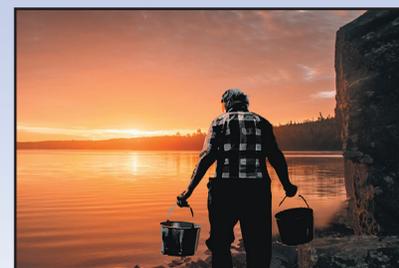


Vis swimmers win state championship
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The St. Paul Voice



Sample St. Paul
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Frosty fun is on its way



St. Paul Winter Carnival returns Jan. 26-Feb. 5

Jake Spitzack
Staff Writer

At the end of January, St. Paulites will once again get the chance to lean into Jack Frost's icy embrace and show the rest of the country that snow and below freezing temperatures don't deter them from hitting the streets and celebrating their city. The St. Paul Winter Carnival returns this year with traditional favorites such as snow-carving competitions and parades as well as a few new activities, including a lip sync competition. Events are held at various venues including the Landmark Center, Rice Park, and the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. Hours are 4-10 p.m. on weekdays, 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Saturdays, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sundays.

The Winter Carnival is presented by the St. Paul Festival and Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit that

Winter Carnival / Page 4

Nonprofit celebrates 10 years of promoting artists with disabilities

Works with area businesses to display artwork for sale

Jake Spitzack
Staff Writer

Winna Bernard represents a wide array of artists, some of whom have rare skills. For example, one uses a paintbrush attached to headgear because she has no control of her hands. This artist worked diligently for six months to create, decorate and glaze a beautiful ceramic bowl. It's artists like her that prompted Bernard 10 years ago to create The Show, a St. Paul-based nonprofit that helps artists with disabilities display and sell their work.

Bernard, who has lived and worked as a social worker in West St. Paul for more than 20 years, said the idea for the nonprofit stemmed from her desire to purchase artwork from people with disabilities, but she found there wasn't an easy way to connect with them. Ultimately, she wanted to give artists with disabilities the same opportunities to make money that artists without disabilities have.

Like many other nonprofits, the pandemic was especially tough on The Show, now celebrating its 10-year anniversary. To stay afloat, the board of directors voted to close its Lowertown gallery and focus on curating shows at local businesses. The latest to join the ranks of participating businesses is Aria Salon in West St. Paul. The salon now has colorful artwork adorning the walls and handcrafted cards at the counter.

Aria Salon displays artwork from two independent artists, and a group of artists from Chrestomathy, a daytime arts program for



Artist Marrie Bottleson (left) with founder Winna Bernard

people with disabilities. Bernard praised salon owner Brandy Eichhof for installing hanging systems that together hold about 25 paintings, and for allowing a shelf for handcrafted cards to be placed on the Salon's front desk. The Show also works with other businesses that have daytime arts organizations for people with disabilities, including MSS, Rise, Lifeworks and Interact.

Show Gallery / Page 2

WSP adopts THC edibles ordinance

Jake Spitzack
Staff Writer

In early July, the Minnesota legislature passed a law allowing businesses to sell edible products containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – the psychoactive chemical in cannabis plants – to adults age 21 and older. The legislation came as a surprise to city leaders across the state and left them scrambling to decide how to manage THC sales within their cities. The West St. Paul City Council quickly adopted a moratorium, which suspended THC sales until the city council further researched the law. At the end of November, the city council lifted the moratorium and approved an ordinance that requires businesses to obtain a license from the city before selling THC products.

"It was a surprising bit of legislation to, well, nearly everyone, but these sales became legal in Minnesota not only to medical marijuana patients but to the general public," said West St. Paul Assistant City Manager Dan Nowicki. "The City needed time to formulate a plan to make sure rash decisions were not made that may negatively impact our businesses or consumers."

Under the state law, edible products may have up to five milligrams of THC per serving and 50 milligrams of THC per package. West St. Paul's ordinance permits the sale of these products at any retailer with

THC ordinance / Page 3

Students at Two Rivers create anti-vaping videos; release party is Jan. 2.

Jake Spitzack
Staff Writer

The ALMAS (Anglos Latinos Motivados a Superarse) group at Two Rivers High School recently created a 3-part video series about the dangers of vaping, particularly among teens. The videos will be shown at a release party at 5:30 p.m., Monday, Jan. 2, at the school in Mendota Heights. After viewing the

three short videos, attendees will have the chance to ask questions of the video creators. The event is free and open to the public.

The videos were created by ten ALMAS students in partnership with Asian Media Access, a Minneapolis-based arts organization. The students were involved in all facets of the videomaking process, including storyboard creation, acting, directing, filming and editing.

"ALMAS has been on the forefront of educating city councils and legislators on how vaping has become an epidemic among youth, and the political leaders have stepped up and supported ALMAS' message with ordinances and laws," said ALMAS founder and leader Robert Hanson, a long-time Spanish teacher at Two Rivers. "However, we have seen little change in the amount of vaping that continues to

occur by youth and young adults. Now, data is coming out as to the real health dangers that are being produced by these vape devices."

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most e-cigarettes used for vaping contain nicotine, a highly addictive chemical that can harm adolescent brain development, which continues into the early to mid-20s. E-cigarettes can contain

other harmful substances as well. Additionally, the CDC says young people who use e-cigarettes may be more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future.

The ALMAS videos are designed to draw attention to the dangers of vaping and counteract the false statements by manufacturers of electronic cigarettes that vaping is a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes.

The videos will be posted

online following the event and Hanson hopes they will be widely shared. The group also plans to share the videos with state legislators and city officials.

Last year, the Tobacco Free Alliance, which has partnered with ALMAS on many projects, secured a Minnesota Department of Health Tobacco-Free Communities grant to support the video

ALMAS / Page 3

Show Gallery

from page 1

Big River Pizza in Lower-town, The Show's first and largest supporter, has been the primary display site since the nonprofit left its brick-and-mortar home in 2020. That restaurant can hold about 50 paintings. Owner Steve Lott is also a board member of The Show.

"After we closed, we pivoted our work to bringing the art to where people regularly gather," said Bernard. "We actually had more sales at Big River Pizza during COVID – when everything was closed – than we did the last two months at the gallery. Galleries are great but we only really had great sales

when we had events."

It was the display at Big River Pizza that led to a display at the Bakken Museum. Executive vice president Joe Imholte of the Bakken noticed the artwork while having lunch at Big River Pizza and contacted Bernard saying he loved her mission and wanted their artists to exhibit at the museum.

Art shows at participating businesses have a theme and last about three months on average. Each artist typically displays several pieces of artwork. Their pieces have a tag with their contact information on it. If purchased, a red dot is placed on the tag and

the buyer picks up the art when the show is over. Sales take place directly between the buyer and seller. The Show doesn't take a commission or charge any fees.

One of The Show's longest standing partners is CHS Field. St. Paul Saints owner Mike Veeck is also a board member of The Show and has provided space at Andy's Gallery at CHS Field every summer since 2016. About 160 artists working in painting, pottery, photography and other mediums exhibit their work there each summer. In addition, The Show has set up artist booths at the St. Paul Farmers Market during the St. Paul Art Crawl, Jazz Fest and other city events, and Bernard continues to explore new ideas to



The work of L'Andre Bradley is featured at Aria Salon in West St. Paul.

promote the artists.

"We are working on launching a marketplace on our website, which will be similar to Etsy, except we're

going to provide 'shops' for everyone for free, and it'll only be for artists with disabilities," said Bernard. "We're trying to make it as simple and easy as we can connecting the artist with the buyers."

The Show is seeking artists with disabilities to join its 11-member board. To apply, or for more information on the organization, call 651-419-8022 or visit www.theshowartgallery.org.

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THC ordinance

from page 1

a license, including bars, but the products must be behind a case or counter. The ordinance allows just two THC specialty stores to operate in the city. A specialty store is defined as one that receives 10% or more of its revenue from the sale of THC products or has 10% or more of its retail space dedicated to THC products. Specialty stores must be located within a shopping center district (zoned B2) and be more than 1,500 feet from a school. Restaurants may be licensed to sell THC products if they have a liquor license or offer indoor dining. However, they may not serve alcohol and THC products at the same time, and no more than two servings of THC products can be served per hour. Opened THC products may not leave the premises.

The state law has some safeguards to protect youth. For example, packaging of THC products cannot include cartoon-like characteristics. Furthermore, a retailer that sells THC products to a minor may be charged with a misdemeanor and have their license suspended or revoked.

CBD vs. THC

The new law doesn't affect CBD (cannabidiol) sales, Nowicki said.

"What is generally marketed as CBD products have had few restrictions previous to this legislation and this really did not change those – you could find these [CBD] products in many retail environments from gas stations to big box stores," he said. "The important distinction is that the products labelled CBD are generally not 'intoxicating' and are sold as kind of health prod-

ucts whereas the intoxicating THC-containing products were not previously legal, and now are." Nowicki added that THC products will be taxed the same as any other merchandise.

CBD and THC are both chemical compounds in the cannabis plant. Federal law differentiates cannabis plants between hemp and marijuana based on the percentage of THC the plant has. Cannabis plants with .3% THC or less are referred to as hemp, and those with higher percentages are identified as marijuana. According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, CBD and THC products may have medical benefits to those experiencing chronic pain, anxiety, eating and sleeping disorders, epilepsy, post-traumatic stress disorder and more. Likewise, the hemp plant is used by companies to create products such as paper and clothing.

The 2022 legalization of THC-infused edibles is the most recent progression of cannabis laws in Minnesota. In 2014, the Minnesota legislature legalized non-smokeable cannabis for medical use and in 2021 did the same with the smokeable dried cannabis flower. Smokeable marijuana remains a schedule I drug under the federal Controlled Substances Act. Schedule I drugs are the most restrictive of the five schedules. Other drugs in this category include heroin, methamphetamine and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). Citizens in Minnesota found in possession of small amounts (less than 42.5 grams) of marijuana may be subject to a misdemeanor and \$200 fine, and

those found with more than that may be issued a felony charge, \$10,000 fine and five years of jail time.

Over the years, Congress has made several attempts to lower marijuana's federal designation but each attempt has failed. Most recently, in 2021 the MORE (Marijuana Opportunity, Reinvestment and Expungement) Act passed the House of Representatives but did not advance to the Senate.

In 1996, California became the first state to legalize medical marijuana, according to Marijuana Policy Project. In 2012, Colorado and Washington State were the first to legalize cannabis for recreational use. As of May 2022, those and 17 other states have legalized cannabis for recreational use on some level. Those states are Alaska, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia. Most states that have legalized recreational marijuana have done so through ballot initiative. In 2018, Vermont became the first state to legalize cannabis through the legislative process.

For more information on the state law, visit lmc.org and search "edible cannabinoids."

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Students were involved in all facets of the videomaking process, including acting, directing, filming and editing.

ALMAS

from page 1

project. The alliance also introduced the ALMAS group to Asian Media Access.

ALMAS has a track record of encouraging state legislators to toughen tobacco laws. In 2018, the group spoke with State Representative Rick Hansen as well as the Mendota Heights City Council about reasons for banning the sale of flavored tobacco products outside of tobacco-only shops. In 2019, they testified at the state capitol, and later that year state and federal laws were passed that increased the age to buy tobacco products from 18 to 21. While federal

law prohibits the sale of flavored cigarettes – with the exception of menthol – flavors are still permitted in all other commercial tobacco products, including cigars, chew and snuff, shisha, and e-cigarettes and vapes in tobacco shops and liquor stores.

Hanson founded ALMAS in 2001 to counteract the findings of his master's thesis, which showed high dropout rates of Latino youth from high school. The primary goals of ALMAS are to improve the graduation rate and post-secondary participation of Latino youth and counter negative stereotypes about them. ALMAS has received state, national and international recognition for its work and achievements in reaching these goals.

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Winter Carnival

from page 1

also produces the Cinco de Mayo festival on the West Side. The Winter Carnival began in 1886 and is considered to be the oldest winter festival in the United States. In a typical year, it attracts an estimated 250,000 visitors who shell out a combined \$2-\$3 million.

Here's a guide to the signature events. The information was accurate as of press time but is subject to change. For more information, visit www.wintercarnival.com.

Rice Park

Rice Park will once again serve as the central location for many festivities, including live music, ice-carving competitions and the culmination site of two parades.

Light the Park - Kickoff to Carnival, 5:30-7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26. Join the Royal Family, Vulcans and other community members to light up the park and acknowledge the start of the Winter Carnival. The first 200 people to arrive will receive a glow wand, to be lit at 6 p.m. Community members are encouraged to bring their own glowsticks or light-up items. Following an announcement by the Royal Family, artists will begin competing in the 2023 Multi-Block Ice carving competition. The nearby Warming House opens at 7 p.m. and will feature live entertainment, including prelims for the new lip sync event.

The **Warming House** will be open 4-10 p.m., Jan. 26-Feb. 4, on Market Street. The tent will be larger than last year's, and a stage will feature music from local musicians

and DJs. Games include trivia and bingo, and beverages will be for sale. Free, with a suggested donation of a non-perishable food item. There will be a bin outside the warming house for food donations for the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center.

The Multi-Block Ice Carving Competition is held January 26-28; the Individual Block Ice Carving Competition-Artisan Division is held 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 29, and the professional division is held 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Jan. 29. Individuals or teams of four must register on the Winter Carnival website by Jan. 15. The top winners are awarded a cash prize. Judging immediately follows the completion of all contests and the sculptures will remain on display in Rice Park for the duration of the Carnival.

The King Boreas Grande Day Parade hits the streets 2-4 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 28. The route goes from West 7th at Smith Avenue, to 5th Street, to Washington, to 4th Street at Rice Park. Dozens of bands, floats and, of course, the newly crowned King Boreas and his Royal Family will be there.

The Vulcan Victory Torchlight Parade will weave its way through the city 5:30-7 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 4. The route is the same as the King Boreas Grande Day Parade, starting at West 7th at Smith Avenue and ending at Rice Park. After the parade, follow Vulcanus Rex and his Krewe to the steps of the James J. Hill Library for the ever-dramatic overthrow of Boreas. Stick around afterward for fireworks and live music.



Photo by Lew Ferty Vogel

The ice carving competition is held January 26-28 in Rice Park.

The Vulcan Victory Dance is 7:30-11:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 4 at Inter-Continental St. Paul Riverfront, 11 E. Kellogg Blvd. The R Factor will perform live music beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$25.

Berners in the Park is held 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 4. Friendly dogs of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of the Greater Twin Cities will join the fun for Kids' and Family Day. Visitors may pet and play with them. Free.

Minnesota State Fairgrounds

For a full afternoon of fun in the winter sun, visit the **Vulcan Snow Park**. From Jan. 27-Feb. 5, visitors will find a snow maze, snow mountain playing area and the artistic creations of master snow carvers participating in the Minnesota State Snow Sculpting competition. The large, frosty sculptures are always stunning to see and make a great photo backdrop. Admission and

parking is free.

Drop by the snow park 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 21 to participate in **Snow Stomp** and help create the blocks of snow used for the snow sculpting competitions. Free.

Minnesota State Snow Sculpting competition, Jan. 27-29. Three-person teams from throughout the state transform huge blocks of compacted snow into works of art, using only hand tools. Winners are announced at 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 29.

Amateur Snow Sculpting Contest, Jan. 28. Three-person teams from across Minnesota use hand tools to create art out of large blocks of compacted snow. Winners are announced at 4:30 p.m.

To ward off the winter chill, enter the **38th annual St. Paul Winter Carnival Fire & Ice Run/Walk** held 8-11 a.m., Sunday, Jan. 29. Adults may enter the 5K, 10K, 15K or 20K and youth (typically ages 4-10) may enter the Kids' run. Also available: a NoK (pay not to run). Cost to register ranges from \$30-\$60 based on the race entered and registration date. All participants will receive a swag bag containing a long-sleeved shirt, Carnival

button and coupon book. Kids receive a hat instead of a shirt. Pick up your swag bag 3-6 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26 at Run N Fun, 868 Randolph Ave.

Landmark Center

Not all events require bundling up and braving the elements. Toasty fun can be found inside the Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth St.

Winter Carnival Memorabilia Display, 4 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26, in the North Gallery. View a collection of Winter Carnival items from throughout the years. Volunteers are available to answer questions about the carnival.

Shower singers may want to check out the **Vocal Interpretations Lip Sync Contest**, a new event. Individuals and groups of five or less will lip sync to a song, competing for cash prizes. Cost is \$15 per individual or group; ages 21 and older. Register online by 4 p.m., Friday, Jan. 6, at www.wintercarnival.com. The first 15 applicants are guaranteed a spot. Prelims are held at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 26, at the Warming House on North Market Street. The top competitors at prelims

will move on to the finals, held 4:30-5:30 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 29, at the Main Stage in Rice Park. Prelims and finals are both free to the public.

The **Jigsaw Puzzle Contest** returns 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 29. Come watch teams of puzzle enthusiasts race to complete a 500-piece puzzle in two hours. \$60 per team; on-line registration required. Prizes will be awarded to the top three teams in five categories: adult 1 and experts, adult 2, adult 3, family with children, and adult 4. Puzzles will also be on the second floor for those who want to puzzle without participating in the contest.

Hot & Cool Classics Concert is held 2-3:30 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 29. The St. Paul Civic Symphony will present music by Ruth Gipps, Rachmaninoff and Duke Ellington. Free.

Warming House Purse Bingo, 6-8:30 p.m., Monday, Jan. 30. Compete for a chance to win a designer purse. \$2 per game. 40 players are required to start the game. Youth under age 18 may play if accompanied by a parent or guardian. No registration required. Food and beverages will be available for purchase.

Frozen Family Fun Night, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 31. The event features a meet and greet with Fozen's Ana, Elsa and Kristoff from 6-7 p.m., story time and singalong, snow activities with junior royalty and more. Free.

Winter Carnival's **Day of Good** is Friday, Feb. 3. The day will have many opportunities to donate food, blankets or blood, and spread cheer into the community. The St. Paul Festival and Heritage Foundation has partnered with the Winter Carnival ambassadors and their Cold Hands, Warm Hearts drive. The Northwind Titan Trooper will be

Volunteer In Your Community

Lutheran Social Service of MN is seeking volunteers age 55+ in your area to provide companionship to older adults or mentor school-age children. Volunteers commit to regular weekly hours for a tax-free stipend and mileage reimbursement. Please contact Jacqueline James at 651.310.9455, or Jacqueline.James@lssmn.org for more information and to make an impact in your community.



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Photo by Terri Johnson

Join Vulcanus Rex and his Krewe on February 4 near the steps of the James J. Hill Library for the ever-dramatic overthrow of Boreas.

parked at the Landmark Center to collect the donations for the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center.

St. Paul Bouncing Team tryouts, 6-9 p.m., Friday, Feb. 3. Free. The St. Paul Bouncing team is a non-profit organization that performs aerial acrobatics at public and private social events throughout the year. This activity is inspired by an Inuit hunting tradition and is among the oldest performances in the Winter Carnival's history. For more information, visit stpaulbouncingteam.org.

Kids' & Family Day, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 4. Kids will be able to exercise, watch performances, participate in art and craft activities, and more. Vendors will also be on site. Free.

Other events

Scavenger hunts are available through the Goosechase app through 5 p.m., Feb. 4. All team members who finish a scavenger hunt will receive a small prize. Teams can register for multiple hunts. Cost to register wasn't available as of presstime. The winner of the hunt gets to participate in the Torchlight Parade on February 4.

Digital Ice Fishing Tournament, runs Jan. 1-Feb. 5. Participants must download the FishDonkey mobile app and join the Winter Carnival group. Prizes will be awarded to the winning angler in 10 different categories. Cost is \$20.

The **Beard-growing Competition** runs Jan. 6-27. There are three categories: clean shaven, lumberjack and freestyle. The

top three winners in each category receive a prize. Participants are encouraged to post weekly pictures of their progress using the hashtag "CarnivalBeard."

Two classic St. Paul walking tours will be held during the carnival Jan. 26-Feb. 5. The Walking Gangster Tour of Downtown St. Paul is a 1-hour stroll on sidewalks that dips in and out of buildings and skyways, exploring crime and corruption from the City's past. The Haunted Walking Tour of Downtown St. Paul is a 1-hour walk inside and outside with a guide telling spooky stories. Both tours start at Infor Commons, 380 St. Peter St., and cost \$20. A portion of the proceeds will support the Carnival. For tickets, visit cyncitytours.com.

Cat lovers will want to

check out the **45th Annual Championship & Household Pet Cat Show**, Jan. 28-29, at the Saint Paul RiverCentre, 175 W. Kellogg Blvd. Hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, and 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday. Cost is \$12 for adults and \$8 for children. Adults get a discount with a Winter Carnival button. For more information, visit saintlycitycatclub.org.

The Orchid Society of Minnesota's **Winter Carnival Orchid Show** is held Jan. 28-29 at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, 1225 Estabrook Dr. Judging is at 7 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 28.

Doggie Depot returns to Union Depot, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 4. Stop by for the crowning of the Canine King & Queen, giveaways, interviews with pet experts and more. Free.

Vulcan vs The Royal Guard Hockey Classic starts at noon, Sunday, Feb. 5, at Doug Woog Arena in South St. Paul. Cash donations are suggested; non-expired food items will also be accepted. Refreshments served following the game.

Royalty events

Past Princess Soiree-A Night to Sparkle, 6-9 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 5, at A'bulae event venue, 255 6th St. E. Honor the outgoing 2022 Wind Princesses and support the Past Princess Association. \$45. Register online at www.pastprincess.com.

2023 Junior Royalty Coronation, 2-4 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 7, at St. Paul College, 235 Marshall Ave. \$5 with a 2023 Winter Carnival

button or \$10 without a button. Buttons are available at the door.

Klondike Kate Contest, 6:30-10 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 11, at the Hilton DoubleTree St. Paul East, 2201 Burns Ave. Reigning Klondike Kate Tina Hacker will crown the new Klondike Kate. Tickets are \$22 if purchased online, \$25 at the door with a button or \$30 at the door without a button.

2023 Senior Royalty Coronation, 5-8:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 19, at Tinucci's, 396 21st St., Newport. Dinner begins at 6 p.m. and the coronation at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35 for dinner and coronation, or \$10 for coronation only. Tickets must be purchased online.

Fire & Ice Dinner, 6-10 p.m., Friday, Jan. 20, at the Pool and Yacht Club, 1600 Lilydale Rd., Lilydale. Join the Royal Family, Vulcans, Klondike Kate and the Royal Guard for a meal. Ticket price wasn't available as of presstime. Reservations required. For reservations, call 651-455-3900.

The Royal Fashion Show, 1-3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 21, at A'bulae, 255 6th St. E. Ticket price wasn't available as of presstime. Order tickets at www.ambassadorsspwc.com.

Annual Queen's Tea, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 22,

at Royal Golf Club, 11455 20th St. N., Lake Elmo. Join former queens in honoring the 2022 Queen of Snows, Effie Barnes. A social hour with cash bar begins at 11 a.m. and other events begin at noon. The event includes tea, Q&A with 2023 Queen of Snows candidates, a dessert auction and a chance to win a \$2,000 gift card to R.F. Moeller Jewelers. \$40. Tickets are available online at www.formerqueens.com/tea.

Royal Coronation, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 27, at the St. Paul RiverCentre. \$30. Tickets must be purchased online. The event is preceded by a Royal Dinner beginning at 5:30 p.m. Tickets for the coronation and Royal Dinner are \$110.

The 2023 Krewe and Vulcanus Rex LXXXV will be introduced to adoring fans at 10 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 28, at Como Lakeside Pavilion, 1360 Lexington Parkway N. Free.

Royal Guards' Rock the Palace is held Jan. 28 and 29 at the St. Paul Hotel, 350 N. Market Street. Party with the Winter Carnival Royal Family, enjoy live music from the band 8 Foot 4 and have a chance to win prizes. Tickets are \$10 online at www.royalguards.org, or \$15 at the door.

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Making a big splash: Blazers win 9th consecutive State title

John E. Ahlstrom
Staff Writer

The Visitation Girls swimming and diving team continued its dominance as a state swimming power by capturing the Class A State Team Championship for a ninth consecutive year. It was their 13th overall title since 2005. The tournament was held November 16-18 at the University of Minnesota Aquatic Center.

The Blazers accumulated 397 team points, more than doubling the 168 posted by runners-up Mound Westonka. A goodly share of the credit for the team's success rests on the shoulders of Nate Lindscheid, who debuted as the Visitation head coach at the age of 23 in 1995 and just completed his 28th season at the helm. The trademark of his formula for success is accumulating depth in each of the 12 swimming/diving disciplines.

"We do our very best to develop swimmers who excel in multiple events," he said.



Captains (left to right) Grace Nilsson, Iris Huerta, Ella Passe, Elizabeth Burke and Tessa Lindstrom.

"It becomes a crucial factor when you are swimming in a competition for a team championship that awards points all the way down to 16th place."

Twelve Visitation swimmers qualified to represent their school on November 11 in the Section 4A finals

at Two Rivers High School. The only event among the 12 state tournament disciplines in which the Blazers failed to score points was the diving competition.

Visitation's depth was immediately evident in the 200-yard medley relay, the first event in the state fi-

nals. The quartet of junior Kathryn Bonneville, senior Meghan Gerend, senior Anna Farley and sophomore Maggie Farley swam for Visitation. The Blazers finished in second place (34 points) behind Mound Westonka (40 points).

The Westonka lead disappeared quickly after Blazer senior captains Ella Passe and Bee Burke, senior Faith McAdam and junior Tess Lindstrom added 57 points to the Visitation column by finishing first, third, seventh and ninth respectively in the 200-yard freestyle.

Another example of the depth exhibited by the Blazers was at work in the 200-yard individual medley, an event that requires the competitors to swim all four disciplines: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle. Anna Farley, sophomore Katie Miller and Junior Grace Nilsson finished first, third and sixth respectively and added 49 points.

It was the 500-yard freestyle event that sealed Visitation's 9th consecutive state title. Passe, Burke, Lindstrom and Maggie Farley finished first, second, third and fourth – a clean sweep that garnered an additional 68 points for the Blazers. Overall, Passe earned 60 points and a remarkable four gold medals with wins in the 200-yard freestyle, the 500-yard freestyle, the 200-yard freestyle relay and the 400-yard freestyle relay.

It was truly a team victory as Bonneville recorded 22.5 points, Gerend 20.5 points, Anna Farley 55.5 points, Maggie Farley 49.5 points, Burke 53 points, McAdam 27 points, Miller 50 points, Nilsson 22 points, Lucy Berg 12 points and Lindstrom 25 points.

There are very few high school sports teams in the state of Minnesota that have achieved the year in and year out dominance that has become the norm for the Visi-

tation Girls swimming and diving team.

"It doesn't happen by accident and it goes well beyond the head coach," said Lindscheid. "I get tremendous support from our assistant coaches and our upperclassmen who instinctively take the time and effort to connect with and encourage the underclassmen. Most importantly, we have kids eager to succeed at a high level."

The roster includes nearly 50 girls, roughly ten percent of the student body. Lindscheid does not refute the notion that the increased popularity and strength of his program lures swimmers to develop and hone their craft by attending Visitation.

"That might be true to a point," he said, "but Visitation has a solid record of academic excellence that makes it a popular and positive destination with or without a swimming program."

A large majority of the team members do some form of club swimming during the off-season. Many of them swim with Black Line Aquatics, based at their home pool at St. Thomas Academy. Others train with Riptide Swim in Apple Valley and as far away as the Aquajets in Eden Prairie.

Another key element for Visitation's success has been the continuity in the coaching staff. Lindscheid's wife, Julie, is the diving coach and Meghan Kemna, a 2009 Visitation graduate who won multiple state events during the program's four-year run from 2005 to 2008, has been on staff since 2013.

"Our coaching staff is remarkable," said captain Bee Burke. "We benefit from their wisdom and they are always available for advice and

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Burke is the third member of the Burke family to exhibit their athletic prowess as a member of the swim team. The first was Halli, then Mary. Like numerous graduates of the Visitation swim team, Mary continued her career in the pool and is now a junior at the University of St. Thomas.

Ella Passe has signed a Letter of Intent to swim at Duke University in North Carolina and Anna Farley has signed a Letter of Intent to attend Villanova University in Pennsylvania. Bee and some of her teammates are still pondering their opportunities.

Visitation will graduate six of the 12 girls who competed at the 2022 State tournament. They accounted for 228 points – 57% of the team’s total – but according to Lindscheid, their contributions extended well

beyond what they accomplished in the pool.

“We encourage our seniors to take ownership of the team and exert their leadership,” said Lindscheid. “This group never let us down. They are so deserving of finishing their careers as state champions and they’ll be missed.”

Despite losing six seniors, the Visitation cupboard is far from bare. It is, in fact, loaded with talent. Among the five underclassmen who competed at the state level this year are three juniors and two sophomores who combined to earn 169 points, or 43% of the Blazers’ total score.

“We are blessed with a bevy of motivated young athletes who love to get in the pool and compete,” said Lindscheid. “This journey has been a joy for our students and our coaches and our school and we look forward to the 2023 season.”



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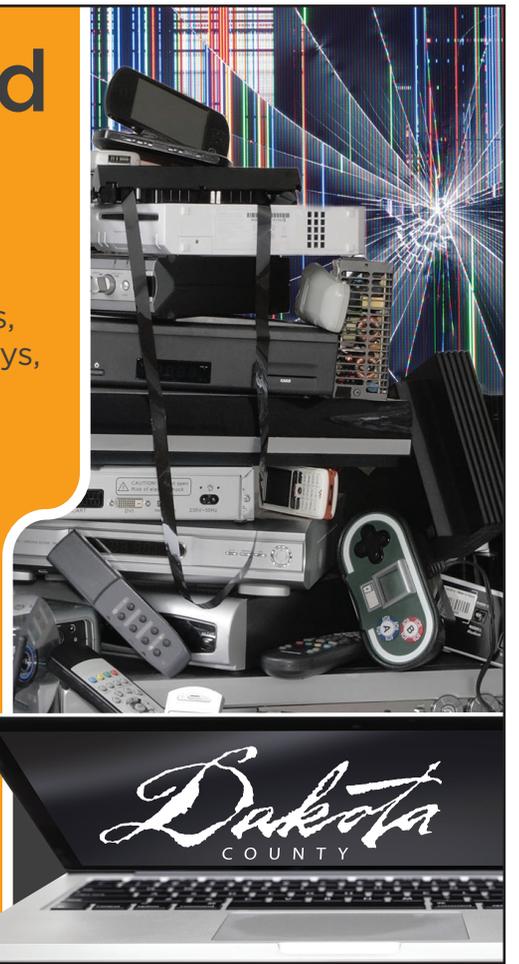
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School Choice Guide

Understanding your options when choosing a school



Looking for a new school for your student? Registration deadlines are fast approaching, so now is the time to do your homework. Families have many choices: public, magnet, parochial or charter; and for college, two- or four-year schools. This primer will help you understand the differences among them so you can select the best school for your child.

Open enrollment

Minnesota has open enrollment, which means families may choose a school that is not within their resident district. In the 2020-21 school year, nearly 10% of the students in the state are open-enrolled. State applications are used for open enrollment, and nonresident districts must receive applications by January 15 for the following fall, with some

exceptions. Families that apply to a school not assigned to them are responsible for their own transportation.

Public schools

Public schools are funded through taxes and operated by local school districts and a board of education. Each student is guaranteed enrollment and is assigned a school near where they live. Bussing is free for those



outside of walking distance. When selecting a public school, families may want to consider class sizes, student-teacher ratios, academic progress and extra-curricular activities.

Magnet schools

A magnet school is part of the public school system

but has a curriculum focus that is used in all classes, such as environmental or STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). Families should ask about the school's focus, transportation options and if there are additional fees for field trips or supplies.

Charter schools

Private groups can get a charter to operate a school that uses alternative teaching methods and innovative curriculum. These schools typically have a smaller student population and a lower student-teacher ratio. Charter schools do not charge admission, nor do they have



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admission requirements to enroll students. They employ licensed teachers and offer services to special needs students. Charter school students are required to take state and national assessments. If the school does not meet academic performance requirements, the charter is revoked and the school is closed. Parents should inquire about the teaching methodology used, how academic progress is measured, if there are any special enrollment requirements or fees, and if the site is the school's permanent location.

Parochial schools

Parochial schools are operated by a church or religious organization and have a curriculum that includes religious instruction. Class sizes and student-teacher ratio are usually small but tuition can be high. Parents should ask about tuition, scholarships, transportation, religious requirements or expectations, and if there are any additional

expenses for uniforms or supplies.

Online learning

While online learning became standard during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, it is not a new model. Prior to the pandemic, some schools offered a full online program. Today, as a result of the pandemic, some school districts have added an online option as well.

Colleges

The nonprofit College Board offers the following things to consider when choosing a college.

Two-year or four-year school - At a two-year college, students can earn an associate degree. At a four-year college, students can earn a bachelor's degree. Many students begin at a two-year college and then transfer to a four-year college.

Public or private: Many students exclude private colleges because they think they're too expensive. However, financial aid can some-

times make private colleges as affordable as public colleges.

Location: the distance to home should be considered. Does your student want to be close enough for meals and laundry, and to visit on weekends, or will they only come home on school breaks?

Campus setting: Many students say that campus size and feel was a big part of their college choice. Visiting a college and talking to

students is a great way to get to know a campus. Do most students stay on campus or do they commute to school? Does the campus exude school spirit?

Cost: For many families, cost is a big concern. To offset the price of college, students should apply for financial aid and scholarships. Most students get some financial help from the government or the college itself.

Majors: Students often think they must choose

their major before they start college. This isn't true. In fact, many students change their major more than once.

However, for the undecided, the school should have several majors of interest to the student.

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Raw Stages: New Works Festival, Jan. 18-22. Get an inside look at the script development process and provide feedback for playwrights. The series consists of four staged readings of scripts-in-progress. Following each reading, audiences will be invited to give feedback to the artistic team and cast. Scripts include: **The Kim Loo Sisters**, 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 18;

The Boy Wonder, 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 19; **The Betty Crocker Musical**, 2 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 21; and **The James Meredith Project**, 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 22. \$30 to attend all readings or \$15 for individual tickets.

The Root Beer Lady, Jan. 28-Feb. 19. Set in 1986, the story reflects on the life of Dorothy Molter, the last legal non-indigenous resident of the Boundary Waters, who is famous for giving root beer to canoeists. The play pushes back against the premise that her time in the North Woods made her the "Loneliest Woman in America," as the Saturday Evening Post claimed in 1952. Tickets start at \$43, with discounts for seniors, adults under age 30 and students.



The Root Beer Lady is presented Jan. 28-Feb. 19 at the History Theatre. Set in 1986, the story reflects on the life of Dorothy Molter, the last legal non-indigenous resident of the Boundary Waters. She is famous for giving root beer to canoeists.

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Minnesota Boychoir Winter Concert, Sunday, Jan. 8. Performances at 1 and 3:30 p.m. Free.

Urban Expedition: Mexico, 1-3 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 22. Features crafts, dance, music, exhibits and food. Free.

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Sparklerama, 6-9 p.m., Friday, Dec. 30. Celebrate the new year with live music, dancing, activities and crafts. \$20.

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ical place where medieval storybook characters come to life. Explore eight themed areas and get to know the characters that make the castle a community.

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Other exhibits and activities include The Scramble, The Studio, Creativity Jam, Sprouts, Our World, Forces at Play, Sprouts, Shipwreck Adventures and Imaginopolis. The museum is open 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Tues.-Sun. Tickets are \$14.95. Admission is free the first Sunday of each month; reservations are required. The next free date is Jan. 1.

MN Museum of American Art
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mmaa.org

"In Our Minds" is on display in the museum's window space through Jan. 8. Presented in partnership with Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts, this exhibit celebrates art-making as a form of research, improvisation and play.

"Colonial Traumas," is an installation in Skyway 28 over Wabasha Street at 4th Street in Downtown St. Paul. Created by Luis Fitch, the mural features colorful, vinyl cut-out skulls that represent the complexity of

identity, place, and belonging for people of mixed-race descent. **"Off the Deep End,"** a digital mural printed on vinyl, is on display in the Jackson Street skyway bridge between 4th and 5th Streets through March 15. The artwork was created by 19 students from the St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists and explores the theme of metaphorical rising sea level.

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Sounds of Blackness' "Music for Martin," 7:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 13. Tickets start at \$24.

The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra presents Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 3 with Richard Egarr, 11 a.m., Friday, Jan. 13, and 8 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 14; Musical Distillations with Steven Copes at 8 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 21; and Express Concert: Legends/Leyendas with Maureen Nelson and Richard Belcher Jan. 27-28. Tickets start at \$12.

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first-avenue.com

Brothers Entertainment New Years featuring Ilkacase, Sharma Boy, Kiin Jama and Hodan Abdirahman, 9 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 31. Tickets start at \$68.

RiverCentre
175 W. Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul
651-265-4800
rivercentre.org

Land O'Lakes Kennel Club Dog Show, Jan. 5-8. More than 1,600 canines in 197 breeds will compete for American Kennel Club (AKC) awards. Tickets are \$10.50 for adults, \$8.50 for seniors (62+) and \$5 for children ages 5-12.

Minnesota Roller Derby, 7 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 21. Tickets start at \$12.50.

Saintly City Cat Club Annual Championship Cat Show, 9 a.m., Jan. 28-29. More than 170 cats from the United States and Canada will compete for the title of Best Cat. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for seniors

older than 65 and children under 10.

Schubert Club
302 Landmark Center
75 W. 5th St.
St. Paul
651-292-3268
schubert.org

Free Courtroom Concerts take place Thursdays at noon at the Landmark Center: Laura Sewell (cello) and Ora Itkin (piano), Jan. 5; Dream Songs Project, Jan. 12; and Jake Endres (bass) and Gary Briggie (tenor), Jan. 19.

A recording of the Dec. 5 **Accordo concert** will be available for viewing on the Schubert Club website, 7:30 p.m., Jan. 12, as part of the Club's Virtual Concert Series. \$10.

Museum Mini: Tami Morse, 10:30 a.m., Monday, Jan. 30, on the Schubert Club website. Learn about the harpsichord in this 15-minute interactive session.

Science Museum of Minnesota
120 W. Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul
651-221-9444
smm.org

Nature All Around Us is

presented through Jan. 22. Discover the hidden worlds and rich ecosystems within familiar places and explore how trees cool neighborhoods, how streams carry storm water away from homes, how spending time in nature keeps people healthy, and more.

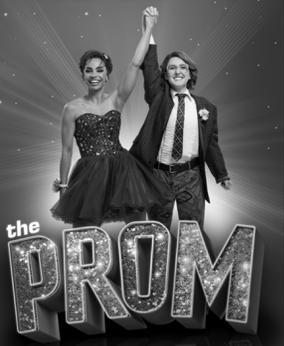
Omnitheater films - "Dream Big" is presented through December 31. Explore engineering marvels from around the world and learn how engineers push the limits of innovation in unexpected ways. **"Backyard Wilderness"** is presented through Jan. 31. Peek inside dens, nests and ponds to meet the creatures that live there. Omnitheater tickets are \$9.95. Free for children age 3 and under.

Sensory Friendly Sunday is hosted the first Sunday of the month. Visitors can experience a lights-up, sound-down Omnitheater show at 10 a.m. The program was created in consultation with the Autism Society of Minnesota. Admission is free for personal care attendants when visiting with a client.

Museum tickets range from \$9.95-\$34.90, with discounts available for those with limited incomes.

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Augustana Lutheran
1400 Robert St. S.
West St. Paul
651-457-3373
augustana.com

Crown of Life Lutheran Church & School
115 Crusader Avenue W.
West St. Paul
651-451-3832
colwsp.org

Our Lady of Guadalupe
401 Concord St., St. Paul
651-228-0506
www.olgcatholic.org

St. Elizabeth Orthodox
125 Congress St. E.
St. Paul
651-424-0814
seocc.org

St. Joseph's Catholic
1154 Seminole Ave.
West St. Paul
651-457-2781
www.churchofstjoseph.org

Beth Jacob Congregation
1179 Victoria Curve
Mendota Heights
651-452-2226
beth-jacob.org

Faith United Methodist
1530 Oakdale Ave.
West St. Paul
651-457-5686
faithumcmn.com

Riverview Baptist
14 Moreland Ave. E.
West St. Paul
651-457-3831
www.riverviewbaptist.net

St. George Antiochian Orthodox
1250 Oakdale Ave.
West St. Paul
651-457-0854
www.saintgeorge-church.org

St. Paul's United Methodist
700 Wesley Lane
Mendota Heights
651-452-5683
stpaulsmn.org

Cherokee Park United
371 Baker St. W.
St. Paul
651-227-4275
cherokeeparkunited.org

Holy Family Maronite
1960 Lexington Ave. S.
Mendota Heights
651-291-1116
HolyFamilyEvents.org

Salem Lutheran
11 Bernard St.
West St. Paul
651-457-6661
www.salemluth.org

St. Matthew Catholic
490 Hall Avenue
St. Paul
651-224-9793
www.st-matts.org

St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship
371 Baker St. W.
St. Paul
651-291-0647
www.saintpaulmennonite.org

Community Christ the Redeemer
110 Crusader Ave. W.
West St. Paul
651-451-6123
ccredeemer.org

La Puerta Abierta UMC
690 Livingston Ave.
St. Paul
651-558-1896

Spirit of Hope Catholic
2035 Charlton Road
Sunfish Lake
651-760-8353
www.spiritofhopemn.org

St. James Lutheran
460 Annapolis St. W.
West St. Paul
651-457-9232
www.saintjameslutheran.com

St. Stephen's Lutheran
1575 Charlton St.
West St. Paul
651-457-6541
www.ststephenswsp.org

Mizpah River Ministries
1530 Oakdale Ave.
West St. Paul
651-399-5783

St. Anne's Episcopal
2035 Charlton Rd.
Sunfish Lake
651-455-9449
www.saintannemn.org

Student Notes

Minnesota State Mankato graduates: Heidi Koury, GC, superintendent of schools, summa cum laude; Mady Morrison, bachelor of science, RN baccalaureate completion, summa cum laude.

Ribbon cutting ceremony

Foodist Films, a West Side-based firm that creates food videography, has recently renovated its building at 608 Smith Ave. S. A ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned for 4 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 11 to commemorate the building's 115-year anniversary, and the founding of Foodist Films. The event will take place in the building's alleyway. Founded in Austin, Tex., in 2016, the

firm moved to the Prospect Park neighborhood of Minneapolis in 2017, then to St. Paul's Lowertown a year later. It opened its West Side studio in April of this year.

Tech buddies needed

DARTS is seeking volunteers for its new Tech Buddies program, which pairs volunteers with older adults in the community who need help with smart phones, TVs, tablets and more. For more information, contact Linda at volunteer@darts1.org or 651-455-1560.

Ski passes

The City of St. Paul and Ramsey County have teamed up to offer expanded cross-country skiing options and new mutual ski passes.

Under a new 5-year agreement, the passes are good at nine locations with groomed trails. New this year is a premier skiing facility at Battle Creek Regional Park West, featuring machine-made snow, lighting and a chalet, and new groomed 5K classic and skate ski trails at Highland National Golf Course. This course also offers a chalet. Skijoring, snowshoeing and dog sledding are now allowed on the skate ski side of the 3.5K cross country trail at Highland 9 Golf Course, and there is a fat tire biking trail on the perimeter of the course.

Passes are \$35/year or \$6/day for the natural snow trails. Passes that also include trails with machine-made snow are \$80/year or \$15/day. Rentals are available for \$12/day at Como Park Ski Center, Battle Creek Recreation Center, Highland National Golf Course and Tamarak Nature Center. Cross-country ski, downhill ski and snowboard lessons are available at Como Park Ski Center. Ski passes are available online through Ramsey County and at the above-mentioned facilities. No pass is required for

ages 12 and under. For more information, visit stpaul.gov/xcountryrski.

Optimist essay contest

The Optimist Club of West St. Paul is accepting submissions for its annual essay contest. Students are encouraged to submit an essay on the topic "Who is an everyday hero who brings out the optimism in you?" The top three winners will receive a medallion and cash prize. The club's highest-scoring essay will be sent to the district level, where the winner of that contest will receive a \$2,500 scholarship.

Essays must be 700-800 words and postmarked by January 11. Students must be under the age of 19 as of October 1, 2022, and currently attend school in Dakota County. For more information, visit www.optimist.org/member/scholarships3.cfm or email Cheryl at optimistcheryl@gmail.com.

TPAC events

Unless noted, all activities take place at Thompson Park Activity Center, 1200 Stas-

sen Lane, West St. Paul. To register, call 651-403-8300.

Music of the World: Robert Everest, 1-2 p.m., Wed., Jan. 18. Register by Jan. 12. \$10.

Watercolor Painting Introduction, 1-3 p.m., Mondays, Jan. 9-Feb. 27. Register by Jan. 6. \$99 for six sessions. Supplies may be purchased at the class for \$40.

British History with Terry Kubista, 1:30-3:30, Tuesday, Jan. 10. Learn about London's abbeys and cathedrals. Register by Jan. 6. \$8.

Presentation on addiction, 10-11 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 10. \$3.

Aging with Gusto, 10:30-noon, Jan. 11, 18 and 25. \$24 for three sessions.

Book discussion on "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents" by Isabel Wilkerson, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Thurs., Jan. 12. Other book discussions are held each Thursday through Feb. 2. \$5 for four sessions.

World War II on Alaskan Soil, 10-11 a.m., Tues., Jan. 24. \$8.

Men's Topics and Toast, 9-10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 30. A discussion (and buttered

toast) for ages 55 and older. Free.

Self-Defense Series for Seniors, 1-2 p.m., Tuesdays, Jan. 31-Feb. 21. \$40 for four sessions.

Hand & Foot card group, 9:15-11 a.m., Wednesdays, Jan. 4-April 26. \$15.

Game on Gamers, three weeks of games geared for word nerds, 10:30 a.m.-noon, Wednesday, Jan. 11, 18 and 25. \$6 for three sessions.

Sightseeing bus tour of Minneapolis and St. Paul, 9:45 a.m.-3:15 p.m., Thurs., Jan. 26. Register by Jan. 6. \$87, includes tour and lunch.

Free tech support, 9 a.m.-noon each Monday.

Holiday lights recycling

Recycle your used or unwanted holiday string lights and electrical cords at the following collection sites through January 31: Mendota Heights City Hall, 1101 Victoria Curve, South St. Paul City Hall, 125 3rd Ave. N., and the Dakota County Northern Service Center, 1 W. Mendota Rd., West St. Paul.

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MN 55103

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<p style="text-align: center;">Brake Special 10% OFF</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Discount is on parts and labor. Not valid with other offers. With coupon only. Exp. 1/31/23.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Second Opinion FREE</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Bring us a competitor's estimate and we'll take a second look for free. Not valid with other offers. With coupon only. Exp. 1/31/23.</p>

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{ THE FULLER FILES } by Roger Fuller

The St. Paul City Council approved a 14.65% tax increase over 2022, less than the 15.35% originally proposed by Mayor Melvin Carter. The \$781.5 million budget will result in a \$226 increase for the owner of a median valued home of \$261,800.

The St. Paul City Council has denied the appeal of Friends of Pig's Eye Lake to stop construction of seven manmade islands at Pig's Eye Lake. The Army Corps of Engineers is creating the islands using soil dredged from the Mississippi River to help reduce shoreline erosion and improve habitat for birds and fish. Friends of Pig's Eye Lake objects to the project, citing concerns about its environmental impact.

Jamie Wascalus was re-

cently appointed director of the City of St. Paul's Office of Technology and Communications by Mayor Melvin Carter. She is responsible for enterprise-wide information services, business and resident outreach efforts, and city communications technology. She succeeds Sharon Kennedy Vickers, who resigned this summer to become CEO for Software for Good. Wascalus has more than two decades of experience in the technology sector. Most recently she was chief information officer for the University of Minnesota for 10 years. Prior to that she was application developer and IT project manager at SRA International, now called General Dynamics.

Purple Line pause - The Maplewood City Council voted to pause its support of

the proposed Purple Line bus rapid transit route between St. Paul and the northern suburbs until it gets more information on the project. The council stated it is still committed to the project but wants the Met Council to release a ridership survey to determine how many people are expected to use the route.

ARP funding - The City of St. Paul will use \$4.65 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) investments to boost community ownership and improvements of local businesses, provide repairs and cold-weather upgrades to housing units for low-income families, and create opportunities for artists in the City's cultural corridors.

Children's Minnesota hospital plans to build a 22-bed inpatient mental health facility at its downtown site.

The proposed \$20 million project will be staffed by 75 full-time employees and serve about 1,000 people a year.

Wildflyer Coffee, an employment training program that hires youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability, plans to open a coffeeshop this spring at 1362 W. 7th St. Youth age 16 and older will work 20 hours and take part in workshops on customer service, mental health, financial literacy and more. Wildflyer also operates a coffeehouse in the Longfellow neighborhood of Minneapolis.

The **holiday lights** on two signature trees in the center of Mears Park were funded by \$15,000 from the City of St. Paul and approximately \$7,000 from Friends of Mears Park, which collects donations from businesses and residents. It was decided not to place lights on

trees along the perimeter of the park and interior crosswalks because squirrels have chewed through the wiring in recent years.

Laughcamp comedy club, 490 Robert St. N., will present Joe Hill, Jan. 6-7; Brent Terhune, Jan. 13-14, and Mike Merryfield, Jan. 20-21. All shows begin at 7 p.m.

Ramsey County Historical Society will present a History Revealed program on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at 7 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 12, on Zoom. To register, visit rchs.com.

Minnesota Sinfonia will present its Classical Winter Concert at 7 p.m., Friday, Jan. 13, at Metropolitan State University. Trumpeter Rodney Marsalis will perform Concerto by Harry James and the third movement from Hummel's Concerto for Trumpet in E Flat Major. The orchestra will

perform Schubert's Symphony No. 1 in D Major and the Overture to Treemonisha by Scott Joplin.

Adrienne Novy will discuss **"Erev Guildene: The Pop Rock Survival Guide for the Modern Jewish Millennial"** at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 10, at Subtext Books, 6 W. 5th St. For more information, visit subtextbooks.com.

Books and Bars will present a discussion on "How to be Perfect: The Correct Answer to Every Moral Question" by Michael Schur on Jan. 17 and 18 at the Urban Growler, 2325 Endicott St. For more information, visit booksandbars.com.

St. Paul Farmers Market will hold its outdoor winter market on Saturdays from 8-11 a.m., at 5th and Wall. The market will feature five bakeries, five meat vendors and a milk and dairy vendor.

New chair of St. Paul Library Board hits ground running

Jake Spitzack
Staff Writer

Ward 2 St. Paul City Council member Rebecca Noecker has wasted no time in making improvements to the city's library system. Since being named chair of the St. Paul Library Board in early August, she has already led the way to eliminate fees for faxing documents and has helped secure \$320,000 to increase substitute staffing at libraries. She will spend much of her time in the coming year overseeing two initiatives already underway: a \$1.5 million project to improve safety at all libraries, and significant renovation

work of the Hamline-Midway branch - set to break ground this spring - and the Hayden Heights and Riverview branches.

"Our libraries are on such a great trajectory that I really think the most important thing is to support these great efforts already underway," said Noecker. "There are a couple of things that I would like to see get even more attention, like the work being done to create early learning centers in our libraries. I'd love to see those expanded to every branch. They are for families with very young children to have a place to play and learn. I'd love to look at ways we can improve our budget for cir-

ulation. We have a relatively low budget compared to surrounding peer libraries as far as the number of materials we have in circulation."

The city expects to hire a contractor by the end of January to complete a safety assessment of the libraries and create a comprehensive public safety plan. Following completion of those projects, the city will create a plan to increase safety at the libraries. Preliminary ideas include redesigning interior layouts, hiring safety specialists, installing additional security cameras and more. The assessment, designs and improvements are being funded by \$1.5 million in American Rescue

Plan Act funding, which was approved by St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter in late July.

"Another role I see myself playing as library chair is taking the concerns I hear from library staff and elevating them and making sure we respond to them through our budget or policy or whatever else we have at our disposal," said Noecker. "For example, in this year's budget cycle we heard loud and clear from library workers that safety was a concern. Specifically, not having enough staff to substitute when other staff are out of the office, resulting in libraries being short staffed or sometimes having to close."

The library board is com-

prised of the same seven members of the St. Paul City Council, and the chairperson is chosen by the members. Noecker succeeds Julie Prince and there is no set length to the term.

"I'm looking forward to being out there in the community and speaking up about why our libraries are so important and why investing both privately and through the city in these three library transformations is critical," said Noecker. "I have a background in education. I started my career as a middle school teacher. I'm an avid reader and huge supporter of our libraries and early learning initiatives so it really aligns with a lot of

the other priorities on which I spend my time."

Noecker is also a co-chair of the city council's audit committee, a member of the early learning legislative advisory committee and the Family Housing Fund board, and serves on the St. Paul Children's Collaborative board, Ramsey County's Violence Reduction Leadership group, and the Heading Home Ramsey Coalition, which is working to end unsheltered homelessness in the county. Noecker typically holds one community conversation per month, which is open to the public. Upcoming dates can be found on her Facebook page.

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POSTSCRIPT

Recipe for Christmas

I don't consider myself a person bound by tradition.

Usually, I'm all about change, encouraging people to change and looking for ways to change myself. I generally think that new experiences make life both more memorable and meaningful.

Except for Christmas. I want Christmas to remain exactly the same.

Nearly every year of my life, Christmas Eve has been celebrated with my father and his family. My dad has only one sister, my Auntie Jo, so this has been relatively easy. My father and his sister



Carrie Classon
CarrieClasson.com

each had two children, and I am the oldest, so the logistics remained simple.

But this year, logistics finally caught up with us and I will celebrate with my par-

ents and my sister and her family. Auntie Jo's family will have their own celebration, and at my age, I should be incredibly grateful that the tradition held as long as it did.

Instead, I'm a little sad.

If you read advice columns at this time of year (and I do), you know they are filled with families feuding over where to spend Christmas. The more distant and strained the family relations are, the more fiercely they fight. I read these columns every year and tut-tut along with the advice giver, and yet I take for granted that my Christmas will remain unchanged. I like to imagine that - while everything in the world changes - Christmas somehow magically re-

mains the same.

"I'm sad!" I told my mother when she told me the news.

"I know," my mom said. "But things change." Of course, my mother is right.

Hanging onto Christmas traditions is important. Letting them go is even more so.

Things change and that is not a good thing or a bad thing. It is simply what happens if you are lucky enough to live as long as I have lived. It is asking too much of Christmas to hold all the relationships and all the changes. It is asking too much of one short day.

Instead, on December 26, we will get together for a brunch. My Auntie Jo is hosting, so I know it will be wonderful. Everyone will

be there, and no one will be worried that they are neglecting some other part of the family, or that they will have to rush to another Christmas event. We will chat and eat all the cookies we want (because what else are you going to do with Christmas cookies on the 26th of December except eat them?) And it will be something new.

"Hey, Sister," I said. "When are we going to make Christmas cookies?"

We made Christmas cookies together last year for the first time. We both mixed a huge amount of dough, and we made a giant mess of her kitchen and put her son to work minding the oven and her daughter sprinkling sugar and we ended up with an amazing pile of cookies.

This was how Christmas traditions survive - not by hanging on to one special thing, but by making new special moments. This tradition, now two years old, is part of Christmas. My job is to treat it with all the respect a two-year-old tradition requires - to honor it and celebrate it and make it the best day possible.

"Where did you get this recipe?" my mother asked, trying one of our cookies.

"From you!" I told her.

And it's true. I got the recipe for Christmas from my mother, and my father, and my Auntie Jo. Now all I have to do is to remember to make it on my own every year.

Till next time.

Neighbors, Inc.
Charlie Thompson
President & CEO

The year 2022 will be remembered for different reasons - many of them positive, some of them challenging, all of them memorable.

Neighbors celebrated 50 years of serving those in need with many activities throughout the year. The celebration culminated with a community-wide open house. Friends of Neigh-

bors from the past 50 years gathered to share stories of service to our neighbors in need. We debuted our wall mural, which captures our history in pictures, words and art. We shared our anniversary video, which highlighted volunteers, services and leaders from our past. Most importantly, we came together as a community to honor the legacy of service that Neighbors represents. Thank you to everyone who participated in the celebration.

The opening of our new Financial Empowerment Center also took place in 2022. The remodeled space enhances our Financial Empowerment program. People working with our staff toward achieving financial goals have access to computers, scanners, a copier and other resources. This space provides a welcoming and calming place to address issues that will help mitigate

the effects of poverty. It also serves as our welcome center, where the community comes together to provide opportunities to thrive.

The year was also one of great need throughout the community. The lingering effects of the pandemic and high inflation contributed to record numbers of people seeking assistance in our food shelf. Year over year, 2022 ended with an 80% increase in people receiving food assistance. We are also seeing more people in need of gift cards for free items from our Clothes Closet Thrift Store and other services provided by Neighbors.

In 2023, as we usher in our 51st year of serving our neighbors, we expect to experience persistent increased levels of need. Inflation continues to affect our community - not only resulting in a higher need for our services, but also increasing the costs to provide those services.

In spite of these challenges, the team at Neighbors remains hopeful. We are hopeful because of the volunteers who give of their time each day. We are hopeful because of the food drives that are held to support our food shelf. We are hopeful because of the clothing and essential items donated to our Clothes Closet Thrift Store. We are hopeful because of our community partners who support our Small Sums Grants and other aspects of our Financial Empowerment program. Finally, we are hopeful because you recognize the need and support it with your time, talent and treasure.

We look forward to the New Year with all its challenges and possibilities. Please continue to join us in supporting our community. By doing so, together, we can make 2023 a joyful and prosperous year for all our neighbors.

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That's interesting...

Do you know of someone in our community who has done something noteworthy or has a fascinating background? If so, we want to hear from you. We enjoy sharing the stories of residents in downtown St. Paul, the West Side, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, Mendota Heights, Lilydale and Sunfish Lake.

If you have a tip for a feature article, contact Tim at 651-457-1177 or tim@stpaulpublishing.com.

The No. 1 Question I Get

Joe Atkins

Dakota County Commissioner

Editor's note: On Jan. 1, 2023, Joe Atkins begins a new 4-year term as a Dakota County Commissioner, representing much of northern Dakota County.



County government is sometimes described as the invisible layer of government. It comes as no shock, then, that the No. 1 question I hear as a county commissioner is, "What does Dakota County do?"

The answer surprises some people.

From maintaining county roads, parks and libraries to protecting children, public safety and natural resources, Dakota County's responsibilities are extensive, with significant and unexpected impacts on our daily lives. Below are everyday examples of work done by Dakota County in 2022.

Roads and infrastructure

County crews main-

tained 440 miles of county highways, 81 bridges and 134 traffic signals in 2022, while also responding to two dozen snow and ice events. Locally, county road and pedestrian safety projects include work underway or planned for Thompson, Wentworth, Delaware, Oakdale and Concord as well as safety improvements near schools, including Heritage Middle School and St. Joseph's in West St. Paul.

Public safety

Dakota County collaborates with local cities to operate Dakota911. This makes our 9-1-1 emergency response far faster and more efficient, saving our taxpayers more than \$15 million since it began in 2007. Working

with the county attorney, sheriff, local police and courts, Dakota County also handled more than 6,000 adult criminal cases, juvenile delinquency referrals, commitments and DUI arrests in 2022, while supervising 10,000 probation offenders and operating the county jail with 100-plus inmates.

Drinking water

Since 2019, we have faced ongoing proposals to export water from Dakota County to southwestern states such as Arizona and California. We have worked closely with state officials, including State Rep. Rick Hansen, to strengthen laws to keep our water here. We now have the strongest state and local laws in the country. These protections are necessary because we anticipate water quantity issues of our own in Dakota County within the next 10 years. In addition, since two of Minnesota's largest landfills are located in Dakota County, we partner with the state and local cities to ensure that waste haulers, landfills and recycling/organics collection centers manage waste properly. This protects

our water, land and air.

Child protection

The County assists with child protection services. In 2022, this included helping collect more than \$40 million in child support and creation of a new short-term housing facility for kids in temporary need of a safe place to stay. Aspen House, a partnership between Dakota and Washington Counties, is a 12-bed home in Mendota Heights that provides teens in crisis with mental health services. A replacement for a Hastings facility that closed, Aspen House is a far better option for kids in crisis than an emergency shelter or detention center. The goal of the professional staff at Aspen House is to help kids return to a safe, permanent home.

Mental health

Dakota County handled approximately 50,000 intake and crisis calls in 2022. In addition, the County paired up a social worker with police in West St. Paul and South St. Paul to help respond to calls involving mental health. This part-

nership provides improved response for those in need while also freeing up local police officers to spend more time on the roads protecting the community. The County is also working with state and city officials to create a new mental health crisis and recovery center in West St. Paul.

Parks and trails

More than one million visits were made to Dakota County's 5,000-acre park system this year. With the help of outside grants, the County dramatically improved both Thompson County Park in West St. Paul and our River to River Greenway connecting South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Mendota Heights. We also have now permanently protected nearly 12,000 acres of top-quality woodlands, wetlands and prairies across the county.

Libraries

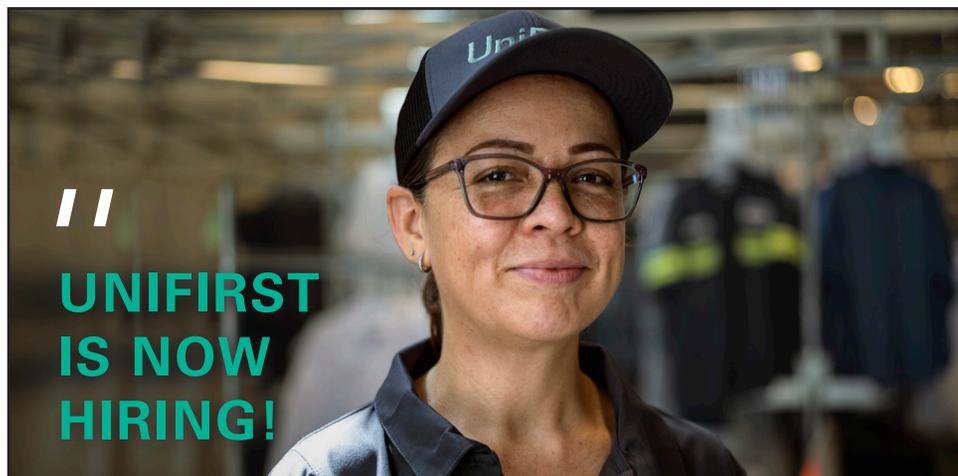
In 2022, residents visited our nine Dakota County libraries nearly 2 million times, checking out more than 4 million materials. A digital streaming service

also gave residents access to thousands of eBooks, movies, documentaries, music and more, and ground was broken for a new county library in South St. Paul.

Next month we will cover how we fund the County's extensive work, the impact on local taxes, and Dakota County's unique position of being one of the only debt-free counties in the nation. We will also zero in on the status of local projects such as the mental health crisis facility proposed to go in next to the Northern Service Center. I welcome your feedback. To share comments, concerns and questions, email me at Joe.Atkins@co.dakota.mn.us or call me at 651-438-4430.

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Financing for this project was provided by the Metropolitan Council Metropolitan Livable Communities Fund, the City of Minneapolis, and the Hennepin County Affordable Housing Incentive Fund and Environmental Response Fund. © 2022 Ecumen. All rights reserved.

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