

## City officials take steps in wake of Oxford shooting

Changes in staffing, gun policies sought after rec employee injures teen

By Jane McClure

**S**aint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter is working to ban firearms in city libraries and recreation centers, among other initiatives to curb youth violence, in the wake of the January 18 shooting that left a 16-year-old boy critically injured outside the Oxford Community Center, 270 N. Lexington Pkwy.

Oxford, along with its Jimmy Lee Recreation Center and Great River Water Park, remained closed until further notice in the wake of the shooting. The teen was shot by Exavir Dwayne Binford Jr., 26, who was a Jimmy Lee staff member at the time.

Binford has since been terminated by the city. He is in the Ramsey County jail, charged with second-degree attempted murder and first-degree assault. His bail was set at \$500,000.

Carter announced on January 23 that the city is hiring an outside firm to audit recreation center policies, including staff security checks. Carter, who did not take

OXFORD SHOOTING ▶3



### Gliding at Groveland.

Both accomplished and beginning skaters took to the Groveland Park Ice Rinks on January 28 for the Macalester-Groveland Frost Fest. Above, Keira O'Day, 14, performed an elegant skating routine. At right, Ben Hamilton helped children Vicente, 7, and twins Araceli and Mireya, 4, keep their balance as they learned to skate. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER



## Save Our Street accuses city of hiding the harm that will result from Summit trail

By Jane McClure

**T**he city of Saint Paul has released its latest proposal for a new recreational trail along the entire length of Summit Avenue for 30 days of public comment. The master plan for the Summit Avenue Regional Trail is now 90 percent complete, according to the city, and responses from both supporters and opponents are already coming in.

The plan has the support of the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition, but has drawn numerous objections from the group Save Our Street (SOS). Other local groups said they will need time to review the document.

SOS filed a Data Practices Act request for city correspondence related to the plan. SOS is accusing the city of a lack of transparency. It contends that experts hired by the city to evaluate the plan maintained that the regional trail will be harmful to Summit Avenue's historic character.

"Based on the analysis of a highly reputable arborist retained by SOS, we're concerned that the trail will result in massive

SUMMIT AVE. REGIONAL TRAIL ▶2

## Public Works proposes overhaul of residential trash collection

### Cart sharing, opting out among possible changes

By Jane McClure

**S**aint Paul's Department of Public Works is recommending an extensive revision of the city's mandatory trash collection program as the current contract for the service nears an October 1 expiration date. The city is now drawing up a request for proposals from trash haulers for the new contract, according to Susan Young, the city's manager of resident and employee services.

The current contract for trash collection from one- to four-unit buildings in the city

is held by Saint Paul Haulers LLC. The consortium of private haulers has indicated it is interested in renegotiating the existing contract. Young said that once the request for proposals is made, the hauler consortium can submit a bid like other haulers or hauler groups.

Saint Paul Haulers LLC was created five years ago when the city was negotiating its initial contract for mandatory trash collection. At the time, it included 15 private haulers. That number has been reduced to five as haulers chose to leave the consortium and sell their residential accounts to other haulers. Waste Management now holds more than 50 percent of the residential accounts in the city. The other haulers in the consortium are Republic, Aspen,

Gene's and Highland Sanitation.

Several key changes have been recommended for trash collection in Saint Paul. Some of these came from a citizens garbage advisory committee. Others are from the Public Works Department.

One change is customer service. City staff is recommending that customer service for both trash and recycling collection be moved from the private haulers and Eureka Recycling to city staff. Young noted that in some cases, people have waited on the phone for over an hour to get a response from haulers. The city is also recommending that it take over cart management for both trash and recycling and billing services for trash.

The Public Works Department is rec-

ommending that the residents of adjacent homes or small apartment buildings be allowed to share trash carts. City Council members indicated that cart sharing would be welcomed. However, they pushed Public Works to consider using small dumpsters for multi-unit apartment buildings rather than carts.

Public Works has recommended that single-family homes be allowed to opt out of the trash collection program if the residents can demonstrate that they generate little or no trash.

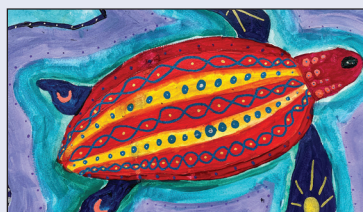
Yard waste pickup would remain an optional service for residents under the new contract. Another possible change is or-

TRASH COLLECTION CHANGES ▶3

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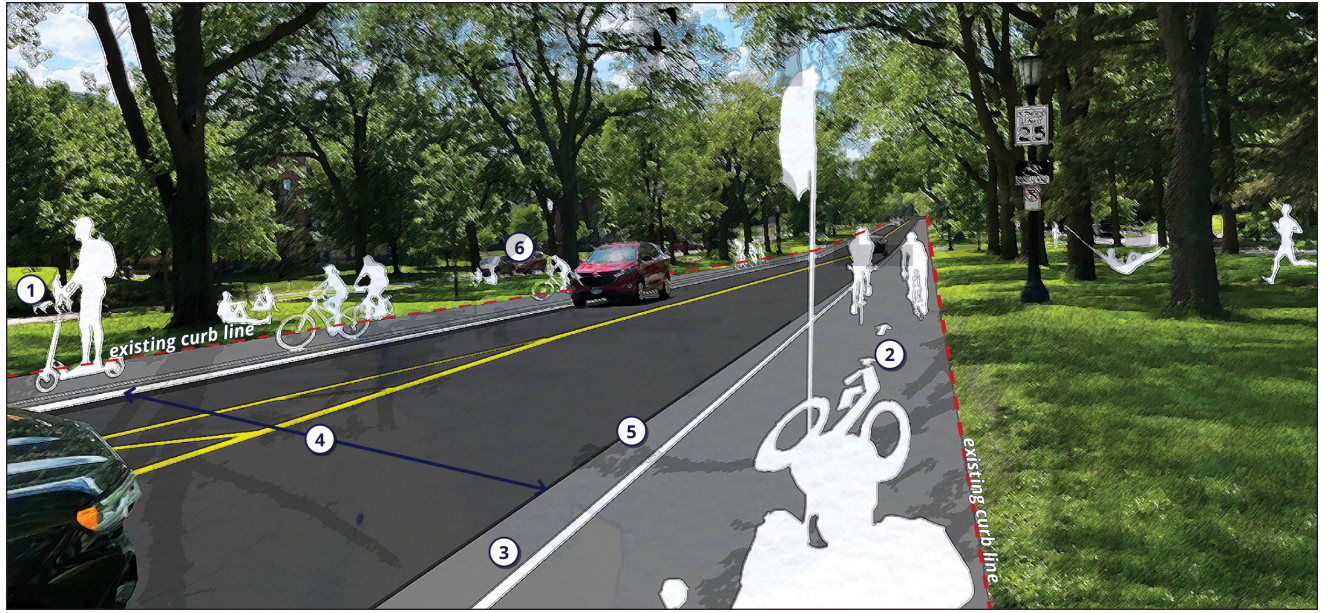


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The city's latest plan for the Summit Avenue Regional Trail illustrates how a redesigned segment of Summit between Fairview and Snelling avenues might be used with two traffic lanes and two grade-separated one-way trails within the existing curb lines.

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tree loss," said Bob Cattanaich of SOS, a resident of Ramsey Hill. "The city's public response has been essentially, 'Trust us. We'll do our best to preserve the historic character and limit the loss of trees.' But based on their own internal documents, we know that's not true. It's time they started being honest with Saint Paul residents."

SOS contends that the regional trail as planned will result in the loss of hundreds of trees along Summit, with heavy tree loss on the boulevards near intersections. Rather than risk a "fatal blow" to Summit Avenue's tree canopy, SOS favors retaining Summit's on-street bike lanes but making them safer by using high-visibility paint and narrowing the traffic lanes to slow motor vehicles and create a wider buffer between cars and bicyclists.

SOS is calling for keeping Summit's curb lines intact. According to the group, city Parks and Recreation officials ignored their own experts' advice on how to preserve Summit's historic character. For example, engineering consultants from Bolton & Menk recommended in March 2022 that "additions to Summit Avenue should be as simple as possible and not change the existing curb line."

SOS has said that the internal emails it obtained show that city staff knew their plans would be in opposition to what the city consultants recommended. The city's draft plans do call for reconstructing the curbs in new locations all along Summit.

City parks planner Mary Norton

stated in one email that if the recommendation is not to change the existing curb lines, she was unclear as to what options this leaves for a physically separated bikeway on Summit. Even a minimal approach to moving the curb line out from the boulevard is a change, she stated.

"I'm hoping the 'no change to existing curb lines' is more subjective than it sounds," stated Brett Hussong, Norton's supervisor, in another email.

Curves in the proposed trail at corners with intersecting streets could lead to the destruction of 96 trees, according to SOS. All told, Summit Avenue could lose 827 to 952 trees, or about 61 percent of its tree canopy, according to SOS and its hired arborist.

Clare Cloyd, public services manager in the Parks and Recreation Department, challenged that conclusion. "The risk to trees is highly variable depending on specific site conditions, current health and maturity of trees, and tree species," she said. "Other design considerations, approval processes, and engineering will be necessary to identify specific impacts to trees. The potential risk to trees was evaluated as part of the regional trail plan to understand potential impacts to trees relative to the proposed trail alignment. In most segments, there is no change in the curb line, meaning that the number of vulnerable trees stays the same regardless of the trail."

As for the loss of trees at corners, Cloyd said that "specific designs at intersections will need to be addressed during the engineering phase of the project to determine appropriate

crossing conditions that prioritize tree health, pedestrian and bicycle safety and vehicle movement. The trail plan does outline tree vulnerability and potential risks associated with construction of a regional trail. It also includes a toolkit of best practices for intersections."

SOS maintains that rebuilding more than 150 driveway aprons and more than 300 carriage walks or outwalks in conjunction with the regional trail will be very damaging to tree roots. According to Cloyd, the plan for the regional trail is a "visionary document" and such a level of detail is not known. Besides, the driveways and walks in the Summit right-of-way will need to be rebuilt at some point regardless of the trail plans, she stated.

Public comment is being sought through February 28 on the latest draft plan of the Summit Avenue Regional Trail. The final master plan will be drafted in March. A public hearing before the Parks and Recreation Commission is expected in March. The Saint Paul Planning Commission Transportation Committee will then make its recommendations. The City Council is expected to address the plan in April and then send its recommendation to the Metropolitan Council for review and approval in June.

To view the latest plan for the Summit Avenue Regional Trail, visit [tinyurl.com/mv68vfdp](http://tinyurl.com/mv68vfdp). To comment on the plan, visit [tinyurl.com/bdz2zy4p](http://tinyurl.com/bdz2zy4p).

**HDC apologizes for violating candidate's rights**

By Jane McClure

**A** human rights complaint filed last year by Highland Park resident Georgia Dietz against the Highland District Council (HDC) has been settled with a public apology by HDC president Kevin Vargas at the beginning of the district council's February 2 meeting.

In May of 2021 Dietz ran for election to two HDC committees. She claimed that prior to the vote, a representative of the HDC spoke out against her, informing the electorate that Dietz had twice sued the HDC, costing it a lot of money, and that the Saint Paul police had to be called to a meeting because of Dietz.

Dietz alleged that the comments prior to the election were made in retaliation for her earlier complaints

to the Saint Paul Department of Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity (HREEO). She alleged that because of the comments, she was not elected to either committee. She claimed that a vote on an alternate committee post was tabled as another attempt to prevent her from fully participating in the HDC.

The HDC denied that it had retaliated against Dietz and asserted that the comments made prior to the committee elections were meant to inform voters on matters of public record. The HDC also stated that Dietz was not excluded from the meeting, nor banned from running for a position.

Dietz had filed complaints against the HDC in January and February 2008 alleging age discrimination and retaliation, respectively. The HREEO found no probable cause in

either complaint.

Regarding the latest complaint, the HREEO found that the HDC had discriminated against Dietz and violated her rights. Section 183.10 of the city's human rights ordinance prohibits retaliation against any person who has engaged in protected activity. Protected activity includes a charge of discrimination.

Dietz accepted the apology on February 2. She also thanked HDC executive director Kathy Carruth, the HDC and the HREEO for working with her on the settlement.

Dietz is a longtime resident of Highland Park who has been active in Republican politics for many years. She has run unsuccessfully for the Saint Paul School Board and for the Minnesota House of Representatives.



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questions after the press conference, said city officials are aware of new information involving Binford's history. That includes an incident in 2019 in which he was suspended for five days regarding another altercation with a teen at a city rec center.

"This new information raises urgent questions—not only about his conduct, but about our systems to identify, investigate and intervene in response to incidents and reports of behavior which fall beneath our standards," Carter said.

A major concern for Carter and other city leaders is that state law on conceal and carry allows people with gun permits to bring their weapons into libraries and recreation centers. The mayor said that needs to be changed by the state Legislature. Binford reportedly has had a permit to carry a firearm since September 2022.

Carter referred to recreation centers as "sacred spaces" and said it is unthinkable that a young person was shot by an adult who was employed to care for him.

"We will never take for granted the trust that our young people and families place in our recreation centers," Carter said.

Carter, who described himself as a product of the city's recreation center system, said he and other city leaders have heard concerns about conflicts when school lets out and hundreds of unsupervised youths congregate in public spaces. He said that is another issue that must be addressed with discussions among the Saint Paul Public Schools, Metro Transit and the city.

In a statement on January 25 about the shooting and Oxford's future, Ward 1 City Council member Russel Balenger recognized JK Movement founder Johnny Allen for stepping up to aid the victim immediately after the incident. JK Movement runs a youth program at Oxford in space that previously housed the Loft Teen Center. Allen, city staff members including a lifeguard, and teens helped the victim until medics arrived.

JK Movement has been working with youths after the shooting, as has the Black Youth Healing Arts Center in Frogtown. Families that use Jimmy Lee for services such as the Rec Check afterschool program are being directed to other centers. Balenger said families will be part of the discussion regarding plans to reopen Oxford.

Binford's background was cited by the mayor as concerning. Binford worked for the Department of Parks and Recreation as an intern in 2013 and then returned in

2015. He worked at various centers, including at Duluth & Case and then Arlington Hills. Binford was transferred to Jimmy Lee in August 2022 and employed as a community recreation specialist.

Records indicate three actions were taken during Binford's employment with the city. In December 2019 he was suspended for five days after fighting with a youth at Arlington Hills. A second complaint was closed without disciplinary action and a third complaint is active.

His criminal record shows minor offenses, such as driving without a license, misdemeanor theft and marijuana possession.

The criminal complaint for the January 18 incident states that Binford had a "problem" with the shooting victim, who is identified in the complaint as JT. Binford said the teenager and a group of young people fought at nearby Central High School that day, and then at Jimmy Lee. He said Central staff contacted recreation center employees about trouble at the school. Doors were locked so that nothing would happen at the center, but a fight among girls began.

A witness told authorities that Binford went outside and told the students to leave. Police came, but left after things quieted down.

A girl from the group allegedly let her brother back into Oxford at one point. He reportedly was part of a group causing trouble and was not supposed to be in the building. Binford became angry, clocked out and left. He told the girl to shut up when he heard her talk about him as he was leaving. Then JT intervened.

An argument began and another teen, called RC in the complaint, joined in. Binford said the teens thought he was brandishing his gun during the argument. Binford said he was trying to find his bus pass.

JT is alleged to have told RC to call someone to "bring all the sticks." Binford assumed that meant bring weapons. Binford walked to his bus, but RC blocked his way so Binford shoved him. JT and RC then knocked Binford to the ground.

After a fight, Binford brandished his gun and fired once, striking JT in the head. Neither JT nor RC had weapons, according to the complaint.

Binford said he did not know that he had shot JT until he looked around a parked vehicle. He then fled, taking a bus downtown and calling a family member.

Ramsey County Sheriff's deputies later arrested Binford at his East Side home and confiscated his Taurus 9 mm handgun.

**14 TRASH COLLECTION CHANGES**

ganics pickup. Ramsey County is developing a program that would allow residents to put food scraps in compostable bags and place the bags in the trash. The bags of scraps would then be pulled out of the waste stream at the trash facility in Newport that serves Ramsey and Washington counties.

Public Works is recommending that the base rate for trash collection include the collection of up to six bulky items per year. Residents would no longer have to call their hauler ahead of time for the pickup of bulky items.

Currently, households may dispose of two or three bulky items per year without an extra charge. That was seen as a way to reduce illegal dumping of bulky items. However, illegal dumping has increased over the past five years.

Public Works is also recommending that the city assume responsibility for 10 percent of the trash and yard waste collection services citywide. That is seen as a small step toward returning all of Saint Paul to a municipal trash collection program. The city dropped municipal trash collection in the 1970s in favor of private collection as a cost-cutting measure.



Brian Navarrete of Highland Sanitation emptied a trash cart in an alley in Ramsey Hill back in 2019.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

With the city handling customer service, billing, cart management and 10 percent of trash collection citywide, the number of city employees needed for the program would increase by 14. That includes four solid waste workers and one supervisor to manage the garbage and recycling cart programs and eight solid waste workers and one supervisor to handle the 10 percent of trash collection citywide.

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# St. Thomas discusses arena plans in first meetings with neighbors

By Jane McClure

University of Saint Thomas officials presented preliminary plans for its proposed 4,000- to 5,000-seat hockey and basketball arena to two neighborhood groups in January. Increases in traffic, spillover parking and vehicular access to the arena site on UST's south campus emerged as the major concerns.

"I seriously hope that you look at all of the street and safety concerns," said Cindy Radtke, a member of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council board.

"Parking is going to be an issue, traffic is going to be an issue," said Goodrich Avenue resident Colleen Crenshaw.

Other local residents pressed for more use of mass transit, remote parking lots and shuttle buses. UST officials said they are looking at those ideas. However, they also noted that many of the seats will be occupied by students who will be able to walk to the games.

The arena will be built just west of Anderson Parking Ramp. The ramp, which is located just west of the intersection of Grand and Cretin avenues, has about 750 spaces. It could be expanded with two more stories or about 300 more parking spaces. However, adding to the ramp would mean reopening Saint Thomas' 2004 campus conditional use permit, which some neighbors are reluctant to do.

The Macalester-Groveland Community Council Housing and Land Use Committee reviewed the arena plans on January 25 and the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee on January 31. More meetings are scheduled.

A public meeting on the arena plans will be held from 6-7:30 p.m. Monday, Febru-



An artist's rendering of the University of Saint Thomas' proposed 4,000-seat hockey arena. The facility is planned for the south campus just west of the parking ramp at Grand and Cretin avenues.

ary 13, at the Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave. A virtual meeting with the Union Park District Council's land use committee will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday, February 27.

The arena is planned as a multipurpose facility where commencement exercises and other large convocations could be held with as many as 6,000 in attendance. The plans were announced in mid-January after longtime UST benefactors Lee and Penny Anderson made a \$75 million gift toward the \$150 million facility.

UST's men's and women's hockey teams are now playing their games at Saint Thomas Academy's arena in Mendota Heights. The UST basketball teams play in Schoenecker Arena on the north campus.

Both facilities are considered too small for NCAA Division I athletics. UST moved up from Division III to Division I two years ago.

UST will need two major approvals from the city for the arena. The overall project site plan will include a range of issues that need to be resolved before construction can start. An environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) will be required to determine the potential environmental impacts of the project and outline ways to mitigate those impacts. The EAW will be overseen by city officials and will be followed by a 30-day public comment period.

The city of Saint Paul recently amended its parking requirements so that new facilities can be built with no additional park-

ing. However, accommodating parking and traffic will be a priority for UST, according to Amy McDonough, chief of staff to new UST president Rob Vischer.

Another potential need is street redesign, especially on Cretin Avenue between Summit and Grand avenues. Related to that are any changes to vehicular access to the south campus.

Preliminary plans for the arena site show Grand Avenue closed off west of Cretin to allow for the building of a plaza in front of the new facility. That could direct more cars traveling to and from the south campus to the driveway off of Summit Avenue. No vehicular access points are planned off of Goodrich, but questions were raised about an additional access point off of Cretin south of Grand.

The new facility will be privately funded. If all goes as planned, construction could start as early as the spring of 2024, with the new facility opening for sports and other events in the fall of 2025. Ryan Companies will do the design-build for the new facility, working with Crawford Architects.

To make way for the Lee and Penny Anderson Arena, three buildings will be torn down—the Cretin Hall dormitory, McCarthy Gym and a service center. Cretin was built as a dormitory for the old Saint Paul Seminary and was designed by noted architect Cass Gilbert. That does not sit well with some historic preservationists. Another Gilbert-designed dormitory turned office building, Loras Hall, was torn down a few years ago to make way for UST's new STEAM building.

UST officials are addressing the latest news about the project and related concerns on its website at [stthomas.edu/](http://stthomas.edu/) neighbors.

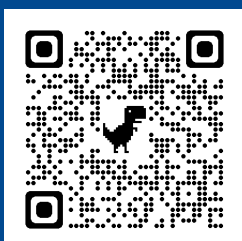
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# The balm of love

## Healing of past trauma begins with Black youths at new Frogtown center

By Anne Murphy

**B**lack Love is the theme of the open house that will be held on Sunday, February 12, to celebrate the new home for the Black Youth Healing Arts Center in Saint Paul's Frogtown neighborhood. The event is not about romance in the traditional sense. It is about "reinforcing and celebrating love of self, family and community," according to Jan Mandell, program director for the Irreducible Grace Foundation, which operates the center.

"Black Love is a reminder that as we enter Black History Month, it's time to love on ourselves, our families and our community, because we continually see that systems are still harming us," said Dr. Darlene Fry, founder and executive director of the Irreducible Grace Foundation. The nonprofit has been providing safe spaces and healing for young people of color for the past 10 years.

The open house will run from 3:30-6:30 p.m. in the former Saint Paul City School at 643 N. Virginia St. The free family-friendly event will offer a host of arts and wellness activities along with performances by special guests Thomasina Petrus and T. Mychael Rambo.

A former theater director at Central High School, Mandell said the Healing Arts Center gives Black youths a place to feel safe and discover peace by transcending unprocessed or underprocessed historical trauma. Such trauma hinders health, happiness and the realization of potential in young people, Mandell said.

The open house's theme of Black Love

was chosen by the youths who have participated in healing activities and training and are now leading classes and workshops at the Healing Arts Center. "Black love to me is a celebration and a chance for our community to recognize the true peace and prosperity our people create," said Joseph Cole, 21, a member of that leadership team.

"Black love in the context of this event signifies an opportunity centered around Blackness and joy, to gather safely, experience familial vibes, celebrate our work and be in community," said fellow team member Mariana Morgan-Sawyer, 29.

"Black love for the community is the absence of Black suffering and pain," said team member Aniya Bailey, 19. "We're not gathering to glorify the things that have caused us to hurt. We are instead practicing things that bring us joy and bring us together."

The Healing Arts Center has a recording studio and a stage as well as spaces for ceramics, painting, weaving, sewing, writing, yoga and conversation. It offers arts workshops for self-expression and wellness classes for body and mind, all with the goal of helping youths identify and work through generational trauma.

That trauma "is not always or even mostly a one-time event," Mandell said. "It's the culmination of stresses and sadnesses that go back generations. It's not just about homelessness. It's about historical poverty and injustice. It has to do with the history of slavery or the way the system operates so that people resort to certain

*The Healing Arts Center offers arts workshops for self-expression and wellness classes for body and mind, all with the goal of helping youths identify and work through generational trauma.*



Black Youth Healing Arts Center staff Mariana Morgan, Aniya Bailey, Joseph Cole and Ruth Meza join program director Jan Mandell in demonstrating breathing as a pathway to healing. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

things because they can't get employment. There's a bigger picture to understand.

"Someone could say, 'I didn't have a place to live, my mom was homeless, I was homeless,'" Mandell said. "But what was the root of that? Was my mother trying to find a place to live? And was there discrimination when trying to find housing?"

Cole said his training as a team leader in mind and body wellness benefited him personally. "They teach how stress works in your body," he said. "That training can help me be a better big brother and better community member. That's really important for me, because when I'm with my family and even my peers, there are a lot of things that I learned that would've been really nice knowing coming up in our household. Without the mind-body medicine tools, there are a lot of things that will go unsaid or undone and a lot of trauma that will go unhealed."

"One of the tools they talked about was to help get things unstuck, to help move energy in your body," said Morgan-Sawyer. "And I was like, OK, cool, I'll do it. And so all of a sudden, these kind of repressed memories were coming back to me. I had this moment where I was bawling my eyes out and I was with my team and they

helped walk me through it."

"The community at the Healing Arts Center does a really good job of intentional listening and intentional connecting," Bailey said. "There are people and young people listening to other young people. That was special to me from the start. And seeing the center move into its new home has been special, too."

"I came to the center in summertime before we got the building," Bailey said, "so it was a perfect connection to my life. Being at the stage of graduating from high school, I saw the transition from borrowed space to new building. It was very eye-opening. It's something that's ours. It's for us. It's by us. We're creating, we're decorating, we're implementing. We're doing all the things to make it a good and safe space."

Future plans for the Healing Arts Center include housing for team leaders as they prepare to move into the community and expanded programming. For now, Mandell and the others are hoping many families join them at the February 12 open house.

"Love in the community is a deep source for healing," Mandell said. "Gathering at an event such as Black Love signifies healing, and our community needs healing—healing and transformation."

# County unveils plan for repaving Cleveland Avenue through Highland

By Jane McClure

**A** plan to remove a layer of pavement on Cleveland Avenue between Bohland and Randolph avenues and replace it with new pavement, street markings, crosswalks and sidewalk ramps will be addressed in a public meeting from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday, February 16, at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy.

The meeting will be conducted by the Ramsey County Department of Public Works. Cleveland is a county road. The county typically does not hold public meetings on mill and overlay projects, but is doing so in response to local concerns.

This stretch of Cleveland is one of two county roads in the area slated for "pavement preservation" improvements this year. The other is Randolph Avenue between Cleveland and Brimhall Street. The two streets are among 10 in the county that will be seeing mill and overlay improvements through a \$7.7 million program paid for with county, county-state aid highway, and other local funds. Cleveland is penciled in at \$285,000 and Randolph at \$540,000. Abutting property owners will not be assessed for the improvements.

The two local projects were reviewed last fall by the Highland District Council (HDC) Transportation Committee, and some changes were made. Cleveland is the focus

of the public meeting because of questions raised about the changes. One of the biggest points of debate was the area between Ford Parkway and Eleanor Avenue. County officials considered extending the Cleveland Avenue bike lanes through that area, but opted not to do so.

HDC committee members objected to losing any on-street parking to the bike lanes in that three-block stretch, saying it would hurt businesses and discourage shoppers from traveling to Highland Village. Bicyclists can still use Cleveland, but it will be without the benefit of bike lanes.

As part of the repaving project, the traffic signal at Cleveland and Highland Parkway will be replaced. Corner bumpouts will be

installed at Bayard Avenue, which is an intersection that is often crossed by Horace Mann Elementary School students. Other crosswalks would get new striping and other improvements.

New 6-foot bike lanes will be added on Randolph between Cleveland and Macal-ester Street. The street will also be striped with 8-foot parking lanes and two 11-foot traffic lanes. The striping is expected to reduce the speed of traffic on Randolph. Corner bumpouts would be added on the northwest corner of Randolph and Prior, and the southwest corner of Randolph and Davern Street. New traffic signals are planned for Randolph and Fairview along with corner bumpouts.

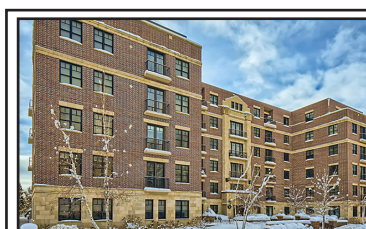
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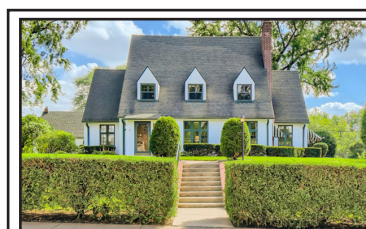
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Members of the Walker West Music Academy Youth Jazz Ensemble took center stage during the Saint Paul Winter Carnival's inaugural Rondo Night on February 2 in Landmark Center. Among those in attendance were U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, Mayor Melvin Carter, Winter Carnival president Lisa Jacobson, carnival royalty and ReConnect Rondo director Keith Baker. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

## News Briefs

### Federal judge to decide lawsuit over St. Paul's rent stabilization

A lawsuit filed by landlords against Saint Paul's rent stabilization regulations is now in the hands of a U.S. District Court judge, following a January 30 hearing where more than two hours of testimony were presented on both sides of the issue. Judge Nancy Brasel must now decide whether or not the city's ordinance is constitutional.

The lawsuit was filed last June by two landlords—Woodstone Limited Partnership at 2335 Stewart Ave. and the Lofts at Farmers Market LLC at 260 E. Fifth St. Defendants include the city of Saint Paul, Mayor Melvin Carter, the City Council and city Department of Safety and Inspections director Angie Wiese.

Saint Paul voters approved a 3 percent annual cap on rent increases and tenant protections in a referendum in November 2021. The measure took effect in May 2022. Since then, the City Council approved various rules and exemptions that allow landlords to exceed the 3 percent cap under certain circumstances. That includes exemptions for buildings considered to be low-income housing. Processes were also set up for landlords to seek higher increases, and for tenants to oppose increases.

The landlords contend that the city's rent stabilization violates property and contractual rights as well as their constitutional rights to due process. It is not known when a ruling will be announced.

Judge Brasel did not allow tenant advocacy groups to intervene in the federal lawsuit, despite their requests to do so. The groups could still get involved if her final order is appealed.

This is the second challenge to city rental policies in less than three years. In 2021 a federal judge ruled on the side of landlords who objected to a set of sweeping tenants' protections. Those policies were deemed unconstitutional by the court, and city leaders opted not to appeal.

### HPC approves renovation plan for historic Assumption School

Work to restore the former Assumption School at 69 W. Exchange St. got the final go-ahead on January 30 from the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission. The HPC reviewed the latest version of the project after voting in favor of the renovation last December.

Project architect Bruce Caulfield said changes in details previously proposed by the HPC were incorporated into the final

design. One of the biggest changes is to remove a portico that was proposed over a rear entrance.

The two-story limestone school building is being eyed as space for public gatherings and classes. The approximately \$3.5 million renovation will feature an 18-by-36-foot addition to the former school to provide an elevator, kitchen, accessible restrooms, and ramp from the building to the parking lot.

The renovation will also feature extensive exterior improvements, including new windows, tuckpointing, drainage system and basement floor. New electrical, heating and cooling, and plumbing systems will be added. A stairway at the north end of the building will be rebuilt, and concrete stairs at the rear entrance will be removed.

The school is next to Assumption Catholic Church, which was founded in 1856. The current church was built between 1870-74 and replaced a smaller one.

History shows conflicting dates for construction of the school. The HPC lists it as circa 1860, while 1864 was listed when the school was nominated for the National Register of Historic Places. The book, *The Catholic Church in the Diocese of Saint Paul* by James Reardon states that the stone school was built in 1867.

The school and church were listed on the National Register in 1975, and received local historic designation in 1980.

### St. Paul festivals receive Cultural STAR funds to offset police costs

The Saint Paul City Council approved Cultural Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) awards on January 25 that included \$37,992 to the Saint Paul Festival Association. The money will be used to help compensate for increases in police costs for organizations in the city that produce festivals. The group had requested \$65,000.

Council members expressed appreciation to the association for trying to work on the cost issue. Some festivals have been canceled or scaled back due to increased security costs. Talks are underway with Mayor Melvin Carter's administration to see how the issue can be addressed.

The council, on recommendation of the Cultural STAR Board and the mayor, funded 40 of 50 applicants at a grand total of \$956,891. All of the funding is in the form of grants, with the largest being \$200,000 for Forecast Public Arts' mural project in the downtown cultural district.

News Briefs were compiled by Jane McClure.





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# VIEWPOINT

## City's fantasy persists with revised plan for Midway superbloc

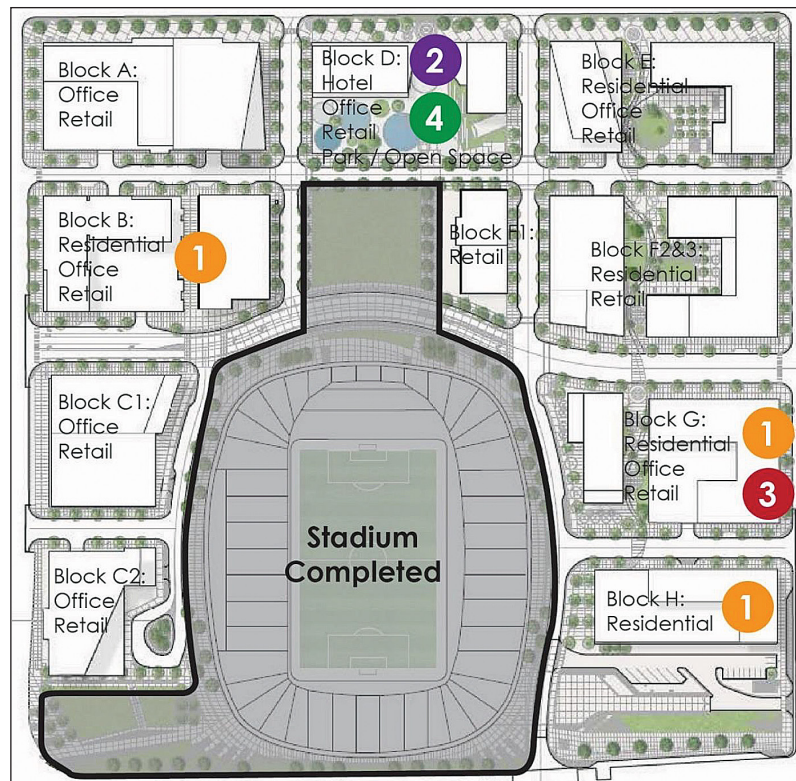
By Tom Goldstein

The recent news from the city of Saint Paul that the anticipated development around Allianz Field has been significantly scaled back from the lofty vision first rolled out by Minnesota United principal owner Bill McGuire in 2015 (*MyVillager*, January 11) should come as no surprise to anyone who has lived in or around Saint Paul's Midway area during the past six years.

Not only has the city's use of \$25 million in taxpayer dollars to fund "infrastructure" specific to the soccer stadium done nothing to enhance the local community, the net result of actions taken by former Mayor Chris Coleman and the majority of the City Council in 2016 on behalf of McGuire and his partners has been the loss of hundreds of jobs and dozens of businesses that once served the neighborhood.

Gone are Rainbow Foods, Walgreens, Office Max, Midway Pro Bowl and the Dollar Store, as well as such longtime restaurants as Peking Garden and Golden Gate Cafe. While it is true that fires related to the civil unrest following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 damaged what remained of Midway Shopping Center, the bulk of the businesses were essentially forced out years before to accommodate McGuire's soccer dreams. In their place is a stadium exempt from property taxes for the next 50 years surrounded by barren fields and asphalt parking lots. For all of the complaints about the old bus barn site, this is an improvement?

Seven years ago, on these pages, I predicted this exact scenario. It wasn't because of any particular genius on my part. I simply noted that "30 years of economic studies have definitively shown that professional stadiums at most simply shift spending patterns rather than spur bona fide development." Unfortunately, such inconvenient facts didn't concern the majority of the City Council. They chose to ignore their own resolution to only back the project if there was "strong, specific evidence that the stadium and



The diagram at left shows the proposed master site plan for the superbloc around Allianz Field at Snelling and Saint Anthony avenues. The plan differs from the site plan approved in 2016. It includes more apartments (1), but fewer hotel rooms (2), less commercial space (3) and less park and open space (4).

public infrastructure investments will help catalyze additional investments on the Midway Shopping Center site." In the words of former City Council member Russ Stark of Ward 4, ignoring his own resolution required "a little leap of faith."

Although the city's newly revised alternative urban areawide review (AUAR) continues to describe the Midway "superblock" that includes Allianz Field as a "mixed-use urban village," the notion that office space, hotels, and housing are going to spring up around the stadium is laughable. Well before the pandemic struck, office buildings in downtown Saint Paul were being converted into condos and apartments—a trend that has only accelerated since 2020. With all of those options, why would people opt to live in the Midway amid the recent devastation and scores of boarded-up buildings and empty lots up and down University Avenue?

Similarly, with approximately 1 million square feet of office space available downtown in close proximity to City Hall,

the Ramsey County Court House and what passes for Saint Paul's "financial district," why would law firms, investment houses, insurance companies, etc., favor a location next to a soccer stadium?

Ditto for a 100-room hotel. If there is a demand for additional hotel rooms in the city, why would an investor choose a site next to a stadium that hosts 20-25 events a year when the bulk of the city's entertainment venues—Xcel Energy Center, CHS Field, the Palace Theatre, etc.—are also located downtown?

In spite of these realities, in late 2020, a new City Council majority voted to create a \$116 million Snelling Midway Redevelopment Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District in hopes of "jump-starting" redevelopment on the superbloc. Incredibly, that amount was nearly doubled to \$209.6 million less than a year later, even though no new development has been proposed.

Keep in mind that providing this level of TIF for the Midway site will effectively deprive the city of \$67.9 million in

property taxes during the projected 26 years that the new TIF district is in place. And this commitment is being made while the Sears block by the state Capitol sits vacant, more than \$100 million in TIF is earmarked for the massive Highland Bridge project, and the city seeks to redevelop the former Hillcrest Golf Course.

It's also worth noting that while the revised AUAR serves as the city's tacit admission that Bill McGuire's glitzy vision for the Midway was nothing more than a fantasy, Minnesota United's principal owner is still sitting pretty. Simply put, successful developers know that moving any kind of project forward first requires assembling the necessary land. While McGuire himself has no development experience beyond funding a soccer stadium, he has effectively gained control of the Midway superbloc. At some point, a developer will come forward with a more realistic vision for the Midway site and, with access to \$209 million in TIF, leverage that subsidy into a huge payday—a payday from which Mr. McGuire will handsomely profit by selling his stake or partnering on the project.

Like everything in Saint Paul, it won't matter if the Midway project fits within the city's master plan, requires numerous variances or is just a bunch of structured parking. All that matters is that new things are getting built and that the mayor can tout them as proof Saint Paul is moving forward.

As for those of us who reside in the Midway, lived through the recent civil unrest and know full well that whatever redevelopment happens will benefit the wealthy at our expense—well, gee, what could be better than a big new dynamic-display screen on the superbloc showing outdoor movies and home and away Minnesota United games? Maybe there will even be free popcorn—paid for by the city, of course.

*Tom Goldstein, a lawyer and former Saint Paul School Board member, lives in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood.*

## INBOX

### A recipe for world peace

There was an ongoing, nudge-to-the-ribs sparring between my dad, who was raised by an Irish mother, and my mom, a first-generation Italian, about the appropriate granule to sprinkle on tomatoes. We had Italian spaghetti sauce made with salt. We had "American" spaghetti made with canned tomatoes, butter and sugar.

Oh, if all of the disagreements in life were so simple! War is death. So come to the table. Refrain from evil. Live in peace. The prosperity of our children and the future welfare of the earth depend on it.

*Mary Therese Nelson  
Highland Park*

### Keep guns out of wrong hands

According to recent research by Everytown for Gun Safety, 52 percent of stolen guns are taken from cars. Leaving an unsecured firearm under the seat of a car or in the glove box or console creates an opportunity for it to fall into the hands of a thief or even a child.

Along with the right to gun ownership comes the responsibility to keep guns out of the wrong hands. One important way to do that is to make sure that guns in all vehicles and homes are securely stored—locked, unloaded and with ammunition securely stored separately.

Minnesotans may obtain up to three free gun locks from the state's Department of Public Safety. Visit [dps.mn.gov/safe-secure](https://dps.mn.gov/safe-secure).

Let's all help make our communities and kids safer by securely storing all guns in our homes and vehicles. To learn more, visit [besmartforkids.org](https://besmartforkids.org).

*Dr. Emily Benzie  
Merriam Park*

### Got ice dams?

We see the impacts of climate change all around us: more extreme droughts, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires and rainfall. These events not only impact people's lives directly, but also cost us more for disaster assistance and insurance rates. It's time for Minnesota to lead our country on climate policy by passing the 100 Percent Clean Energy Bill (HF-7 and SF-4).

This bill will lead to a more sustainable energy future, but what about the present? As I travel around the Twin Cities, I see many houses and buildings with ice dams. Ice dams typically result from problems inside the house. Insufficient insulation and air leaks from interior heated spaces are usually the cause. These problems can be prevented and climate impacts reduced.

A home energy audit is the first step to diagnose the problem and define ways to save energy and money. There are do-it-yourself guides from the U.S. Department

of Energy, and the nonprofit Center for Energy and the Environment provides residential and commercial energy audits in the Twin Cities.

Renewable energy sources like solar and wind are necessary, but let's not forget about energy conservation. It's not sexy, but proper building practices will reduce energy use and eliminate ice dam problems. Conservation is the most readily available and cheapest form of energy savings, carbon-emission reduction and climate change mitigation.

*Terry Brueck  
Merriam Park*

*Editor's note: The 100 Percent Clean Energy by 2040 bill was passed by the Minnesota Legislature last week.*

### Do write, won't you?

MyVillager welcomes letters to the editor and longer guest editorials. However, 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](mailto:letters@myvillager.com) or submit it via our website at [myvillager.com/editorial](https://myvillager.com/editorial). The views expressed are not the views of MyVillager.



# Thirsty city toasts opening of these new venues

By Carolyn Walkup

From Grand Avenue to downtown to the far reaches of West Seventh Street, four new dining establishments have opened or will open in the coming weeks in Saint Paul. All of them are or will be serving food, but beverages are clearly their top attractions. They include:

## Bar + Cart

Craft cocktails are the specialty of this cozy newcomer at 1571 Grand Ave. in the space formerly occupied by Khyber Pass restaurant. The name Bar + Cart pays homage to the portable bar carts that cocktail fans often had in their homes in the 1940s and '50s.

Brian Riess and partner Ralena Young are veterans of the hospitality trade, but this is their first foray into restaurant ownership. The pair did the buildout themselves, from the floor-to-ceiling back bar to the individual tabletops.

Bar + Cart's extensive cocktail menu features Riess's signature Mont Blanc, a combination of gin, blanc vermouth, genepy, absinthe rinse and lemon spray; the classic Sazerac with rye, cognac, sugar, Peychaud's bitters, absinthe and Angostura bitters; and the vintage Mary Pickford with rum, pineapple, maraschino, grenadine and lime.

The establishment's food menu changes often. Many items are meant to be shared. Examples include a footlong lobster roll; loaded hummus with flatbread; smoked salmon spread with crostini; tuna poke bowl; lamb chops; a cheeseburger with caramelized onion, red chili bacon and kettle chips; and Chilean sea bass.

"We're still tweaking the food menu," Riess said. "If something is too cumbersome to get out (of the kitchen), we remove it. We have no fryer or freezer, so everything is fresh."

There are just 55 seats in Bar + Cart. That includes the lounge in the foyer. Riess likes how the relatively small space allows him to interact with his patrons. "We want this to be a comfortable neighborhood spot," he said. "We hope patrons come back for the hospitality. Our staff is our most important asset."

Bar + Cart adds a 20 percent service charge to all bills. That amount is divided equally among the waitstaff, so no additional tipping is necessary. Hours are 3-11 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 3 p.m.-midnight Friday and Saturday.



Brian Riess, co-owner of Bar + Cart, poses in the dining room of his new Grand Avenue restaurant and lounge on a busy weeknight.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

## Gambit Brewing Company

Josh Secaur, former brewmaster at Bobtown in Roberts, Wisconsin, has opened a new brewery on the garden level of the Pioneer Endicott Building at 141 E. Fourth St., in the space formerly occupied by 12welve Eyes Brewing.

Gambit Brewing has a total of 94 seats at the bar, around tables and in the lounge. It serves a wide variety of beers and hard seltzers that partner Mike Christianson flavors in-house with fresh syrups. With low lighting and recorded jazz, Secaur and Christianson are striving for a nightclub atmosphere.

Due to the historic status of the Pioneer Endicott, Secaur said he is unable to add a kitchen. However, he plans to expand his menu of do-it-yourself charcuterie boards with cheeses and cured meats produced in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Hours are 3 p.m.-close Monday through Thursday and noon-close Friday through Sunday.

## Wildflyer Coffee

Wildflyer Coffee is planning to open in March in the former Fresh Grounds coffee shop at 1362 W. Seventh St. The nonprofit venture is dedicated to hiring teenagers and young adults who have experienced homelessness or other housing instability. It works closely with RS EDEN, a social service agency that will be providing single-occupancy apartments on the building's second floor.

Wildflyer tested its business model at its first coffee house on Minnehaha Avenue in Minneapolis' Longfellow neighborhood. Program manager Kenzie Diessner is a licensed social worker who works with employment counselors to oversee the progress made by current and past Wildflyer employees in securing and keeping

stable jobs.

Wildflyer's plans include a full espresso bar, brewed coffee and tea and various caffeine-free beverages. It will have between 30 and 40 seats. Initially, it will serve pastries, bagels and other goods made at local bakeries. However, the building has a full kitchen, and Wildflyer plans to develop its own food service at a future date, according to Diessner.

## Wandering Leaf Brewing Co. and Soul Lao Restaurant

A new brewery and Laotian restaurant are slated to open this spring in the former Family Dollar store at Sibley Plaza, 2402 W. Seventh St. Matthew Holton, co-owner of Wandering Leaf, has a degree in horticulture. He plans to create a "living green space" in the tap room with planters filled with ornamentals and a "living wall" of other plant species.

Holton used to manage a vineyard in Minnesota. He already has all of the equipment he needs for the brewery, since he ordered everything a year ago, even before his plans received city approval. "We took a gamble and it paid off," he said.

Wandering Leaf will have about 100 seats in all at the bar and at tables. However, Sibley Plaza landlord Paster Properties is planning to build a patio next to the building, and that should increase the tap room's seating by about 50.

Soul Lao Restaurant will provide the food for Wandering Leaf. The first brick-and-mortar venture for food truck owners Eric Phothisanh and Sabrina Boualaphanh, Soul Lao will serve such traditional Laotian dishes as spicy red curry, rotisserie chicken marinated in lemongrass, oyster sauce, fish sauce and such exotic meats as chicken feet and ox tail.

# Council upholds plans for Treehouse senior apartments

By Jane McClure

Trellis' proposed five-story Treehouse apartments for low-income seniors can finally move ahead. The Saint Paul City Council voted 5-1 twice on February 1 to reject appeals of a variance and site plan for the project, which will be built into the hill behind the Highland Chateau, 2319 W. Seventh St.

Council member Chris Tolbert, whose ward includes the site, said he could find no evidence that the city's Planning Commission erred last December when it approved the site plan and variance for the development.

Last month, the council also rezoned the property from single-family to medium-density residential.

Council member Jane Prince cast

the lone votes to deny the appeals. She agreed with concerns raised by neighbors about a retaining wall that would be as high as 14 feet tall in spots, and a trough-shaped yard between the new building and wall. Council member Nelsie Yang was absent.

A public hearing on the appeals was held on January 25. Chad Cutshall, who lives on the bluff near the development, filed the appeals. He and other neighbors question the wisdom of constructing a five-story building on such a steep slope.

Neighbors contend that the structure will be visible to homes atop the bluff. They also raised concerns about the extent of regrading needed for the site, and the need for the retaining wall and trough-shaped yard. The opponents question whether the project

met all of the legal standards needed for the city to grant a variance.

They also took issue with the site plan and the amount of work that will be needed to prepare the site for development.

Cutshall said he and other neighbors understand the need for more housing, especially low-income senior housing. But they believe the building will be out of character with the rest of the neighborhood.

"This will tower over everything," Cutshall said.

The site would be accessed via a new private street that will loop behind Highland Chateau. Treehouse residents also are expected to be able to use services at Highland Chateau and would also receive services from Catholic Charities.

# MyVillager

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Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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### Editors

Dale Mischke,  
John Wadell  
news@myvillager.com

### Graphic Designer

Craig Schuster

### Classified Advertising and Legal Notices

Craig Schuster  
wantads@myvillager.com

### Display Advertising

Gary Ball  
gball@myvillager.com

### Publisher

Michael Mischke  
mmischke@myvillager.com

### Circulation

Craig Schuster  
membercare@myvillager.com

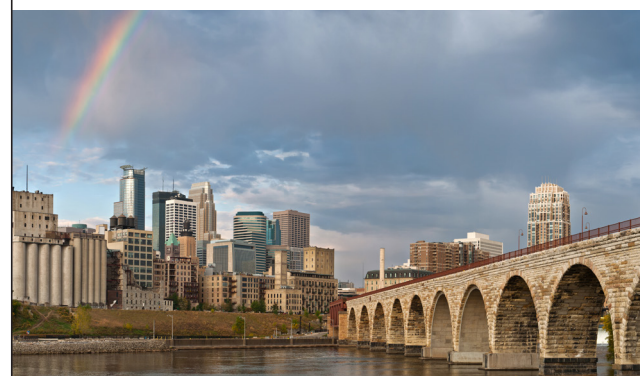
**CONTRIBUTORS:** Roger Barr, Matthew Davis, Casey Ek, Janet Lunder Hanafin, Anne Hauth, Brian Johnson, Frank Jossi, Mary Maguire Lerman, Jane McClure, Lou Michaels, Steve Michaels, Anne Murphy, Melenie Soucheray, Brad Stauffer, Jennifer Stewart, Bill Wagner, Carolyn Walkup, Dave Wright.

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# SUMMER CAMPS

## Art of Middle East

### ArtStart camps explore cultures of Ancient Egypt and long-ago Turkey

By Anne Murphy

The itinerary is set for ArtStart's 2023 summer camps. This year, children ages 6-12 will explore the art and culture of Ancient Egypt and long-ago Turkey. From the Pyramids of Ancient Egypt: Dig This! will be held on July 10-14, and Turkey: From Anatolia to the Ottoman Empire will run from July 17-21 at Mount Zion Temple, 1300 Summit Ave.

Both sessions will have morning, afternoon and all-day options. The cost for half day is \$225 per week; full day is \$425 per week.

Versions of these summer camps will also be available for children younger than 6 and older than 12. A Start with the Arts for 4- and 5-year-olds will meet in the mornings from July 10-14 and July 17-21 at a cost of \$225 per week. Children age 13 and older can register for Camp Create, working alongside professional artists from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on June 27-30 at a cost of \$350.

Egypt and Turkey are fascinating for their art and culture as well as their expansive borders, according to ArtStart executive director Carol Serrine. "Their land mass spans two continents," Serrine said. "Egypt stretches from the Nile Valley in northern Africa to the Sinai peninsula in southern Asia. Turkey reaches into Asia as well as southern Europe."

Serrine founded ArtStart in 1988 as a nonprofit dedicated to educating both children and adults in the arts. ArtStart operates ArtScraps, the store at 1459 Saint Clair Ave. that partners with local businesses and manufacturers to collect scrap material, overstock, factory rejects and other items and recycles them as art materials and creativity kits that families can use at home.

ArtStart's summer camps began in 1992. They are taught by artists and arts educa-

tors with backgrounds in the particular classes. Over the years, the camps have focused on cultures in every corner of the world.

Macalester-Groveland mother Katharine Stebinger said her children Ruth and Paul, both 9, are more excited than ever about this summer's camp offerings. "They've attended one of the camps every year they've been old enough for full day," Stebinger said. Her children explored Mexico in 2019, Ecuador and Peru remotely in 2020, Japan in 2021 and Australia in 2022.

"What my children love about ArtStart is how hands on it is," Stebinger said. "They're taking the Egypt week this year and looking forward especially to the her-bology workshop."

In The Art of Herbolgy, children will learn about the Ancient Egyptian priests and physicians and the medications they prescribed made from thyme, fennel, garlic, juniper and other plants. The children will make salves and syrups from plants and record the recipe for each with pen and ink on Egyptian papyrus.

In Mummies and More, campers will learn the secrets of mummification and create their own mummy and sarcophagus. In Hieroglyphics, they will learn how to communicate in this ancient script and create a book with it. The class Adorned and Bejeweled will have campers creating amulets, necklaces and bracelets inspired by Ancient Egyptian designs.

Summer campers who choose to explore Turkey can take a class in Miniatures and create their own "nakish," a traditional Turkish art involving bright and boldly colored mini-paintings. In Weaving a Magic Carpet, children will make a simple loom and use it to weave a small carpet or kilim that can be used as a rug, wall covering or saddle pad.

Folk Dance of Turkey will teach the



ArtStart will return to Mount Zion Temple this summer with half-day and full-day camps for children ages 4-18. The art and culture of Ancient Egypt and long-ago Turkey will be explored. Last summer, the children in ArtStart's camps created works of art in the traditions of Australia and New Zealand (at left and above left and right).

steps, patterns and gestures of traditional Turkish dances. Iznik Ware Inspired will focus on the pottery first made in the town of Iznik and invite campers to make their own Iznik-inspired tiles. In A Caravan of Camels, children will make a papier-mache camel and enjoy a sweet treat made from camel's milk.

Among the nine artists and educators conducting the summer camp classes this year is Julie Boada. An Anishinaabe artist, storyteller, puppeteer and educator, Boada has worked for more than 30 years with such organizations as In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre and the Little Coyote Puppet Theater, which she cofounded.

"I love the ArtStart summer camps because each of them is based around a particular country or area of the world, so students are learning about culture and history through the art of the culture," Boada said. "Of course, they're also learning a lot about art making."

"In the first week, Egypt, my husband

Gustavo and I are doing the story of the Benu Bird," Boada said. "Campers will be making shadow puppets and masks inspired by those found in King Tut's and other tombs. In the second week, Turkey, we're making crankies (moving pictures) of superhero stories inspired by the Turkish Yesilcam films. We're also teaching Oya or Turkish-style crochet."

"The content of the camps is inspiring and interesting," Boada said. "I think the children have fun and learn a lot, too. We have many students who return year after year."

"We've got the grandchildren (of former summer campers) coming, which is wonderful," Serrine said. "And we have kids who graduated from previous camps coming back, many of them as paid interns to assist the artists. A lot of them have brothers and sisters who attend."

For more information on the summer camps, visit [artstart.org](http://artstart.org), call 651-698-2787 or email Serrine at [carol@artstart.org](mailto:carol@artstart.org).

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# City loan helps save historic W. 7th house from demolition

By Jane McClure

The historic Justus Ramsey House will be dismantled and put into storage with the long-term goal of rebuilding the 1852 stone cottage on a vacant lot elsewhere on West Seventh Street.

After much debate on January 25, the Saint Paul City Council acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) approved \$84,000 in emergency business assistance to stabilize, disassemble, move and store the two-room limestone structure, which is located on Burger Moe's patio at 252 W. Seventh St. The funding is to be structured as a forgivable loan and handled by the West Seventh/Fort Road Federation.

Attorney Dan Kohler offered to have the cottage, which is believed to be the oldest surviving house in Saint Paul, rebuilt on a lot that he owns at 1072 W. Seventh St. He and partner Rita Dalbec would live in the house after it is rebuilt, and Kohler said he would relocate his law office there.

The vote ended a tense 44 hours that started just after 6 p.m. January 23 when Mayor Melvin Carter ordered the cottage to be demolished. The announcement came two days before the council was expected to hear an appeal by property owner Mojtaba Sharifkhani, aka Moe Sharif, of a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) decision denying the demolition.

Preservationists and representatives of West End neighborhood groups stood vigil over the cottage during the evening of January 23-24. They confronted police and watched Burger Moe's staff start removing pieces of the building. The group made signs stating "Plow our streets, not our history" and "Shame on Moe and Melvin."

Federation board members and members of the Little Bohemia Neighborhood Association, the Historic Irvine Park Association and Historic Saint Paul convinced Ramsey County District Court Judge Laura Nelson to sign a temporary restraining order halting the demolition at about 7 a.m. January 24. Nelson urged the sides to come together to find a resolution.

A request for city assistance during the January 25 council meeting was whittled down from \$115,000 after resistance from council members Amy Brendmoen, Chris Tolbert and Nelsie Yang. The vote was eventually 6-0 to approve the \$84,000, with Mitra Jalali absent.

Ward 2 council member Rebecca Noecker, whose ward includes the Justus Ramsey House, spoke for the funding and described the situation as a "win-win."

Council members who raised objections noted they had not received a written staff report on the request for business assistance dollars. Tolbert said he was frustrated by a lack of details and said the request "didn't pass the smell test." Brendmoen said it may be more appropriate for the city funds to be sought and allocated through a competitive process. She criticized the request for lack of transparency.

Noecker responded that the project could not wait. "The urgency here is the condition of the building," she said. City Planning and Economic Development director Nicolle Goodman agreed. "There's a real risk that this could just collapse," she said.

Tom Schroeder, who has led efforts to save the structure, said the \$84,000 would cover the costs of shoring up, then safely dismantling and storing the cottage. New footings and foundation would have to be prepared before it could be rebuilt on its new site. That could not happen until after frost is out of the ground.

Sharifkhani spokesperson Mike Zipko said in a statement that the veteran restaurateur is on board with the proposal approved on January 25. "Moe is pleased that there is an outcome that addresses the current challenge while also making sure history is preserved and a better future for this building is now viable," Zipko wrote. "The key challenge was that the building is badly deteriorated and has been ruled a safety risk."

Elyse Jensen, who is active in the Historic Irvine Park Association, said she was frustrated that the city was subsidizing a deal for a building that Sharifkhani did not want. Other neighborhood activists said saving the building and moving it was better than losing it entirely.



A statue appears to be watching over the Justus Ramsey House, which will be moved from its current spot on Burger Moe's patio.

## Business Briefs

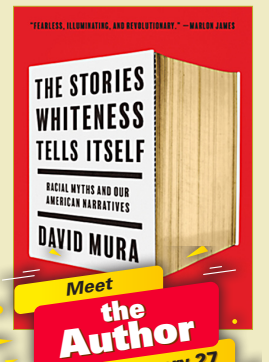
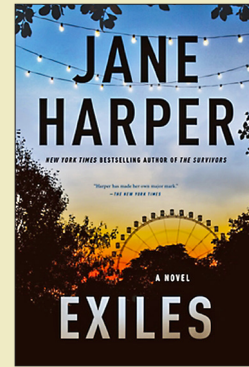
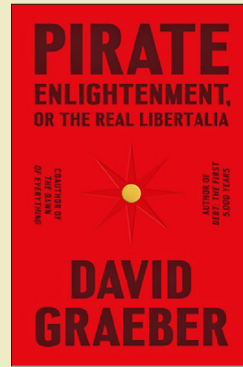
Robbie Grossman was named 2022 Realtor of the Year by the Saint Paul Area Association of Realtors during its annual banquet in January. In 2022, Grossman served on the city's Rent Stabilization Task Force, and on a residential and business displacement committee. As a Gold Star grandson, he works with the Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals to help active duty service members and veterans achieve homeownership. He also participates in the Men's Club at a local school, assists its Home and School Committee, and coaches youth baseball.



Foodist Films has moved to a newly renovated studio in a 115-year-old building at 608 S. Smith Ave. The company works with household brands found in grocery aisles to create recipe videos and food photography for the web, social media and broadcast.

The Minnesota Tool Library is now sharing tools and trade skills on the lower level of the Capitol Lien Building at 1010 N. Dale St. Since 2017, it had been located in the basement of the PriorWorks Building on North Prior Avenue. The Tool Library is open from noon-4 p.m. every Saturday. For information, including volunteer opportunities, visit [mntoolibrary.org](http://mntoolibrary.org).

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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 crimes not mentioned in this print edition, go to MyVillager.com.

## Highland Park

**Burglary**—Suspects stole two cash drawers after breaking into Cecil's Restaurant, 651 S. Cleveland Ave., between 7:32-8:37 a.m. on January 30.

**Theft**—Thefts from vehicles were reported at Crosby Farm Park on January 19 and 30, and at Hidden Falls Park on January 29.

—Items valued at more than \$500 were reported stolen from several vehicles at the Highland Arena, 800 S. Snelling Ave., between 3-4 p.m. on January 25.

—A 31-year-old man with multiple warrants was arrested for theft and trespassing at Lunds & Byerlys, 2170 Ford Pkwy., around 1:02 p.m. on January 26.

—A man reported a theft of more than \$1,000 near Panera, 2056 Ford Pkwy., around 7:35 p.m. on January 30.

**Assault**—A felony assault was reported at the BP Station, 2526 W. Seventh St., around 1:01 a.m. on January 13.

—A woman was taken to the hospital following an assault with a dangerous weapon in an apartment on the 1900 block of Ford Parkway at 8 p.m. on January 26.

**Arson**—A fire was reported on the 2100 block of Scheffer Avenue around 8:47 a.m. on January 28.

**Weapons**—Shell casings and damaged property were located after police responded to a report of shots fired near Highland Pointe, 1800 Graham Ave., around 8:35 p.m. on January 22.

**Miscellaneous**—A driver reportedly slid on ice and struck a male pedestrian and his dog on Scheffer Avenue and Roy Street around 6:09 p.m. on January 29. The male was not transported, but the dog was taken to a veterinary clinic.

## Lexington-Hamline

**Robbery**—A woman was reportedly robbed at gunpoint by two males on the 300 block of North Dunlap Street around 12:17 a.m. on January 24. The suspects took off when police arrived, but were later arrested for aggravated robbery and fleeing police. One of the suspects, a 19-year-old man, was also cited for possession of a gun

by an ineligible person. The gun was recovered in a nearby storm drain.

**Theft**—A theft of items valued at more than \$1,000 was reported at Speedway, 399 N. Lexington Pkwy., on January 20.

—A pick-pocketing loss of more than \$500 was reported near Aldi, 1134 University Ave., on January 24.

—A 27-year-old man was arrested for trying to steal more than \$500 in items and fleeing police at the Midway Target around 12:18 p.m. on January 26. The suspect also had multiple outstanding warrants.

—A 27-year-old woman was arrested for trying to steal more than \$500 in items from the Midway Target around 12:18 p.m. on January 26. She also was cited with trying to flee police and having multiple outstanding warrants.

**Miscellaneous**—A pedestrian was reportedly struck by a vehicle near University Avenue and Dunlap Street around 4:30 p.m. on January 26.

## Macalester-Groveland

**Burglary**—Police responded to Grand Avenue and Wheeler Street around 8:54 p.m. Monday, January 16, to recover bicycles from a burglary that occurred on the 1700 block of Lincoln Avenue.

—A burglary was reported on the 400 block of South Lexington Parkway around 7:59 p.m. on January 26.

—Money was reported stolen from an apartment on Albert Street and Grand Avenue on January 28.

—A home break-in was reported on the 300 block of Woodlawn Avenue around 11:04 p.m. on January 30.

—A resident confronted a burglar who broke through the back door of his home on the 1900 block of Summit Avenue around 1:58 p.m. on January 31. The suspect was described as a white male, around 5-foot-7, slender build, short gray hair, and wearing a blue winter coat. He was carrying a bag across his chest and appeared unkept. Police unsuccessfully tried to track the suspect with a K9 unit.

**Theft**—A woman reported her purse stolen from her cart while shopping at Walgreens, 1585 Randolph Ave., around 11:28 p.m. on January 24.

—A trailer was reported stolen on the 1700 block of Stanford Avenue between 2:53-4:13 p.m. on January 30.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony damage to

property was reported on the 1200 block of Saint Clair Avenue between 1-6 a.m. on January 26.

## Mendota Heights

**Theft**—Items stolen from a vehicle were returned to their owner after police found them abandoned near Diane and Victoria roads around 3:36 a.m. on January 18.

**Miscellaneous**—A highly intoxicated female was taken to the hospital from the 1700 block of Victoria Road around 6:35 p.m. on January 22.

## Merriam Park

**Robbery**—A woman said a man with a sword tried to steal her car on University and Snelling avenues around 5 p.m. on January 24. She was able to disarm the suspect, but he took her keys and fled. The woman chased him for several blocks, but he escaped.

**Theft**—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a building on the 1500 block of Marshall Avenue around 7:55 p.m. on January 27.

—A U-Haul trailer was reported stolen from the parking lot at Auto Tech, 461 N. Wilder St., around 9:51 a.m. on January 31.

**Assault**—A woman was assaulted by a suspect with a gun on the 400 block of Herschel Street around 12:43 p.m. on January 23.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony damage to property was reported during two incidents on the 1900 block of Marshall Avenue on January 19-20 and 23.

## Snelling-Hamline

**Robbery**—A suspect reportedly reached through the drive-up window and grabbed \$800 from the register at the Midway McDonald's, 1570 University Ave., around 8:26 p.m. on January 25, before running away. A perimeter search with a K9 unit could not locate the suspect.

—A suspect demanded money from the register at gunpoint during a robbery of Speedway, 56 N. Snelling Ave., around 10:48 a.m. on January 27.

**Theft**—A 44-year-old woman was arrested for possession of stolen property on the 1400 block of University Avenue around 2 a.m. on January 24. Multiple items were recovered from a car theft. A male victim had tracked one of the stolen items to the University location.

## Summit Hill

**Theft**—A purse-snatching was reported near the Red Rabbit, 788 Grand Ave., around 8 p.m. on January 26.

—A vehicle was reported stolen on Saint Albans Street and Grand Avenue on January 30.

## Summit-University

**Assault**—An assault with a dangerous weapon was reported at the Dale Street Place Apartments, 313 N. Dale St., around 6:29 p.m. on January 24.

—A fight was reported at the Rondo Library, 461 N. Dale St., around 10:30 a.m. on January 31. Upon police arrival, the fighting parties were separated. Only minor injuries were reported.

**Sex crime**—A woman said a suspect grabbed her and tried to forcibly kiss her on the lips at Sweeney's Saloon, 96 N. Dale St., around 2:55 p.m. on January 28.

**Weapons**—Gunfire was reported on the 800 block of Hague Avenue around 1:18 a.m. on January 26.

## West End

**Theft**—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were stolen from a vehicle on Kellogg Boulevard and West Seventh Street around 10:30-11:35 p.m. on January 26.

—Wooden pallets were reported stolen from the Highland Nursery, 1742 W. Seventh St., around 10 a.m. on January 27.

**Assault**—An attempted assault by a suspect with a machete was reported at a bus stop on West Seventh Street and Otto Avenue around 11:58 a.m. on January 23. No injuries were reported.

—A 36-year-old man was arrested for felony assault with a dangerous weapon on the 500 block of Michigan Street during the evening of January 25-26.

—An assault with a dangerous weapon and felony damage to property were reported at Journeys Secondary School, 90 S. Western Ave., around 9 a.m. on January 31.

**Weapons**—An automatic weapon was recovered from a vehicle, along with a large amount of suspected fentanyl, after police attempted a traffic stop for speeding on Clinton Street and Jefferson Avenue around 7:29 p.m. on January 26. The suspects ran a stop sign, struck a vehicle in the intersection and then fled on foot. Another automatic firearm was recovered in the backyard of a nearby residence.

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# District Councils

## Highland Park

highlanddistrictcouncil.org  
• 651-695-4005

**Sledding party**—Families are invited to grab their sleds and come out for a sledding party from 1-3 p.m. Saturday, February 11, at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. There will be a bonfire, s'mores, hot chocolate and a story walk. The event is hosted by the Highland District Council, Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation, and Saint Paul Public Library.

**Workshop deadline nears**—The Highland and Macalester-Groveland district councils will hold a Home Improvement Workshop Day on March 11 at Cretin-Derham Hall. Presenters are sought to give 45-minute to one-hour workshops during the event. The application deadline is February 11. Visit [macgrove.org/events/hiwd](http://macgrove.org/events/hiwd).

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

**Public apology to Georgia Dietz**—The Highland District Council was found to have violated the Saint Paul Human Rights Ordinance by retaliating against Georgia Dietz. The Highland District Council apologizes to Ms. Dietz.

**Upcoming meeting**—Community Development Committee, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 21. The meeting 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](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar).

## Macalester-Groveland

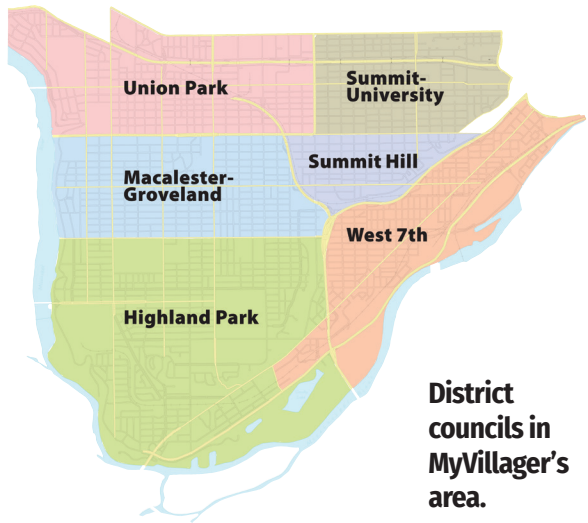
macgrove.org • 651-695-4000

**Last chance to register**—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. The registration deadline is February 11 and workshop space is limited. For information and an application, visit [macgrove.org/events/hiwd](http://macgrove.org/events/hiwd).

**Annual meeting and elections**—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council will host a virtual annual meeting and board elections on Thursday, April 20. All those who live, work, learn or play in the neighborhood are encouraged to participate. Learn more about open seats and running for the board by visiting [macgrove.org/boardelections](http://macgrove.org/boardelections) or emailing [alexa@macgrove.org](mailto:alexa@macgrove.org).

**Century building plaques**—The community council offers engraved plaques to celebrate century-old homes and businesses in the neighborhood. Any property that will be 100 years old by 2028 is eligible. Order and pay by visiting [macgrove.org/100years](http://macgrove.org/100years) by March 31.

**Upcoming meetings**—board of directors on Thursday, February 9; Community Building Team on Monday, February 13; Inclusivity Task Force on Wednesday, February 15; Housing and Land Use Committee on Wednesday, February 22; and Transportation Committee on Monday, Febru-



District councils in MyVillager's area.

ary 27. All of the meetings will be held via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. To receive monthly notices and log-in details, visit [macgrove.org/participate](http://macgrove.org/participate).

## Union Park

unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

**Upcoming meetings**—Transportation Committee with Allianz Field general manager Justin Borrell, 6:30 p.m. Monday, February 13; Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee with Saint Paul Parks and Recreation director Andy Rodriguez speaking on the Park Improvement Fund, 7 p.m. Tuesday, February 21; Committee on Land Use and Economic Development with University of Saint Thomas chief of staff Amy McDonough presenting plans for a multipurpose arena, 6:30 p.m. Monday, February 27; and board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 1. All of the meetings will be held via Zoom. For access information, email [info@unionparkdc.org](mailto: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](mailto:info@unionparkdc.org).

**Office hours**—The Union Park office hours are by appointment only. Contact executive director Leah Timberlake Sullivan at [leah@unionparkdc.org](mailto:leah@unionparkdc.org).

## West Seventh

fortroadfederation.org • 651-298-5599

**Board updates**—The West Seventh/Fort Road Federation is currently seeking board candidates for its annual meeting on Tuesday, April 25. To learn more, email [fortroadfed@fortroadfederation.org](mailto: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 safety in the West seventh neighborhood from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Thursday, February 9, via Zoom. Register by visiting [fortroadfederation.org/calendar](http://fortroadfederation.org/calendar).

**District plan forums**—Two public forums will be held via Zoom to discuss the Fort Road Federation's updated district plan: for residents from 6-7:30 p.m. Monday, February 20; and for businesses and nonprofits from 6-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, February 21. An in-person forum on the plan will take place from 1-3 p.m. Saturday, February 25, at the Palace Community Center, 781 Palace Ave. To register, visit [fortroadfederation.org/calendar](http://fortroadfederation.org/calendar).

**Upcoming meetings**—board of directors, 7 p.m. Monday, February 13; Community Engagement and Outreach Committee, 6:30 p.m. Thursday, February 16; and Transportation and Land Use Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 1. To log in, visit [fortroadfederation.org/calendar](http://fortroadfederation.org/calendar).

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# ON THE TOWN

## Faith and friendship

Secular world of New York threatens to separate two teens on a mission in *Trayf*

By Frank Jossi

Coming-of-age stories have always been a favorite of writers wanting to explore a turning point in their characters' lives. Playwright Lindsay Joelle's buddy comedy *Trayf* does that and more.

The latest production of Highland Park-based Six Points Theater, *Trayf* tells of two Orthodox Jewish teenagers who navigate the secular world of New York City in a truck. The teens are members of an Hasidic sect, and they are on a mission to ignite the souls of Jews whose faith is not as ardent as their own.

Directed by Jennie Ward, *Trayf* will open on February 18 in the theater of the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. The production stars Saint Paul Academy senior Soren Thayne Miller as Zalmy and Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists senior Charlie Peterson as Shmuel.

Zalmy and Shmuel are following in the tradition of the Chabad-Lubavitch sect, riding in trucks dubbed "mitzvah tanks" throughout Brooklyn and Manhattan and engaging passersby in discussions about Judaism. The teens are intent on outreach and not necessarily

conversion, according to Ward, a Highland Park resident.

"They have a clear mission to ignite souls in the world," she said. "So if you have a positive interaction with them, that's a mitzvah, an act of bringing greater light and joy to the world." However, their friendship and love of Judaism is tested when a curious outsider draws Zalmy into the forbidden pleasures of New York City.

The two teenagers are at the point in their lives where formal schooling is about to end, Ward said, and they begin to sense what their future lives might be like. "They're slipping away from each other and from what they thought their futures might hold," she said. "It's a universal kind of slipping away, one that any pair of childhood friends might feel as they step into adulthood."

*Trayf* is a comedy about friendship, faith and conflict, according to Ward. It deals sensitively with male friendships. That is rare in American culture, she said, and it is what attracted her to the play.

Miller, 18, has been performing on stage since he was 8. The role of Zalmy felt honest to him, he said, and it represents one of the first times he has been able to play a character who is the same



Zalmy and Shmuel, played by Soren Thayne Miller (left) and Charlie Peterson, high-five in a scene from Six Points Theater's production of *Trayf*. The buddy comedy opens on February 18 at the Highland Park Community Center. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

*Trayf is a comedy about friendship, faith and conflict. It deals sensitively with male friendships, and that is what attracted director Jennie Ward to the play.*

age as himself.

"I personally related to a lot of things Zalmy goes through," Miller said. He said he appreciated Zalmy's constant questioning and struggle to learn who he is and what he stands for. The word "trayf" means forbidden things, and Zalmy struggles with the Orthodox Jewish tenets not to listen to secular music nor to watch musical theater.

Peterson, 17, is enrolled in the theater track at the Conservatory for Performing Artists. He has performed in many plays at school, but this will be his first time on a professional stage. The Macalester-Groveland resident said he also identifies with his character.

"I think Shmuel just knows who he is, and I think that's a rare thing to find in teenagers especially," Peterson said. "I think it's just a lovable and passionate role to play." Shmuel, he said, "is confident in himself, in who he wants to be and in who he enjoys being around. I think that's a powerful thing to portray and play."

In *Trayf*'s other roles, Paul LaNave plays Jonathan, a potential Catholic convert who learns his deceased father was of Jewish descent, and Marci Lucht, who plays Jonathan's Jewish

girlfriend Leah.

*Trayf* will be performed at 1 p.m. Tuesdays, at 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays, at 1 and 7:30 p.m. on Saturdays, and at 1 and 7 p.m. on Sundays through March 12. Additional shows are scheduled at 5 p.m. Sunday, February 26, and at 1 p.m. Tuesdays, February 21 and March 7.

Masks must be worn by the audience on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Sundays. They are optional on Thursdays and Saturdays. Socially distanced seating will be available at 7 p.m. Sunday, February 19, and at 1 p.m. Tuesday, February 21.

Tickets are priced from \$25-\$40 with discounts for groups and during the rush for students, artists and "nextgen" theatergoers. For reservations, visit [sixpointstheater.org](http://sixpointstheater.org) or call 651-647-4315.

## ON THE TOWN Briefly

### Books

*The Stories Whiteness Tells Itself: Racial Myths and Our American Narratives* will be discussed by author David Mura from 7-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 8, at the Minnesota Humanities Center, 987 E. Ivy Ave. The book unmasks how the stories whites tell about race attempt to erase the brutality of the past and prop up systemic racism in the present. A book signing will follow. Admission is free, but registration is required. Visit [mnhum.org/events/](http://mnhum.org/events/).

Author Eme McAnam will launch her novel *Freefalling* on Saturday, February 11, at the Commodore, 79 N. Western Ave. The program begins at 2 p.m. with refreshments and a cash bar. McAnam will discuss this story of senior romance at 3 p.m. A book signing will follow at 4 p.m. Admission is free, but reservations are requested at [freefalling.eventbrite.com](http://freefalling.eventbrite.com).

Next Chapter Booksellers, 38 S. Snelling Ave., will present a free reading and

discussion with Minneapolis author Beth Obermeyer and her book, *When Winter Came: A Doctor's Journey to Fight the Flu Pandemic of 1918*, at 6 p.m. Wednesday, February 15. Visit [nextchapterbooksellers.com](http://nextchapterbooksellers.com) or call 651-225-8989.

### Exhibits

"Defying Sameness," 56 works by 56 artists who disrupt expectations and allow their imaginations to break free, are 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](http://theazgallery.org).

Artists Angela Two Stars and Jaime Black are displaying their works through March 19 in the Catherine G. Murphy Galleries at Saint Catherine University. Black, in her installation "She Holds Water," seeks to dissolve the borders between body and land, and between inner and outer

geographies. In "(Re)Connected," Two Stars addresses the causes of trauma for Native American women and highlights their strength, beauty and resilience. She will perform "Healing is a Process" at 6 p.m. February 16, March 2 and 16. Admission is free.

"Terms of Engagement," a collection of paintings by David Amdur, and "Folk Magic," featuring the pottery of Alana Cuellar, will be displayed from February 17 through April 2 at Raymond Avenue Gallery, 761 Raymond Ave. The gallery is open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Friday. Admission is free. A public reception for the artists will be held from 6-8 p.m. Friday, February 17. Call 651-644-9200.

### Dance

Beginner square dance lessons are being conducted by the Triple T Square Dance Club from 6:30-8 p.m. on Mondays at Saint Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church, 550 W. Seventh St. Singles, 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.

Dancers from Ballet Co.Laboratory will perform in a free program beginning at noon on February 14 and March 14 in the Landmark Center cortile. For more information, visit [landmarkcenter.org](http://landmarkcenter.org) or call 651-292-3063.

### Family

Red Balloon Bookshop, 891 Grand Ave., will present storytime with author Amanda Henke and her picture book, *Not a Book About Bunnies*, at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, February 11. Admission is free. Call 651-224-8320 or visit [redballoonbookshop.com](http://redballoonbookshop.com).

Tour the Philippines without leaving Saint Paul from 1-3 p.m. Sunday, February 12, at Landmark Center. The free Urban



**14 ON THE TOWN BRIEFLY**

Expedition program is sponsored by the Cultural Society of Filipino-Americans. It will feature the live music, dance, food and crafts of this island nation. For more information, call 651-292-3276 or visit [landmarkcenter.org](http://landmarkcenter.org).

**Venture up the fjords of Norway** without leaving Saint Paul. Take part in an Urban Expedition from 1-3 p.m. Sunday, February 26, at Landmark Center. Sponsored by the Sons of Norway, the free program will feature the music, dance, food and crafts of this Northern European nation. For more information, call 651-292-3276 or visit [landmarkcenter.org](http://landmarkcenter.org).

**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](http://soundunseen.com).

**Music**

**Pianist Steven C. Anderson** and guests will present Valentine's concerts from 7-8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, February 10-11, at the Commodore Bar & Restaurant, 79 N. Western Ave. Joining him will be singers Jack Cassidy and Jillian Gubash and violinist Nate Wilson. Singer Kathryn Budzien will take part in the show on Friday. Singer-songwriter Jeff Arundel will also be featured on Saturday. Tickets start at \$20. Visit [eventbrite.com](http://eventbrite.com).

**Ginkgo Coffeehouse**, 721 N. Snelling Ave., will host concerts by singer-songwriter Steffi Brill at 6:30 p.m. Friday, February 10; finger-style guitarist Pat Donohue, 8 p.m. Saturday, February 11 (tickets are \$20); and folk and country artist Eric Peltoniemi, 8 p.m. Saturday, February 25 (\$20). Admission is by donation unless otherwise indicated. Call 651-645-2647 or visit [ginkgocoffee.com](http://ginkgocoffee.com).

The award-winning Salzburg Guitar Trio will perform at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, February 25, in Sundin Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave. For tickets, priced at \$10-\$25, visit [mnguitar.org](http://mnguitar.org).



**"For the Love of..."**, a Valentine's Day concert featuring some of the finest female performers in the Twin Cities, will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, February 14, at the History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. From folk to pop to Broadway to opera, these women will deliver their musical thoughts on what love is really all about: Judi Vinar, Ginger Commodore, Rachel Holder, Erin Schwab, Joan Griffith, Maria Jette, Jen Maren, Ellis Delaney and Lori Dokken. For ticket information, call 651-292-4323 or visit [historytheatre.csstix.com](http://historytheatre.csstix.com).

**The Minnesota Guitar Society** will present an evening of jazz and finger-style guitar on Wednesday, February 15, in Fingal's Cave at MetroNOME Brewery, 289 E. Fifth St. Ben Abrahamson will play from 6-7 p.m. followed by national champion Tim Sparks from 7-9 p.m.

**"Far from the Triumphant Court,"** radical music from 17th-century England by such composers as John Dowland, William Lawes and Thomas Morley, will be performed on Friday, February 17, by Phillip Rukavina on lute, Ginna Watson on violin, Julie Elhard on viols and Curtis Foster on recorders. The concert will begin at noon in the Baroque Room, 275 E. Fourth St., Suite 280. Tickets are \$5-\$20. Visit [lyrbaroque.org](http://lyrbaroque.org) or call 651-321-2214.

**Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon"** will be performed live in its entirety by Classic Albums Live at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, February 25, in the Ordway Concert Hall. Tickets start at \$33. Visit [ordway.org](http://ordway.org) or call 651-224-4222.

**A contemplative service** of lessons and carols for Lent will be presented by the Mount Olive cantorei and organist David Cherwien at 4 p.m. Sunday, February 26, at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 3045 Chicago Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Admission is free and open to all. Call 612-827-5919.

**Hot Club of San Francisco violinist** Evan Price will be featured on Sunday, February 26, in a program of original compositions, jazz and folk music and a Mozart string quintet. The concert is sponsored by the Chamber Music Society of Minnesota. It will begin at 4 p.m. in Sundin Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave. Tickets are \$15-\$25. Visit [chambermusicmn.org](http://chambermusicmn.org).



**A Soldier's Play** will take the stage on February 8-12 at the Fitzgerald Theater, 10 E. Exchange St. Written by Charles Fuller, this powerful drama about service and sacrifice tells of the murder of a Black sergeant on a Louisiana Army base in 1944. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets start at \$43. Visit [ordway.org](http://ordway.org) or call 651-224-4222.

**Theater**

**Rent**, the rock opera loosely based on Puccini's *La Boheme*, is being performed on February 8-11 by Theatre 55. Twenty actors ages 55-75 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 at Gremlin Theatre, 550 N. Vandalia St. Tickets are \$10-\$40. Visit [theatre55.org](http://theatre55.org).

**'Til Death: A Marriage Musical** has returned to 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 further strained when they are snowbound in a remote cabin with a young couple that is head over heels in love with each other. Joining the Gambles on stage are two real-life couples who alternate as the newlyweds: Nathan and Stephanie Cousins and Damian and Anna Leverett. The curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. February 10, 11, 13, 14, 17 and 18, and 3 p.m. February 11. Tickets are \$30, \$25 for students and seniors. Call 612-547-9839 or visit [bucketbrigadetheater.com](http://bucketbrigadetheater.com).

**The Root Beer Lady**, a one-woman show about Dorothy Molter, the last person to have a private home in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, is playing through February 19 at the History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. Bucking the 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 was written and is performed by Kim Schultz. It 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. For tickets, visit [historytheatre.com](http://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. 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. 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](http://theatreintheround.org).

**Et cetera**

**Classics Lost 'n' Found Theater** will conduct auditions on February 13 and 15 for its production of *The Petrified Forest* by Robert Sherwood. Tryouts will be held from 7-9 p.m. that Monday and Wednesday at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church, 1620 E. 46th St. in Minneapolis. Rehearsals begin on March 20. The play will be performed on May 5-6 and 12-13. For more information, call 612-724-4539.

**FRIDAY/FEBRUARY 10**

**EMOTIONS ANONYMOUS**, a 12-step program that helps people who are dealing with stress to live a healthier emotional life, will meet at 7 p.m. today and every Friday at the Twin Cities Friends Meetinghouse, 1725 Grand Ave. For more information on the group and its program, visit [emotionsanonymous.org](http://emotionsanonymous.org) or call Paul at 651-402-6774.

**SATURDAY/FEBRUARY 11**

**FREEDOM FOUNDATION** of Minnesota CEO Annette Meeks will be the keynote speaker at the Lincoln Day Tea of the Metro Republican Women beginning at noon at Mendakota Country Club, 2075 Mendakota Drive in Mendota Heights. For more information or to register for the event, call Elaine at 651-423-0556.

**STATE REPRESENTATIVE** Dave Pinto invites his constituents in House District 64B to join him in an informal conversation about the current legislative session from 12:30-2 p.m. at the Palace Community Center, 781 Palace Ave.

**KIOSK****WEDNESDAY/FEBRUARY 15**

**THE OPTIMIST CLUB** of Saint Paul will hold a Welcome Dinner for prospective members at 6 p.m. at Joseph's Grille, 140 S. Wabasha St. All are invited. For reservations, call Terry Gorman at 651-955-7072.

**SATURDAY/FEBRUARY 18**

**KING PHILIP'S WAR**, the 17th-century conflict between Native Americans and colonists in the American Northeast and the effect it had on succeeding generations, will be discussed by historian Christine DeLucia in 90-minute forums beginning at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. Admission is \$10-\$16. For reservations, call 651-259-3015 or visit [boxoffice@mnhs.org](mailto:boxoffice@mnhs.org).

**A FREE WINTER FUN FEST** will be held from 2-5 p.m. at Dodge Nature Center, 1701 Charlton St. in West Saint

Paul. Sleigh rides, snowshoeing, boot hockey, ice golf, kick-sledding and otter sliding will be featured as snow conditions allow. Bonfires, refreshments and live music will also be part of the fun along with raffles for a 50-inch and 65-inch TV.

**SUNDAY/FEBRUARY 19**

**THE SAINT PAUL HIKING CLUB** will take a five-mile hike through the historic neighborhood around the old Schmidt Brewery beginning at 2:30 p.m. New members are always welcome. The group will gather beforehand at Joe & Stan's Pub & Grill, 949 W. Seventh St. For more information, call Sharon at 651-207-5926.

**SUNDAY/FEBRUARY 26**

**THE TWIN CITIES BRIDAL SHOW** returns to Saint Paul's RiverCentre from noon-4 p.m. Featured will be a bridal fashion show; makeover demonstrations; booths for caterers, photographers, florists and reception sites; and displays of flowers, stationery, cakes and décor. Tickets are \$15-\$20. Visit [TheWeddingGuys.com](http://TheWeddingGuys.com).



# SPORTS



## The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

### O'Brien to tackle new grid challenge

A month or so ago, Saint Thomas Academy football coach Dan O'Brien got a phone call from Jeff Ferguson, a longtime friend. Ferguson had considerable success coaching high school football at Totino-Grace, winning eight state titles, but retired a couple of years ago. That was fine, but when Ferguson was asked by Holy Family Catholic to evaluate what was wrong with its troubled prep football program, he couldn't resist the challenge. The Fire went winless the last two seasons, getting outscored 762-183 in the process.

Ferguson first asked O'Brien if he knew of anybody who might be able to take over the coaching reins at Holy Family in Victoria, which is just a bit west of Chanhassen. Later he asked if O'Brien might be interested in the job.

"I said 'no,'" O'Brien recalled. "We had a good thing going at Saint Thomas Academy." During O'Brien's five years at the helm, the Cadets made it to the state Class AAAAA tournament every year it was held. That includes advancing to the title games in 2018 and 2019, and going undefeated in the COVID-shortened 2020 season when the tournament was canceled.

A couple of weeks later, Ferguson called O'Brien with another pitch. Ferguson and fellow retired grid boss Dave Nelson, who won state titles at Blaine and Minnetonka, thought it'd be neat to revive Holy Family's football fortunes as assistants if O'Brien would agree to serve as head coach.

"When you're younger, you chase championships," O'Brien reflected. "When you get older, you learn to value the relationships you develop in coaching together."

O'Brien decided to take the offer. Now he just had to tell STA athletic director Reed Hornung that he was leaving a football program with 150 kids playing at all levels for one that had a little more than 30 varsity players last season and only a freshman team to feed it.

"A lot of people, including my wife, thought I was nuts to do this," O'Brien said. "Saint Thomas was fantastic to me. Reed said he understood. I don't have a lot of tread left on the tires. While I can still do it, I couldn't resist the chances to work with two longtime friends who I can learn from."

O'Brien has some history working with smaller football programs. After he left his job as an assistant at the

WRIGHT CALL ▶17

## One game at a time

### Unselfish Minutemen hope for deep playoff run

By Bill Wagner

The Central High School boys' basketball coach Scott Howell wasn't quite sure just how the 2022-23 season would play out, given that there were so many players in key spots who weren't seasoned performers. But the Minutemen have shown that they can more than hold their own.

After a rocky start that included three losses in the first four games, Central bounced back by launching a nine-game winning streak. The Minutemen were 13-4 overall as of February 4 and 7-1 in the competitive Saint Paul City Conference.

Among the team's hard-fought wins were a 73-70 triumph at Highland on January 24, and a 76-74 win three days earlier against South Saint Paul, which is rated among the top 10 teams in Class AAA.

Two days after that Highland win, Central lost a tight 57-54 contest against Johnson. However, they got right back on track by blowing out Harding, Humboldt and Washington.

Howell said a major reason for his team's strong showing this winter has been its defense. "We stress defense like you wouldn't believe," he said. "Our goal is to keep every team we play under 60 points." He credited assistant Jon DePerry, a former Highland head coach, with his work on the defensive side of the ball.

Even though Central prevailed against Highland in late January, Howell said his club was a little stiff late in the game after building a lead. "We need to close better," he said.

Still, Howell was quick to add that his team's focus has generally been good, especially against South Saint Paul. "That was a great game," he said. "It was team basketball for us. I think we outworked them a little."

Central's only other losses so far have been against Woodbury, River Falls and Bloomington/Jefferson.



Central sophomore Allan Lankford puts up a shot in front of the Harding bench during the Minutemen's 95-67 win over the visiting Knights on February 1. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

The most encouraging thing about the season, Howell said, has been the way sophomore Allan Lankford and freshman Eli Moseman have established themselves. Lankford leads the team with around 20 points a game, while Moseman has been averaging about 10 assists and also scoring in double figures.

"Those two are our guys," Howell said. "They are both playing like seniors."

Lankford had a team-high 21 points against Highland, while senior Henry Acker scored 16. Moseman and senior

P.J. Blakely each added 14 points as the Minutemen showed a good ability to distribute the scoring.

Howell praised Acker for his fine work in the post, where he leads the team in rebounding and has solid passing skills. The coach especially likes the way Acker can kick the ball out to his teammates for three-point attempts.

"We average 20-25 three-point (attempts) per game," Howell said.

Blakely has shown a special talent

CENTRAL HOOPS ▶17

## Highland gymnasts balance strong work ethic with plenty of talent

By Bill Wagner

The Highland Park High School gymnastics team got a good taste of the postseason when it went to state for the first time ever in 2020. This winter, the Scots are hoping for a repeat performance as the section meet approaches.

Highland was tied for first in the Saint Paul City Conference with a 3-1 record after battling Central/Como twice in the span of a week. The Scots won the first contest on January 25, with Highland junior Nuria Rodriguez-Foster and Central/Como's Szofia England tying in the all-around with 31.65 points.

Central/Como then topped Highland during the Best of the Twin Cities meet on February 1 in Minneapolis. Rodriguez-Foster was out sick in that contest and the Scots had to bring up two JV members to compete. Highland senior Kylie Peterson took the all-around for Saint Paul teams with a 31.5.

The Scots were dealing with a few other injury problems, including freshman Ellie Pavlis with a knee issue, but coach Kathy Balzart-Price likes her club's talent base and work ethic. This, she said, bodes well as her team heads into the Conference Meet on February 10.

"We all support each other. We all pat each other on the back," Balzart-Price said. "We all rally around each other. Each one of our girls has a goal going into every meet."

The Scots' lineup is paced by Rodriguez-Foster, the team's top all-around gymnast. She started out the season by claiming the all-around title with a score of 31.2 to help Highland win the conference preview on December 2. That included placing first on floor with an 8.2 and on bars with a 7.6. She also won the all-around with a 30.7 in a dual-meet victory over Johnson on December 7.

Rodriguez-Foster counts bars as her best event, and her coach agrees. "She makes it

look so easy," Balzart-Price said. She added that Rodriguez-Foster is "shooting for an 8" in upcoming bar competitions, which she thinks is highly doable. "It's all about timing and momentum," Balzart-Price said.

Peterson provides good support for Rodriguez-Foster with her excellent balance beam work. Peterson usually scores between 8.5-8.7 in this event. Sophomore Thea Berg provides strength on the bars, while Pavlis provides good backup in the all-around, habitually scoring in the 30s there. Senior Emily Rademacher also provides strength on the beam and floor exercise.

Freshman Claudia Rodriguez-Foster (Nuria's sister) adds depth on the bars. Balzart-Price likes the way the two sisters support each other and especially enjoys watching Claudia's continued growth. "She could be as good as her sister in a few years," the coach said.

The City Conference meet is scheduled

for February 10 at Highland, with the Section 4A meet on February 18 at Roseville followed by the state meet on February 24-25 at Roy Wilkins Auditorium.

Balzart-Price said a return trip to state would be most welcome, since the one in 2020 took place when COVID was exerting its grip and the gymnasts had to spend so much time apart.

"There's been a lot of team building since those times," she said.

Balzart-Price knows how much of a positive it would be for Highland to get back to state. She also is thankful that her squad routinely draws 15-25 gymnasts for its varsity program. Balzart-Price said there appears to be little possibility that Highland will merge with any other prep programs, as has happened with Central and Como Park.

"If a team is struggling and only has two or three players, it (becoming a co-op) makes sense," Balzart-Price said, "but our varsity gets good numbers."



**16◀ WRIGHT CALL**

University of Minnesota, he spent a season as an assistant at Saint Agnes. Although the Aggies' roster has grown in recent years to roughly 50 kids, there were a little more than 30 the year O'Brien was there. The same kids play on both offense and defense, as well as special teams. O'Brien said he will use the memory of that season as well as talking to friends at smaller schools that have done well, such as Caledonia (a perennial Class AA power), to learn how to run practices with smaller numbers.

"At Saint Thomas, we could split up the offense and defense for practice," he said. "We can't do that now. We have kids, particularly on the line, that go both ways."

Indeed, the Fire have just 17 returning juniors and seniors. A check of the 2022 roster revealed just three potential returnees weighing over 200 pounds. Last week, O'Brien conducted his first meeting with his new charges and 37 showed up. The hope is to increase that number to 50 by the time practices start in August.

O'Brien was asked if he had looked at any film of Holy Family games from last season. "Yes," he said. "The good news is the quarterback (Gavin Frye) will be a senior. We must replace a lot of the line on both sides of the ball."

High schools are allowed 11 summer sessions before hitting the ground for real in August. Schedules won't be released until sometime in April. In 2022, Holy Family found itself in the East Central South Conference. That placed them with defending Class AAA champ New London-Spicer, Watertown-Mayer and Dassel-Cokato.

"It's a heavy lift," O'Brien summarized, though he is undaunted by the challenge. O'Brien might tell his new charges about 1999. At the time, he was the head coach and athletic director at Concordia University, which had just moved from the nonscholarship UMAC conference to the Division II NSIC. On a mid-October afternoon at Griffin Stadium, the new kids on the block upended Minnesota-Duluth 35-27.

Concordia didn't win another game the rest of the 1999 season, but the tone was set. The next year, O'Brien gave up the football reins to concentrate on being an athletic director and watched his baby grow up quickly as the Golden Bears went 7-3 in 2000.

Holy Family may not make that quick of a jump, but it won't be for lack of effort. "Change is good," O'Brien said. "You get re-energized by it."

After the story about O'Brien broke, Hornung said, "I was on the phone all weekend." He hopes to start talking to prospects early next month and have STA's new head football coach in place by April.

"You need time to meet the returnees and sent up the summer practices," he said. "The wheels are starting to turn. The job is posted."

Hornung tried to talk O'Brien out of leaving, but to no avail. "Some guys are wired that way," he said with a sigh. "Dan wanted to do this. It's the nature of being an AD to accept it and move on."

**STA-Vis make more waves in swimming**

O'Brien's announcement was just one part in what turned out to be an interesting week for Hornung. A day earlier, STA and Visitation School announced that Chip Michel and his wife, Mary, were making a \$3 million matching gift to help fund a new \$10 million aquatic center. The Michels had apparently already given \$1 million for the project. So the family's \$4 million gift is the largest in the history of both schools.

Chip Michel is a 1967 STA grad who had been a four-year member of the school's swimming program. The family's largesse hopes to encourage more donors to join so the Cadets can move on from their five-lane pool that was built in the early 1960s and isn't deep enough to host current diving competitions.

"The new pool would be eight lanes with a regular diving board," Hornung said. "We are about 65-70 percent there." The aquatic center also will feature seating for 300 and expanded deck space. The schools hope to complete the project by the 2025-26 swim season.

The STA pool gets a lot of work, supporting more than 130 student-athletes. Visitation uses it in the fall when girls' swimming competes, and the Cadets dive in for the winter. The state boys' swimming championship is slated for March 2-4 at the University of Minnesota.

Despite the small, aging facility, the Blazers and Cadets are powers in the sport. Visitation has 13 overall state titles and won its ninth straight last fall. The Cadets have won 15 state titles since 1995. Along with a space for the Cadets and Blazers to train and compete, the new center will serve local swim clubs and other Catholic schools.

*Dave Wright can be reached at [dwright53@msn.com](mailto:dwright53@msn.com).*



Central senior Henry Acker shoots under pressure during a home win against Harding on February 1. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

**16◀ CENTRAL HOOPS**

for scoring and averages about 18 points. "He's a sharpshooter all day long," Howell said. "Other teams had better find him out there or he'll hurt 'em."

Lankford has not hesitated in becoming a team leader. "He's really moved into that role," Howell said. "I told him, 'This is your team.' The kids listen to him."

The Minutemen had to deal with some injuries recently, but those are clearing up. Sophomore Eliezer Lopez-Henriquez, who has good penetration skills offensively, had missed time

with a bad ankle, but has returned. Senior Jack Augustine, who had a bad hand, has also come back and is set for a key role of relieving Acker in the post.

With a tough slate of games behind them, the Minutemen like to think they're poised to do something that has eluded them in recent years—make a deep run when the Section 4AAAA playoffs begin next month.

"This is one of the most unselfish teams I've had in a long time," Howell said. "We share the ball more this year than in the past. But we'll just take the games as they come."

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### CRAFT SHOW

**CRAFT FAIR. Saturday, April 1, 10am-3pm. Free admission. Over 30 crafters. Concessions available. Edgcombe Recreation Center, 320 South Griggs Street. Call 651-695-3711 to reserve space. Deadline is March 17. Seeking new crafters!**

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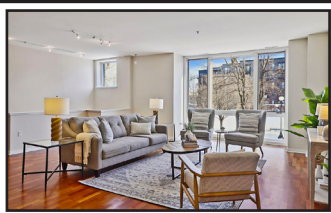


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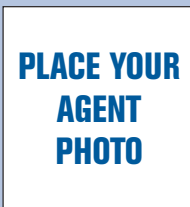


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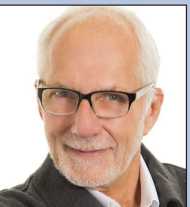
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