief and loss, overlaid with expectation. There are a lot of overlapping feelings for people whose lives have been touched by adoption."

Recurrent themes

One of the themes that kept coming up in the story circles, according to Berks and Cooper, was the theme of the "good" adoptee and the "bad" adoptee. That is, if there are two adopted children in a family, a dichotomy is common.

Cooper said, "Both of the adoptees act out their fear of abandonment, but in different ways. Transracial adoption complicates things even further. We have more Korean adoptees in Minnesota than any other state. Many Korean adoptees we hear from said they grew up thinking they were white."

In this storyline, there are two adopted sisters. One is White (Alice) and one is Korean (Jen). Alice and her boyfriend Lewis are engaged. Alice meets her future in-laws for the first time at her own engagement party, at which



Alan Berks (left) and Leah Cooper (right) are co-artistic directors of Wonderlust Productions, located in Frogtown. Their 2016 play about the experience of adoption has been adapted into graphic novel form. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Jen appears after spending two years in Korea.

Both sisters go down a rabbit hole at the engagement party, as the realities of adoption set in. The feelings they've spent years avoiding start to surface in fantastical forms. Questions swirl as the sisters ask, "Who am I? Where did I come from? Do I even belong in my adoptive family?"

Cooper said, "Part of what made The Adoption Play Project so special, and what inspired us to create the graphic novel, was people saying, 'This play gave me language for what I'm feel-

ing. This play is a tool for having more meaningful conversations about adoption.'

"We hope that people inside and outside the adoption community will continue having these conversations. A deeper understanding of adoption makes all of our connections stronger."

"In my Heart: the Adoption Story Project" is on the shelves at Next Chapter Booksellers in St. Paul and Magers and Quinn in Minneapolis. Copies can also be purchased from Wonderlust Productions' website at <http://wlp-productions.org/inmyheart>.

NEWEST BOOK >> from 6

the relationship between White people and the Indigenous people on the continent. "European ethos has really wreaked havoc on so many people in the world," he said. According to Krueger, the travesties have to be looked at, confronted, and dealt with for different cultures to move forward. He said the recent report of Native children's graves being found near Canadian boarding schools is just scratching the surface.

"I am sure we will find the same situation existed here, and I am glad we will do an investigation as a nation," he stated.

His new book looks at how Whites have done their best to shatter the Native community, Krueger claimed. "The Relocation Act was just one of the things." The timing of "Lightning Strike," which will be published Aug. 24, is important in terms of the larger body of his work.

'I wrote this book for me'

Besides the Cork O'Connor series and other short stories, Krueger has written two stand-alone novels, the Edgar-winning "Ordinary Grace" and "This Tender Land."

"This Tender Land" had a young narrator, and Krueger followed up with "Lightning Strike," a coming-of-age story about the adolescent Cork. Krueger said a lot of readers had discovered him when he wrote "This Tender Land," and he can point them to this prequel that won't feel that different. "It gives them everything they need to know about the character Cork," he said. The book also provides an opportunity to know better the characters who help to form the young O'Connor's life.

"I wrote this book for me,"

Krueger said. "I wanted to learn more about the relationships of the characters. I have touched on them in other books, but this book tells more. The father-son relationship is so significant, I wanted to explore and understand that in such a way it would be meaningful for the readers and me."

A contant journey

Krueger said that when he started writing, he was planning to write the Great American novel, ala Ernest Hemingway. "When I hit my mid-40s, I wanted to write something people would want to read. And everyone loves mysteries."

When he signed the contract for his third novel, "Purgatory Ridge," Krueger's wife told him that he had wanted to always earn his living as a writer, and now was the time.

"So I quit my job, and we immediately went into debt," he said. "But slowly over the years, we climbed out. That was the summer of 1999, and I have never looked back."

Krueger claims to have been very fortunate in his choice of a mate. "My wife has always been very supportive of my writing, and she has also usually had a good job. When young writers ask me what is the most important thing in a writing career, I tell them to marry somebody with a good job," Krueger joked.

Krueger has finished his next novel and is thinking about his next companion novel. He has two more books under contract. "Writing is a constant journey," he explained, "and with every novel, I try to do something a little different, something that will surprise readers. I hope readers can never predict how the story will turn out."

Newly opened Black healing arts center >> from 1



Participants at artistic events at Afya Sanaa engage in self-expression and wellness activities to heal through art, knowledge and love. (Photo submitted)

spiritual health. We had to find a way to out of our grief. At the same time, as a community, we were grieving and protesting the killings of Jamar Clark and Philando Castille – but George Floyd's murder really broke us.

"Social justice is so important. How do we feed our spirit in the wake of all this? How do we uphold the beings that we are? This was the beginnings of Afya Sanaa."

From an idea to reality

In 2019, Williams and Nevils received a generous start-up grant from United Healthcare. The Minnesota Health Department has also funded Afya Sanaa, and the Sanneh Foundation is making it possible for interim services to be offered at 1276 University Avenue West.

At present, those services include healing circles, massage therapy, and use of a studio for creating podcasts. All programs

and offerings are free to members, and there is no cost for membership. Members are asked to be present, to be respectful, to treat the space and others with love and care, and to lend a helping hand when needed. Members receive newsletters, invitations to special events, and a personal-log in to the website's registration portal.

Membership is available only to people who identify as Black, African, or African American. Williams explained, "We welcome collaboration with all marginalized communities and will provide resources to like-minded organizations serving our brothers and sisters in those respective communities."

"All of our services are offered free to Black folks in the Twin Cities area. As we are allies and supporters of other communities, we also need the support of allies and donors to keep our healing doors open – and to help

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From Afya Sanaa Healing Center

us recover from our recent setback."

Moving ahead

What comes next for Afya Sanaa?

Williams said, "It would be great if we could own our own building. We want to be able to advocate for ourselves. We feel that it's time. We'll be back for sure in our fullest form – we just don't know yet how soon and where that will be."

The community that Afya Sanaa has created welcomes donations as it rebuilds its physical space, either in the original location (if possible) or somewhere new. For more information on how to help them or to complete a membership application, visit www.afyasanaa.com.

Como Principal Kirk Morris looking forward to his second year

With a new academic year set to begin in September, Como Park Senior High School Principal Kirk Morris is planning and preparing for what everyone hopes is a more "normal" school experience.

Principal Morris has spent over two decades in education as a teacher, coach, and administrator. The 2021-2022 school year will be his eighth as a principal, and second as Como's principal. The following interview was conducted at the end of July.

How would you describe your first year as Como's Principal?

Being a first-year high school principal in a pandemic was challenging. Despite the challenges of transitioning from distance learning to on-site support and then to in-person learning, it was a great first year. I have many great memories from my first year as principal of Como Park High School. My most memorable day of the school year was April 14 (the first day of in-person learning).

What are you looking forward to as you plan and prepare for the new school year?

As I prepare for the new school year, I look forward to spending time in classrooms with students and staff. Witnessing students learning in their classrooms has always been a highlight of my job as a principal. I am very much looking forward to seeing the learning happen.

How do the pandemic and



Como Park Senior High School Principal Kirk Morris is looking forward to a new school year.

Como Park Senior High School



By ERIC ERICKSON
Social studies teacher

ing will happen. We are planning for a "normal" school year.

Are there any new academic offerings or programs that students will have available during the upcoming school year?

We continue to have one of the strongest AP (Advanced Placement) programs in our district. In addition, we continue to have high level CIS (College in the Schools) courses. This school year we have added a CIS Spanish course. Other new academic offerings are: Medical Careers Exploration, Sustainable Foods, Critical Ethnic Studies, and

MCTC Intro to Urban Education.

Are there any changes with the building or schedule that will impact students and families?

I'm proud to say that all of our renovations to our building have been completed. We are hoping there won't be any roadblocks to our in-person return to school.

What are some strengths of Como Park Senior High School that you've witnessed as the Como Principal?

Como is a very diverse school that is not too large and is not too small. Our students are hardworking and kind to each other. Our teachers and support staff are collaborative and growth-oriented. There are many opportunities for students to get involved in extracurricular activities. Every student at CPSHS is able to find their niche in our academic programming as well as our extracurricular activities - we have something for everyone.

new variants impact the planning process?

As of today, I'm hoping that the pandemic and new variant will not greatly impact the planning process. We are planning as though full-time in-person learn-

SPPS may require masks

Superintendent Joe Gothard was expected to introduce a resolution requiring masks for all children ages two and older, staff and visitors at the Committee of the Board meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 10, to be voted on during the regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 17.

Minneapolis and Duluth schools were among the first to announce they were requiring masks again this year in all

school buildings. Parents and staff will be informed of the decision regarding masks as soon as it is made. Other health protocols and back-to-school information will be shared in the weeks leading up to the first day of school (Sept. 9 for grades 1-12 and Sept. 13 for Pre-K and kindergarten). Three SPPS schools are hosting COVID-19 vaccine clinics that are open to anyone in the community who needs a vaccine. For more information, visit spps.org/covidvaccine.

Hamline University requires COVID-19 vaccination

In order to ensure a full educational experience in the fall 2021 semester, Hamline University will require all students and employees to complete a COVID-19 vaccination series by Aug. 15, 2021. Recognized exemptions or extensions will be allowed.

"Getting vaccinated allows Hamline University to be at its best," said Hamline University President Fayneese Miller. "It

allows our students to enjoy all that one expects as a university student. It allows for greater flexibility in campus life, including better and more frequent access to events, and the other things that make being a Hamline Piper so special."

Hamline will host free on-campus vaccination clinics for anyone aged 12 or older. Appointments and walk-ins are welcome. Pfizer first and second doses will be offered.



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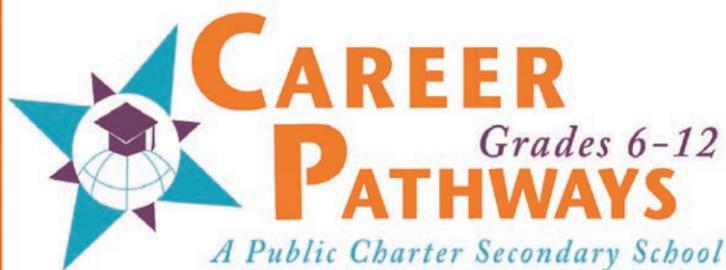
In-person learning starts September 1.

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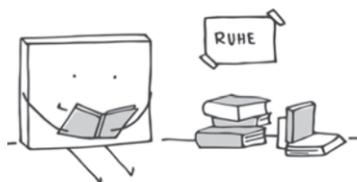
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Saint Paul
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Reviving upper Hidden Falls Creek

>> from 1

Reviving a creek long buried

Hidden Falls Creek was buried and paved over prior to construction of the Ford Assembly Plant. Since then, impervious surfaces at the site have sent runoff downstream without treatment, destabilizing the underground creek and carrying pollutants to the river.

The revived Hidden Falls Creek will flow to Hidden Falls Regional Park through a channel underneath Mississippi River Boulevard. The 90-foot channel will connect the park with Highland Bridge. Adjacent to the creek, a paved pedestrian and bike path will end at a terrace overlooking Hidden Falls. CRWD will contribute grant funds for this portion of the project, in addition to providing funds for stormwater management.

Called the Mississippi River Boulevard Crossing, construction of the channel and bridge started in April; traffic has been detoured around the construction area since May 10. The parkway is expected to reopen in the fall, once this first phase of the project is complete.

In addition to its aesthetic and recreational benefits to Highland Bridge and the broader community, the system now taking shape will filter pollutants year-round. Much of the system's stream path has been built, and is receiving finishing touches before the water starts to flow later this month.

Innovative stormwater storage

The stormwater collection system consists of a series of underground tanks, surface ponds, and manufactured wetlands that all support the central water feature. Designed to hold 3-7 feet of water, the flow isn't expected to run dry during drought or get overwhelmed by torrential rains because of the steady ground water supply.

Bob Fossum, is the Monitoring and Research Division Man-



Bob Fossum of CRWD (left), Les Saunders-Pierce (center) and Anne Gardner (right) of the city of St. Paul take a tour of Highland Bridge. The central water feature for Highland Bridge will offer recreational, as well as environmental, opportunities. Four new parks and several public spaces within the redevelopment project at the former Ford Assembly site will be available for public use starting next summer. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



Green markers indicate where the manufactured wetland will be. Native plants growing in the wetland, along the water feature, and in surrounding rain gardens will help filter pollutants out of stormwater runoff. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

ager for CRWD. He said, "The Ford site is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to apply sustainable practices to a very large piece of land in the heart of the city, and take a leading role in improving environmental health for future generations. We see this project as very positive from a water resource perspective."

Increased green space and

wildlife habitat

In addition to the underground storage and filtration practices, there are several large rain gardens and a manufactured wetland that will collect and filter stormwater runoff for the central water feature. Rain garden and wetland plants will provide beauty and increased wildlife habitat, while helping to clean water as it passes through the soil.

The stormwater systems will capture and clean an estimated 64 million gallons of water annually. This will prevent approximately 55,200 pounds of total suspended solids and 145 pounds of phosphorus from entering the Mississippi River each year.

Prior to redevelopment, polluted stormwater from this site entered the river untreated. By

Learn more

Saint Paul Water Resources Coordinator Wes Saunders-Pierce said, "In the Highland Park neighborhood, the water table is high because it's near the river. With this project, we're diverting ground water into the water feature and improving the water quality of stormwater runoff flowing into the Mississippi. Ground water doesn't carry the same level of contaminants as storm water. It is always more clean, clear, cool, and dependable. We see this project as being a real celebration of water."



"The Ford site is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to apply sustainable practices to a very large piece of land in the heart of the city."

~ Bob Fossum

cleaning and reusing stormwater in the central water feature, rainwater will be a resource – instead of a waste product.

The four new city parks and public open spaces within Highland Bridge will be available for public use beginning next summer.

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Neighborhood bids farewell to Diane Dodge as she leaves St. Paul for rural Wisconsin

GARDENING ACTIVIST MOVES ON

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

After many years as a Hamline-Midway resident, longtime neighborhood activist Diane Dodge moved to rural Wisconsin at the end of July. Dodge was active in racial equity and social justice work through the Urban Farm and Garden Alliance, the Art of Food in Frogtown and Rondo, and many other organizations.

She said, "I had my 82nd birthday last February. I've learned over the years to look back and analyze."

Things go full circle

Dodge was born in Duluth in 1939, at the end of the Great Depression at home and the outset of World War II in Europe. Her family had a Victory Garden, and she grew up understanding the value of homegrown food.



Diane Dodge was roasted and toasted by several dozen friends and admirers at a recent picnic at Newell Park. Best known for her relentless community activism and cheerful, flower-covered hats, Dodge is moving to rural Wisconsin to be closer to family. (Photo by John Pavlica)

She said, "To this day, I use food as a metaphor for life. Food is the driving force for bringing equity across every line that divides us – and equity is at the top of my list of what's important."

She continued, "The few people of color in Duluth at that time were almost all African Americans, and a handful of Native Americans. It was a very caste-driven city when I was growing up. Society was so fractured, but you know what? It still is."

A long line of strong women

Dodge is known for being passionate, outspoken, stubborn, and hard working. She said, "I may be changing my place of residence, but I'm not changing my point of view."

A second generation American, Dodge said, "I was raised at my mother and my grandmother's tables, and both of them were very strong women.

I'm a child of the Russian Jewish Diaspora. My mother saw me as her great hope. Because I didn't fit the traditional role of a woman in the 1960s, I sometimes felt like I failed her."

Dodge was accepted to the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1957 and offered a scholarship. After two and a half years, she left school and got married. She said, "I ended up with a PhD from the School of Hard Knocks – a degree I conferred upon myself. I stayed married for 37 years, and finally got divorced. There weren't many divorced people back then. There's a lot in my life story that shows how women's roles have changed over time."

In addition to raising her four biological children, Dodge

IN HER WORDS

• "My favorite word is paradox. Everything is disconnected, but it's connected at the same time."

• "Water is life. Soil is life. Human beings are just a speck in the universe. I'm hoping to continue on in the form I'm in for a little while longer."

~ Diane Dodge

was instrumental in the lives of nine other bonus children who came into her life. Over the course of her career, she worked as a certified nursing assistant, a library clerk, a beekeeper, a home butcher and food preserver, a forager and, always, a gardener.

Dodge has also been a Ramsey County Master Gardener for 26 years. In that role, she volunteered hundreds of hours teaching people how to garden and be better environmental stewards.

One of her favorite garden commitments in St. Paul was the Midway Green Spirit Community Garden, located on Pierce Butler Route between Hamline Avenue and Albert Street. Dodge said, "I learned so much there; I was a garden plot holder and on the garden leadership team for many years. For 10 years, I worked as a beekeeper in the garden, too. If you ever stop learning, you might as well just hang it up."

Time to go back to the farm

Twenty five years ago, Dodge and one of her sons bought a 100-acre piece of land in west central Wisconsin. Of the land, Dodge said, "It's on the western edge of the Driftless Region. I have a whole lot of children within a 50-mile radius. We hope

GARDENING ACTIVIST >> 13

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What's good? What needs reconciling and healing? Let me know.

"Sometimes people don't want to hear the truth because they don't want their illusions destroyed."
-Friedrich Nietzsche

"The butterfly does not look back at the caterpillar in shame, just as you should not look back at your past in shame. Your past was part of your own transformation."
- Anthony Gucciardi

"If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner" - Nelson Mandela

Hello Monitor readers,

I started this article with the intent of highlighting issues and topics of the past few months. I wanted to name what I consider the bad or negative, as well as the good or positive happenings.

However, as I begin to list some issues/topics like climate change, global de-forestation and forest fires, the high rate of gun shootings and murders across the country, the Water Protectors fortitude and solidarity to end the outdated and dangerous pipeline 3, I started feeling overwhelmed, scattered, and even depressed – although I was also listing positive things like increased pollinator gardens, Minnesota's young warriors, champions, draftees, and Olympians, another national award-winning year of National Afternoon/Night Out events in the Twin Cities, and other good things.

I realized what I wanted to

write was just too much to express.

What do you think?

So, I decided to ask you, the Monitor readers for input highlighting issues and topics. For instance, using the five senses, what do you think, feel, smell, taste, and see happening recently; and what suggestions for short and long-term solution plans would you like to share with your district councilperson, your city councilperson, your county commissioners, our state and federal lawmakers?

I'm inviting you to please share your suggestions that we can share in the September issue of the Monitor.

Working to adjust

Actually, we know that too much is going on as we keep trying to adjust and create a new normal way of life based on what was basically a safe and not perfect but comfortable norm for America and Minnesota. However, COVID-19 and the murder of George Floyd have helped to remove the false narrative that has served as U.S. history; the curtain of Manifest Destiny and how the West was won and of the ongoing and generational impact of not owning-up and repairing the results of enslaving Africans to make our country the global powerhouse on our beautiful planet.

Again, I encourage you to send

Peace bubbles

By MELVIN GILES
peacebubbles@q.com



me messages highlighting the good and suggestions for reconciling and healing our not good and intentional mistakes of the past and current bad policies that undercut our rural farmers, upholds urban redlining, or corporate welfare loop-holes that allow companies to receive above average tax credits and exemptions.

I also would like to know who else was not surprised that some national lawmakers who like to talk law and order, however, they betrayed our national peace/police officers by denying Jan. 6 was an attack on our democracy and are still trying to justify the killings of the peace/police officers at our national capitol? These lawmakers often love confusing and dividing people by telling us that Blue Lives Matter. The curtain was removed and they had a chance to prove their words. Instead, they appeared to be more interested in limiting the opportunity for people to vote or to receive basic health care. Some lawmakers also seemed to forget that they were birthed from immigrants and refugees, particularly, in the 19th and 20th centuries.

V-Fest reflections

I also want to encourage that we all lighten up and give ourselves a break during our current reset phase.

It's way too easy just to see the bad and injustice happening, particularly when we know there are good and great things happening, too. I attended a wonderful event in July so I asked Phillip McGraw to share two paragraphs about this uplifting event. These are his brief reflections:

V-Fest was a beautiful-community healing event for Saint Paul. This was our second annual health and wellness event. At this event, we had a larger audience, more vendors and volunteers, and more give-a-ways for youth and families! I was so thankful to see young kids and families at V-Fest share in our love for life. I felt that our efforts to promote V-Fest went better in the Rondo and Frogtown community. Individual's reception to our flyer was easier to explain the mission and benefits of one "living your best life." With COVID-19 being more than a year behind us, individuals believe in the notion that health is wealth. Our community deserves a healthier and more vibrant food system that supports this need.

We want to thank our sponsors and partners: Urban Farm and Garden Alliance, CSP, Open Cities Health Clinic, Job Corps, Twin Cities Rise, Ramsey County Public Health (sponsor), Minnesota Community Care (sponsor), Cultural Wellness Center, Arts Us, Hallie Q. Brown, Minnesota Historical

Society, Minnesota Department of Motor Vehicle, Minnesota Health Fairview (sponsor), Saint Paul Public Art, Saint Paul Public School Family Engagement, Black Nurses Rock, U of MN, Animal Rights Coalition, MRAC (sponsor), and Turning Point. We couldn't have done this without you. Thank you for believing in me and my staff (and volunteers) to execute a vision for a health and wellness event this community deserves. And, we know this because we received warm welcomes, happy smiles and community appreciation for hosting this for our community. See you all next year.

With Love and Light, Phillip "Prosper" McGraw, founder and owner Living Naturally Abundant

Thank you, Brother Phillip, for being a beacon of hope and inspiration and for creating a space for community and businesses to work together for a higher purpose.

We don't have to stay stuck and be divided.

We have to keep rising and working together for the best of all.

What ideas do you have?
Dream and believe!!!!!!

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May Peace Be In Our Homes & Communities...

May Peace Prevail On Earth (MPPOE)!!!!

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One of many friends who came to say goodbye, Dr. Antonia Wilcoxon (right) is, according to Dodge, "a legend in her own right." (Photo by John Pavlica)

GARDENING ACTIVIST MOVES ON

>> from 12

to work together and get the land into a land trust so that others can enjoy it. There's already a large garden there and an orchard with apples, cherries, and other fruit trees. My son has grafted much of the tree stock. I'll be moving into a mobile home, and downsizing to almost nothing. It's the right time to do this."

Dodge got rid of her car

about 15 years ago. That means she really will be home on the farm – a lot – and she's excited about that. She said, "While I'm leaving behind some really wonderful people, I won't be inviting anybody to visit me who projects toxicity. I'm sick of watching people exert their privilege, without even realizing it."

When asked to share a parting thought, Dodge said, "I've been influenced by so many people over the years, but among those, my friend Melvin Giles really stands out. We declare publicly that we are conjoined twins separated at birth.

"Human beings have got to figure out how to work together and make this world more livable, more peaceful – and the only way we're going to do that is to make the road by walking it."



AGING WELL

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Thank you to all who have volunteered at the State Fair over the years, and to all who have visited our stand.

We look forward to see you again soon!

**Midway Men's Club
Hot food and cold drink**

Sarah O'Brien hired as new executive director of Hamline Midway Coalition

The Hamline Midway Coalition (HMC) Board of Directors is happy to announce that Sarah O'Brien has been hired to be the next executive director of Saint Paul District Council 11.

O'Brien began her role with HMC on Monday, Aug. 9, 2021. She joins community project coordinator Alec Armon and neighborhood plan intern Emma Kiley.

Outgoing executive director Kate Mudge has been serving in an interim capacity and will provide support during the organizational transition.

"Sarah has a deep record in fundraising and communications for community organizations and rich experience in staff organization and development," said Mike Reynolds, HMC copresident with Thom Foss. "In the interviews she demonstrated a robust understanding of the coalition and our work, and spoke with passion and clarity about community organizing and the role of a non-profit like HMC."

A resident of Saint Paul's

Como neighborhood, O'Brien will take the helm at HMC after 16 years in the nonprofit sector working to increase access to healthy food, education, and better opportunities for all. Her most recent role was on behalf of The Open Door where she led communications and development.

HMC hired O'Brien after a three-month search and interview process by a board committee.

"We are lucky to have been able to hire someone as experienced and passionate about community building, economic vitality, and sustainability as Sarah," said Foss.

Get to know Sarah a bit better in the following Q&A.

What do you wish everyone would know about Hamline Midway Coalition (or the DC system?)

I wish everyone to know that the Hamline Midway Coalition is the voice of its neighbors. What is important to you is important to HMC. With the engagement of



Sarah O'Brien (Photo submitted)

all HMC residents, especially the underrepresented neighbors of our community, and working in harmony with the District Council system (17 district councils make up the city of Saint Paul!), we together make a thriving, vibrant, bustling neighborhood. HMC is here to support neighbor-led interests and initiatives.

HMC takes community recommendations on Community Building, Economic Development, Transportation, as well as other improvements, to public agencies and representatives to ensure that the needs of HMC are heard. We all care that Hamline Midway continues to be an amazing place to live, work, and play!

On my day off, you can find me:

On my day off you can find me enjoying some of my favorite Saint Paul haunts by bike and on foot and spending time with my family. Lately, I've been trying to come up with clever ways to keep my two kids off their iPads and outside! Some recent successes include bike riding around Lake Como, swimming at the YMCA, foraging for vegetables in our mini-front yard garden (running out of creative ways to utilize kale and sure could use some ideas!), and time spent on a trampoline that takes up the majority of our backyard.

What makes the Hamline

Midway neighborhood unique?

The people who live, work, study, and play in Hamline Midway are proud of their community, as they should be! In every corner of Hamline Midway and all pockets in between you will find parks, eclectic restaurants, educational institutions and hubs, clubs and coffee shops all nestled among beautiful neighborhood gardens and engaging artwork. Hamline Midway is also unique in its commitment to improved equity through working to provide equal access to resources for all community residents. I love this neighborhood so much because the people that make up Hamline Midway are passionate about the locally-owned businesses, they care for their fellow neighbors, and are actively engaged in support of a connected community. When I am here in the Hamline Midway neighborhood I feel that vibrant connectivity that makes you want to be a part of it.

New vice chair, sub-district 1 member on board

A special election to fill two District 10 board vacancies was held in July. Como community members elevated sitting Sub-District 4 board member Benjamin Kowalsky-Grahek to the Vice Chair seat and elected new board member Alex McLean to the Sub-District 1 seat. Both seats will be on the ballot again at next year's annual meeting.

An August special election is being held to fill Kowalsky-Grahek's former Sub-District 4 seat.

Introducing the Como Park Stewards Program

District 10 Environment Committee in partnership with

St. Paul Parks & Rec invites individuals or groups (families, schools, churches, clubs and others) to volunteer and give back and to help keep our regional treasure welcoming for everyone. Announced in July, the Como Park Steward Program is off to a good start with several stewards already signed up! There are available parcels for those interested in becoming a steward and helping keep our regional treasure welcoming for everyone.

To become a Como Park Steward, you will participate in ongoing clean up, special clean up events, work with the city departments to report tree and natural damage, graffiti, safety, and

**District
10 Como
Community
Council**



By **SHAVEK
MCKEE,**
Executive Director
district10@district10comopark.org

other concerns. They ask for a minimum commitment of one-year with visits twice monthly. (Some parcels may be allowed more than one steward, depending on commitment levels)

Pick your favorite area to

walk, run or bike, or that you have a special connection to, as an environmental project or learning experience, or even in memorandum of someone special. You can even name your parcel on the map. Parcels are first come, first served so if you want a special spot, register soon.

Look at all available parcels and registration information on the District 10 Como Community Council website: <http://www.district10comopark.org/park-steward.html>.

Upcoming meetings

Renters, homeowners, and other community members are always welcome to participate in District 10's board and committee meetings. You can join either by video conference or by phone.

To find meeting links and call in numbers go to our website calendar at <http://www.district10comopark.org/Calendar.html>. If you have questions you can email district10@district10comopark.org. Or, call 651-644-3889.

- Board meeting: Tuesday Aug. 17
- Anti-Racism Work Group: Wednesday, Aug. 25
- Land Use Committee: Wednesday, Sept. 1
- Neighborhood Relations Committee: Tuesday, Sept. 7
- Environment Committee: Tuesday, Sept. 14

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

Eid al-Adha explores theme of sacrifice in final month of Islamic calendar year

guest
columnist

By **IBRAHIM
HUSSEIN,**
Frogtown resident



Eid al-Adha is one of the most important days for Muslims around the world. In July, Eid al Adha was celebrated by the Muslim community of Frogtown. The celebration is traditionally held on the 10th day of the final month in the Islamic calendar. This year the date was July 20, 2021.

As the members of our Muslim community gathered at the West Minnehaha Recreation Center, they rejoiced at the chance to finally celebrate with their loved ones. Muslims all over the world had a hard time celebrating Eid, because of the pandemic this past year and a half. So it was a relief for many people when they were able to gather together and celebrate this religious tradition safely.

The tradition of Eid al-Ad-



Imam Mursal of Masjid al-Ihsan leads the Eid prayer hosted by Al-Ihsan Islamic center. (Photo submitted)

ha explores a very important theme in the religion of Islam: Sacrifice. The word Islam is defined as "submission to god,"

and sacrifice is a big part of that. Eid al-Adha commemorates a very important sacrifice in Islamic history. On this day, Muslims

believe that the prophet Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice his son. At the moment that Abraham attempted to ful-

fill the sacrifice, a ram was sent down in the place of his son, Ishmael. Muslims celebrate this event because of the devotion expressed by the prophet Abraham in this moment. And that is how this celebration got the name eid al Adha, otherwise known as the "celebration of sacrifice."

On this day Muslims also perform their own sacrifice. Muslims around the world continue the tradition of sacrificing a sheep, goat, or camel. The meat of these animals is usually divided up between family members and a portion is required to go to charity.

Prayers in Frogtown were held outdoors this year. Thousands of people gathered together to perform the Eid prayers and celebrate with their families. The field was quickly filled up, and by 7 a.m. the gathered people began chanting the traditional Takbeerat. Their chanting filled the air and could be heard miles away. After the chanting was over, everyone lined up for the prayers which were led by the Imam.

This specific gathering was hosted by Al-Ihsan Islamic center, one of the leading Islamic organizations in Minnesota.



Louie Moore has been president of the Major Taylor Bicycling Club of Minnesota for 22 years. He is a tireless advocate for cycling, promoting the sport in communities of color, and improving biking conditions across the city for all. Club rides meet at his home near 48th Street and Columbus Avenue in South Minneapolis. Moore was the first Black person to buy a home on his block, and has lived there for 57 years. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

Major Taylor Bicycling Club promotes cycling geared towards African American riders

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The Major Taylor Bicycling Club of Minnesota has been bringing diversity to Twin Cities cycling since it started in 1999.

Co-founded by Louie Moore and Walter Griffin, the nonprofit recreational/social club promotes cycling geared towards African American riders in Minneapolis and St. Paul, but anyone is welcome to ride – with a word of caution.

Moore, who has been club president since the beginning, said, "We ride fast."

The club roster has about 30 active members. Their Wednesday night and Saturday morning rides average 18-20 miles per hour, and usually cover 35 or so miles. Club members range in age from 50-80. They ride with bike shoes clipped in to their pedals, and wear matching lycra bike shorts and jerseys. Moore, at 80, is the oldest member.

Cycling interest growing in Black communities

Marshall "Major" Taylor was an American bike racer born in Indianapolis (1878-1932). He is considered the world's first Black sports superstar, but many people have never heard his name. By 1899, Major Taylor was the world cycling champion. He became American sprint champion one year later and also set several track cycling records. In the Jim Crow Era, he had to fight racial prejudice every step of the way just to get to the start line. Exhausted by his racing schedule and relentless racism, Taylor retired from cycling at age 32.

More than 70 bike clubs across the country now bear Major Taylor's name. According to Moore, "Interest in cycling within the Black community has skyrocketed in the last 10 years. Every large American city has a Major Taylor Bicycling Club.

Some have two."

Why join a club?

Cycling is an endurance sport with cardiovascular and respiratory health benefits. Moore said, "Because of racial inequities, a lot of people in the Black community have health problems. Cycling is a great way to counter that."

The club promotes the benefits of friendship and fellowship, too. Moore explained, "Many members have been with our club for years. In addition to biking, we enjoy having dinner together, going to cultural events, and traveling to biking destinations. Being a mixed group racially, it's been an education for all of us. Our bike group is made up of people who love to communicate with each other."

This summer, there will be a new recreational club forming for riders who don't ride as far or as fast as the established group. That club will be led by Major Taylor ride coordinator Walter Griffin and will include art rides, dinner rides, and local history rides. Visit the website for more details at www.majortaylormn.org.

Lifelong dedication to cycling

Moore worked as an aide to former Minnesota congressman Martin Sabo from 1988-2007 and, among many other things, served as a strong advocate for cycling. He persuaded Metro Transit to put bike racks on their buses, and CEOs of big businesses to install bike facilities on their campuses so people could ride to work more easily.

As a member of the Minneapolis Bike Advisory Committee, Moore was behind the push to get dedicated bike lanes on Minneapolis city streets. And through the years, his has been a persistent, influential voice pro-

moting cycling in communities of color.

Cycling events

The Southside Sprint had hoped to return July 18, 2021 for another day of racing and celebrating the neighborhood around 48th Street and Chicago Avenue, but it was cancelled. The Southside Sprint course is 3/4 of a mile long. This year would have been its 10th anniversary run.

More at <https://bigwatersclassic.com/>.

The event typically serves as the Minnesota State Criterium Championship. A criterium is a bike race made up of a set number of laps on public roads closed to normal traffic. Riders race in tight formation at high speed, testing both strength and agility.

Members of the Major Taylor Bicycling Club of Minnesota always ride in the race wearing brightly colored kits (jerseys and shorts) designed by St. Paul artist and club member Seitu Jones.

On Aug. 21, the bike club will provide ride marshals for an event called the Ride for Reparations. This 34-mile leisurely ride through the Twin Cities is educational in nature. Riders will come away with a better understanding of African American history in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The legacy of slavery lives on in America – expressed in segregated housing, poor schools, mass incarceration, and higher crime rates in communities of color. The mission of Ride 4 Reparations is to be part of healing racial inequities in America. All ride participants agree to donate to an organization working to improve the lives of Black Americans; a list of national and local partners is provided.

For more information or to register, email harold@ride4reparations.com.

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The Church of St. Andrew 1927-2019

By JANE McCLURE

Como Hoofstock building project proceeds

"Hoofstock" may sound like a music festival for four-legged friends. But hoofstock animals are animals that have hooves for feet. African hoofstock animals at Como Zoo live in their own building, which is getting some improvements.

The St. Paul City Council July 7 approved financing and spending plans to establish a geothermal heating project for the Como Zoo Hoofstock Building. The budget amount is in the amount of \$528,475, financed by an internal loan and the transfer of annual program funding for capital maintenance projects.

The city's Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget Committee approved the funding earlier this summer.

The St. Paul Department of Parks and Recreation needs to purchase and install a replacement for the heating system in the hoofstock building at Como Zoo and Conservatory. With the help of Sustainable Energy Savings, Inc. and city staff, a budget plan was developed to install a new geothermal heating system. Parks will use additional funds for the installation of the geothermal heating unit, geothermal well, backup electrical boiler, and associated pumps, piping and valves to improve the heat distribution in the building. The project is to be completed this year. Energy savings from the project will be used to repay the loan.

City services opening back up

City services continue to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. The St. Paul City Council July 28 approved \$86,034 to increase recreation center hours. Another \$70,000 is allocated to increase staff capacity for the St. Paul Public Library system.

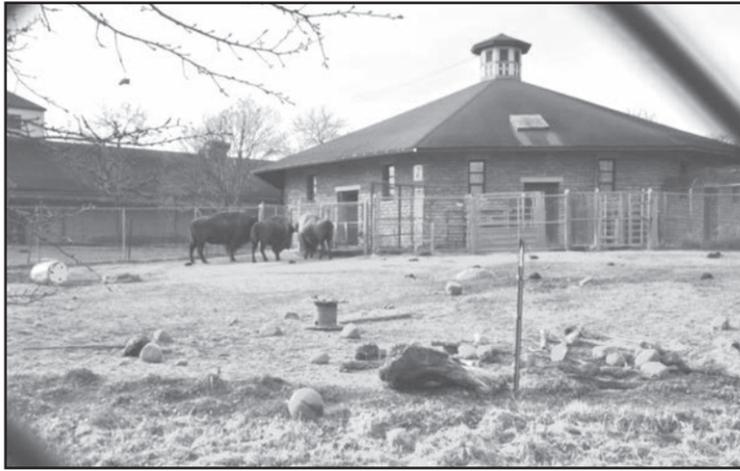
Uncertainties about when city services could be restored prompted the city council last year to set aside funds for some city services in the 2021 budget. Recreation centers throughout St. Paul have been adding back hours and activities over the past several months. The \$86,034 was placed in a contingency account by the city council, to be held until it was needed.

Another \$70,000 was set aside for library staffing. All libraries are currently open.

The council uses a set contingency policy to decide when to release funds. It requires that revenue projects be reviewed on a set schedule.

If the June revenue forecast

{ Monitor in a Minute }



A geothermal heating system will be installed at the Como Zoo Hoofstock Building. (Photo submitted)

was greater than one percent of the budget, use of contingency dollars can be approved. But that forecast showed that there wouldn't be enough surplus revenue.

One option would have been to check the September forecast and see if that met the one percent threshold. What allowed the council to release funds now is that the funds the city is receiving from the American Rescue Plan Act. The contingency plan was developed before the federal infusion of funds was contemplated, so the council felt comfortable releasing money for recreation centers and libraries.

Rondo study

Street, bike and pedestrian accommodations and transit could all see changes if a proposed Rondo Neighborhood Streets Improvement Study is funded. The St. Paul City Council July 7 voted to seek federal funding for the study, through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Transportation grant program. The city would receive \$2 million for a three-year study if it wins approval.

The study area is bounded by University Avenue, Rice Street, John Ireland Boulevard, Selby Avenue and Hamline Avenue.

Opposition to higher speeds on Highway 280

Plans to raise the posted speed on Highway 280 from 55 to 60 miles per hour are drawing opposition from area neighborhood associations. Union Park District Council (UPDC) July 7 joined the opposition, sending its concerns to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). UPDC joins St. An-

thony Park community Council and the Prospect Park Neighborhood Association in Minneapolis in raising red flags in objecting to the change from 55 to 60 miles per hour.

The vote follows action in June by the district council's Transportation Committee, which recommended opposition.

MnDOT wishes to raise the speed limit on Highway 280 to 60 miles per hour and to remove the intersection of Broadway Avenue with Highway 280. The committee and district council took no action on the change proposed for Broadway, which connects to a large Minneapolis commercial-industrial district.

MnDOT initially planned to raise the speed limit without community input, but instead has been meeting with neighborhood groups this summer.

Highway 280 was built in the 1950s and connected to Interstate 94 in 1968. After the Interstate 35W bridge collapsed in 2007, Highway 280 was designated as the detour route, resulting in its temporary conversion into a full freeway. The intersections at County Road B, Broadway Street, Walnut Street, and Rose-lawn Avenue were closed.

After the new I-35W bridge opened in September 2008, many of Highway 280's at-grade intersections were not reopened. In October of 2008, MnDOT proposed to make the post-collapse changes permanent and to further reduce local access along Highway 280. Highway 280 now functions more like an expressway, according to Transportation Committee members.

Opposition centers on several points. One is that motorists exit Highway 280 onto neighborhood streets at high rates of speed. Even a small speed in-

crease can increase vehicular noise and pollution.

Because Highway 280 has a lot of truck traffic, and trucks accelerate and decelerate slower than cars, this creates a wide range of speeds on the highway already.

A key point is that MnDOT is working on a project to revamp I-94, the Reimagine I-94 project. Committee and district council members said any speed limit change should be considered with that project and not before.

A letter outlining the concerns was sent to MnDOT.

Juneteenth is city, county holiday

Juneteenth has taken another step in its status as a city holiday, with St. Paul City Council action July 14 on employee contracts.

The vote amends worker contracts and gives city employees June 19 the day off each year. If the day falls on a weekend, a weekday will be taken. It will affect city facilities as St. Paul's other 10 holidays do, with some facilities closed, workers taking the day off and parking meters shut down.

In June Mayor Melvin Carter declared Juneteenth as a city holiday.

The city actions complement Ramsey County, which in June directed the county manager to take steps to make Juneteenth Day a recognized county holiday. County and city officials now join with other communities in pressing for Juneteenth to be a state holiday.

Both city and county commemorations will start in 2022. This year the day was marked in St. Paul on June 18 because June 19 was a Saturday.

The Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It declared that all enslaved people in Confederate states shall be set free from slavery. Many Texas slaveowners refused to follow that order.

It was not until June 19, 1865 that Union General Gordon Granger and his troops entered Galveston. Granger declared the immediate release and freedom of those who were still enslaved. The first celebration, known as Jubilee Day, was held in 1866. Texas was the first state to declare the state holiday, in 1980.

Juneteenth drew renewed attention after the 2020 killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. It is now a federal holiday as a result of action by President Joe Biden.

Development ROUNDUP



By JANE McCLURE

Project receives funding

The Metropolitan Council has awarded \$2.8 million in polluted-site cleanup grants that promote redevelopment and economic opportunity in the region, including funding for a unique Midway building. Redevelopment through the Livable communities program will create jobs and invite investment in market-rate and affordable housing, as well as industrial and commercial space at vacant and idled properties, the council stated in a news release.

The current round of grants awarded is expected to encourage other public and private investment, help clean up 54 acres, and produce and preserve more than 800 affordable housing units.

"Contaminated sites, or brownfields, are a threat to the environment, public health, and the economy," said Chair Charlie Zelle. "The Livable Communities program is one of the tools we have to help clean up these idled sites and put them back into productive use."

Grants fall into three categories including contamination cleanup and site investigation. A third category, Seeding Equitable Environmental Development (SEED), is investment that encourages development within and near areas of concentrated poverty that have potential for job or housing creation.

Almost 60 Twin Cities regional communities participate in the program.

One of the contamination cleanup projects funded is 1222 University Ave. The former St. Paul Casket Company Building recently earned a spot on the National Register of Historic Places. Developers received \$174,600 toward cleanup at the vacant one-acre site that was used for storage and various businesses in recent years. Plans call for redevelopment of the existing building into 33 affordable apartments and 30-market rate apartments.



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We're Back!

At Home moving into former Walmart

By JANE McCLURE

Two of the area's largest empty "big box" retailers are poised for change. Soon the former Midway Walmart will reopen as At Home, a home goods store. And, a mixed-use development of five to seven-story structures is eyed for the former Rice Street Sears site.

Both Walmart and Sears closed their doors in 2019.

Work is well underway at the former Walmart at 1450 University Ave. The new building occupant is part of a company based in Plano, Texas; the city issued a building permit for the property in May.

Minneapolis-based Kraus Anderson owns the Midway Marketplace shopping center where At Home will open its doors in the weeks ahead. The sale price was \$31 million.

At Home is in a growth mode, and has more than 220 stores.

As for Sears, preliminary plans came forward this summer. The 14-acre site includes a building that is almost 60 years old. The planning process will



At Home is moving into the former Walmart space at 1450 University Ave. (Photo by Tessa M. Christensen)

not be like most planning process that go through the Planning Commission or Board of Zoning Appeals. The Sears site is in the Capitol Area and is under the purview of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB) or "CAAPB Board."

Property owner, New York-based Seritage Growth Properties, submitted its preliminary redevelopment plans to the board this summer. Plans call for a mix of multistory apartment and office buildings around a central park, and the restoration of the

area's historic street grid.

Buildings would be five to seven stories tall. Development would likely be a few years off as the site needs a detailed environmental review. About 600 housing units are eyed, with underground parking and a parking facility.

Seritage owns almost a dozen former Sears stores around the United States. It is independent from Sears' corporate structure, and serves as owner-developer of the shuttered stores.

Will Midway Center be used for parking?

>> from 3

an interim basis. At past meetings, land use committee members, some committee members have expressed impatience with the slow pace of development and now, demolition.

A plan to redevelop the 35-acre shopping center site has been in place since 2016. The master plan calls for hotel, retail, office and residential space. Plan amendments were presented to the district council in spring 2020, weeks before the civil unrest. The city council was told this summer that plan amendments will be brought forward in the future. The property is owned by RK Midway/RD Management out of New York City, and is under a lease agreement with Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC.

Failing inspections

Since the civil unrest, the shopping center and the former Big Top Liquors store had had numerous inspections by city

staff. Both structures are condemned and considered unsafe.

Marcia Moermond, city legislative hearing officer, said the structure is in a substantial nuisance condition, meaning that more than \$5,000 will be needed to take the building down. Demolition is estimated at more than \$200,000.

Magner said the land value is \$10,251,200 million in property taxation. The damaged building is worth about \$1,000.

The damage in parts of the shopping center is extensive. "Large areas of the secondary structure, open web steel joists and roof decking have failed and collapsed leaving open areas in the roof. There is potential for additional collapse of the roof due to gravity loading," one city staff report stated. Other parts of the structure including structural members and roof beams could collapse. Part of the roof have collapsed, leaving the building exposed to the elements. HVAC

units add load stress to other parts of the roof.

Overstressed masonry on the building's east wall could collapse into the Pascal Street right-of-way.

Several intentional fires have been set inside the property, and there have been repeated break-ins by people seeking shelter or items to take. Locks have been broken several times. Rotting bags of dog food inside of one store have attracted rats and other rodents. Open sewer lines have not been capped.

Another report stated, "Several walls have been breached so squatters could tunnel themselves into other portions of the building that were otherwise secure. This is extremely dangerous for firefighters trying to perform search and rescue efforts as they could easily become disorientated of their location in the building."

Breaches in a wall and floors could cause people to fall into the building basement.

Social club for Muslim men coming to 1619 University

By JANE McCLURE

A building that has recently drawn neighborhood complaints is poised for a new life - 1619 University Ave. could become a social club for Muslim men. But the building needs some work before a condemnation order is lifted and a new use can go in. Any new club operator needs to reassure residential neighbors to the north that it will operate in a way that doesn't disrupt the neighborhood.

Correction orders for the building were the focus of a July 28 St. Paul legislative hearing. Various code issues have to be addressed by the building owner before the building can be occupied again, and the club use can start. In the meantime, a reinspection is set for late August.

The matter goes to the St. Paul City Council this fall for final action.

Legislative Hearing Officer

Marcia Moermond said the building owner is responsible for behaviors there. Among her suggestions were improved lighting and cameras. She also suggested neighboring residential properties have cameras installed.

Built in 1987, it was originally the home of the Pizza Papa restaurant, where patrons could dine on a rooftop deck overlooking University. The building later housed a salon and then a barber/beauty shop. In September 2019 a limited liability corporation called SmartBar LLC registered at the address. It was to be a business incubator. But those plans were set aside.

The building owner, Salon Elise Inc./Elisa Sloves, has a tenant who wishes to use the building as a social club.

James Peroutka, an inspector with the city's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI), said there have been complaints

about recent use of the building as a hookah lounge and as an after-hours club. Complaints started in July 2020. Those uses aren't allowed by the city.

Neighbor Natalie Singer said issues began in July 2020, with large groups of people in the building parking lot and University-Sherburne alley until 2-4 a.m. Loud music, noise and gunshots rattled neighbors. She said neighbors wouldn't have problems with a club use if activities occurred during normal business hours.

"It's been a year of issues," she said.

Attorney Ryan Case spoke on behalf of the planned new use. The planned social club for Muslim men wouldn't permit such uses, and would not have groups smoking outside. Nor would tobacco products or alcohol be served or sold.



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Briefs



Mississippi Market staff with food donations. (Photo submitted)

Mississippi Market increases food donations, food justice efforts

Mississippi Market has launched a new food donation program to help meet the increase in hunger the community is facing, which is estimated to have increased 300-400% due to the impacts of COVID-19. Community organizations and nonprofits can now request a fresh produce or healthy food drop from the co-op. "We understand that a just food system needs food to be accessible and nutritious as well as culturally appropriate. We've learned from our food-shelf partners that there is a gap to fill when they cannot access dietary-specific, sustainably grown, or culturally relevant products," say co-op representatives. "This is a gap we are able to help fill with donations from local, organic and sustainable farmers and makers. Since we started this new program on July 1, we have had the opportunity to donate fresh blueberries, tomatoes and cucumbers to East Side Elders for their monthly free grocery distribution and bananas, peaches and granola bars to the East Side YMCA for their children's after-school program."

Beyond food donations, the co-op is committed to expanding understanding and taking action around food justice. There is a new section on their website featuring food donation and food rescue programs, connections to local hunger relief, educational resources, and rotating ways to engage by donating, volunteering or contacting your representatives. Learn more at msmarket.coop/

community/food-justice.

Party for the Parks honors Champions of St. Paul Parks

The Saint Paul Parks Conservancy held its Party for the Parks, on Wednesday, July 28 at the Wigginton Pavilion at Harriet Island Park, recognizing three local individuals and one volunteer organization as park champions with special awards.

Park Volunteer of the Year: Debby Smith

Debby Smith has planted and tended gardens at Como for 14 years, starting with the East Gateway Garden, then adding the round garden at the Lexington walking bridge and the big one by the lake. "Every house I've lived in has had large gardens," said Smith. "The key is to weed every day so they don't get out of control. When we moved to Woodbury last year, I gave away two of the Como gardens to volunteers who have been helping with the annual planting and mulching, but I kept the lakeside garden." Smith has cheerfully worked more than 823 hours in the park. She is one of more than 160 Garden Stewards who plant and care for 46 gardens across Saint Paul parks.

Changemaker: Khalique Rogers
Khalique Rogers became a passionate advocate for creating greenspace and a community gathering space for the Midway area during his years at Gordon Parks High School. Rogers testified before funders and government groups with a powerful narrative. Working with the Trust for

Public Land, Saint Paul Parks and Recreation and the newly formed Friends of Midway Peace Park, he helped bring together resources and neighborhood advocates. The big day came on June 15 of this year with the official grand opening of Midway Peace Park at 416 Griggs Street. The basketball courts were full, community booths filled the upper plaza, and both playgrounds were full of happy youth of all ages enjoying this new three-acre park. Midway Peace Park serves both as a destination along the Green Line, which has few parks along its route, and as an important local park for the neighborhood, Gordon Parks High School, High School for the Recording Arts, and residents of the adjacent Skyline Tower.

Also recognized were Golden Shovel Award winner Priscilla Brewster and Park Booster of the Year winner, The Saint Paul Garden Club.

New executive director at MCN

The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (2314 University Ave.) board of directors unanimously voted to appoint Nonoko Sato as executive director, effective August 1, 2021. She steps into this leadership role after serving as the Minnesota Council of Non-Profits' (MCN) associate director since January 2018, succeeding current and founding executive director Jon Pratt, who announced his forthcoming retirement in December 2020.

"I see a responsibility for MCN to harness our power and privilege to ensure Minnesota's robust nonprofit sector has what it needs to fulfill their important work towards a just, joyful, and equitable world," said Sato.

Low-cost insurance

Minnesotans who received unemployment income at any time in 2021 now can access extremely low-cost health insurance through MNsure. The new benefits were implemented as part of the American Rescue Plan legislation enacted earlier this year. Some Minnesotans can find a plan with a premium as low as \$0 per month. Visit MNsure.org and select "Find free help."

Like our Facebook page. You may win tickets to Ren Fest.

Volunteers 55+ Needed

Earn a tax-free stipend, mileage reimbursement, training, recognition and pride know you are making a difference in your community by helping seniors stay independent and active. Opportunities also exist working with children in schools as a Foster Grandparent. To learn more, contact Jacqueline James at 651.310.9455, Jacqueline.James@lssmn.org.

**Ribbon cut at Lloyd's Pharmacy**

Lloyd's Pharmacy owner Jim Stage (back center) and his family officially cut the ribbon of their rebuilt pharmacy on Aug. 5, 2021. Celebrating with them were Mayor Melvin Carter (far left), past owner Ron Johnson (second from right), and Midway Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Chad Kulas (far right). The Stage family includes mother Cally and children Evelyn, Gracen, Elliot, Lydia and Edmund. The longtime neighborhood pharmacy burned to the ground during the civil unrest on May 29, 2020, and was rebuilt to model the original building. >> More photos at MonitorSaintPaul.com (Photo submitted)

Plan It

Como Relays Aug. 18 & 25

Every Wednesday in August Run Minnesota is hosting Como Park Relays at the intersection of Horton Ave. and Lexington Pkwy. Kids race (race 1/4 mile or 1/2 mile) start at 6:30 p.m.; no registration for kids race. Relay race starts at 6:45 p.m. (Aug. 18: 10 X 1000 meters, Aug. 25: 6 X 1 mile). Relay runners must register to get a bib number. The races are free and donations are accepted. View results at www.raceberryjam.com. "This series of races (which began in 1974) are a great way to get in shape and improve your fitness," say organizers. "All level of runners are encouraged to compete and have fun. If you don't have a partner, just show up early and we will find you one." For more information, contact (651)489-2252 or breadmanrunner@yahoo.com.

Como Woodland August Nature Tour Aug. 21

Learn about the Summer plants and animals of Como Woodland's forests and prairies. Start your tour through the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom (CWOC) at 1221 Wynne Ave. (near the Como Regional Park Pool). Como Woodland Advisors Joan McKearnan, professor of biology and environmental science, Anoka-Ramsey College; Britt Forsberg, University of Minnesota Extension Educator; Teri Heyer, Program Specialist-Urban Connections, U.S. Forest Service; and Lisa Held, Environmental Educator will reveal what they know about CWOC's plants, pollinators, birds, animal tracks (and more) at various information stations along the CWOC trails. RSVP at dmrobinsoncwoc@gmail.com.

The CWOC has 17-acres with eight Minnesota plant communities and a trail system featuring 27 numbered posts with QR codes that correspond with the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom's short guide; The full guidebook is online at: comowoodlandoutdoorclassroom.org.

Classic car show Aug. 21

Jehovah Lutheran Church invites classic car enthusiasts to a popup classic vehicle collector show in the church parking lot at

1566 Thomas Avenue, St. Paul, from 6-8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 21.

Owners of classic cars, trucks or motorcycles are invited to bring their vehicle with a camp chair and non-alcoholic beverage to enjoy the fellowship. It's free. Fans of classic vehicles who don't happen to own one? They're welcome too, of course — likewise all free. Please bring a mask.

Black Business Is Beautiful market Sept. 11

The Black Business Is Beautiful pop-up market for BIPOC and Black-owned businesses continues on the second Saturday of each month from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is held outdoors at The Case (767 N Eustis St.) in good weather months. More at blackbusinessbeautiful.org.

Community dinner Sept. 18 benefits Reading Partners

Eureka Compass Vegan Food (ECVF), The Twin Cities Vegan Chef Collective (TTCVCC), and Hamline Church United Methodist (HCUM) present a day of food and art in support of Reading Partners Twin Cities. Chefs Colin Anderson (Eureka Compass) and John Stockman (XmarX) will be serving vegan pizzas from the HCUM community, wood fired oven. This will be a "Pay What You Want/Can" Community Dinner, with half of all proceeds going to help support the incredible efforts of Reading Partners Twin Cities.

This community dinner will take place (rain or shine) at HCUM, 1514 Englewood Ave. around the outdoor, wood-fired oven.

Art festival Sept. 23-25

The Solidarity Street Gallery will hold the second edition of its one-of-a-kind art and cultural festival along Payne Ave. on the east side of St. Paul on Sept. 23-25. The festival will bring together artists, performers, poets, entrepreneurs, business owners, civic leaders, community organizations, neighbors and visits for important conversations about justice, equity, and environmental stewardship. More at www.solidaritystreetgallery.org.

A colorful advertisement for the 2021 Minnesota Renaissance Festival. It features a central shield with the number '50' and the word 'Anniversary' below it. Two knights on horseback are shown on either side of the shield. A banner at the bottom reads "We can't wait to Celebrate!". Below the banner, it lists activities: "Full Armored Joust • Live Unicorn", "Food fit for Royalty • Mermaids", "Fairies • Turkey Legs", and "Endless Artisans for Shopping". At the bottom, it says "2021 Minnesota Renaissance Festival" and provides dates: "Weekends (Sat. & Sun.) + Labor Day Aug. 21 - Oct. 3 + Festival Friday, Oct. 1st", "9am - 7pm • Rain or Shine", and "RenaissanceFest.com • Free Parking".

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What is role of artists in community? >> from 1



Marcela Lorca, artistic director of Ten Thousand Things said, "I keep thinking back to a play I directed at the Guthrie almost 10 years ago called "Caroline, or Change." There was a song in it with a refrain, "Change comes fast and change comes slow, but change comes." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

TTT actors, staff, and board members are used to this idea of seeing each other with the lights on. "Still," Lorca said, "the pandemic and the Uprising last summer really made us take a deeper look at how we operate."

A time of deep racial reckoning

She continued, "In particular, a letter authored by more than 250 BIPOC theater artists last June was a call to action. The letter spoke directly to the indignities and racism that BIPOC, and in particular Black theater professionals, face on a daily basis. Hundreds more names have since been added to the letter, which is called 'We see you, White American theater.'

"The letter seemed geared toward large institutions, like Broadway houses, but it applied to everyone. Many American theater groups started to issue anti-racist statements, and to do deep racial reckoning."

Read the full letter at <https://www.weseeyouwat.com/statement>.

Lorca and her colleagues at TTT embraced the challenge to go deeper. Actors, staff, and board members gathering monthly through Zoom last year to create what they call, "A living, breathing document." It incorporates anti-racism practices including: to produce plays from a wide range of BIPOC perspectives, to engage more BIPOC artists as playwrights, composers, directors, choreographers, stage managers, designers, actors, etc., to employ intentional color-conscious casting, to center BIPOC voices and BIPOC history, and to heal.

Furthermore, they've agreed to continue revisiting, reviewing and revising the document and to assess their progress twice yearly. The an-

ti-racism practices are a commitment to all of their artists, staff, board members, volunteers, community partners, and audiences.

Be brave, talk to one another

The anti-racism committee at TTT is called "On Belonging."

Lorca said, "The exercise of writing our anti-racism statement allowed us to come together and have each person share their point of view. As we crafted the statement, we asked ourselves, 'What does this word really mean to you?'"

"It's very important right now to have honest conversations, and to be able to ask questions. To be candid about what we do and don't understand. Different people use different vocabularies. There are generational gaps, and there are gaps across cultural lines. It takes courage to ask questions. Enhance your sense of curiosity with kindness, in a spirit of wanting to understand another person more deeply."

Role of artists in community

When Lorca opens a newspaper, she wishes that the Arts Section wasn't buried in the back. She said, "I once asked a reporter at the *Star Tribune*, 'Why don't you ever put us on the front page? I feel like artists are the messengers of culture, and that their consciousness is often visionary. Artists are wrestling with the human and social issues of our times. That process has the power to lead others into real and fruitful conversations. Through art, a common ground can be found that is so needed in our world right now."

"When members of an audience watch a challenging play together and there's a discussion afterwards, they

become open to share much more than just the space."

We need each other

Lorca continued, "We are social creatures – we need each other. A lot of people have suffered from extreme isolation during COVID-19, and the negative mental health consequences are very real."

To counter that isolation, TTT launched a pandemic series called "Ten Thousand Voices." They sought stories from people living in correctional and assisted living facilities: the very people who would usually be the audience became the storytellers. TTT actors read the stories; a selection was recorded on video and all were recorded in podcast form.

Of the 44 stories TTT received, Lorca said, "There wasn't one bad piece."

"It is very meaningful for people to be listened to. It's an essential human need to know that you matter."

Experience the Ten Thousand Voices podcast here: <https://tenthousandthings.org/season/ten-thousand-voices>

Change comes

Reflecting on the challenges of running a theater company during this last year, Lorca said, "This is a difficult time, but it has invited us to learn so many new things."

"Selective history has been taught in text books and classes; whole cultures and events have been ignored. Only one version of many stories has been told, and this has caught up with us. It's time to learn and share new and untold stories."

"The process of racial reckoning gives me so much hope."



Wrap up Summer at the Bell



Bugs: Outside the Box

On view through September 12

Visit the larger than life new exhibit *Bugs: Outside the Box!* This exhibit features the rarely seen long-arm beetle more than ten feet in height, a collection of heavily armored stag beetles with impressive jaws and horns as long as your arm, and insight into the amazing intricacy of each insect on display.



More Bugs at the Bell

Visit our outdoor "classroom"

We've got more bugs for you to explore! Step outside the Bell Museum and into the Learning Landscape to learn more about the many insects that live in Minnesota. Be sure to check out an Ento Explorer pack, safely catch insects, learn about different insect behaviors, and more!



Explore the Cosmos

Immerse yourself in one of five planetarium shows

Check out our newest shows! Learn the techniques researchers use to discover Earth-like planets in *A Planet for Goldilocks*, explore new ways to protect our water in a Bell Museum original production, *Minnesota Water Stories* and journey to the planets beyond our solar system and to the edge of our visible universe in *Far Out!*

Exhibition and programs generously supported by



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