

Rebirth reenergizes hub for arts in Lowertown

AZ Gallery's new owners expand access for artists of all abilities

By Anne Murphy

Lowertown's Argyle Zebra (AZ) Gallery has been reframed. Artists Amy Clark and Beth Stoneberg have assumed ownership of the 2,000-square-foot space on the ground floor of the Northern Warehouse at 308 Prince St. They also changed its structure from a member-owned artist cooperative to a non-profit organization.

"The AZ was having trouble rebounding from the pandemic," said Clark, a Macalester-Groveland painter. "After more than 25 years as an artist cooperative, we dissolved and reemerged as a community gallery owned and operated by women."

"It's like the universe gave us the moment," said Stoneberg, a painter who lives in Lowertown. "This is what we were supposed to do, to reimagine the gallery and to be here for the community not as individuals but as artists."

"Our heart is in the Lowertown community," Clark said. "Lowertown has always been an arts district. We want to make sure it doesn't lose that identity, and we've gotten a great response from the community and the artists."

For the past several years, AZ Gallery has hosted "Fire & Ice," an art exhibit held in conjunction with the Saint Paul Winter Carnival. This January, the AZ has opened "Defying Sameness," an exhibit of 56 works by 56 artists. The art does not follow a theme. In fact, "it disrupts expectations," Clark said. "It's about artists allowing their imaginations to break free, persuading others that they see something completely different."

Clark and Stoneberg have been affiliated with the AZ for years. Clark joined the co-op in 2004 and Stoneberg in 2008. "It was an organization where the membership sort of ebbed and flowed," Stoneberg said. Artists would pay a yearly fee, help



Beth Stoneberg and Amy Clark of the AZ Gallery are working to expand opportunities for artists to show, sell and share their art. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

AZ GALLERY ▶5

GABA gearing up for June 4 return of Grand Old Day

Street fest will mark its 50th year in 2023

By Jane McClure

After a three-year hiatus, Grand Old Day will return on June 4 to once again herald the beginning of summer in Saint Paul. More than two dozen Grand Avenue Business Association (GABA) members celebrated the announcement at the business group's annual meeting on January 19.

"It's exciting to be back," said Brian Wagner, who is cochairing the street festival this year with Chris Jensen, another member of the GABA board.

"We are excited about the return of Grand Old Day," Jensen said. He recalled attending Grand Old Day as a child with his family. However, he and Wagner emphasized that the festival cannot happen without the support of the community. A core group of about a dozen people are working on the event, but more are needed. Volunteers do not have to be Grand Avenue business owners or employees to help out.

Grand Old Day almost did not happen in 2019. GABA had canceled the event on April 23 of that year for a lack of funds and

GRAND OLD DAY RETURNS ▶2

St. Thomas eyes south campus site for new hockey-basketball arena

Benefactor's \$75M gift sets in motion yearlong effort to design facility

By Jane McClure

A \$75 million gift from longtime benefactors Lee and Penny Anderson to the University of Saint Thomas has launched a yearlong effort to draw up plans for a new hockey and basketball arena on UST's south campus. The donation has also ignited a discussion of

what the new 4,000- to 6,000-seat multi-purpose facility would mean for the adjacent Macalester-Groveland and Merriam Park neighborhoods.

Saint Thomas students, faculty, staff and alumni packed the atrium of UST's Anderson Student Center for the January 17 announcement. Representatives of the four teams that will use the facility—men's and women's hockey and men's and women's basketball—cheered the news. Coaches and student athletes described the facility as a game changer for the university, which moved from NCAA Division III to Division I two years ago.

"How great is this?" said Rico Blasi, men's hockey coach.

With the arena, UST will be playing its home hockey games on campus for the first time ever. The men's and women's teams play their games at Saint Thomas Academy in Mendota Heights currently. Home basketball games will move from Schoenecker Arena on the north campus. That facility will continue to be used for volleyball, intramural athletics and physical education classes.

UST president Rob Vischer and UST vice president and athletic director Phil Esten described the new facility as a major step

forward, not just for the athletics department but for the university as a whole as it strives to become a nationally leading Catholic university.

"We've only begun the journey," Esten said.

The \$75 million is not only the largest gift in UST's history, it is also the largest gift to any university in Minnesota. Lee Anderson said that he and his wife Penny were "thrilled" to make such a generous gift. They have given about \$140 million to Saint Thomas in recent years toward the

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EDUCATION



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volunteers. But when a group called Grand Old Day Anyway rallied to get some kind of event going, GABA regrouped and was able to raise the necessary funds and pull a festival together for the first Sunday in June.

The COVID-19 pandemic scuttled the festival in 2020, '21 and '22. Lack of time for planning and rising security costs were other factors. But for the three years it was not held, Grand Old Day 2023 would be the 50th annual.

Planning and fundraising for the festival are well underway. Organizers in 2019 were able to raise more than \$72,000 in five weeks. Wagner said that with more time, organizers are confident they can raise that amount and more in 2023. Their goal is to have \$100,000 in hand by early February.

Grand Old Day organizers received the support of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council for a city block party permit earlier in January. The Summit Hill Association will act on the request in February.

One big challenge will be paying for security. The Saint Paul Police Department has raised its festival security costs in re-



Sheila Garland spun partner Anthony Kaczor as they tripped the light fantastic in front of one of the music stages during the 45th annual Grand Old Day in 2018.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

cent years. Parade security is another huge need with the risk of motorists bypassing barricades and hitting parade participants and spectators. Police costs last year sidelined the White Bear Avenue Parade, and they were a factor in the demise of the venerable Rice Street Festival.

Grand Old Day security costs have risen from about \$40,000 in 2019 to \$125,000 for 2023. Wagner said talks are underway with the Saint Paul City Council and Mayor

Melvin Carter's office to see if that amount can be reduced.

Along with the parade, several other events will return. One is the two-mile run, which will start in the Mac Market area and end at Dale Street. Live music, beer gardens, a battle of the teenage bands, a children's area, an art fair, car show and community service fair are also being planned. Organizers are also looking at ways to assist small businesses who would

like to take advantage of the crowds.

Grand Old Day organizers are hoping to offer a wider variety of live music. "We've heard from many people wanting that," Wagner said. An LGBT Pride Stage is in the works. June is Pride Month, Wagner said, and Saint Paul does not have any kind of celebration. GABA is also working with the city's Parks and Recreation Department on several featured events, including pickleball and giant cornhole or beanbag tossing tournaments.

Jensen is president of Axia Home Loans at 1272 Grand Ave. Wagner is a real estate agent with the local office of Coldwell Banker Burnet. They are hoping GABA realizes some financial benefit from the event. Any revenue raised will help the business association with member outreach, Grand Avenue beautification and other business association needs, they said.

GABA no longer has its own staff or office, so the business association has looked to the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce for organizational support. The Chamber has helped GABA with a strategic plan and staffing needs. The organizers still need volunteers and sponsors. For more information, visit grandave.com.

Residents seek safer way to cross between Lexington Landing buildings

Skyway, raised crosswalk among suggestions made

By Jane McClure

Residents of Lexington Landing worry about speeding vehicles and pedestrian safety when crossing the rerouted section of Lexington Parkway that divides the two halves of the senior apartment complex. They are asking for

safety improvements at the site, such as a raised crosswalk or even a skyway between the development's two buildings.

The Highland District Council's Transportation Committee heard those requests on January 17. It is asking Lexington Landing developer J.A. Wedum Foundation and the Ramsey County and Saint Paul public works departments to look at the situation and bring back solutions.

"There's no easy way at all for people to get across the street," said Lexington Land-

ing resident Vera Wenzel, one of several people who attended the meeting either in person or virtually.

She and other residents worry about crossing Lexington at West Seventh and Albion streets to access services in the two buildings, as well as the prospect of people trying to make mid-block crossings.

The irony is that by solving one longtime problem, another may have been created. Lexington Landing is on what used to be the 5-acre Riverside School site. The Saint

Paul Public Schools sold the property to the Wedum Foundation and the school was torn down in August 2017.

Lexington was rerouted through the site as a means of dealing with the longstanding traffic hazards at the old West Seventh-Montreal-Lexington intersection. It was a change sought by the HDC.

The south end of Lexington was turned into a cul-de-sac and the parkway was

LEXINGTON LANDING ▶3

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Committee supports rebuilding Grand from Snelling to Fairview

Nearly \$7M project now enters final design stage for 2024 reconstruction

By Jane McClure

Plans to reconstruct Grand Avenue between Snelling and Fairview avenues next year are one step closer to completion following a January 9 vote by the Saint Paul Planning Commission's Transportation Committee. The vote ushered the project into its final design phase.

Joe Widing, project manager for the city's Department of Public Works, said open houses on the final design will be held in late January or early February, including one in person and one virtually. The project has been discussed over the past several months with residents, businesses, Macalester College, Hidden River Middle School and the Macalester-Groveland Community Council.

The \$6.69 million project will include new pavement, lighting, trees, sidewalks and underground utilities. It will be the first full reconstruction of that stretch of Grand in decades. The cost figure does not include reconstruction of the Grand-Snelling Intersection, which will be done and paid for by the Minnesota Department of Transportation since Snelling is a state highway.

No opposition has been raised to narrowing Grand from curb to curb from 56 to 48 feet. One lane of vehicular traffic in each direction would be retained, as would a left-turn lane between Macalester Street and Fairview. Most on-street parking would remain.

Boulevards and sidewalks would be widened, which is welcomed by pedestrians and businesses in the Mac Market area, many of which use the sidewalk for restaurant seating and display space.

Most of the discussion on January 9 centered on pedestrian safety and the Macalester College median that extends from Snelling to Macalester Street. According to one count, that median sees as many as

4,624 pedestrians using the three crossings a day. At peak times, as many as 200 people an hour use just one of the crossings. The busiest times are at 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

While the median provides a measure of safety for people crossing Grand, its current design has been criticized for not being accessible to people with disabilities.

Various reconstruction options for the median have been considered, including fewer crossing points. Raising the road surface to the top of the curb to create a "tabled crossing" also has been considered. The design is intended to calm traffic, but some say it could create issues for emergency vehicles and buses.

The median recommendation moving forward is to eliminate the center crossing and improve the western and eastern crossings with wider sidewalks, more signage and changes that meet the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. The crossing points would be raised, and the redesigned median would continue to have 14-foot traffic lanes on either side.

Corner bumpouts at Grand and Macalester Street will remain. The Grand-Cambridge intersection will have bumpouts on the northeast, southeast and southwest corners. A pedestrian island will be installed west of Cambridge where pedestrian counts near Hidden River (former Ramsey) show 405 crossings on school days.

Widing outlined a proposal to have a long median between Cambridge and Wheeler streets, which was dropped. The Macalester-Groveland Community Council's Transportation Committee said such a median could affect safety for bicyclists on Grand.

The Wheeler and Fairview intersections will also have new corner bumpouts to improve pedestrian safety.

Grand's traffic volumes have actually decreased in recent years. The most recent average daily vehicle count was 6,882 in 2022, down from 7,779 in 2017. The number had been as high as 10,000-12,000 vehicles per day in the past.

For detailed sketches of the reconstruction plans, see stpaul.gov/grandavenue.

2◀ LEXINGTON LANDING

rerouted between the two sides of the development site to cross West Seventh. The rerouted Lexington will eventually connect to Shepard Road via Elway Street. The connection was to be completed in 2022, but was pushed to this construction season.

"It was a challenging intersection to the south," said developer Scott Black. He called the change to the development plans to reroute Lexington a "gut punch," but said it was done to help address the traffic hazards at the old intersection.

The first phase of Lexington Landing, a five-story building, opened in December 2020 on the southern end of the site with about 154 independent living, assisted living and memory care units.

The second phase is a four-story building on the northern end of the site with about 90 independent living units for those 55 and older. It won city approval in 2021 and it expected to open this year.

"We want the buildings to operate as a campus," Black said. Some of the amenities within the two buildings include a bistro, commercial kitchen, barber shop, beauty parlor, fitness center, gym and pickleball courts.

Neighbors have complained that motorists speed up and down Lexington, including between the two apartment buildings,

and that there are traffic backups at the Lexington and West Seventh intersection. They also said turning vehicles at the intersection create hazards for pedestrians.

Committee member Mark Triola lives in the area and drives Lexington and West Seventh daily. He said speeding vehicles have ended up in his yard.

"Vehicles back up and people want to jump the stop light" at Lexington and West Seventh, Triola said.

"It's an interesting intersection," said Nick Fischer, project manager for Ramsey County Public Works. "It was built by the county, it was timed by the city and it's in the state right of way."

Ramsey County has discussed changing traffic signal timing with the city, but was told that would mean changing it for all of the other signals along West Seventh.

Committee members and residents discussed options for Lexington Landing at length. Building a tunnel beneath Lexington was explored, but dropped due to costs and underlying bedrock, Fischer said.

Black said the developers were originally told a skyway could not be allowed over a county road, but Fischer said the county could look at the idea. While a skyway would help Lexington Landing residents, Black said it would not improve traffic safety for everyone who lives, works or does business in the neighborhood.

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St. Paul to remove 4K more boulevard ash trees over next two years

By Jane McClure

Green rings painted on boulevard tree trunks indicates that another round of ash tree removal is underway in Saint Paul. As of mid-January crews had removed 119 out of nearly 2,504 trees that are scheduled to come down this year.

Many of the marked trees are in the West End neighborhood. At its January meeting, the West Seventh/Fort Road Federation discussed ways to encourage residents to save their ash trees. Federation board member Meg Duhr said the impact of losing so many trees must be considered, especially in terms of the loss of shade and the future increase in home energy bills.

"People may not be aware of options to save their trees and the potential costs," she said.

The district council's Community Engagement Committee met on January 19 to discuss efforts to save boulevard trees, even trees marked with green rings. District council members are trying to see if residents can voluntarily pay for continued treatment of boulevard trees if those trees have previously been in the city's tree treatment program.

Clare Cloyd, public service manager for the city's Department of Parks and Recreation, said the city has an online permit at tinyurl.com/58vjnk6f that includes the option to apply to treat boulevard trees. However, she said all approvals are made by city foresters. Generally, trees that have not been previously treated are no longer candidates to begin doing so. "We'd also stress that treatment for those that are approved does not guarantee the tree will live," she said.



The city's removal of boulevard ash trees will continue in 2023-2024. The stumps are currently being ground out the same year that the trees are removed, with replacement trees to be planted by the following spring. The city hopes to have its structured tree removal finished by 2026. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Structured removal sometimes takes out whole blocks of infested boulevard ash trees in the city at the same time. Saint Paul's management plan assumes that once trees are removed, the stumps will later be treated and removed. Then a variety of replacement trees will be planted.

"No parking" signs will go up several days prior to tree removal. Trees can be infested for three to five years before they begin to show signs of infestation. When the trees die off, their branches become brittle and start falling.

The West End is losing trees on streets including Tuscarora, Watson, View, Osceola, Toronto, Eleanor, Goodhue, Leech, Bay and Goodrich. Next year the neighborhood will lose large swaths of trees along Shepard Road near the High Bridge and Upper

Landing, and into downtown.

Ramsey Hill will also hear the chainsaws, with a lot of tree removals this year slated in an area bounded by Western, Portland, Dale and Selby. Summit Avenue will lose more than two dozen trees between Farrington Street and the Hill House.

Summit Hill also has several blocks with trees marked for removal, including ones on Grand, Lincoln, Goodrich and Fairmount.

Macalester-Groveland will lose trees on a stretch of Goodrich between Cretin and Cleveland, and four blocks of Macalester Street north of Randolph.

Highland residents on Bohland Place east of the golf course are set to also lose several trees. Merriam Park has trees marked for removal on Iglehart between

Fairview and Wheeler.

Another 1,511 boulevard ash trees are scheduled for structured removal in 2024. By the end of last year, around 22,280 ash trees had been removed from the city right-of-way.

Ash stumps are currently being ground out the same year that trees are removed, Cloyd said. The city has caught up on stump grinding through structured removal, and is working to catch up on a backlog of non-ash tree stumps.

Some trees will be replaced this fall, with more replaced in spring 2024. The goal is to wrap up the management plan tree removal and stump grinding by 2026, with tree replacement extending into 2027.

Homeowners cannot obtain permits to do the stump grinding themselves. They can apply to purchase replacement boulevard trees, but have to work with city staff to plant them.

Emerald ash borer was first found in Saint Paul in 2009 and in Minneapolis in 2010, and has since spread to every county in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It also can now be found in many counties around the state. Southeastern Minnesota has been especially hit hard.

The larvae of the insect bore beneath an ash tree's bark and feed on its circulatory system. Forestry staff for years used a combination of tree treatment and removal to save trees, but have moved the focus on tree removal and replacement for the past several years.

Property owners are responsible for the removal of infested ash trees on private property.

For a map of boulevard ash trees slated for structured removal in 2023 and 2024, see tinyurl.com/ywpyc83h.



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City sweetens homeowner assistance for Rondo descendants

Homebuyer and home rehab help is expanded for the progeny of those displaced by I-94 project

By Jane McClure

The city of Saint Paul's efforts to compensate Rondo neighborhood homeowners displaced six decades ago by the construction of I-94 took several key steps forward on January 11. The Saint Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, allocated \$2 million to a city program that provides help with home down payments. Some of those funds could be used for the city's new Inheritance Fund.

The Inheritance Fund was proposed by Mayor Melvin Carter as part of the 2023 city budget. It is meant to mitigate what is described as the lost generational wealth of direct descendants of families who were displaced when I-94 was built through the city's largely African American Rondo neighborhood in the 1960s.

"This targeted approach to Saint Paul's specific history allows the city to address homeownership disparities in a hyper-lo-

cal way that not only replaces lost wealth but contributes to community healing," a city staff report stated.

The city will work with the Rondo Community Land Trust to verify the residential history of people who say they are descendants of residents displaced by freeway construction.

The Inheritance Fund will draw on two existing city programs—the Downpayment Assistance Program and the Homeowner Rehab Loan Program. The City Council amended the guidelines for these two programs on January 11 in hopes that more people will be able to benefit from them. Tara Beard, the city's housing director, said the changes are intended to address the racial disparities in homeownership in the city.

The Downpayment Assistance Program, which began in 2020, has served more than 40 households earning no more than 60 percent of the area median income (AMI). To date, more than \$1.5 million has been spent through the program. Those funds were drawn from the city's Housing Trust Fund and the Minnesota Housing Finance Authority Community Homeownership Impact Fund.

Several changes were approved for the Downpayment Assistance Program. Now,

households earning up to 80 percent of AMI qualify for the program. And households that qualify for the Inheritance Fund can receive the assistance even if they earn as much as 100 percent of AMI. Also, the down payment assistance used to be limited to specific neighborhoods where residents faced displacement pressures. Now eligible properties can be anywhere in Saint Paul.

The down payment assistance can cover down payments, closing costs and property inspection fees. The amount of assistance varies. The typical award is \$40,000, but an award can increase to \$110,000 under certain conditions. First-generation homeowners can receive an additional \$10,000 in assistance. Households that qualify for the Inheritance Fund can receive an additional \$50,000, or an additional \$60,000 if the home is being purchased in Summit-University (former Rondo neighborhood).

Loan terms were also changed for the down payment assistance—from 30 years repayable when a house is sold to 15 years with amortized loan forgiveness. The new guidelines also eliminated purchase price limits and limits on college and retirement savings.

The Homeowner Rehab Loan Program, formerly known as the Citywide Reha-

bilitation Program, has been in place since 2010. It provides financial assistance to low- and moderate-income homeowners to maintain and improve their homes. The program to date has served 572 households earning no more than 60 percent of AMI or no more than 80 percent AMI under certain emergency conditions. It is funded through the city's share of federal Community Development Block Grants.

Eligibility for the Homeowner Rehab Loan Program was broadened by the HRA from households earning up to 60 percent of AMI to households earning up to 80 percent of AMI.

The maximum rehab loan was previously \$25,000, or \$50,000 under certain "emergency" conditions. Regular program loans are now limited to \$40,000, with the ability to add another \$40,000 under emergency conditions. Homeowners who qualify for the Inheritance Fund can receive an additional \$15,000, or an additional \$40,000 if their home is in the Summit-University neighborhood. This increases the maximum available under the Inheritance Fund to \$120,000.

The terms of the loans were reduced from 30 to 15 years, and life insurance policy redemption value was removed from the household asset limit.

14 AZ GALLERY

with the operation of the gallery and be guaranteed space and exposure through exhibits.

In its new form, the AZ is a nonprofit "but we're not a 501(c)(3)," Stoneberg said. "We're a 317A. We basically operate each month trying to break even. We just want to make sure we can pay our bills." The work is 100 percent volunteer, and no salaries are being paid, Clark added.

To persuade artists to exhibit, the AZ Gallery puts out a call for works five times a year. "There's no fee," Stoneberg said. "If a work sells, we keep a commission. There's zero risk to the artist."

"The old cooperative model worked for a really long time with the AZ having an average of eight to 10 members," Stoneberg said. "Then the environment changed. We moved into the pandemic. But even before the pandemic, the community around us was changing. Lowertown used to be the hub of it all, the hub of the Art Crawl, and then that started to diversify and spread out."

With the AZ struggling, Clark and Stoneberg felt an urgency to preserve the gallery and the Lowertown community. "(Artists) were pretty negatively impacted by the pandemic," Stoneberg said. "They lost studio space. They lost access to exhibit space. We wanted to provide access by transforming AZ into a community gallery. We really believe that art can heal communities. And we think there's a lot of healing that needs to happen."



A sampling of the art that is now hanging at the AZ Gallery. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Both Clark and Stoneberg consider the AZ to be sacred space deserving of good stewards. "Who gets 2,000 square feet to just sort of make a dream work?" Stoneberg asked. She credited Artspace, which owns the Northern Warehouse, for providing support.

Over the past year, "we've supported 350-plus artists in the gallery and established some really great relationships," Stoneberg said. "It's just been an incredible

experience."

The artists who have exhibited at AZ over the past year range from emerging to established. "When you come to one of our shows, you might see an \$8,000 painting hanging next to a \$100 painting," Stoneberg said. "We think that's wonderful. We've even found that the established artists are engaging with the emerging artists, so it's a mentor situation as well."

"We help educate all of the new artists

on how to engage with a gallery, because it can be quite intimidating," Stoneberg said.

"We talk about how to hang your work, the best way to display your work, and how to use social media to promote your work," Clark said. "You don't become a better artist if you isolate. You need to be around other artists and to have that give and take, talking about ideas and learning from others."

Clark teaches studio art at Visitation School in Mendota Heights. "I came to the AZ Gallery as a young art teacher," she said. "One of my students said, 'You know, Mrs. Clark, you keep telling us we can be artists, but where do you show your work?' The next day I went down to the AZ and applied."

"As women, I think we're good nurturers," Clark added. "We're carrying on the legacy of the many women in the arts who left so much to us: Sally Ordway Irvine, Kate and Aimee Butler, Katherine Nash, Catherine G. Murphy. These women were vital to the arts in Saint Paul. I think of all the women who opened doors for Beth and me. That's what we want to do at the AZ—nurture, mentor and let people soar to great heights."

"Defying Sameness" will remain on view through March 26 at AZ Gallery. A reception for the artists with live jazz and light refreshments will be held from 5-8 p.m. Saturday, February 18. The gallery is otherwise open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Admission is free. For more information, call 651-224-3757 or visit theazgallery.org.

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City seeks proposals for reuse of old Highland Park bathhouse

1936 building has remained largely vacant since the old swimming pool closed in '79

By Jane McClure

Will the third time be the charm for the old bathhouse in Highland Park? The Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation hopes so. The city issued another request for proposals for reusing the facility in January.

"There's been a high level of interest in seeing some kind of reuse of the Highland facility," said Parks and Recreation director

Andy Rodriguez.

The bids are due by February 3. A couple of potential bidders toured the facility on January 17.

The old bathhouse on the northeast corner of Montreal Avenue and Edgumbe Road is all that remains of Highland Park's former outdoor swimming pool. The city would like to see the building renovated and reopened as some sort of public amenity. The Highland District Council (HDC) voted to support a new use for the building in 2015. HDC executive director Kathy Caruth said the council is waiting to see what its role could be as bidders come forward.

The bathhouse was built in 1936 by the

Works Progress Administration, a federal jobs creation program. The Platteville limestone building was designed around the same time that Clarence "Cap" Wigington was designing municipal buildings all over Saint Paul. Wigington is recognized as the nation's first African American municipal architect. However, historians have not been able to tie Wigington to the bathhouse building.

When the Highland Park Aquatic Center opened across Montreal Avenue in 1979, the old bathhouse was closed. The city has used the building as storage from time to time. The structure was stabilized and the roof repaired several years ago.

Friends of Highland Arts, which has hosted events outside of the old bathhouse in recent years, has pushed for the building to become a year-round venue for arts and recreation with exhibit space, meeting rooms, disc golf and cross-country ski equipment rental, and a restaurant offering walkup service and limited seating.

The city sought proposals for a new building operator in 2015 and again in 2017. When no bids came in, city staff recruited potential new users. By early 2018, two proposals to manage the facility were brought forward, but neither materialized and the building has continued to sit empty.

1 SAINT THOMAS' NEW ARENA

building of the Anderson Student Center and the Anderson Athletic and Recreation Center on the north campus and the Anderson Parking Ramp on the south campus.

Lee Anderson said the new facility will become a key portion of the university experience for Saint Thomas students. "College is where you figure out how you can be a part of something bigger than yourself," he said, "building character and finding purpose."

UST made the historic move from Division III to Division I athletics in 2020, after being asked to leave the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference where its teams made a habit of winning titles. While most of its sports facilities were able to weather the transition, UST's existing hockey, baseball and softball facilities are viewed as being inadequate for that level of play.

UST indicated last year that it was looking at the south campus for a new hockey arena or multipurpose facility. It has been working for many months with Highland Bridge master developer Ryan Companies on plans for new sports facilities at the

UST's goal is to complete the design work and submit a site plan for the multipurpose facility by January 2024. The plan is to have the facility ready for use by the fall of 2025.

former Ford Motor Company assembly plant in Highland Park. Though a hockey arena was eliminated from consideration at Highland Bridge, baseball and softball stadiums were still part of the mix. UST offered \$61 million to purchase the nearby Town and Country Club golf course almost a year ago. However, that offer was rejected by the club membership.

UST has chosen Ryan Companies and Crawford Architects to do the design-build for the new multipurpose facility. The facility will have 4,000 seats for hockey and 5,000 seats for basketball, with additional seating possible for other events. It could accommodate commencement exercises, convocations, career fairs and other presentations. It will have two sheets of ice, one for practice and one for games. It will



The facade of the University of Saint Thomas' proposed hockey and basketball arena.

also have basketball game and practice facilities as well as locker rooms and offices. According to Esten, talks are already underway with local youth and high school hockey programs about sharing the ice sheets.

To make way for the new arena, Cretin Hall dormitory, McCarthy Gym and the adjacent service center will be torn down. The dormitory and service center date from the 1890s. McCarthy Gym was built in the 1960s. All three buildings were part of the original Saint Paul Seminary campus. Vischer said students can continue to live at Cretin Hall through the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years, and that the campus has adequate capacity to absorb the lost dorm beds.

UST's goal is to complete the design work and to submit a site plan for the multipurpose facility by January 2024. Once the site plan and building permits are approved by the city, construction can begin if UST has raised at least 75 percent of the \$175 million project cost. The plan is to have the facility ready for use by the fall of 2025.

Any new construction on campus is limited by Saint Thomas' 2004 conditional use permit (CUP), which limits building heights and setbacks, enrollment and other growth factors. UST officials said the new construction will fall within CUP limits. What could trigger an amendment to the CUP is the need to add levels to the Anderson Parking Ramp at Cretin and Grand avenues. Esten and Vischer said that it is too early to know if the CUP will need to be

reopened.

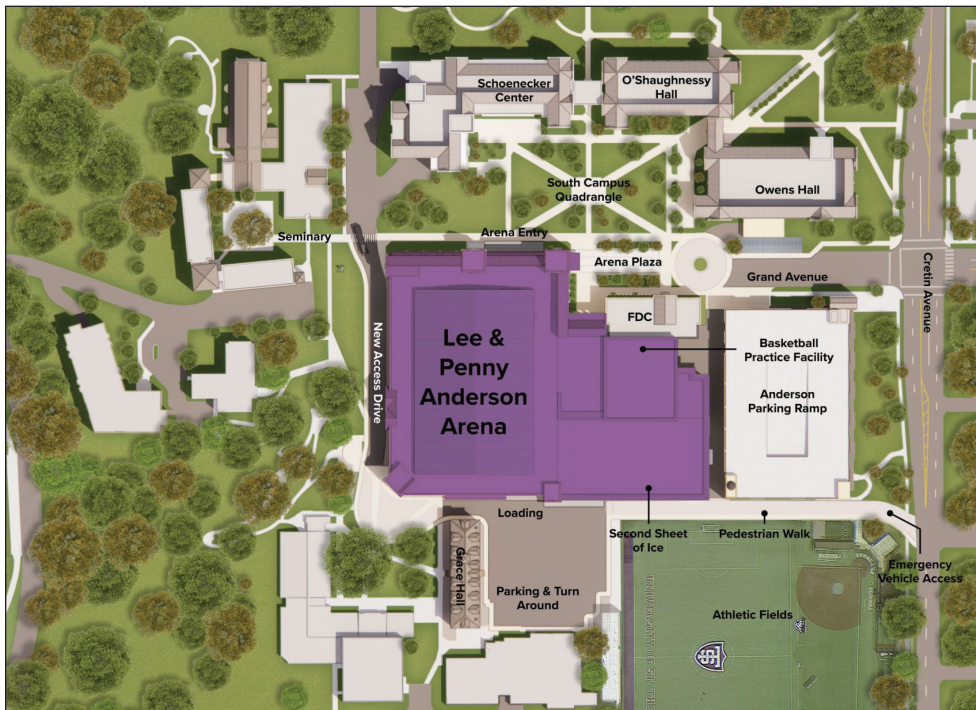
The multipurpose facility would face the interior of campus. It is seen as completing the south campus quadrangle. Brady Education Center and Binz Refectory would remain, as would the athletic fields at the northwest corner of Cretin and Goodrich avenues.

Noelle Jacquet-Morrison, cochair of the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee, said local residents have already raised concerns about increased traffic and parking congestion related to the new arena. Since the city of Saint Paul dropped its minimum parking requirements last year, UST can build the new facility with no additional parking.

Esten and Vischer pointed out that the Anderson Parking Ramp will be able to accommodate arena fans. However, parking is an issue they intend to discuss with neighbors. Much of the neighborhood south and southeast of the campus is in a residential permit parking district.

UST officials will discuss plans for the multipurpose facility with the Macalester-Groveland Community Council Housing and Land Use Committee on January 25. A community meeting is planned for Monday, February 13, at the Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave. The Union Park District Council's land use committee is also planning to discuss the new arena at its meeting on February 27.

For more information on the arena and to access project updates, visit stthomas.edu/neighbors.



The map above shows the location of the new Lee & Penny Anderson Arena near the center of the University of Saint Thomas' south campus just west of the intersection of Grand and Cretin avenues.



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One of downtown's busiest streets is due for historic makeover

By Jane McClure

The busy section of Robert Street between Kellogg Boulevard and I-94 is slated for reconstruction in 2025-2026. The Saint Paul Planning Commission's Transportation Committee got its first look at the project on January 9.

The upcoming work is believed to be the street's first major reconstruction project in a century. Eight blocks will be rebuilt, with new pavement and lane markings, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, boulevards and trees, traffic signals, signage and underground utilities.

"Reconstruction will be building face to building face," said Anna Potter, downtown transportation planner for the city's Department of Public Works. One historic tidbit about the past reconstruction is that some building faces were cut off to allow for street widening years ago.

The estimated cost of the reconstruction project is \$9.25 million. Of that amount \$2.25 million will come from the state, which is turning Robert Street back to the city. The remaining \$7 million will come from the federal government.

Plans are currently in the concept design stage, which will continue until summer. Final design is to take place between June and December. Different traffic, transit and parking configurations are being studied.

Utility construction is to take place in 2024, with street reconstruction starting the following year.

The first round of public engagement took place last fall with surveys, stakeholder meetings and work by a steering committee. Potter said Public Works heard many questions and suggestions on the project from residents, property and



Robert Street (shown here looking south from Ninth Street) is scheduled for a \$9.25 million makeover between Kellogg Boulevard and I-94. Utility work will begin next year, with reconstruction in 2025-2026.

business owners.

One strong desire is for more green space and trees, and ways to tie the Pedro Park development on 10th and Robert into any streetscape improvements. More cafe seating and retention of current seating between 9th and 10th streets also is sought, along with improved access to the downtown skyway system.

Pedestrian safety is another issue frequently raised, especially at the intersections at Robert-Kellogg and Robert-10th. Bumpouts and shorter pedestrian crossings are sought. Also heard were requests for wider sidewalks, restrooms and drinking fountains, improved street lighting, better bike parking, heated bus shelters and dedicated bus lanes.

The upcoming work is believed to be the street's first major reconstruction project in a century.

Robert has 75 feet of right-of-way up to Fourth Street, with 90 feet between Fourth and Kellogg. The street currently has some parking on both sides, with restrictions. There is a drive lane in each direction and a center turn lane.

Potter said that historically, traffic volumes along Robert have decreased from 14,700 vehicles per day in 2005 to 12,000 in 2022. Robert also has Metro Transit bus

routes 68 and 71. In 2019 those routes carried an average of 1,543 people per day, but more transit ridership is likely in the future.

Street reconstruction will have to be done in way that accommodates the Gold Line, a bus rapid transit corridor that would connect Woodbury and Washington County destinations to downtown Saint Paul, and the Purple Line, which would connect downtown to northeastern suburbs. Robert will also be home to service by the B Line and G Line buses when those start operating.

Transportation Committee members asked why bike lanes could not be part of the project. Because nearby Jackson and Minnesota streets are part of the downtown Capital City Bikeway, Robert is not going to have bike facilities added. Cyclists can connect to those routes.

"It's hard to fit everything in," Potter said.

Public Works is also trying to coordinate the work on Robert with other streets, including 2022 Wabasha Street reconstruction, work starting this year on Minnesota Street, and work on the Kellogg-Third Street bridge that is also to start this year.

Another issue Public Works must decide is how to deal with is what Potter describes as "ancient" utilities that will have to be removed and replaced.

A big below-grade worry is that of areaways—spaces below sidewalks that provided access into building basements. Areaways were often used for deliveries and to access basement spaces with equipment and furnishings. Such spaces have been allowed with building construction since the 1950s. Potter said it is possible current building owners may not know if areaways exist at their buildings.

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VIEWPOINT

Star-kissed: Treasured memory is best kept locked away

By Beth L. Voigt

My Uncle Bill had a job at the old Met Center in Bloomington, and when he was working a Minnesota North Stars game, he often took my cousin Natalie and me along. The North Stars were Minnesota's first National Hockey League franchise, and I relished the excitement of the crowd, the slap of the sticks on the ice and the loud cheers whenever the North Stars scored.

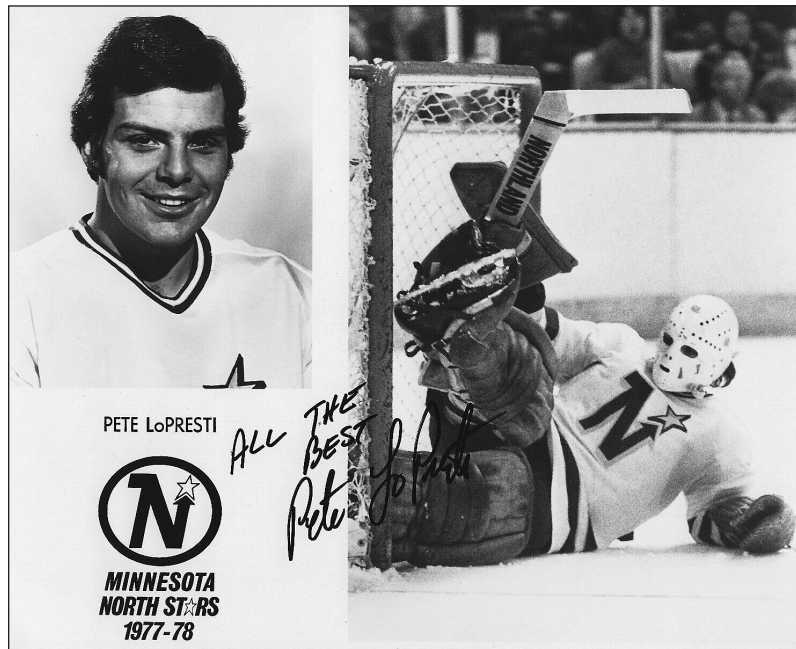
In the middle to the late 1970s, the North Stars had a goalie named Pete LoPresti. The first time I saw him play, I was in awe of his agility, the deftness with which he'd snag the flying puck. LoPresti was young—not much older than me when he started his professional career—and handsome, or so I noted from his picture in the North Stars' program. And he sounded humble—maybe even shy, like me—whenever he was interviewed on the radio.

One evening, we were enroute to Met Center in my Uncle Bill's Chevy Blazer when we heard over the radio that LoPresti would not be playing in goal that night. I slumped in the back seat. Seeing my gloomy 14-year-old face in the rearview mirror, Uncle Bill said, "Cheer up, Beth. Maybe they'll win anyway."

I sighed. Every time I went to a game when LoPresti played, the North Stars won. Without him in goal, I wasn't so sure.

At the Met Center, while Uncle Bill worked in the penalty box, I settled into my seat, wrapping my arms around myself to offset the chill from the ice. Natalie and I chatted nonstop. Then, between the second and third periods, Uncle Bill came down to our seats. "Come with me," he said.

Uncle Bill escorted us into a quiet room



An 8-by-10 print issued by the North Stars in 1977-78 to promote its then starting goaltender, Pete LoPresti. LoPresti signed the print for a delighted fan.

and said, "Pete, I'd like you to meet...."

"Pete LoPresti! Pete LoPresti! Pete LoPresti!" I screamed in my head. There, not 15 feet in front of me, stood my favorite North Star in blue jeans and a blue striped dress shirt, two buttons open at the top. I stared into his brown eyes. I inhaled his musky scent.

"Hi," he said, his deep voice swooning. I stared at his perfect smile. I felt my cheeks get warm, my breath catch.

"Beth's a huge hockey fan," Uncle Bill said, breaking the silence. He was exaggerating, of course. I just liked watching LoPresti play. "She's never seen you lose," he added.

"Really?"

With a nudge from Natalie, I nodded.

"Wow," LoPresti said. "You're my good luck charm!"

And with that, I gained a level of confidence I'd never felt before.

Assuming I'd remain mute, Uncle Bill

said, "Well, we better go—"

"No!" I exclaimed. Taking a deep breath and exhaling slowly, I asked LoPresti, "May I kiss you?"

Natalie and Uncle Bill gasped, but all of my attention was directed at LoPresti. I held my breath.

"Sure," he replied with a chuckle, and opened his arms wide.

Before my uncle could stop me, I raced up to LoPresti, kissed him on the cheek and then took several steps back.

"Wow!" he said. "Come to my games any time."

I don't recall the third period of that game, whether the North Stars won, lost or tied, or anything I said to Natalie the rest of the evening. But I do remember my first kiss, with a celebrity, and the elation I felt afterward.

On the way to school the following Monday with my best friend at my side, I talked nonstop about LoPresti. At my

request, Uncle Bill got me an autographed photo of LoPresti that I taped to the inside of my high school locker. Soon afterward, my brother Brian, who also worked at the Met Center, gave me a North Stars jersey. Too hallowed to wear, I folded the jersey, laid it at the top of my dresser drawer and gazed at it every day when I opened the drawer.

I continued to attend North Star games whenever Uncle Bill had free tickets, but LoPresti left the North Stars in 1979 and joined the Edmonton Oilers and my passion for hockey waned. Then, about 30 years later, while running errands on a Saturday afternoon, I heard on the radio that LoPresti was signing autographs at a local sports memorabilia show.

I spun the car around and headed for the show. Once there, I weaved my way through the aisles, looking only for LoPresti. I finally found him, with hair that had grayed but a smile that was still radiant. I waited in line until only the width of a table stood between us. I inhaled his musky scent, looked into his warm eyes and wondered if there was any chance he remembered me.

I considered asking him that, or just leaning forward and kissing him on the cheek. But I was still shy at heart. Instead, I handed him an 8-by-10 photograph from his rookie season, like the one that hung in my high school locker so many years ago. He signed it. I smiled and walked away.

I wanted to keep the memory of that 14-year-old girl intact. First kisses are always unforgettable, and I didn't want to have my memory influenced by someone else's—not Natalie's, not Uncle Bill's, not even Pete LoPresti's.

Beth L. Voigt grew up in Highland Park and now lives in Summit Hill.

What is the city trying to hide?

The Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department is attempting to steamroll a plan to build an off-road bicycle trail down Summit Avenue against the loud protests of its taxpaying citizens. The city asserts that it has extensively engaged the public in this process. Not so. No formal public presentation and public hearing has been held.

Parks and Rec unveiled the 60 percent draft plan for the Summit Avenue Regional Trail on October 27 during a two-hour open house with posters. Design Advisory Committee members expressed concerns that views opposing the city's preferred designs would not be heard. This has turned out to be true. Comments made on the city's Engage Saint Paul website disappear, leaving the public questioning whether their comments are even read. The public portal is blind; a citizen cannot view the comments of others.

Initially, the Engage Saint Paul website functions were available to the public, including the ability to ask a question, share an idea, see the ideas posted by others and utilize the "like" button to express support for that idea. After comprehensive research demonstrated that citizen response to the proposed plan showed almost 20 to 1 in opposition, the city closed the public portal.

The city asserts that it has extensively engaged the public in this process and is listening to its citizens. I assert the process has inhibited broad, authentic citizen input. What is the city of Saint Paul trying to hide?

*Marilyn Bach
Summit Hill*

Saint Paul Parks and Recreation director Andy Rodriguez replies: Community engagement for the proposed regional trail on Summit Avenue kicked off in August 2021 with an online survey that was open to the public for over a year.

INBOX

Two public comment tools called "Map Your Comments" and "Share an Idea" were also live on the Engage Saint Paul website during that time.

When these tools were closed as planned in October 2022, the comments became temporarily unpublished. However the complete set of archived comments is available on the website. In addition, a series of in-person community engagement events were held in the fall of 2021, followed by advisory committee meetings, virtual and in-person public engagement sessions, a virtual public information session and an in-person community open house.

The public comment portal for the current 60% draft master plan remains open, and there are several additional opportunities for commentary and reaction coming up, including a public comment period on the 90% draft document, which will be released on February 1. A timeline of additional engagement opportunities and project information can be found on the Engage Saint Paul website at engagestpaul.org/summit.

Whether you have been engaged since the proposed Summit Avenue Regional Trail project was initiated or are new to the process, we welcome and appreciate your feedback.

A better way to return surplus

Regarding the demand of an earlier letter writer that the budget surplus be returned to taxpayers as personal checks, I ask: Do you want to make the recession worse?

High-profile businesses have been laying off employees because interest rates have been climbing because the Federal Reserve is reacting to inflation. Where did the inflation come from? Economists have pointed a finger at President Biden, because he gave a round of stimulus money straight into people's pockets.

Sound familiar?

The state budget "surplus" is already going back to taxpayers as services and infrastructure, such as hiring more teachers and repaving horrendous roads. These types of long-term investments will bring a bigger payoff for Minnesotans than a check for one month's rent or mortgage.

*Wendy Eidukas
Macalester-Groveland*

Time to clean House and Senate

I dare you. Go online and read the \$1.7 trillion, 4,000-page spending bill our duly elected U.S. representatives and senators enacted recently. They are 535 of the most arrogant, ridiculous, dishonest, corrupt, shameless, vile and embarrassing people in our country.

Forget party affiliation. We have to rid ourselves of each and every one of these parasites. Please vote against every incumbent in the next election. How else can we fire them?

*T.J. Sexton
Highland Park*

Do write, won't you?

MyVillager welcomes letters to the editor and longer guest editorials. All commentary must be signed, indicate the neighborhood in which the writer lives and include a phone number for verification purposes. Please, send your commentary to MyVillager, 241 S. Cleveland Ave., Suite V, Saint Paul, MN 55105, email it to letters@myvillager.com or submit it via our website at myvillager.com/editorial. The views expressed are not the views of

District Councils

Highland Park

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Board candidates—Due to several vacancies, the Highland District Council is seeking candidates to represent Grids 9 and 11 on its board of directors through April 2023, and an at-large candidate to serve through April 2024. The positions will be up for election by all Highland residents and business representatives ages 18 and older at the board meeting in early February. The application deadline is January 31. Learn more on the HDC website.

Blood and donation drives—The HDC will hold blood and donation drives from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. Nonperishable food will be collected for Francis Basket. Learn more and make a blood drive appointment on the HDC website or its Facebook page.

Cleveland Avenue resurfacing—Ramsey County will host an open house from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday, February 16, at the Highland Park Community Center. Project engineers will discuss an upcoming overlay project on Cleveland Avenue from two blocks south of Ford Parkway to Randolph Avenue.

Workshop presenters—The Highland and Macalester-Groveland district councils are bringing back their home improvement fair next year under the newly titled Home Improvement Workshop Day. Presenters are being sought to give 45-minute to one-hour workshops during the event, which will be held on March 11 at Cretin-Derham Hall. The application deadline is February 11. Visit macgrove.org/events/hiwd.

Seniors going solo—During the last few years, local “solos”—residents 60 and older who are navigating life without the help of family—have formed groups that meet monthly to help each other identify resources, develop plans and complete necessary documents. For information, contact Paula Fischer, director of the Highland Block Nurse Program, at paulaf@ourladyofpeacemn.org or 651-696-8425.

Upcoming meetings—Community Engagement Committee, 7 p.m. Monday, January 30; and board of directors with city planning director Luis Pereira, 7 p.m. Thursday, February 2. The meetings will be held at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy., with the option to join online. Get the Zoom link and agendas at highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.

Macalester-Groveland

macgrove.org • 651-695-4000

Frost Fest 2023—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council and the Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation will hold Frost Fest from 2-5 p.m. Saturday, January 28, at the Groveland Park Ice Rinks, 2021 Saint Clair Ave. There will be free ice skating, lessons, puck decorating, games, hot chocolate, a bonfire, treats and other

activities. Visit macgrove.org/frost-fest to learn more.

Home improvement workshops—The Macalester-Groveland and Highland community councils will hold a newly titled Home Improvement Workshop Day from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, March 11, at Cretin-Derham Hall. Presenters are being sought to offer 45-minute to one-hour workshops on home improvement topics. For information and an application, visit macgrove.org/events/hiwd.

Board openings—During its annual meeting in April, the following representatives will be elected to the community council’s board of directors: two from Grid 2, two from Grid 4 and two at-large residential members. Board members are elected to rotating three-year terms. To learn about running for the board, email mgcc@macgrove.org.

Upcoming meetings—Housing and Land Use Committee on Wednesday, January 25; and board of directors on Thursday, February 9. The meetings will be held via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. To receive monthly notices and log-in details, visit macgrove.org/participate.

Union Park

unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

Upcoming meetings—board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, February 1; and Transportation Committee, 6:30 p.m. Monday, February 13. The meetings will be held via Zoom. For access information, email info@unionparkdc.org, or see the calendar on the website.

Contact us—The public is invited to “like” the Union Park District Council on Facebook, follow it on Twitter at @UnionParkDC, and subscribe to its e-newsletter, “Neighborhood Matters,” by emailing info@unionparkdc.org.

Office hours—The Union Park office hours are by appointment only. Contact executive director Leah Timberlake Sullivan at leah@unionparkdc.org.

West Seventh

fortroadfederation.org • 651-298-5599

Board updates—New members of the West Seventh/Fort Road Federation board of directors include secretary Ruthanne Atkinson, Area I coordinator Jessica Nelson and Area III coordinator Lynne Rollins. Board candidates are now being sought for the annual meeting in April. Positions on the ballot this year include president, vice president, secretary/treasurer and area coordinator. To learn more, email fortroadfed@fortroadfederation.org.

Public safety discussion—The public is invited to join the Fort Road Federation, City Council member Rebecca Noecker and Police Chief Axel Henry to discuss public safety in the West Seventh neighborhood from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Thursday, February 9, via Zoom. Register at fortroadfederation.org/calendar.

Upcoming meetings—Transportation and Land Use Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 1, at the Federation office, 882 W. Seventh St., Suite 6. For log-in details, visit fortroadfederation.org/calendar.

My Villager

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Volume 70, Number 23

Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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A brighter future

Local students help light African classrooms with solar suitcases

By Frank Jossi

For the past three years, District 197 middle and high school students have built “solar suitcases” that are helping youngsters in African schools continue to study and do homework even when the sun goes down.

Friendly Hills Middle School in Mendota Heights began the solar suitcases program in 2019. Through veteran teacher Katy Lynch, the school acquired several of the devices to teach students about electricity and solar energy.

Participants in the district’s afterschool LiveGreen Club then built solar suitcases to send to schools in Africa, lately to those serving refugees in Kenya. The California-based nonprofit We Share Solar creates and distributes the technology to schools around the United States to help students learn about solar energy and to build the devices to be sent to developing nations.

Friendly Hills was one of the first 10 schools in Minnesota to offer We Share Solar suitcases in sixth-grade classes and afterschool activities. Meghan Bernard, the district’s sustainability manager, said the program provides a STEM (science, tech-

nology, engineering and math) activity in classrooms and their assembly benefits students in other countries.

“An experience like this can be life-changing for students because they can see how something they do can positively impact the world,” she said.

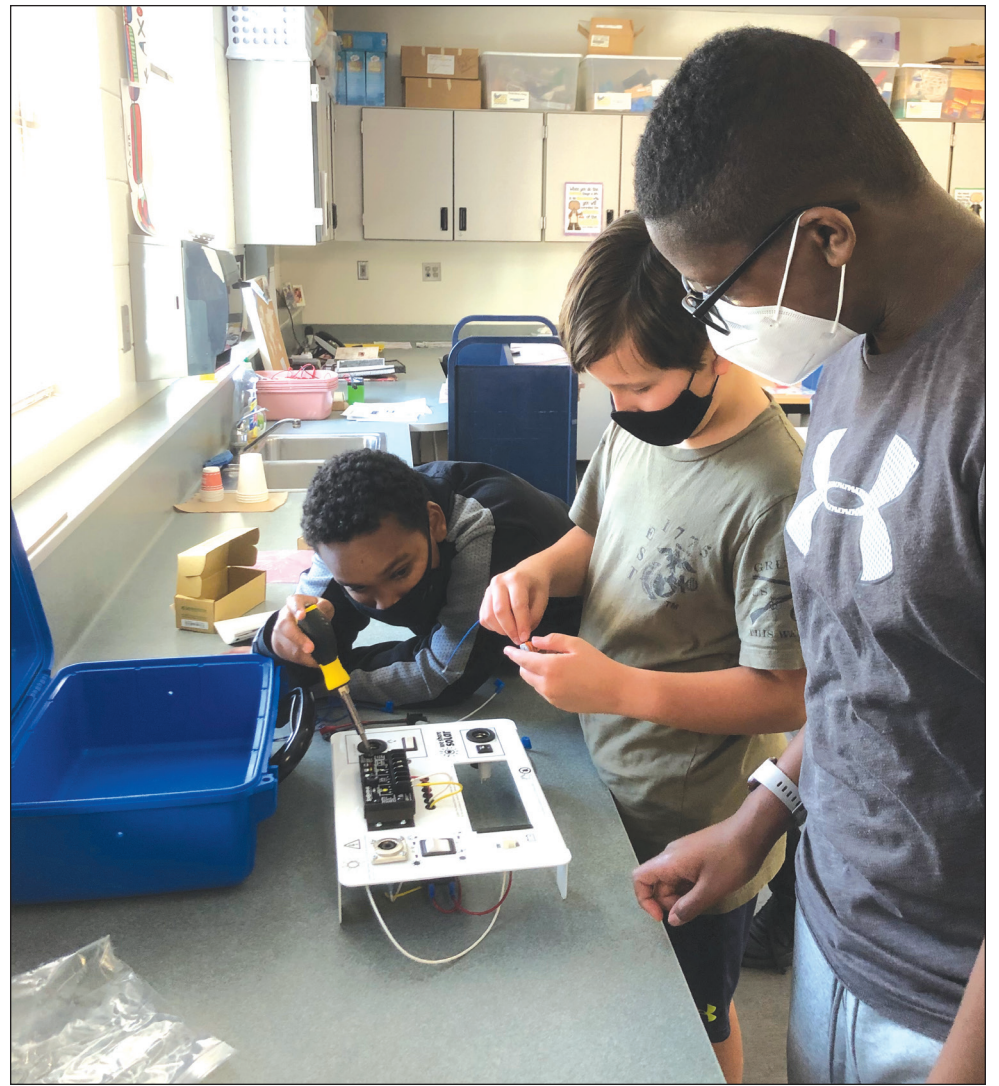
The program is part of West Saint Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools’ sustainability efforts, which include providing 100 percent of its energy needs through solar panels on school buildings and memberships in community solar gardens. In addition, Bernard said the district has LiveGreen Clubs in all of its schools, a recycling program, and has earned Energy Star certification in several of its buildings.

We Share Solar sent a newsletter to Friendly Hills in 2021 to thank it for donating a solar suitcase to Kilifi, Kenya. It and other kits built by American students were distributed

to seven Kilifi schools that had no or only limited access to electricity. With solar suitcases to help light the classrooms, students are able to study and prepare for state exams and learn about solar energy. In addition, teachers there have more time to prep for lessons and to recharge their mobile devices without having



Friendly Hills students test a solar suitcase during the school’s first year in the program.



Students at Friendly Hills Middle School in Mendota Heights work on creating a solar suitcase in 2021 to be shipped overseas. The school was among the first in Minnesota to help build the devices and will be working on its sixth one this spring.



Students in Kilifi near the southern coast of Kenya help with setting up a solar suitcase for their school.

to travel long distances.

Lynch uses solar suitcases to teach students about the importance of electricity and the gravity of the situation in the developing world. She will turn the lights off in the classroom to give them an idea of what it is like studying in the dark.

Class members create posters addressing the topic. They also read *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, which tells the story of a Malawi boy who builds a windmill out of scrap metal and bicycle parts to generate electricity for his family.

While everyone at Friendly Hills learns about solar by taking part in the school’s onsite solar suitcases, LiveGreen Club participants make the ones sent abroad. Last year, Lynch broadened the effort to include homeroom kids, many of whom live in Section 8 housing and cannot participate in afterschool activities.

After completing the suitcases, students attach them to mini-solar panels at the school to test them. Lynch said the schools in Africa do the same, connecting the suitcases to solar panels to generate electricity.

The solar suitcases cost roughly \$1,100 each. Wells Fargo partnered with We Share Solar and pays for some of the equipment, Lynch said, and a grant from a local foundation also helps with the cost.

Friendly Hills will be making its sixth solar suitcase this spring, when students can go outside and test it. Lynch said many of

the children working on them have no idea how to use hand tools, which is another learning opportunity the project offers.

“You wouldn’t believe the number of kids who’ve never held a screwdriver or wrench, or they don’t know the names of the tools,” she said. “Seeing them learning how to use basic tools and how electricity in their homes work is fun to watch.”

Two Rivers High School special education teacher Dave Weiss found his classes enjoyed solar suitcase projects in the same way as middle schoolers. Weiss, who trained with Lynch, saw his classes build and send four suitcases abroad over the past few years and also will be working on another this spring.

For his students, the projects offer a hands-on learning opportunity and open a window to the world.

“I think they’re struck by the stories of the students we’re building these for,” Weiss said. “They’re just impressed that they’ve been able to go beyond West Saint Paul, Eagan and Mendota Heights and do something better for someone else. They seem to take a sense of pride in that.”

Lynch sees the solar suitcase program the same way. “I think the program is excellent at just teaching them empathy and how lucky they are,” she said. “Instead of always focusing on what we don’t have, this helps them realize all the things we have living in America.”

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St. Paul modifies regulations for earned sick and safe time

By Jane McClure

Saint Paul's earned sick and safe time requirements are changing, with unanimous City Council approval on January 18. Along with several technical and procedural changes, one key modification brings the city's rules into compliance with a recent Minnesota Supreme Court decision.

The state's highest court upheld Minneapolis' earned sick and safe time ordinance in a June 2020 case involving the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce. The decision clarified that if a business has an office outside of the city but the employees work in the city, the employer needs to follow the earned sick and safe time regulations.

That is a clarification Saint Paul spelled out in its recently approved ordinance amendments. Some employers reportedly had moved their headquarters out of the city to try to skirt the regulation. Until the Minneapolis court case was settled, Saint Paul could only enforce its ordinance with businesses based in the city limits.

Beth Commers, deputy director of Saint Paul's Human Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity (HREEO) office, said it took a while for the changes to be processed. HREEO in recent years has struggled with frequent turnover in leadership, including six directors in the last five years.

A public hearing on the changes earlier in January drew just one supporter. Highland resident Rick Varco, who is the political director for SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and its 50,000 union members, said the changes follow the intent of the recommendations of the city task force on earned sick and safe time.

Varco, who served on the task force, and

many other worker advocates are now trying to get statewide paid family and medical leave approved during the 2023 Minnesota legislative session. Local ordinances helped pave the way. "Our success with this is why we will get it (passed) at the state level," he said.

Earned sick and safe time initially won approval in Saint Paul and Minneapolis in 2016. Workers and organized labor said it was needed to give employees time to care for their health needs and the needs of their family members. Earned sick and safe time can also be used by workers who need time off due to domestic violence, harassment or stalking situations.

Many smaller employers questioned whether earned sick and safe time would add to their costs and complexity of keeping records. Business advocacy groups warned employers might opt to leave the city and not expand their workforces here.

Earned sick and safe time took effect in Saint Paul on January 1, 2018. All employees working in the city are eligible for the benefit, including part-time and temporary workers. Independent contractors are not included.

Employees are covered if they work at least 80 hours in the city in one year. The city has specific policies for how earned sick and safe time can be accrued or banked by an employee, and how an employer keeps records. The maximum number of hours that can be carried over year to year is 80.

Other amendments approved on January 18 will add definitions to the ordinance, clarify some sections, reflect current practices, and bring consistency with how Saint Paul enforces both its earned sick and safe time and minimum wage requirements.

School Notes

The MSHSL State Debate Tournament drew several local student qualifiers when it returned to in-person competition on January 13-14 at the University of Minnesota. Local competitors included Central's Max Ulven in Lincoln Douglas debate; Central's Maren Lien & Cayden Mayer and Eleanor Johnson & Kieran Levitre, and Highland Park's Audrey Snowbeck & Sebastian Crea in policy debate; and Saint Paul Academy's Cerena Karmaliani and David Schumacher making it to the quarterfinals in public forum debate.

The Saint Paul School Board elected the following officers for 2023 during its annual meeting on January 3: chair Jim Vue, vice chair Jessica Kopp, clerk Halla Henderson and treasurer Uriah Ward. The board also includes Chauntyll Allen, Zuki Ellis and Jeanelle Foster.

The Women's Drum Center, 2242 University Ave., will hold a four-part drumline camp from 6-7 p.m. Saturdays, February 4-25. Participants will explore original drum pieces as well as songs performed by drumHeart, the center's premier ensemble, led by Jo Klein. Some drumming experience is encouraged. Drums will be provided. The cost is \$65. For information or to register, visit womensdrumcenter.org.

VISTA Productions of Visitation and Saint Thomas Academy earned several Hennepin Theatre Trust Spotlight Awards for its latest show, *Peter and the Starcatcher*, directed by Wendy Short-Hays. The honors include outstanding for Overall Performance, Sound Crew, Lighting Crew and Overall

Technical Team. Receiving outstanding individual honors were Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role: Tess Cavanaugh (as Mrs. Bumbrake); and Outstanding in Technical Leadership: Megan Overel as Assistant Sound Designer, Thomas Lund as Board Operator, Ryan Farrington for Props, and Jax Wiitanen, Tommy Ondrey and Amaia Walsh as Deck Captains.

Saint Thomas Academy senior Samuel Fulton was named the 2022-2023 cadet colonel and brigade commander, the highest-ranking officer in the school's corps of cadets. Jackson Cercioglu was promoted to cadet command sergeant major, the senior-most noncommissioned officer in the brigade. Seniors promoted to cadet lieutenant colonel included Luke Pucel, Michael Miller, Hung Nguyen, Emmett Wolf and Bennett Kotok. Promoted to command sergeant major were Gavin Engelbert, Eric Zauha, Adam Husaby and Luke Audette.

Saint Paul School Board member Zuki Ellis received the Marny Xiong Legacy Award at the annual Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) conference on January 12. The award was established in 2020 for late board chair Marny Xiong, who died in June 2020 at the age of 31 due to COVID-19. The award honors school board members who have spent years making a lasting impact on the lives of children, teachers and administrators, and have been a fierce advocate for marginalized citizens. Saint Paul board vice chair Jessica Kopp received a directors' award for completing 100 or more hours of MSBA training programs within her term.

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Crime Report

The following criminal incidents were compiled from Saint Paul and Mendota Heights police reports. For vehicle and catalytic converter thefts and other crime reports not mentioned in this print edition, go to MyVillager.com.

Highland Park

Burglary—Burglaries were reported at Jimmy John's, 1999 Ford Pkwy., on January 8-9, and at Potbelly's, 2130 Ford Pkwy., on January 9-10.

—A garage burglary and felony damage to property were reported on the 1600 block of Juno Avenue on January 8-9.

—A 46-year-old man and 34-year-old woman were arrested for breaking into the Laundry Tub, 2346 W. Seventh St., at 12:18 a.m. on January 15. The male had two outstanding felony warrants.

Theft—Thefts from autos were reported at Crosby Farm Park on January 5, and at Hidden Falls Park on January 11 and 13.

—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 800 block of South Snelling Avenue on January 8, and the 600 block of South Snelling on January 11.

—A woman entered Noodles & Company, 2110 Ford Pkwy., to pick up an order and returned to find her vehicle stolen at 5:48 p.m. on January 11.

—A suspect stole multiple bottles of alcohol from Haskell's, 2221 Ford Pkwy., at 11:55 a.m. on January 15.

Assault—A woman was assaulted on the 2100 block of Ford Parkway at 5:49 p.m. on January 4.

—A 27-year-old man was arrested for felony domestic assault and interfering with a 911 call in an apartment on the 1300 block of East Maynard Drive at 2:05 a.m. on January 7.

—A felony assault was reported at the BP Station on Davern and West Seventh streets at 1:01 a.m. on January 13.

Arson—A dumpster fire was reported on the 1200 block of East Maynard Drive at 7:51 p.m. on January 14.

Lexington-Hamline

Theft—Two men ages 18 and 20 were cited for shoplifting and disorderly conduct at the Midway Target at 9:02 p.m. on January 8. Police said the suspects became hostile after they were caught trying to steal electronics.

—A 30-year-old woman was arrested for tampering with a vehicle and trying to flee police at the Midway Target at 10:42 a.m. on January 13.

—An officer tried to stop a vehicle with a stolen license plate at the Midway Target at 9:10 p.m. on January 15. The female driver sped away instead, striking the squad car, running several lights and driving the wrong way on University Avenue.

—A 31-year-old woman was arrested for trying to steal more than \$750 in merchandise from the Midway Target at 9:13 p.m. on January 16.

Miscellaneous—A 25-year-old man was arrested for DWI and felony drug possession after he was found slumped over in a vehicle at the Midway Target at 9:18 p.m. on January 5.

—A 32-year-old man was arrested for DWI and drug possession after he was found unconscious behind the wheel of his vehicle on the 400 block of North Hamline Avenue at 1:50 p.m. on January 7.

Macalester-Groveland

Burglary—A home break-in was reported on the 200 block of Mount Curve Boulevard on January 8.

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were stolen from vehicles on the 2100 block of Princeton Avenue on Janu-

Worker charged in Jimmy Lee shooting

Exavir Dwayne Binford, 26, of Saint Paul has been charged with attempted murder of a 16-year-old boy who was shot in the head around 4:12 p.m. Wednesday, January 18, in the parking lot of the Jimmy Lee Recreation Center, 270 N. Lexington Pkwy. The teen was transported to Regions Hospital and was listed in critical condition.

Binford, who was a city recreation center employee, was later arrested at his home in East Saint Paul. A handgun was recovered.

According to the complaint, the incident took place after Binford reportedly closed the rec center because of a large fight there among Central High School girls. He became upset when a girl let a male relative back inside and cursed at her. The victim and another teen joined the argument and began fighting with Binford. He then pulled out a gun and fired at them.

ary 3-4, on Davern Street and Randolph Avenue on January 12, and on the 1800 block of Goodrich Avenue on January 12.

—A gun was stolen from a vehicle on the 300 block of South Mississippi River Boulevard between 4-4:33 p.m. on January 11.

—A 60-year-old man was arrested for trying to steal more than \$500 in merchandise from Walgreens, 1585 Randolph Ave., at 10:14 p.m. on January 16.

Mendota Heights

Theft—Items were reported stolen from three vehicles on the 600 block of Second Avenue on January 4.

—A man entered a store, went into the bathroom, walked out and stole the store's snowblower on the 900 block of Highway 13 at 6:22 a.m. on January 5.

—A suspect was arrested for two outstanding felony warrants during a disturbing the peace call at 8:38 p.m. on January 5 on the 2000 block of Dodd Road.

Assault—A man was arrested for assault and making terroristic threats after police responded to a report of a couple yelling on the 900 block of Highway 13 at 1:43 a.m. on January 12. Obstruction and additional assault charges were later added when the suspect resisted arrest.

Miscellaneous—A driver was arrested for DWI after he ran a stop sign and drove the wrong way on I-35E near Highway 62 at 4:18 a.m. on December 31.

—Police responded to a report of an intoxicated man walking in the cold at 4:08 p.m. on January 1 on the 1300 block of Northland Drive. The man had been in a car crash and was taken to the hospital.

—The driver of a truck was arrested for DWI after he was seen speeding through a snowstorm on Delaware Avenue near Copperfield Drive at 11:41 p.m. on January 4.

—A dog reportedly attacked another dog in the street on the 600 block of Cheyenne Lane at 2:45 p.m. on January 8. The aggressive dog was labeled by the city as potentially dangerous.

—A male was cited for reckless driving after he drove off a bike path and got stuck in a snowbank on the 1600 block of Lilydale Road at 11:06 a.m. on January 9.

Merriam Park

Robbery—An attempted carjacking was reported in the University of Saint Thomas parking lot on Summit Avenue at 6:31 p.m. on January 16.

Burglary—Residential break-ins were reported at 10:13 p.m. on January 15 on the

2000 block of Summit Avenue, and at 10:15 p.m. on the 1900 block of Saint Anthony Avenue.

Theft—A 36-year-old man was arrested for possession of a stolen vehicle and fleeing police on Roblyn and Prior avenues at 1:14 a.m. on January 4. Police were able to force the vehicle into a snowbank. The occupants tried to flee, but eventually surrendered.

—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 1900 block of Marshall Avenue on January 9-10, and at the Minnoco Station, 2178 Marshall Ave., at 4:53 p.m. on January 13.

—A trailer was reported stolen on the 1800 block of Marshall Avenue during the evening of January 11-12.

Miscellaneous—A public notification meeting regarding eight Level III predatory sex offenders registering to live in Saint Paul will be held at 6 p.m. Wednesday, January 25, at the West District Police Station, 389 N. Hamline Ave. Locally, the list includes Anthony John Dentz, 27, who has registered to live on the 400 block of Pierce Street, and Jeremiah Marquis Johnson, 38, who has registered to live on the 2100 block of University Ave. For information, contact officer Jeremy Doverspike at 651-266-5871 or officer Paul Kuntz at 651-266-5706.

Snelling-Hamline

Burglary—A man was arrested for breaking into a home on the 1300 block of Laurel Avenue at 10:11 p.m. on January 8. He also was cited for auto theft, criminal damage to property, drug possession and giving false information to police.

—A burglary was reported at T-Mobile, 1360 University Ave., at 3:48 a.m. on January 10. Video showed the suspect inside the store, which suffered damage though nothing appeared to be missing.

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a vehicle near Sea Foam Stadium at Concordia University during the evening of January 12-13.

Assault—A 27-year-old man was arrested for felony assault after he pointed a weapon at a tow truck driver on the 1400 block of Iglehart Avenue at 9:18 a.m. on January 10.

—The manager of McDonald's, 1570 University Ave., was assaulted at 5:30 p.m. on January 12 by a man who had been previously banned from the restaurant.

Summit Hill

Robbery—A robbery was reported on the 1000 block of Grand Avenue at 3:13 p.m. on January 5.

Burglary—An apartment burglary was reported on the 600 block of Grand Avenue on January 16.

—Home break-ins were reported on the 1100 block of Goodrich Avenue at 8:01 p.m. on January 13, the 100 block of South Lexington Parkway at 3:34 p.m. on January 14, and the 1100 block of Fairmount Avenue at 3:04 p.m. on January 15.

Theft—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a vehicle on the 700 block of Grand Avenue at 12:45 a.m. on January 4.

Assault—A woman was reportedly assaulted near CVS Pharmacy, 1040 Grand Ave., at 5:18 p.m. on January 15.

Summit-University

Robbery—A strong-arm robbery was reported on I-94 and Lexington Parkway following a rollover crash at 11:11 p.m. on January 16. Police said a female passenger in the crashed vehicle pulled a man out of his vehicle when he stopped to help. She sped off in his vehicle, dragging him a short distance. She was eventually arrested and charged with fleeing police, possession of

a stolen gun, DWI, aggravated robbery and driving after suspension of her license.

Burglary—Apartment burglaries were reported on the 600 block of Selby Avenue at 5:38 a.m. on January 10, and at 7:30 p.m. on January 14.

Theft—A gun was reported stolen from a vehicle on the 400 block of North Lexington Parkway at 4:43 a.m. on January 12.

Fires—A 65-year-old man with a knife was arrested for starting fires in the Catholic Charities building at 286 Marshall Ave. at 8:15 p.m. on January 9.

—Police assisted the Fire Department with a fire at the Dale Place Apartments, 313 N. Dale St., at 3:28 p.m. on January 16.

Assault—A 48-year-old man was arrested for assault with a dangerous weapon at the Dale Place Apartments, 313 N. Dale St., at 12:30 p.m. on January 4.

—A felony assault with a weapon was reported on Lexington Parkway and Concordia Avenue at 8:19 p.m. on January 10.

—A 21-year-old man was arrested for assaulting a staff member at a residence on the 1000 block of Ashland Avenue at 8:09 p.m. on January 10.

Weapons—Someone reportedly shot at a woman's vehicle with a BB gun near Dale Street and Selby Avenue at 3:30 p.m. on January 8.

Miscellaneous—A pedestrian was injured in a hit-and-run accident on Selby Avenue and Farrington Street at 6 p.m. on January 16.

West End

Burglary—A break-in was reported at Best Pawn, 966 W. Seventh St., at 8:23 a.m. on January 6.

—An apartment break-in was reported on the 300 block of West Seventh Street at 8:45 p.m. on January 7.

—A 34-year-old man was arrested for breaking in and stealing money from the Science Museum, 120 Kellogg Blvd., at 4 a.m. on January 14.

—Two suspects reportedly broke into an apartment on the 800 block of Randolph Avenue at 11:03 a.m. on January 14. A 31-year-old woman was arrested a block away in connection with the burglary.

Theft—College Prep Elementary, 355 Randolph Ave., reported being swindled out of \$45,000 by a fraudulent online firm posing as a bus company at 2:18 p.m. on January 4.

—A 31-year-old man was arrested for theft and vehicle tampering after he was caught by security personnel taking items from a car near the Hampton Inn, 200 W. Seventh St., at 2:06 a.m. on January 10. The suspect also had an outstanding felony warrant for aggravated robbery.

—A woman was arrested after she reportedly stole a pizza and walked out the back door of Cossetta's, 211 W. Seventh St., at 7:21 p.m. on January 10. She was seen throwing the pizza in the snowbank, provided a false name to police and was wanted on several warrants.

Assault—An assault and felony damage to property was reported at a woman's shelter on Leech and McBoal streets at 2:36 p.m. on January 9.

Miscellaneous—A 22-year-old man was arrested for DWI after he was found passed out behind the wheel of his vehicle on Jefferson Avenue and Clifton Street at 1:37 a.m. on January 7.

—A 42-year-old man was arrested for felony violation of a restraining order and interfering with a 911 call after police responded to a call on the 800 block of Otto Avenue at 7 p.m. on January 10.

—Felony damage to property was reported near a towing company on the 500 block of Randolph Avenue at 4:30 p.m. on January 12.

Laser lights and Rondo Night in store for carnival Jan. 26-Feb. 5

The 137th Saint Paul Winter Carnival will feature a new Light Up the Park event, lip sync contest, Rondo Night and first-ever presenting sponsor (Priority Courier Experts) when it returns for its frosty 11-day run on January 26-February 5.

Lisa Jacobson of the Saint Paul Festival and Heritage Foundation is excited about putting on a bigger carnival in 2023. "This year, we are intentionally creating events that welcome all communities," she said. "We're working with a variety of new partners, including event organizers from the Rondo neighborhood, to produce a carnival that all people can enjoy."

The carnival will kick off with Light Up the Park from 5:30-7 p.m. Thursday, January 26, in Rice Park. Join the Royal Family, Vulcans, Klondike Kates and others for a laser light show. The first 200 people to arrive will receive glow wands.

Afterward, watch the ice carving teams start their masterpieces and check out the Vocal Interpretations lip sync contest preliminaries from 7-9 p.m. in the Landmark Plaza warming house. The finals will be held from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Sunday, January 29, in Rice Park. The contest is for those age 21 and older. The \$15 entry fee will benefit the festival.

Also new this year is a chance to warm up on Saturdays, January 28 and February 4, at the Latimer Library, 90 W. Fourth St. There will be a carnival slide show from 10:30 a.m.-5 p.m. both days and a storytime from 11 a.m.-noon on January 28. Hot cocoa and cider will be served.

Rondo Night will be celebrated from 5-9:30 p.m. Thursday, February 2, in Landmark Center. The evening will include live performances, minority artisans and organizations, food from Taste of Rondo and surprise guests.

Rice Park will serve as the central location for many carnival festivities, including the ice carving competitions on January 26-29, live music, food and merchandise vendors, ice bars, and the culmination of the Grande Day and Torchlight parades.

The State Fairgrounds will be home to the Vulcan Snow Park from January 27-February 5. It will feature a snow maze, visits by the Vulcans, and the Minnesota State Snow Sculpting Competition.

Historian Marilyn DiMartino's Winter Carnival Memorabilia Display will be open seven days during the carnival in Landmark Center's North Gallery. Scavenger hunts will be held throughout the Capitol City via the Goosechase app, with a small fee to support the festival. CynCity Tours will serve up gangsters, haunts and history with its downtown walking tours.

The Winter Carnival Orchid Show will be held at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory in Como Park from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, January 28-29 (\$4-\$5), while the Saintry City Cat Show will take place from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday that same weekend at Saint Paul RiverCentre (\$7-\$10).

Other highlights of the 2023 Winter Carnival include the following:

Friday, January 27—Royal Coronation of King Boreas and Aurora, Queen of the Snows, at Saint Paul RiverCentre. The ticketed event will begin with dinner at 5:30 p.m. and coronation at 8 p.m.

Saturday, January 28—The Jigsaw Puzzle Competition featuring four divisions from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. in Landmark Center.

—King Boreas Grande Day Parade stepping out at 2 p.m. near Smith Avenue and following West Seventh Street to Rice Park.

—Klondike Kate Cabaret at 7 p.m. at KJ's Hideaway, 408 Saint Peter Street (\$10-\$25), followed by the Royal Guards' Rock



the Palace at 9 p.m. at the Saint Paul Hotel, 350 N. Market St. (\$10-\$15).

Sunday, January 29—Fire & Ice Winter Run/Walk with starting times from 8-11 a.m. at the State Fairgrounds. Events include a Kid's Run, 5K, 10K, 15K, 20K and NoK (pay to not run).

—"Freeze Your Bags Off" bean bag tournament from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. at Rice Park (\$50 per team).

—Saint Paul Civic Symphony free concert of "Hot and Cool Classics" from 2-3 p.m. in Landmark Center.

—Virtual Minecraft Ice Palace Build Competition from 2-5 p.m. featuring carnival historian Bob Olsen and the Victoria Theater Arts Center (\$5).

—Vulcans vs. Royal Guards Hockey Classic from 5:30-7:30 at the Doug Woog Arena, 141 S. Sixth St., South Saint Paul. Admission is free, but donations and nonperishable food will be collected.

Monday, January 30—Purse Bingo from 6-8:30 p.m. in the Landmark Plaza Warming House. There will be food and beverages available for purchase. Children may play if they are with a parent or guardian.

Tuesday, January 31—Frozen Family Fun Night from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the Landmark Plaza Warming House, with characters from *Frozen* and the carnival, a story time, singalong, snow activities with Junior Royalty and gift bags.

Friday, February 3—Day of Good at Landmark Center. Join the Royal Family, Vulcans, Kates and Royal Guard for a day filled with volunteer opportunities, such as donating blood, nonperishable food and new or gently used mittens and hats.

—Klondike Kate Arctic Sizzle from 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the Camp Bar, 490 N. Robert St. (\$35).

—Saint Paul Bouncing Team tryouts from 6-9 p.m. in Landmark Center.

Saturday, February 4—Union Depot's Doggie Depot from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Union Depot, 214 E. Fourth St., featuring the crowning of the Canine King & Queen, giveaways and adoption opportunities.

—Kids and Family Day from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. at Landmark Center, with exercise, performances, and arts and crafts.

—Vulcan Victory Torchlight Parade starting at 5:30 p.m. from West Seventh Street to Rice Park. The Overthrow of Boreas on the library steps and fireworks will follow around 7 p.m.

—Vulcan Victory Dance from 7:30-11:30 p.m. at the InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront Hotel, 11 E. Kellogg Blvd. (\$25-\$30).

For the most current information, visit wintercarnival.com.

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ON THE TOWN

I Was a Stranger Too

Drama relates stories of people displaced and the humanity of those who have welcomed them

By Anne Murphy

After four years in development involving scores of interviews with people seeking asylum and the people who help resettle them, *I Was a Stranger Too* will make its world premiere on January 26-29. Written by Cynthia L. Cooper and directed by Carolyn Levy of Ramsey Hill, the play will be performed at 7 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday in the Wellstone Center at Neighborhood House, 179 E. Robie St.

"The drama follows a woman named Rory as she attempts to navigate the asylum system and in the process encounters a rich mosaic of people who are fleeing persecution and others determined to welcome them," said Cooper.

Rory's mother escaped Nazi Germany in the Kindertransport. "You know about them?" she asks at one point in the play. "Children shipped out of Germany to England to save them, even though their parents were denied entry." With Rory's memories of her mother's rescue at the forefront, the story unfolds in monologues by the characters she meets.

"The play shows the power and capacity of the human spirit and the hope that can emerge from a single act of caring," said Levy. "What we're trying to say is that, yes, asylum seekers face terrible situations, but there are people working hard to change this on the legislative and global levels. And there are people on the ground saying, 'How can I do my share?' People who do even small things can make a big difference."

It was a shared interest in women's issues that first brought Levy and Cooper together. Cooper had received a Jerome Fellowship at the Playwrights Center in

Minneapolis, and Levy was assigned to direct her first play. "It was a play about violence against women, and there weren't that many women directors then," Cooper said.

Levy, a former professor of theater at Hamline University, ran a company called the Women's Theatre Project. She and Cooper continued to collaborate even after Cooper moved to New York and became an award-winning playwright with dramas produced off-Broadway and across the United States.

Work on *I Was a Stranger Too* began four years ago. Levy had been struck by the number of people seeking asylum. "We're in one of the greatest periods (of human displacement) since World War II," she said. "People are having to flee their homeland because they're going to be killed or put in prison. They're having to go to a place that is unknown with minimal belongings and minimal access to their networks."

Levy discussed her idea for the play with Cooper. "Cindy came out to Minnesota, and we did a lot of interviews with asylum seekers and the people who help them—lawyers, translators, all sorts of folks. Then Cindy went back to New York and continued doing interviews with people all over the country."

A script was developed out of those interviews, and Levy and Cooper were invited to present their production to Theatre Unbound. That was in March 2020, when the pandemic hit and the theater world ground to a halt. "But we were both very committed to continuing the project," Levy said.

Cooper revised the script, and several virtual performances followed. "It got some nice pats on the back," she said. *I Was a Stranger Too* was named a finalist



Actors Kirby Bennett and Nicole Joy Frethem rehearse a scene from *I Was a Stranger Too* under the direction of Carolyn Levy (right). PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

for the Jewish Plays Project's Trish Vradenberg Prize and a semifinalist at the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference. It also received a grant from the Minnesota Jewish Arts Council and the Alliance of Jewish Theatres.

According to Levy and Cooper, there could not be a more meaningful venue for the premiere of *I Was a Stranger Too*. Neighborhood House was founded in 1897 by the Sisterhood of Mount Zion Temple to assist Jewish immigrants from Europe. Since then, "it has evolved into a place that works with immigrants from all over the world," Levy said.

Neighborhood House "has a beautiful new auditorium," Levy added, "and they've donated the space to us." As a result, Levy and Cooper are heading into the play's opening financially sound, which is no small thing with a cast of nine, they noted. The actors are Bethmari Márquez Barreto, Kirby Bennett, Nicole Frethem, Mahmoud Hakima, Megan Kim, Jasmine Porter, Shona Ramchandani, Abigail Ramsay and Phasoua Vang.

Bennett has found her role in the play especially meaningful, given the current

state of refugees and immigrants in the United States and the world. "The play makes it personal," she said, "as it is drawn from the stories of real asylum seekers. Behind the face of every refugee there's a profound and personal story of loss, of family and of hope for the future. These stories connect us with our history as a nation that has both welcomed and refused asylum seekers."

The play reminded Frethem of the link almost all Americans have to people who came to the U.S. as immigrants, if not asylum seekers. "There are echos of the past in *I Was a Stranger Too* that speak loudly," she said.

Levy and Cooper will host a panel discussion after each performance of the play. On the panels, "we have asylum seekers, a lawyer, a Hmong woman who came over many years ago and now works in the Hmong community," Cooper said. "We have people who are suffering asylum issues and people who are trying to help."

Tickets for *I Was a Stranger Too* are pay-what-you-wish, with \$10 suggested. For reservations, visit strangertoo.weebly.com.

ON THE TOWN Briefly

Theater

The Root Beer Lady, a one-woman show about Dorothy Molter, the last person to have a home in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, will open on January 28 at the History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. Bucking the social norms of the 1930s and '40s, Molter moved into a cabin on Knife Lake and became famous for the root beer she brewed with lake water and served to thirsty canoeists. The play, which was written and is performed by Kim Schultz, explores Molter's independence, fortitude and love of nature and pushes back against the notion that she was the "loneliest woman in America," as the *Saturday Evening Post* claimed in 1952. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays through February 19. For tickets, visit historytheatre.com or call 651-292-4323.

The Book Club Play, a light-hearted comedy about books and the people who love them, is playing through February 19 at Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave. S.

in Minneapolis. Comedian Shanan Custer directs this play by Karen Zacarias about a tightly wound bibliophile who has it all until her cherished club becomes the focus of a documentary film. Show times are 2 p.m. Sundays and 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and Monday, February 6. Tickets are \$25, or \$18 for book clubs of six or more who come as a group. Call 612-333-3010 or visit theatreintheround.org.

Rent, the popular rock opera loosely based on Puccini's *La Boheme*, will be performed from February 3-11 by Theatre 55. Twenty actors ages 55-75 will turn this angst-ridden, youth-focused drama into an equally thought-provoking production about the impact of aging in America. Show times are 7 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday at Gremlin Theatre, 550 N. Vandalia St. Tickets are priced at \$10-\$40. Visit theatre55.org.

A Soldier's Play, an award-winning drama about the murder of a Black sergeant on a Louisiana Army base in 1944, will be staged by the Ordway from February 8-12 at the Fitzgerald Theater, 10 E. Exchange

St. Written by Charles Fuller, this story of sacrifice, service and identity stars Eugene Lee as Sergeant Vernon Waters. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets start at \$43. For reservations, visit ordway.org or call 651-224-4222.

'Til Death: A Marriage Musical returns from February 3-18 at Art House North, 793 Armstrong Ave. A production of Jeremiah and Vanessa Gamble's Bucket Brigade Theater, the musical comedy tells of a couple in mid-life whose marriage is strained when they get snowbound in a remote cabin with a young couple that is head over heels in love. Joining the Gambles on stage are two real-life couples who alternate as the newlyweds: Nathan and Stephanie Cousins and Damian and Anna Leverett. Show times are 7:30 p.m. February 3-4, 10-11, 13-14 and 17-18, and 3 p.m. February 11. Tickets are \$30, \$25 for students and seniors, \$20 on opening weekend. Visit bucketbrigadetheater.com or call 612-547-9839.

Music

Ginkgo Coffeehouse, 721 N. Snelling Ave., will host the following concerts: eclectic singer-songwriter Jesse Anderson, 6:30 p.m. January 27; soulful blues artist Dan Rumsey celebrating the release of his CD "Faith in Tomorrow," with special guest Sarah Morris, 8 p.m. January 28 (tickets are \$15); traditional Irish and American folk artist Emmett Boyle, 6:30 p.m. February 3; singer-songwriter Steffi Brill, 6:30 p.m. February 10; and finger-style guitarist Pat Donohue, 8 p.m. February 11 (\$20). Admission is by donation unless otherwise indicated. Call 651-645-2647 or visit ginkgocoffee.com.

Works by Strauss, Dvorak, Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky and others will be performed by the Saint Paul Civic Symphony at 2 p.m. Sunday, January 29, at Landmark Center. Admission to the concert is free.

Internationally acclaimed organist Stephen Hamilton will commemorate

14 ON THE TOWN BRIEFLY

the 200th anniversary of the birth of Cesar Franck with a playing of the Franck Pastorale at 4 p.m. Sunday, February 5, at Hamline Church United Methodist, 1514 Englewood Ave. The recital will also feature works by Reger, Lidon, Bach and Dupré's Prelude and Fugue in B Major and Variations on a Noel. Admission is by donation.

The Baroque orchestra and choir, Bach Collegium Japan will make its Schubert Club debut on February 7-8, performing with founder and harpsichordist Masaaki Suzuki and British baritone Roderick Williams. Works by Bach, Janitch and Telemann will be featured at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday and 2 p.m. Wednesday in the Ordway Concert Hall. Tickets are \$28-\$61. Call 651-292-3268 or visit ordway.org.

"Rondo '56," a portrait in music, stories and archival photos of Saint Paul's once thriving Rondo neighborhood before it was eviscerated by the construction of I-94, will be presented at 7 p.m. Sunday, February 5, at Hamline Church United Methodist, 1514 Englewood Ave. Filled with popular music from the 1940s and '50s, the revue captures the heart and soul of the largely Black neighborhood that extended two miles west of the Capitol along old Rondo Avenue. It was written by Dan Chouinard in collaboration with cohosts T. Mychael Rambo, Thomasina Petrus and Charmin Michelle. A reception will follow. Admission is by donation. Reservations are recommended. Visit tinyurl.com/rondo56.

Exhibits

Proving that creativity does not contract in the cold, Art Shanty Projects has returned to the frozen shore and parkland of Minneapolis' Lake Harriet on weekends through February 12. Eighteen art shanties are featured from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays along with a rotating schedule of 20 performing arts groups. Among the performers are American Ice Theatre, Twin Cities Native Lacrosse, snowsuit yoga Saturdays, Sunday dance parties and the live music of Frigid Airs, Taiko on Ice, Klezmer on Ice, and Good Trouble, Sarina Partridge and Their Subzero Sing-Alongs. Live plein air painters, puppet shows and other theatricals will entertain, and so will the solar-powered Archive of Collective Memory and Techno from



Radiant in white.

Classical and contemporary choreography will be performed by CAAM Chinese Dance Theater in concert on February 4 and 5 in the O'Shaughnessy at Saint Catherine University. Entitled "Radiance," the colorful program will feature world premieres by CAAM artistic director Jinyu Zhou, retired artistic director Lili Teng and performance director Ao Liu. Liu (pictured above) will also perform a new dance in honor of her mentor Yang Liping, aka "the Peacock Queen." The curtain will rise at 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$5-\$30. Visit oshag.stkate.edu.

the Sun music project. Admission is by donation with \$10-\$20 suggested. Visit artshantypj.org.

"Defying Sameness," 56 works by 56 artists who disrupt expectations and allow their imaginations to break free, is being displayed through March 26 at Argyle Zebra Gallery, 308 Prince St., Suite 130. A reception for the artists with live jazz and light refreshments will be held from 5-8 p.m. Saturday, February 18. Admission is free and open to all. Visit theazgallery.org.

Artists Angela Two Stars and Jaime Black will open new exhibits with a public reception from 5-7 p.m. Saturday, February 4, in the Catherine G. Murphy Galleries at Saint Catherine University. In "(Re)Connected," Two Stars addresses issues that have caused trauma among Native American women and highlights their strength, beauty and resilience. She

will perform "Healing is a Process" at 6:30 p.m. February 4 and at 6 p.m. February 16, March 2 and 16. Black, in her installation "She Holds Water," seeks to dissolve the borders between body and land, between inner and outer geographies. The exhibits will remain on view through March 19. Admission is free. The artists will also participate in a screening of the videos "She Draws a Circle" and "Bring Her Home" from 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, February 7. The video program is free, but ticket are required. Visit oshag.stkate.edu/events/.

Dance

Beginner square dance lessons will be conducted by the Triple T Square Dance Club from 6:30-8 p.m. on Mondays beginning February 6 at Saint Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church, 550 W. Seventh St. Solos, couples, families and children are welcome. No partner is necessary. The cost is \$5 per evening, but the first night is free. For information, call 651-503-7040.

Books

Students and recent graduates of the creative writing program at Hamline University will read from their poems and stories from 2-3:30 p.m. Sunday, February 5, at Next Chapter Booksellers, 38 S. Snelling Ave. Taking the podium will be Emma Harrington, Elena Laskowski, Austin Malberg, Arielle Newfield, Remi Sherman, Tara Westerlund and Luqa Martins. Call 651-225-8989 or visit nextchapterbooksellers.com.

Next Chapter Booksellers, 38 S. Snelling Ave., will host a reading and discussion with author and Carleton College professor Deborah Appleman and her book, *Literature and the New Culture Wars*, at 6 p.m. Tuesday, February 7. Admission is free. Visit nextchapterbooksellers.com or call 651-225-8989.

The Stories Whiteness Tells Itself: Racial Myths and Our American Narratives will be introduced by author David Mura from 7-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, at the Minnesota Humanities Center, 987 E. Ivy Ave. The new book tells of how white stories about race attempt to erase

the brutality of the past and underpin systemic racism in the present. Mura will read selections from the book and discuss the issues raised with author Alexs Pate. A book signing will follow. Admission is free, but registration is required. Visit mnhum.org/events/.

Film

Lee Fields: Faithful Man will be screened at 7 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, at Trylon Cinema, 2820 E. 33rd St. in Minneapolis. The documentary tells of the blues and soul singer who toured the legendary Chitlin' Circuit in the 1970s alongside some of the biggest names in music and then disappeared, only to enjoy hard-won success decades later. Tickets are \$13. Visit soundunseen.com.

Et cetera

"Bonhoeffer's Cost Of Discipleship" will be discussed on Friday, January 27, in a free program sponsored by the Institute of Theological and Interdisciplinary Studies. The evening will open at 6:30 with a buffet supper in the Hearth Room of the Anderson Student Center at the University of Saint Thomas. The program will follow at 7:30. For reservations or more information, email alan@astonishme.org or call 651-983-3846.

More than 200 felines in 26 breeds will compete for top honors at the Sainly City Cat Club's championship and household cat show on January 28-29 at Saint Paul RiverCentre. The show will run from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$10, \$7 for seniors and children under age 10.

The work of racial healing will be discussed at 7 p.m. Monday, January 30, at Penumbra Theatre, 270 N. Kent St. The first of four monthly conversations on social justice, equity and wellness will begin at 6 p.m. with light refreshments followed at 7 p.m. by the 90-minute panel conversation and Q&A. Tickets are \$25. Call 651-224-3180 or visit penumbrateatre.org.

District 64B Representative Dave Pinto invites constituents to take part in an informal conversation about the current legislative session on Saturday, February 11. The free program will run from 12:30-2 p.m. at the Palace Community Center, 781 Palace Ave.

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SPORTS



The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

Moening tackles new XC challenge

When she was a junior at Highland Park High School, Molly Moening started on a journey. One of the state's top cross-country skiers, she knew she wanted to compete in the sport in college. There aren't a lot of colleges that offer Nordic skiing as an NCAA sport. Around these parts, only Saint Cloud State, Saint Olaf and Saint Scholastica do. Moening started researching and zeroed in on the University of Vermont. The Catamounts have been a power in the sport for a long time, with six national championships and 15 second-place finishes since the NCAA began holding men's competitions in 1954.

Women were added to the mix in 1983. By then, Vermont had six consecutive top-five efforts in the AIWA National Championships. Over the years, the Catamounts have had 54 individual national champions, more than 273 all-Americans, and 66 U.S. Ski Team members.

"I put myself out early and they responded to me quickly," said Moening, who helped lead the Highland girls to two state Nordic titles in three years. "I had friends on the team. I FaceTimed with the coaches. It was a great fit."

When she arrived, Moening discovered that variety is the spice of college skiing. The Vermont roster has skiers from three Canadian provinces and four states, as well as a native of Sweden. Moening is one of two from Minnesota. In past autumns, she ran cross-country at Highland. At the start of college this fall, she traded her running shoes for roller skis.

"I had done it a couple of times before. It's like rollerblading, but there are no brakes," she said.

Even though the first meet didn't take place until the second week of January, Moening and her teammates were busy going up and down hills near Burlington. Suffice it to say that navigating this terrain was different than skiing around the Highland 9-Hole Golf Course.

"There was a lot of variety in the hills here," she said. "You learn how to pace yourself when you go downhill."

The temperature in Burlington is similar to these parts. The difference is it averages around 80 inches of snow a year. Unlike Minnesota this winter, the snowfall totals are far less than usual in Burlington. As a result, Moening and her teammates have had to go far and wide at times to practice. At one point, the team headed 60 miles away to Lake Placid to practice against other schools. The trip may have had a dual purpose. The NCAA meets are scheduled in Lake Placid on March 8-11.

The weeks of practicing and lifting weights led up to Moening's college debut on January 14 in a meet hosted by Bates College in Maine. Moening finished 18th in a field of 81 in the 10K freestyle with a time of 29:39, roughly two minutes behind sophomore teammate Haley Brewster, who won the meet.

The schedule picks up in intensity over the next six weeks. There are meets of different types scheduled each weekend. As one of three first-year skiers, Moening is battling for position every week. She's doing this while balancing books as a major in sustainability and ecology policy. She hopes to go to work for a nonprofit in the environmental field.

But that's far down the road. For now, Moening is zeroing in on slopes trickier than Como Golf Course. "I feel confident in my ability," she said.

Watching from afar, her father Brad, who coaches Highland's cross-country teams, said, "It's a perfect fit for her." And isn't that what college is supposed to be?

Saint Thomas steps up its game

As noted elsewhere in this paper, the University of Saint Thomas made a bold move on January 17 when announcing a \$75 million gift to help build an on-campus

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Training on the Highland Park 9-Hole Golf Course are Highland cross-country senior skiers, from left, Max Reemtsma, Ben Martin, Tad Forsman, Gavin Roberts and Delia Johnson. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Scots still setting the pace in Nordic skiing

By Bill Wagner

When the state Nordic ski competitions are held at Giants Ridge in mid-February, it's no surprise that the Highland Park High School girls' team is expected to be right in the mix for another title.

The Scots have won nearly every meet they've been in this winter, including the recent Loppet Invitational on January 14 featuring 15 teams from throughout the metro area. The only time Highland wasn't at the top of the podium was when it finished third in the massive Mesabi East Invitational on January 7. A large reason for this was the absence of one key skier.

Highland is a team of great talent, work ethic and self-discipline that does not beat itself. Last winter, the Scots won their second state title in three years by edging out Duluth East by three points. They also won state in 2020. Still, coach Brad Moening said the best could be yet to come.

"This year's girls may be a little bit better than last year's," he said. "We have a blend of experience and youth. Our sophomore class is strong."

Moening said his squad joins Duluth East and Stillwater as having a viable chance at winning all the mar-

bles at state this winter. The Scots can do it, but Moening said they have to be healthy. Some persistent illnesses have bitten several skiers this winter. But if that gets solved, his club has a good chance.

The Scots' potent lineup is headed by the Koch sisters. Sophomore Hanna and senior Chloe have traded off being the top finisher in several meets this winter, with Hanna winning the first two of the season and Chloe taking the third.

Hanna also won the Twin Cities Meet on January 10 and had the top time in the skate race at the Loppet Invitational. She missed the Mesabi meet because she was competing in a senior nationals event in Michigan.

Moening said Hanna has a very laid-back personality "until the gun goes off" to start the race. "She's just a real competitor," he said. "By the time she's a senior, she's going to be way up there among others in the state. She's so calm at the starting line, but we call her 'The Beast' because she takes such an aggressive approach."

Chloe is a six-year veteran of the team, and is steady and determined. Moening said she is one of the best captains he's had on his teams, which is saying a lot.

The sisters get plenty of help from

their teammates. Sophomore Alexa Pundsack gets stronger every year, doing equally well in the skate and classic courses and generally being very well-rounded. Sophomore Amelie Isom is a four-year veteran and uses her experience well. She and sophomore Ellie Moore won the skate relay event at the Loppet.

The girls were set to compete in a classic race on January 18, followed by the Saint Paul City Conference meet on January 27 at Theodore Wirth Park. The Section 3 meet is set for February 7 at Battle Creek.

The Highland boys' team also has won every meet it's been in this year, with the exception of the Mesabi. That includes the Loppet, where the Scots outpaced second-place Eden Prairie by 10 points. Spearheading the winning effort were seniors Davis Isom, Ben Martin and Gavin Roberts. Isom won the skate event, and the team of Tim Tzeuschler and Tad Forsman finished first in the skate relay.

Moening said the Highland boys should also be within the top five of teams at state. However, when it comes to winning it all, the girls' chances are even better.

"If our girls ski well, they've got a real shot," he said. "It all comes down to what happens on a given day."

CDH has unfinished business in boys' hockey

By Bill Wagner

The Cretin-Derham Hall boys' hockey team would like a do-over of last year's postseason play. But that doesn't mean the Raiders can't learn from their past.

One year ago, CDH was rated No. 1 in Class AA as they prepared for the state tourney. What happened then was nightmarish as the Raiders were dominated by unheralded Prior Lake. CDH then lost to Edina in the consolation semifinal. It wasn't how they were hoping for the season to end.

But for those returning players, it was a teachable moment. "It's a big deal," said CDH coach Matt Funk.

"They're hungry, and they're a little bit embarrassed by what happened. But I don't need to talk about it—my captains talk about it. This crew has unfinished business."

Raiders are playing like it so far, racking up a 13-4-1 record through January 19 and being ranked among the top six in the state in AA. They remained unbeaten in the Suburban East Conference, placing second behind White Bear Lake.

After losing their first two games, CDH has been on a tear. Among its victims have been strong Eden Prairie, Benilde-St. Margaret's and Saint Thomas Academy teams.

The Raiders also battled top-ranked

Wayzata hard before losing 4-5 in overtime over the holidays.

Funk said this year's team is a little different than last year's. "I don't know about better," he said, "but we can use our depth and it tends to wear other teams down."

The Raiders employ 11 forwards and seven defensemen most of the time. Not many teams can do that.

CDH's offense, which at this writing had outgunned its opposition by an 89-50 goal margin, is led by senior center Jake Fisher, a Northern Michigan commit who has 20 goals and 20 assists. Fisher will play junior hockey

CDH BOYS' HOCKEY ▶17

16◀ CDH BOYS' HOCKEY

before starting his collegiate career. "He has great on-ice vision," Funk said about Fisher. "He has a quick release on his shot that is tough to stop. And he goes to the places on the ice that are hard to go to."

Fisher, who also possesses outstanding playmaking skills, makes up a great first line with junior left wing Chuck Owens (16 points) and freshman right wing Max Anderson (14). Both of them are solid and effective forecheckers.

The second line finds another talented center, senior Attila Lippai, who is the team's second-leading scorer with 12 goals and 18 assists. He is joined by senior left wing Colin Scanlan (15 points) and freshman right wing Nate Chorlton (11). The second line has great skating skills and makes things happen out there.

The Raiders' third line consists of

senior center Holden Saumweber between sophomore wings Beszi Lippai and Max Bennett. This trio might not have the offensive skills of some more high-profile teammates, but Funk likes their game. "They're big and heavy and they play a physical brand of hockey," he said.

Two other forwards—senior Charlie Cantwell and junior Easton Swift—are also earmarked for their share of ice time.

The CDH defense is reliable and deep. Senior Simon Houge is the top gun there. He takes point on the power play and knows how to manage the puck. Houge was third on the team in points with three goals and 19 assists. Houge's partner on defense is senior Lucas Cernohous, who is steady and strong back there.

Senior defender Colton Jamieson is the team's fourth-leading scorer with 18 points and partners with sophomore Jimmy Dodig. The third

defensive pairing includes seniors Trey Gnetz and Luke Chorlton. Junior Aidan Siegfried also provides good backline savvy.

Back in the nets, the Raiders have more of their vaunted depth. Junior Leo Miller was the starter, but has been sidelined with a knee injury. Stepping in nicely was sophomore Owen Nelson, who has a 2.35 goals-against average and .891 save percentage.

The Raiders have two tough contests coming up next month against While Bear, with the Section 3AA playoffs to begin February 21. But Funk likes the direction of his team so far. So does Fisher.

"We got to the state tournament last year and it was tough not doing more once we got there," Fisher said. "We have to be mentally tough this year and I think we are, but we'll be facing some tough competition and we have to keep our focus."



CDH senior forward Attila Lippai scores on a penalty shot in the Raiders' 7-0 win at home over Gentry Academy on January 17. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

16◀ WRIGHT CALL

arena for hockey and basketball. It was inevitable this would take place. From the moment the school announced it was moving to Division I, it was clear it would need a facilities upgrade.

The largesse afforded them by donors Lee and Penny Anderson is a very nice start. More funding is needed before the first brick is laid, but if all goes well the new arena will be in place in plenty of time for the Tommies to begin qualifying for NCAA tournaments.

UST's basketball and hockey coaches said the new 4,000- to 6,000-seat arena will be a boon for recruiting. This should be particularly true for hockey, which now plays at Saint Thomas Academy's 1,000-seat rink.

Odd as it may sound, this announcement was the easy part. As the new kid on the DI athletic block, UST will continue to get a lot of positive media publicity in a market that, with a few notable exceptions, is sympathetic to college athletics.

The tough stuff lies ahead. Division I athletics is no longer a friendly playground. It's always been a competitive entity, but with the advancement of transfer portals and the ability for athletes to cash in on fame and fortune it's become a cutthroat industry. Athletes are now free agents, moving from school to school in a bid to get playing time and/or money. The nature of the beast means that for every transfer you get from, say, Western Michigan, you run the risk of losing one to Iowa State. That volatility is now part of Saint Thomas' world.

It was interesting to hear new UST president Rob Vischer say the goal was NOT to be a Villanova or Boston College. UST has roughly 6,000 undergrads who pay around \$49,000 a year, which is close to the 7,000 students and \$52,000 tuition at Villanova and a little less than the 9,500 students paying \$61,000 at Boston College.

Both Villanova and Boston College are in major markets with other DI schools around them. At times, they also have risen to the top of the pack in a DI sport. Wildcats have won a pair of men's basketball titles, and the Eagles have won four men's hockey crowns. As an aside, Boston College also has an arena shared by basketball and hockey. Both schools also have sterling academic reputations. If UST doesn't want to emulate them, what role model is it picking?

A side note is having a facility of that size will allow UST to host section games for high school hockey and basketball. That's been a need on this side of the river since the Coliseum closed shop for hockey. Basketball is currently played at high school gyms with far less capacity than the new building will hold.

For now, UST gets a pass on its results on the court and ice. The school can rightfully enjoy victories such as men's hockey winning 3-2 at nationally ranked Michigan Tech recently, while shrugging off an 81-60 men's basketball loss at Kansas City as a learning experience.

Once the Tommies move into their new digs, however, expectations will be higher. Wins can still be celebrated but, as Ben Johnson and the Gopher men's basketball team discovered last week, the joy is short-lived when you lose at home to a conference foe three days later. Such is life in the world of DI athletics.

That's in the future for UST. For now, there's time to dream about what things will be like in a couple of years.

Dave Wright can be reached at dwright53@msn.com.

2023

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6	Home Improvement		
20	Selby JazzFest		
	Home Improvement		
OCTOBER			
		1	2
8	9	10	11
15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25
29	30	31	
4	Home Improvement		
18	Boomers & Beyond		
	General Election		
NOVEMBER			
		1	2
5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29
		30	
1	General Election		
22	Holiday Gift Ideas		
	Grand Meander		
DECEMBER			
			1
3	4	5	6
10	11	12	13
17	18	19	20
24	25	26	27
		28	29
		30	31
6	Holiday Gift Ideas		
20	Last Minute Gift Guide		

CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED & LEGAL ADS

Classified Categories, ad submission & more information at MyVillager.com
Classified ads are \$1.20 per word, \$12 minimum. Legal notices are 60¢ per word.

Phone 651-699-1462
Email WantAds@MyVillager.com

All ads are prepaid. We accept all ads by email with form from website.

Next Issue: February 8 Deadline: February 1

FOR SALE

MYVILLAGER digital and print memberships are for sale! Get your newspaper delivered via the post office. Join us today! www.MyVillager.com

FIREWOOD. FREE delivery. 100% oak, 2-year seasoned; stacked solid 4'x8'x16", \$190, unless bigger quantity. Order before the rain and snow comes. Call Mark, 320-980-1637.

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GARAGE/MOVING SALES

SPRING CLEANING means extra furniture, housewares, electronics, clothing and toys. Open your garage door to sell it now! Advertise your sale for a minimum of \$12 and then sit back and rake in the profits! 651-699-1462 ext 10 or WantAds@MyVillager.com

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HOME IMPROVEMENT

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HOME SERVICES

MYVILLAGER HOME SERVICES category offers handyman, moving, window and gutter cleaning services, repair and clean out services, hauling, demolition, painting etc. Advertise YOUR Home Service in the next MyVillager! Call 651-699-1462 ext 10 or email WantAds@MyVillager.com

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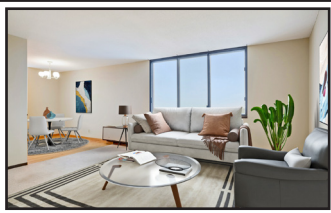


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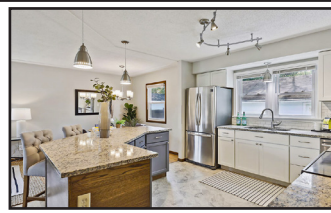
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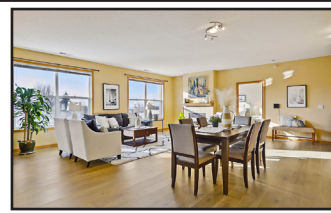
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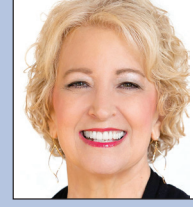
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