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St. Paul cuts \$500,000 from Safety & Inspections Dept.

More budget cuts are expected pending state Legislature's decision on Local Government Aid

By JANE MCCLURE

In its ongoing effort to address a \$13.4 million budget shortfall in 2009 and a projected \$30 million shortfall in 2010, the St. Paul City Council recently approved \$500,000 in cuts to the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) budget.

Six building inspectors were laid off, a vacant position was eliminated, another DSI employee is taking early retirement, and 36 other building inspectors will have their workload cut from 40 to 32 hours per week. The cuts are just part of a restructuring of DSI that, among other things, moved the city's historic preservation functions back to the Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED), where they had been prior to 1993. By reducing the number of divisions and making other clerical and

financial management changes, DSI has eliminated a total of 15.2 full-time-equivalent positions.

The DSI cuts are the first of what is expected to be a series of budget reductions as the city of St. Paul prepares for a big reduction in Local Government Aid (LGA) from the state. The Minnesota Legislature is grappling with a \$4.6 billion shortfall in its budget for the two years beginning July 1. Governor Tim Pawlenty has proposed cutting \$244.9 million in LGA from cities across the state, including \$23.7 million from St. Paul.

Mayor Chris Coleman has said he will cut staff in the mayor's office, though he has not specified which positions will be cut. He has also announced a 5 percent reduction in salaries in the mayor's office, includ-

CITY BUDGET WOES ►5



Wishes for the Sky. If they had their druthers, last Sunday probably would have been fair and mild. As it turned out, a much-needed rain fell intermittently on Edwin Fuentes, 9, Oscar Del Sebastin, Hallah Jensen, 8, and others taking part in a kite-flying festival on Harriet Island. PHOTOS BY ANNE BRANDRUD

West End neighbors hope to silence talk of new Saints stadium

Their overwhelming vote against locating ballpark at West 7th and Otto Ave. disappoints city officials

By JANE MCCLURE

The bid for a new St. Paul Saints baseball stadium on the site of a former fuel tank farm near West 7th Street and Otto Avenue has at least one strike against it. The 90 West End residents and business people who attended the annual meeting of the West 7th/Fort Road Federation on April 13 voted overwhelmingly against it.

For the past few months, the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce has been exploring various locations for a new Saints stadium, and the West End site and a second site in Lowertown have emerged as the top two choices.

Planning for the redevelopment of the former fuel tank farm has been in the works for well over a decade, and a stadium was never part of those plans.

"We're really struggling with what to do with the site," said former federation president Diane Gerth, who brought forward the motion against the stadium. According to her, a stadium would be "completely incompatible" with current plans for the site.

The vote disappointed St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, who had asked the Saints and the St. Paul Chamber to consider the former fuel tank property as a potential alternative for the Saints' current home at Midway Stadium.

Coleman would like the federation to reconsider its recommendation against the stadium. "It would be a missed opportunity to not even look at this proposal," he said. "To not even have the discussion.... What's the harm in talking about it?"

However, federation board members said that is not likely given the lopsided vote.

Midway Stadium is 27 years old. The Saints have played there for 17 years and will continue to play there until a new stadium is built, according to Saints executive vice president Tom Whaley. The current plan is to find a private developer to help finance the estimated \$25 million to \$30 million it would cost for a new 7,500-seat stadium and related facilities.

No one from the chamber or the Saints attended the Federation's April 13 meeting, and according to chamber vice president Susan Kimberly, there is not a lot that the Saints or chamber can say before they have had a chance to read the federation's resolution and discuss it with Coleman.

West End residents have long wanted the former fuel tank farm redeveloped as housing to replace the homes that were lost decades ago to the construction of I-35E. Ground was broken in November 2005 on the first phase of a proposed 854-unit housing development on the 64-acre site. However, the housing market began to slide shortly thereafter.

Brighton Development Corporation built two townhouse buildings on a portion of the property that had been owned by Koch/Flint Hills, and those units are now being offered for rent. The city is in talks with another developer to build more rental housing on the site, but those plans are preliminary and have not been made public.

The Sholom Community Alliance recently moved its St. Paul senior housing campus to the Koch property, and Mississippi Market is also building a new food co-op there. However, city officials and Exxon are still haggling over the purchase price for the 38-acre portion still owned by Exxon.

Exxon does not want to sell its property for housing, citing the potential legal liabilities it could face if future residents experience any health problems. A few years ago, the city won its case to redevelop the property for residential use.

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REAL ESTATE



Signs of rebound ►17

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Small-business owners brace for the third round of street reconstruction that is giving Selby Avenue a new look ►6

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Highland Park company carries on the century-old candy-making tradition of the Pearson brothers ►23

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News Briefs

St. Paul approves ban on candy cigarettes, toy lighters

The St. Paul City Council voted unanimously on April 8 to ban the sale of imitation tobacco products and novelty lighters from store shelves, effective in early May. The ban was sought by St. Paul teenagers who waged a high-profile campaign against the products.

Before the vote, Ward 1 City Council member Melvin Carter III thanked the youths who helped work on the ordinance. He sponsored the measure on their behalf and gave them credit for the effort.

The youth-based Ramsey Tobacco Coalition led the charge against the marketing of such products and was joined in its efforts by area high school students, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and other organizations. The young people argued at City Council meetings and through a letter and e-mail campaign that the imitation products are meant to encourage children to take up the real tobacco products later in life.

Other countries have banned the sale of imitation tobacco products with the encouragement of the World Health Organization. The Association of Non-Smokers Minnesota was one of several groups that supported the youth effort.

The ban applies to such items as candy cigarettes, gum masquerading as chewing tobacco, and chocolate and bubblegum cigars. It also outlaws the sale of novelty lighters, which was supported by the St. Paul Fire Department. Novelty lighters were described as those that are designed to appear as toys, or that have entertaining effects.

Stores that violate the ordinance face penalties ranging from a \$250 fine to revocation of their business licenses.

Council fines coffeehouse for violating city's smoking ban

A Merriam Park coffeehouse that apparently allowed smoking inside its building must pay a \$500 fine, the St. Paul City Council decided on April 15. A city environmental health inspector reportedly found multiple ashtrays and smelled cigarette smoke in the basement of Cosmic Charlie's, 189 N. Snelling Ave.

The basement space is used for band practice and storage, but lighting up there still violates the city's smoking ban. Cosmic Charlie's also violated a city ordinance that prohibits ashtrays, lighters and matchbooks in areas where smoking is banned.

St. Paul adopted its anti-smoking regulations in March 2006. A handful of businesses have been found to be in violation of the ordinance since that time. The \$500 fine is for a first offense. The amount jumps to \$1,000 for a second violation, \$2,000 and a 10-day suspension of the business' licenses for a third, and revocation of the business' licenses for a fourth.

Businesses may appear before a legislative

Walgreens looks to open store on Ford Parkway

A proposal to tear down the Oasis Market and Party America buildings and erect a new Walgreens store and another smaller commercial building at Ford Parkway and Finn Street will go before the Highland District Council's Community Development Committee at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 19, at the Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy.

The project will require the approval of a site plan and parking variance from the city of St. Paul. As of last week, the exact size of the parking variance was still being calculated. The current site plan shows 36 off-street spaces.

A 9,483-square-foot Walgreens would be built on the eastern part of the site where Party America is now, abutting the Snyders' Drug Store parking lot. A separate, 1,050-square-foot building would be built at the corner of Ford and Finn, with parking provided between the two new structures. Landscaping would be added on both Ford and Finn to screen the parking lot from the street. A tenant for the smaller building has not been announced. Walgreens could not be reached for comment.

The HDC's recommendation on the project will go to the city, since the parking variance requires approval from the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals.

The developers have met with city staff

hearing officer to contest the fine. The owner of Cosmic Charlie's chose not to do so.

Federation pushes to start brewery water flowing again

The days of getting drinking water from a tap at the Schmidt Brewery could return soon. The West 7th/Fort Road Federation has reached an agreement in principle with the former property owners to restart the brewery's water dispenser on West 7th Street. The agreement was announced at the federation's annual meeting on April 13.

West 7th Federation board member Leonard Schwartz said local residents have wanted the water turned back on for some time. "This is not only welcomed, it's a measure that is very green and environmentally friendly," he said. "You can bring your containers and fill them rather than buying bottled water."

The federation and brewery owner BHGDN are still working with public officials on the regulatory and public health issues involved with opening the tap again. Their hope is to start the water flowing later this spring. People could then use the coin-operated dispenser to fill their own water jugs, just as they did for decades.

The brewery's water was shut off more than



A rendering of the proposed Walgreens site looking north from Ford Parkway.



The proposed Walgreens and a smaller commercial building at Ford Parkway and Finn Street would replace the existing Oasis Market and Party America buildings.

to discuss the parking variance and other development issues. The store will not have a drive-through lane, so no conditional use

permit is required, nor will a zoning change be needed, since the property is already zoned for business use.

four years ago during the height of the West End neighborhood's battle with the now-defunct Gopher State Ethanol plant. BHGDN, a corporation that includes brewery owners Bruce Hendry and Glen D. Nelson, is still trying to sell the brewery property for redevelopment after a bid from Brewtown LLC to buy it fell through. The federation is working with BHGDN on the sale and redevelopment of the property. Dominion Development is still moving ahead with its plans to build more than 100 artists' lofts in the old brewery bottling house.

Before the taps were shut off, users paid a quarter to fill their water jugs. The proceeds from the sale of water benefitting the federation and the West Seventh Community Center. How much the water will cost when the tap is turned on has not been determined.

St. Paul's transformed parks earn state landscape awards

Raspberry Island Regional Park and Two Rivers Overlook Park recently received awards for public landscape design from the Minnesota chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (MASLA). The society also presented the St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation with an award for its planning

vision.

Raspberry Island, located below the Wabasha Bridge on the Mississippi River, reopened last fall with new landscaping, a winding path around the edge of the island, new benches and steps leading down to the river. City landscape architects Don Ganje, Brian Tourtelotte and Alice Messer led the redesign of the park.

Two Rivers Overlook Park, located off Highway 5 and Shepard Road in Highland Park, features interpretive storytelling panels, stone sculptures and a tranquil resting place on the edge of the bluff overlooking the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers. City landscape architect Jody Martinez worked with St. Paul artist and designer Philip Rickey on the redesign.

The Parks and Recreation vision plan was completed with the help of Hoisington Koegler Group Inc. The 87-page document outlines the mission, vision and initiatives to achieve higher levels of satisfaction among park users. Additional details on the parks plan can be found at www.stpaul.gov/parks.

MASLA will present the awards at its annual banquet on April 24 at the Nicollet Island Pavilion in Minneapolis.

News Briefs were compiled by Jane McClure and John Wadell.

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Dream of Ayd Mill Road bike trail is a bit more distant

\$1.1 million grant expires before city and CP Rail can agree on a trail alignment

By JANE MCCLURE

A long-awaited off-road bicycle and pedestrian trail along Ayd Mill Road may have to wait a while longer. The project has lost a \$1.1 million federal grant that was earmarked for that purpose in 2004. City of St. Paul and Canadian Pacific Railroad officials have been unable to agree on where to put the trail. The city received a one-year extension for the grant in 2008, but that expired on March 31.

According to John Maczko of the St. Paul Department of Public Works, city officials were disappointed to lose the federal money but will continue to work on the trail project in hopes they can successfully reapply for the funds once an agreement is reached.

The city had been seeking a 20-year lease on the property needed for the trail. CP Rail owns the land on both sides of the railroad

tracks that parallel Ayd Mill Road. The company's primary concerns have been the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians and maintaining its capacity to add a second set of tracks in the future.

CP Rail prefers to have the trail on the west side of the tracks. City officials have argued for putting it on the east side, making it possible for trail users to access connecting bike and pedestrian trails without having to cross the railroad tracks.

City Council member Russ Stark, a former head of the Midway Transportation Management Organization, said he also was disappointed to lose the federal funding. However, he said, he will encourage Public Works staff to reapply for the grant.

If the necessary right-of-way cannot be obtained from the railroad through negotiations, and if city officials are against acquiring it through eminent domain, Stark said the solution may be to rebuild four-lane Ayd Mill Road as a two-lane parkway. That option, which was recommended by the City Council several years ago, would leave enough city-owned land to build the trail, Stark said.

The loss of the federal grant also disap-

CP Rail prefers to have the trail on the west side of the tracks. City officials have argued for putting it on the east side, making it possible for trail users to access connecting bike and pedestrian trails without having to cross the tracks.

pointed members of Neighborhoods First!, a citizens group that has long supported the construction of the bicycle and pedestrian trail. Bicycles are currently prohibited on Ayd Mill Road, and there is no pedestrian trail or walkway along its length. "It seems like all of the pieces get in place and then something gets in the way," said Mike Madden of Neighborhoods First! "But we saw this coming a mile away."

The trail has been on the drawing board at least since the Ayd Mill Road reconstruction studies of the 1990s. The original plan called

for a paved off-street bicycle and pedestrian trail east of the CP Rail tracks from the intersection of Syndicate Street and Ashland Avenue to Victoria Street and Benhill Road.

The 1.5-mile trail would connect to the existing bicycle routes on Pascal Street and Marshall Avenue to the north and to the bike trail along the I-35E Parkway to the south. The trail would also connect to the bicycle lanes on Summit Avenue, to a proposed bicycle route along Jefferson Avenue, and to a planned cross-river extension of Minneapolis' Midtown Greenway bicycle trail.

In 2006, the city of St. Paul and Midtown Greenway advocates were promised \$3.9 million in federal funds to extend the Midtown Greenway to Prior Avenue. That funding will be available in 2009.

The city, through its Capital Improvement Budget, also has \$1.2 million in Municipal-State Aid funds from the 2006-2007 funding cycle available for the trail.

Some bike trail advocates want the city to obtain land for the trail through eminent domain. However, that would be expensive. The city, Maczko said, does not even want to go that route.

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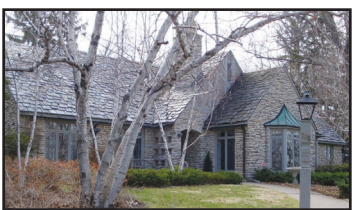
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Commission overrules city staff in approving house design

Their varied interpretations evince problems with city's housing design guidelines

By JANE McCLURE

The design of a proposed new single-family house in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood has given city officials an early glimpse of the difficulties that await in further regulating the construction of infill housing in established older neighborhoods.

Builder Matt Miller's design for the home he would like to build at 1168 Palace Ave. was reviewed by city staff under interim design regulations for infill housing adopted earlier this year by the St. Paul City Council. City staff recommended rejecting Miller's design. However, the St. Paul Planning Commission gave it its unanimous approval on April 10.

Under the interim regulations, all new single-family homes and duplexes require a site plan review by city staff before ground is broken. Most of those reviews are handled internally, but questions regarding Miller's plan sent the matter to the Planning Commission. The process has illustrated the potential pitfalls in requiring newly constructed homes to fit the character of neighborhoods whose buildings are a century or more old.

The interim guidelines regulate the size, the setback and the design of new homes. They will be in place pending the completion of a Planning Commission study later this spring and the approval of permanent regulations by the City Council.

Miller's design for the new house is more modern than most of its neighbors, though it is similar in style to the house that Miller built right next door.

According to Tom Beach, who oversees site plan reviews for the city, city staff needs more guidance on how to interpret certain provisions of the interim guidelines. "We're really looking for some direction here," he said.



The Planning Commission OK'd the design of a new house for the vacant lot at right that is intended to complement the modern house next door. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

In the case of the proposed Palace Avenue house, Planning Commissioners said the city has to be careful not to impose vague guidelines on home builders. Commissioner Tony Schertler questioned whether the city even has adequate staff to perform detailed reviews of every plan for a new single-family home or duplex. "To elevate each single-family home and duplex to a full review is unconscionable," he said, "especially in light of cuts to city staff and resources. I hope that what we ultimately come up with for design standards is a lot clearer."

The City Council adopted the interim guidelines in January after a prefabricated house was placed sideways on a vacant lot in the city's North End. The side of that house facing the street has no windows. Other new houses in the city have been constructed with few if any windows on the front or sides, with large garage doors on the front or with other design features that do not match neighboring homes. Concerns have also been raised about new "McMansions" that dwarf neighboring homes or overwhelm their relatively modest city lots.

Miller plans to build his house on a 5,000-square-foot lot that had been occupied for many years by another single-family home. The lot was split several years ago, and Miller built a new home last year on the vacant eastern part. Miller is now selling that home, and he hopes to sell the one he is planning to build as well. The property is zoned

for single-family use and is located in an area of single-family homes and duplexes.

The design of the proposed house, including the construction materials and window placements, is intended to conserve energy and complement the design of the house to the east, Miller said. That house has not been the target of any criticism, he added.

City staff have not received any comments, good or bad, from neighbors on the design of the proposed house, and the Macalester-Groveland Community Council has not made a recommendation to the city.

City staff recommended denial of the plans for Miller's second house after determining that the design is not compatible with other houses in the neighborhood. The house's entrances, scale, setback and colors would blend into the neighborhood, according to city staff, and it would be similar in size to the surrounding homes. However, city staff found that the overall design and building materials would not match the surrounding homes.

The proposed house has a flat roof, while most of the homes in that area have peaked roofs. The house would also be taller than other homes in the neighborhood—about 28 feet 11 inches to the parapet. The first floor would be about eight feet above grade, another feature that was cited by city staff as being dissimilar to nearby homes.

City staff also cited the placement of windows in its objections to the design. Miller's plan calls for a mix of large and small windows on the front of the house, not the typical placement of double-hung windows seen elsewhere in the neighborhood.

Miller also wants to side the front of the home with cedar plank and Hardie Plank, a building material that looks like wood. The exterior material would be painted taupe to match other area homes, but Miller wants to use galvanized metal to enclose the rear entry and stairwell.

1◀ ST. PAUL SAINTS STADIUM

According to Coleman, holding out for new housing could make it harder for the city to purchase the Exxon property and could delay redevelopment of the property for any purpose. "You've got one of the largest corporations in the world that is dead-set against putting housing there," he said. "The community needs to look at other options."

Gerth conceded that the Exxon property

may never be developed for housing. The Federation has discussed other development scenarios for the site, including a park. Though a stadium would attract more business for other commercial establishments in the area, the consensus at the annual meeting was that the noise, traffic and parking congestion from a new stadium would outweigh its positive impacts.

Ward 2 City Council member Dave Thune is also opposed to building a stadium on the

Exxon site. "I just think it's the worst idea for that property," he said. "I've heard some fears about noise and traffic in Lowertown, but I've also heard a lot of interest from that community." Thune wants the city to prepare a land-use plan for a stadium in Lowertown.

Though many downtown residents opposed the idea of building a Minnesota Twins stadium there several years ago, Thune said a smaller facility for a minor league team like the Saints might be viewed as an amenity in-

stead of a disruption.

The vacant Lowertown site being considered for a new Saints stadium is near the former Diamond Products/Gillette Company building. If the city could acquire that land in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Transportation's upcoming reconstruction of the nearby LaFayette Bridge, it could save redevelopment costs, Thune said.

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Task forces rank area projects seeking share of CIB funding

By JANE McCLURE

Replacement of the Hamline Avenue bridge over Ayd Mill Road, renovation of the Palace Recreation Center and improvements along the Central Corridor line are among local projects still in the running for city of St. Paul Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) funding for 2010-2011. Many other local projects did not fare as well when community facilities, streets and utilities, and residential and economic development task forces wrapped up their rankings of the CIB proposals on April 14.

The full CIB Committee will make its own ranking decisions in May, followed by a public hearing on June 4. Mayor Chris Coleman will then review the recommendations and send his list on to the City Council for final approval as part of the 2010 city budget process.

The city asks district councils to rank projects in their neighborhoods and to give city-wide or multi-neighborhood projects rankings of high, medium or low. Those rankings were factored in this year before the task forces and CIB Committee made their recommendations.

How much ultimately will be spent on CIB projects over the next two years is unclear since the city is facing a \$44 million budget deficit. Some City Council members have suggested cutting back on capital spending to curb long-term debt. The council has already postponed a vote on the bond sale for many 2009 CIB projects, including street paving in the Macalester-Groveland and West End neighborhoods.

Many district councils submitted fewer projects for this go-round of capital projects. "It's pretty easy to do your rankings when you only have one project," quipped Irna Landrum, executive director of the Summit-University Planning Council. The Macalester-Groveland and West 7th district councils also only had one project each to rank.

Here is how local projects fared during the task force ranking process:

Community facilities

- \$365,000 for renovation and expansion of the Palace Recreation Center ranked eighth overall out of 46 projects. The West 7th council's only project was co-submitted by the St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation.
- \$64,000 for preliminary design of future improvements to Merriam Park ranked 15th.
- \$1.9 million for continued renovation of the Highland Pool and bathhouse ranked 17th.

- \$1.9 million for rehabilitation of the Highland Park pavilion, the top project for the Highland District Council, ranked 24th.

- \$4.7 million for restoration of the clubhouse at Highland National Golf Course ranked 29th.

- Finishing toward the bottom half of the rankings were \$221,000 for West 7th boulevard trees, \$4.9 million for the renovation of the Highland Library-Hillcrest Recreation Center and \$377,000 for improvements to the Crosby Farm Park entrance off Elway Street.

Streets and utilities

- \$1.37 million for replacement of the Hamline Avenue bridge over Ayd Mill Road ranked second out of 54 projects. It was the top project submitted by the Union Park District Council. Earlier this year, the city put weight limits on the bridge.

- \$350,000 for parking improvements for the Central Corridor light-rail line was bumped from sixth to eighth, but not without debate and a split voice vote. "We're moving this project in the wrong direction," said Summit Hill representative Dann Dobson. "People will need places to park."

- \$2 million for streetscape improvements for the Central Corridor ranked fifth and \$350,000 to build sidewalks from outlying neighborhoods to the Central Corridor ranked sixth.
- \$750,000 for a proposed bicycle boulevard on Jefferson Avenue ranked 15th. The project got a last-minute boost when Public Works received a \$750,000 matching grant from Transit for Livable Communities.

- Other area projects that ranked in the top half include \$2.1 million to reconstruct Fairview Avenue from St. Clair to Randolph (20th), and \$2.1 million to rebuild Fairview from St. Clair to Summit (24th).

- Projects finishing in the bottom half of the rankings include \$1.9 million for Western Avenue streetscape improvements, \$625,000 to complete the Marshall Avenue median, \$2 million for Shepard Road reconstruction between I-35E and Highway 5, \$125,000 for reconstruction of the Grotto Street stairs, \$162,000 for Grand Avenue traffic calming, \$250,000 for Grand Avenue street lighting and \$90,000 to restore the Selby Avenue streetcar tunnel.

Residential and economic development

- No local projects were in contention this year. The top project is a \$100,000 home loan repair program for the North End and Hamline-Midway neighborhoods.

permits, licenses and other services. When the revenue from those fees fell last year, the City Council had to tap the general fund to make up the difference.

The 2009 DSI budget adopted last December projected a 25 percent drop in revenue from fees. The recent changes to the DSI budget account for an additional 7 percent reduction in revenue.

Building permits and plan-review revenue began to decline in early 2008, according to Scott Cordes of the city's financial services office. The city had anticipated bringing in \$1.07 million in plan-review revenue in 2009, but only \$85,848 came in during January and February. DSI's initial 2009 budget had projected another \$6.25 million in permit revenue, but that number was only \$586,334 in January and February.

The city is facing a record number of vacant buildings due to the mortgage foreclosure crisis and rising unemployment. According to Kessler, the restructuring of DSI will not affect its ability to carry out its inspections of vacant buildings, problem properties and buildings applying for certificates of occupancy.

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1 ◀ CITY BUDGET WOES

ing his own, and has frozen the salaries of his various department directors.

In a letter to city employees, Coleman said he would "continue to be responsive to the likelihood of reduced Local Government Aid." However, further cuts to the 2009 city budget are not anticipated until it becomes clearer how much LGA the Legislature will decide to cut.

A wide range of cuts are on the table for the city, including closing the Hamline-Midway Library and several recreation centers and laying off employees in virtually every city department, including police and fire.

City departments are already making some cuts. In late March, the Police Department closed a law enforcement center storefront in the North End.

DSI director Bob Kessler said making the cuts and reaching agreement with employee bargaining units has been a "very painful process." DSI is the city department most directly affected by the economic downturn. Most of its revenue comes from the fees it collects for

Selby Ave. businesses brace for Phase III of street reconstruction

BY STEVEN PEASE

It could take 45 days or 115 days. Either way, more than a dozen Selby Avenue businesses are determined to keep their customers coming in the weeks ahead as crews tear up the two-block stretch between Kent and Arundel streets and install new gas, electric and water lines.

The businesses have been planning for more than a year for the project, the third phase of street reconstruction that has already addressed the stretch of Selby between Kent and Victoria streets to the west.

"We're very excited about getting a new street and that the city is willing to work with us as much as they have," said Selby Area Business Association (SABA) president Jeff Gardner. "But we still have a little bit of skepticism because of the economy. With businesses struggling, we need the support of the community to be there."

Gardner said he is too familiar with how a street reconstruction project can hinder business. He bought the Sel-Dale Laundromat at 662 Selby Ave. in 2004, a year after the previous owner suffered a slowdown in business during the first phase of the reconstruction project. Gardner also soldiered through the second phase of the project in 2006.

The \$1.3 million reconstruction project involves the installation of new gas lines, updated phone lines, new copper water pipes to replace the old lead pipes and a new streetscape that includes twin lantern-style lights and 5 extra feet of boulevard between the sidewalks and street, some of it to be paved with bricks.

Commercial property owners will be assessed \$72.79 per frontage foot for the project. Residential property owners will be assessed \$47.54 per frontage foot. They all will also have to endure a few headaches as crews jackhammer their way through layers of concrete and old streetcar tracks.

Though only two blocks long, this year's project will be done in three parts: first, from Kent Street to the front door of Solo Vino; next, from Solo Vino to the front door of the Curling Club; and last, from the front door of the Curling Club to Arundel Street.

Xcel Energy began laying gas lines on the south side of Selby on April 13 outside owner Bonnie Alton's Great Harvest Bread Company. Alton and others in SABA worked hard to ensure that the street work is done so that one side of the street remains open to traffic and that pedestrians will not have to walk more than a block to get to businesses.

"There were times when the contractor for Phase II (of the project) literally disappeared

for weeks at a time," Gardner said. "The city said it was a case of having a small project and hiring a big contractor."

This year's contractor, Arndt Construction, is scheduled to begin work on April 27, and local business owners say they are pretty confident this phase of the Selby Avenue face lift will be more expeditious.

Barb Mundahl, the project manager in the St. Paul Department of Public Works, said that she and others in Public Works listened closely to SABA's concerns. "I certainly hope (the project goes smoothly)," she said. "We're doing everything we can to make that happen."

That includes penalizing Arndt if the contractor does not meet the deadlines of 30 days to finish part one, 45 days for part two and 30 days for part three.

Business owners are hoping the project is completed sooner than that. Among the businesses in the project area are Great Harvest and A Piece of Cake bakeries; the Cheeky Monkey, Bon Vie, La Grolla and Happy Gnome restaurants; Solo Vino wine shop; Arthur Murray Dance Studio; Fleur de Lis floral shop; Root Salon and Day Spa; Fivetwosix Spa Salon and Gallery, Mary Jane Bridal; the St. Paul Curling Club; Beka Inc.; and Carlson-Frank Architects.

This phase of Selby Avenue reconstruction was originally slated to be completed in 2008, but Selby Avenue businesses persuaded the city to delay the project so that it would not interfere with the influx in business they expected from the Republican National Convention. Though that influx never happened, the businesses continued working on a plan to get the city, the utilities, the business owners and Arndt all on the same page, according to Alton.

"We've had good advance planning," she said. "We're all small businesses along Selby, and hopefully (the planning) will allow us to come out of this with our shirts on."

"We're very fortunate that we have an active, entrepreneurial, team-type group of businesses on Selby that are willing to work together," Gardner said. "We all care about each other, and the businesses are all very vocal. We've taken a stand to communicate to government what we expect, and we're fortunate they've listened to us."

Now all they need is the willingness of customers to be patient and accommodating.

"SABA is making a very active appeal in this process to our customers," Alton said. "We said, 'You're going to have to park and walk a little bit, and we'd really appreciate it if you would.'"

BZA grants 55-space parking variance for McGovern's expansion

Decision allows pub to end shared parking agreement

BY JANE MCCLURE

The St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals has approved a 55-space parking variance that will allow Patrick McGovern's Pub and Restaurant to expand its patio and use part of the former Twin Cities Magic and Costume Shop as additional bar space. The project is expected to get under way this spring.

The BZA approved the variance on April 6 with the condition that any changes be reviewed by the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, because the building and patio lie within a historic district. Site plan review and approval by city staff are also needed, and McGovern's must add bicycle racks or lockers for patrons who pedal to the pub.

The BZA vote was unanimous, despite the concerns expressed by some board members

about the high demand for parking in the area due to the proximity to Xcel Energy Center and other downtown attractions. No one testified against the variance and West 7th/Fort Road Federation community organizer Betty Moran said the district council did not hear of any concerns.

McGovern's, 225 W. 7th St., and the former magic shop are separated by McGovern's existing patio. McGovern's owner Patrick Boemer bought the adjacent building last year after the Twin Cities Magic and Costume Shop moved downtown.

Boemer plans to expand McGovern's patio onto the former magic shop property by about 1,400 square feet. The expansion requires eight additional parking spaces because of the property's change from retail to restaurant use. Those spaces will be provided by expanding parking behind the building.

"I'm either the dumbest guy in St. Paul to be expanding right now or the smartest," Boemer said.

The need for a parking variance came up

during the site plan review for the patio expansion because Boemer intends to terminate an existing agreement with Cossetta Italian Market and Pizzeria to share off-street parking. Boemer said that though he has had shared parking agreements in place since 1999, the spaces he has rented are not used by his patrons.

Since 2004, Boemer has torn down two nearby buildings to provide additional off-street parking for the patrons of his establishment. He now has a total of 43 spaces behind his building and the former magic shop. McGovern's patrons also have access to a United Hospitals parking ramp nearby.

When he expanded McGovern's into the second floor of his building at the time Xcel Energy Center was set to open, Boemer was told by city staff that he needed to find more off-street parking. That led to the original shared parking agreement with the late Bert Sandberg and the current agreement with Cossetta.

Though he will lose \$4,600 in monthly rev-

enue with the granting of the parking variance and the cancellation of the shared parking agreement, Cossetta owner David Cossetta testified before the Board of Zoning Appeals in support of it. "Pat and I, we're the pioneers in that area," he said.

Boemer said that he entered into the shared parking agreement just to appease the city. "We haven't had one customer park in those lots ever since I started paying for them," he said.

BZA members were skeptical about the size of the variance and the cancellation of the shared parking agreement. "So how can this not have an adverse effect on the surrounding neighborhood?" asked board member Gloria Bogen.

Boemer responded that he does not get customer complaints about parking and offered to host the BZA members if they wanted to check out the situation.

That brought a quick rejoinder from board member Buzz Wilson. "We won't be able to park anywhere," he said.

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A drawing of the proposed University of St. Thomas athletic and recreation complex, right, and new student center to its left, looking west from the campus quadrangle.

UST site plan gains support

By JANE MCCLURE

The University of St. Thomas' proposed Anderson Athletic and Recreation Complex is headed to the St. Paul Planning Commission with recommendations of support from the commission's Zoning Committee and city staff. The committee held a public hearing on the site plan for the \$52 million project on April 16, and the full commission will take up the matter on April 24.

The decision by the Planning Commission will be final unless it is appealed to the St. Paul City Council, which isn't likely. The Union Park and Macalester-Groveland district councils have already reviewed the plans, as has the West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Council. WSNAC co-chair Scott Banas said he does not anticipate controversy over the site plan. A construction management plan still has to be worked out, but that should be finalized before the demolition of buildings gets under way next month.

"We haven't heard a lot of comment about the site plan," said Doug Hennes, UST's vice president of university relations. The city has asked the university to work out plans to address erosion and sediment control, and submit final plans for drainage systems and sewers before work can begin.

Construction of the athletic complex will begin with the demolition of the Schoenecker Arena and Coughlan Field House and Foley Theater after graduation this May. Part of the university's physical plant building will also be removed. O'Shaughnessy Hall will remain

open until the new athletic complex is completed in the fall of 2010. Then it will be razed to make way for a new \$66 million student center.

The UST board of trustees approved plans for the athletic complex in February. It is named for Lee and Penny Anderson, who donated \$60 million for the new facilities as well as the new 725-space parking ramp that opened in February on the university's south campus.

The new three-level, 180,000-square-foot Anderson Athletic and Recreation Complex will be located east of O'Shaughnessy Stadium. It will include a 2,000-seat volleyball and basketball arena, a field house with a 200-meter track, a fitness center, a weight room, offices, classrooms and an eight-lane swimming pool.

Tom Beach, who oversees site plan reviews for the city, said plans for the complex are consistent with the city's comprehensive plan and meet applicable zoning, height and setback requirements. He said the project will not adversely affect neighboring properties and will not affect any historic resources since the complex will be outside of the Summit Avenue West Historic Preservation District.

The site plan vote on April 24 will not include the proposed 240,000-square-foot student center, which would be located on the site of O'Shaughnessy Hall and the school's main parking lot at Summit and Cretin avenues. Work on the student center is expected to start in 2010 and be completed in 2012, pending approval of the university's trustees.

Higher Ground Academy expands

By JANE MCCLURE

Higher Ground Academy, a 10-year-old charter school at 1381 Marshall Ave., is hoping to break ground later this year on a 12,000-square-foot addition. St. Paul city staff have already signed off on the site plan for the two-story addition, and the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) has approved a 29-space parking variance to accommodate it.

Higher Ground currently enrolls 570 students in grades prekindergarten through 12, and is expected to grow to about 600 students next year. The new addition will include 10 classrooms. It will be constructed at the southwest end of the existing building, adjacent to the academy's middle school and high school wing. It was designed by Cunningham Group Architects to match the school's brick and block construction.

The addition will create a small courtyard for the school's playground, and the parking lot west of the school will be redesigned to make it safer for students to be dropped off and picked up.

BZA staff recommended the approval of Higher Ground's parking variance. The variance also has the support of the Union Park

District Council's Land Use Committee and Concordia University, the charter school's sponsor.

With the addition, Higher Ground is proposing to provide 41 parking spaces on campus and to lease another 15 parking spaces from Concordia. That leaves the school 29 spaces short of the city requirement of 85.

Parking requirements for schools are based on the number of staff and students who are of driving age. Higher Ground has 67 full-time and six part-time staff. Under the city's formula, the academy would be required to provide 12 student parking spaces, but earlier this year the school's board of directors approved a policy prohibiting students from parking on campus.

Higher Ground currently has 51 parking spaces on its 2½-acre campus and 15 parking spaces on nearby property owned by Concordia. Bill Wilson, the school's director, said he does not anticipate that the loss of 10 parking spaces will cause any problems.

Higher Ground bills itself as an Afrocentric college preparatory school. Its students speak as a first language English, Somali or Oromo, a language native to Ethiopia. The school opened in the fall of 1999 in a building that once housed National Checking Company.



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Viewpoint

Byrne surrenders the key to city for the key to Pearly Gates

BY KEVIN DRISCOLL

Former St. Paul Mayor George Latimer visited former St. Paul Mayor Tom Byrne at his home last summer. “At one point I asked him why he never touted his considerable World War II military record during his mayoral campaigns,” Latimer said. “After all, he flew some 50 missions over Germany” as a navigator-bombardier with the Army Air Corps.

Byrne told Latimer, “There was nothing good about that experience. We’d leave with 30 planes and come back with 20. And the death and destruction on the ground...there was nothing good about it.”

Byrne “was a man of total selflessness, a complete lack of grandiosity,” Latimer said. “He would never advertise his military service for the sake of getting elected.”

“He never wanted to talk about (the war),” Tim Byrne said of his father. “He was always involved with the American Legion and veterans’ rights, but he never talked about the war.”

Byrne, who was St. Paul’s mayor from 1966-70 and a long-time resident of Macalester-Groveland and Highland Park, died on April 5 at Our Lady of Good Counsel Free Cancer Home in Merriam Park. He was 85.

Byrne grew up in St. Columba Parish, attended Cretin High School and graduated from Nazareth Hall Preparatory Seminary. Following World War II, he earned a B.A. in education at the then College of St. Thomas, took a job teaching at St. Thomas Academy and later earned a master’s degree in educational administration at the University of Minnesota. Though he is best remembered for his two terms as St. Paul mayor, “it was teaching and his involvement with schools that he most loved,” Tim Byrne said.

“After he retired, he was an interim principal at I think eight public and Catholic schools,” Tim said. “We used to tease him about having retired so many times, because he’d get a party thrown for him at the end of each term as principal at a school. Maybe it wasn’t just being principal. I think he liked



Hizzoner Tom Byrne

the parties, too.”

Tim recalled the many summer trips their family would take. “We’d spend two weeks at a different lake cabin every summer,” he said. “Then Dad bought an old Ford school bus and refurbished it. It had beds, a refrigerator, the works. Dad dubbed it the Hobotel. We drove everywhere in it.”

Byrne was a public servant to the end. From 2002 until he went into hospice at the end of 2008, he served on the St. Paul Parks Commission. “He brought passion, creativity and great historical perspective to the work,” said John O’Halloran, who sat on the commission with Byrne for four of those six years. “He was our institutional memory. He remembered so many of the city’s original decisions on park issues and the intent behind them. That helped us make solid recommendations to the City Council.”

“(Byrne) promised to help elect me chair if I promised to shorten the meetings,” recalled Carrie Wasley, current chair of the Parks Commission. “He made great contributions to the commission and he had a very warm personality, always gregarious, outgoing, charming and gracious.”

“Gracious, that’s the word,” said fellow parks commissioner Tom Kayser. “I came to

St. Paul as a young attorney in 1966, and Tom from the get-go was a class act, very friendly and not at all pretentious. He was a dedicated (parks commissioner) with an unbelievably broad knowledge of the city and its park system.”

As a youngster, O’Halloran passed out political literature for Byrne’s mayoral campaigns. “He was always such a gentle man and he had a sly sense of humor,” O’Halloran said. “He wasn’t a typical politician. He should’ve been mayor longer because he was a great diplomat.”

“He was amazingly modest for a politician, especially for an Irish one in St. Paul,” said Pat O’Halloran, John’s father and another former Byrne campaign supporter. “He was nice, gentle, never argued with people, but he was still tough. He had to deal with war protesters during those years, but he’d just wait them out in his office and serve them coffee and doughnuts while he listened to what they had to say. I think he could’ve been re-elected indefinitely, but he decided not to run again in 1970.”

Pat O’Halloran was one of many to credit Byrne for his leading role in re-establishing St. Paul’s St. Patrick’s Day parade in 1967.

“I think we were one of the first cities in the country to have a St. Patrick’s Day parade, until Archbishop (John) Ireland banned them because of the drinking,” he said. Byrne, a shillelagh clasped firmly in his hand, led that 1967 St. Patrick’s Day parade downtown past “crowds six deep on the sidewalks,” according to a history published by the St. Patrick’s Association.

But Byrne was also occupied with weightier matters as mayor. “When the city tore down the old Rondo neighborhood in the early ’60s to make way for I-94, no consideration was given to the civil rights of the residents who were forced from their homes,” Latimer recalled. “But Byrne got the first city human rights ordinance in the nation passed and a housing rights law soon followed.”

“The great paramedic program that St. Paul has now was started in 1968 with Byrne’s enthusiastic support,” said Steve Conroy, who was St. Paul’s fire chief at the

time, appointed by Byrne in 1966. “Tom was smart and fair. I would’ve done anything for him.”

Byrne was the 4th District chair of Lyndon Johnson’s 1964 presidential campaign, vice chair of the Minnesota Municipal Commission, commander of Ran-View VFW Post 6210, president of the Hilltoppers Little League and a member of the Holy Spirit Men’s Club and Choir. “Not everybody knows that Tom was a great singer,” Pat O’Halloran said. “Besides the choir, he’d sing at weddings for friends and family.”

Barb Fitzpatrick and her late husband Jim were longtime friends of Tom and Mary Therese, Byrne’s wife of 63 years. “Jim used to go to breakfast virtually every Sunday after Mass at the Cathedral with Tom, John McLaughlin and Tom Kelly,” Fitzpatrick said.

One project that Byrne worked on was preventing the I-94 sound wall from extending all the way between Cretin and Cleveland avenues so that residents of Our Lady of Good Counsel would still have a view out their windows. “He spent his last days looking out the window directly opposite where that wall ends,” Tim said. “So he had a view.”

A luncheon was held in Byrne’s honor earlier this year. Among the gathering were Latimer, former Vice President Walter Mondale, former Governor Wendell Anderson, former state Attorney General Warren Spannaus and former Assumption Church Pastor John Malone. “Everyone knew we were saying goodbye,” Latimer said. “At the end of the lunch, Tom asked us to remind his son to thank everybody at his funeral Mass. ‘We never do that enough,’ he said. Tom also told us, ‘I’ve had the gift of life with my wife, and I’ve always tried to live it well so that when I meet St. Peter, I’ll have the key to get through those gates.’

“Father Malone told him, ‘You do have that key, Tom, and we’re all jealous. We want it, too.’”

Besides Mary Therese (née Barrett) and Tim, Byrne is survived by son Joe, daughter Mary Ellen Hennessey, 13 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by sons Tom Jr. and Patrick.

Thirty-year-old river corridor protections are primed for revision

BY RICK HANSEN AND KATIE SIEBEN

In 1979, Minnesotans recognized the need to protect the unique natural and cultural resources of the 72 miles of the Mississippi River as it flows through the Twin Cities. Designated by executive order of Governor Al Quie, the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area was established to ensure that the river was managed so as to preserve these resources of statewide and even national significance.

Three decades later, it’s time to bring MRCCA policy up to date. After hours of testimony in the Minnesota House and Senate, the proposed changes have been well-considered and a bill to that effect is now wending its way toward passage.

As the building boom of recent years heated up, we began to hear increasing concerns about the inability of local cities to enforce the state objectives enshrined in the executive order. The Legislature authorized a study by the Department of Natural Resources to examine the regulations and recommend changes. (The report is available at www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/critical_area/index.html.) As part of the study, business, government and citizens were all engaged in a series of public meetings. Broad agreement was reached that the river corridor needs state protection, that existing enforcement requirements are unclear, and that changes are in order. Overwhelmingly, we heard that local debates about development in the river

corridor often are politically protracted and thus costly, in large part because the current guidelines are vague, cumbersome and inconsistent.

Last fall, we convened a study group to grapple with the numerous management options that had been suggested and to draft legislation for the 2009 session. The study group included representatives of the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, the League of Minnesota Cities, developers, the DNR, the National Park Service, Friends of the Mississippi River, and other environmental organizations. The resulting legislation seeks to strike a balance among the diverse interests by providing appropriate flexibility as well as adequate protection of the river’s resources.

Here is what our bill (HF424 and SF671) does:

- Directs the DNR to conduct a rule-making process for the MRCCA.
- Directs the DNR to establish new land-use districts and standards that better match the diverse natural and cultural features of the river corridor.
- Clarifies terms related to bluffs and steep slopes. Under the bill, the DNR will map the bluffs of the corridor and establish definitions in state rules.
- Clarifies the enforcement responsibilities of local governmental units, the DNR and other state agencies.

The bill does not remove local authority. Affected cities will continue to regulate the corridor through their critical

area plans and ordinances, and they will continue to have the final say on the granting of variances and other discretionary actions. Cities will also be required to notify the DNR of proposed variances, just as they are now required to do.

New districts will match the geographic variations of the river corridor, as opposed to the current districts that are based on 1976 land-use patterns. The new districts will focus on protecting resources, as opposed to land-use patterns.

The corridor is already regulated, but with new districts the revised standards will more closely match the resources in that district and avoid unnecessary protections that come with a one-size-fits-all approach. New tools, such as GIS mapping of the bluffs and other natural features, will bring the standards and protection strategies into the 21st century.

The Mississippi River is a natural resource of great significance for our region, state and nation. In the Twin Cities, it is one of our claims to greatness and a tremendous asset to the cities through which it flows. This bill will ensure that the rules are clear for all parties involved in river corridor development, and that the river will be protected for current and future generations to use and enjoy.

Editors note: The authors, state Representative Rick Hansen (DFL-District 39A) and state Senator Katie Sieben (DFL-District 57), are the sponsors of the proposed bill in the Minnesota House and Senate.

Inbox

For a smaller Snelling median

Given all the information available about the proposed Snelling Avenue median, I find it interesting that there are still folks who believe the median will calm traffic, prevent their foundations from rumbling and their light fixtures from swinging, and do something about the insane amount of traffic on Snelling (“Snelling could use a median,” *Villager* Inbox, April 8). While it would certainly be nice if a median would do all that, the only positive thing a median can do is provide a place for pedestrians to safely stop while trying to cross the street. Unfortunately, the proposed Snelling median would create a 10-foot-wide mega-median that would also block access to the neighborhood and local businesses and eliminate parking lanes needed both for buses to safely pull out of traffic to load and unload passengers and for Macalester College’s overflow parking.

Let’s be clear about what the proposed median will not do. It will not reduce the insane amount of traffic on Snelling. It won’t keep foundations from rumbling and lights from swaying. And it certainly won’t make Snelling “calmer, safer and more attractive.” It is quite likely that the median would go a long way toward making motorists act as though that stretch of road is the state highway that it, in fact, is.

A smaller median that allowed access to businesses and the neighborhood and that didn’t eliminate as much parking would provide the same benefit as a mega-median without all the problems. Pedestrians would still be able to stop halfway while crossing the street, buses would still be able to pull over out of traffic to load and unload passengers. Macalester College would retain most of its overflow parking. Residents would have the same access to the neighborhood they now have. And business parking would be unaffected.

It’s a mystery to those who live in the neighborhood why Macalester College refuses to compromise on the median.

Brian Ashley
Sargent Avenue

Support new Challenger Center

Reductions in funding for public education are on the horizon considering the forecasted budgetary problems of our state and local governments. We are going to have to become creative as a community if we are to provide educational opportunities for the next generation.

Recently, the Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation proposed to the Fort Snelling Upper Post Task Force a plan to build a National Air Guard Museum, Aviation Learning Center and Challenger Center.

The Challenger Center was born out of the tragic loss of the space shuttle Challenger in 1986. There are 50 similar centers around the country, but none in the Midwest. Its commitment to education reaches students, teachers, schools and the public at large. A visit to the website www.challenger.org will show that its philosophy of learning is what our system needs in these economic times. Regardless of a person’s cultural background, economic situation, gender, learning style or academic level, every Challenger Center provides children and adults with opportunity to succeed and enrich themselves.

I believe the public must support the Minnesota Air National

Guard Historical Foundation in bringing this science and technology program to Minnesota. Please contact your local and state representatives to support our proposal. Visit us at www.mnangmuseum.org.

Brigadier General (Retired) Mark Ness
Vice President of the Board of Directors
Minnesota Air National Guard Historical Foundation

Crack down on crime near river

For the past several years, I have read the *Villager’s* biweekly Crime Report. I continue to be concerned and frustrated with the number of vehicles that are broken into and stolen from on a seemingly constant basis along the Mississippi River, principally at Shadow Falls and Hidden Falls parks. These assaults on property seem to be tolerated by the police and city, and it’s mind-boggling that some impromptu or random sting operations cannot or will not be conducted by the St. Paul police.

Obviously, speed traps and parking violations are much more cost-effective in producing city revenue. But what about the individuals who are not allowed to take periodic pleasure at these sites for fear of their cars being vandalized and broken into? Are they not to be protected?

These perpetrators are quite brazen; most of the thefts occur in the middle of the day. Might the local unmarked patrols at least pull over on occasion for a coffee or lunch break near these parking areas, pop out the binoculars and try to catch these guys? Can we organize a vigilant citizen group to take turns watching these parking areas and report suspicious or illegal activity? Maybe I’m ignorant of the number of actual police “busts” that do occur, but I never read about them in any local newspaper.

Mathew C. Curran
Merriam Park

A budget of the people

Over the last several months, Minnesota lawmakers have traveled the state gathering input from Minnesotans on how to eliminate the state’s \$6.4 billion budget deficit. More than 6,500 people attended 23 public hearings statewide, and more than 3,000 Minnesotans weighed in online at www.house.mn. Senator James Metzen and I held five townhall meetings throughout District 39, and invited citizens to the Capitol to discuss the budget and other legislative issues. Carefully considering that input and the impact our decisions will have on Minnesota’s future, House DFLers crafted a budget plan that reflects the priorities of Minnesotans.

Our budget does exactly what you asked: It resolves the shortfall in a forward-thinking, responsible way that protects our most vulnerable citizens and preserves our quality of life. The House DFL budget protects Minnesota students from preschool to college. It sets clear priorities and resolves the budget shortfall with a balanced approach, cutting where necessary and providing for new, progressive revenue to protect and grow jobs and maintain essential services.

I’m disappointed Governor Pawlenty’s budget proposal does not share the same long-term vision. There are some areas of his budget I

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VILLAGER

Volume 57, Number 4

Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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St. Catherine Choral Society

Beethoven mass IN C major

and

Kristie Tigges, soprano
Angela Keeton, mezzo soprano
Dan Dressen, tenor
Seth Keeton, bass

Fauré: Cantique de Jean Racine
Pierce: Hosanna from *Jazz Fragments*

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Patricia C. Connors, conductor

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9◀ INBOX

agree with, but relying on \$1 billion in borrowing for general operations that racks up more than \$600 million in interest is not a long-term solution.

In the next few weeks, we are going to work hard to find compromise and balance this budget responsibly. We need to make careful decisions to ensure our future remains strong. But lawmakers can't do that work alone; we need your continued input. I encourage you to contact me directly with your questions, suggestions and concerns.

*Rick Hansen, State Representative
District 39A*

Spare long-term care

As Minnesota lawmakers scramble to balance the state budget by the May 18 deadline, cuts to long-term care for seniors are among the quick fixes on the table. I urge you to write or call your state legislators and tell them that until lasting, fiscally responsible solutions can be enacted, they must not balance the budget on the backs of our parents. First, because it does not reflect Minnesota values. Second, because it's bad for Minnesota's economy.

When the state cuts long-term care funding, it loses matching federal Medical Assistance dollars. That is a double loss Minnesota can't afford. According to a study by the Long-Term Care Imperative, for every \$1 million in federal matching dollars we lose due to shortsighted budget cuts, we lose as many as 51 full-time employees in nursing homes and assisted-living facilities across the state. This, in turn, results in a loss of more than \$3.6 million in economic activity on which our communities depend.

*Marvin J. Plakut, President and CEO
Episcopal Homes of Minnesota*

Extend Medicare to all

The cost of health care is a major financial burden for American citizens and businesses. General Motors owes \$20 billion that it can't pay to its Retiree Health Care Trust. Chrysler owes \$10 billion to a similar trust. Many of our local governments have large unfunded health care obligations to employees and retirees.

Every other developed nation in the world has a government-run single-payer health care system with average costs of about half those in the U.S. Among those nations, the U.S. ranks near the bottom in such measures as infant mortality, treatment effectiveness and life expectancy in studies by the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

Opponents of single-payer systems dismiss them as poorly run "socialistic" programs. They want consumers to reject government plans and be free to shop for health care services on their own. They apparently believe that the individual patient has more bargaining power than Medicare as he goes from clinic to clinic, seeking the best deal while his fever is rising or appendix dripping.

Actually, we have a single-payer system, Medicare, which works very well, with total overhead costs in the range of 3 to 4 percent—far below private insurers. Medicare allows free

choice of physicians and other health services. Medicare's Diagnosis Related Groups program has set fees for each procedure, thus holding down treatment cost. Our Social Security System also works, providing security for millions of seniors. The plan was opposed by nearly every Republican congressman when it was adopted in the 1930s. Today, conservative and liberal seniors alike are happy to receive those monthly checks.

Expansion of a Medicare-type plan to all citizens merits serious consideration. Our financial future and the competitive position of U.S. industry demands it.

*Rolf E. Westgard
Macalester-Groveland*

House the homeless in Highland

I am a 7th-grader, and I am studying Catholic social teachings. I have learned much about global warming, pollution, animal cruelty and many other things, but we have mainly focused on the poor and the homeless and what we can do to support them. My teacher asked us to pick a topic that we are most concerned about or interested in and try to do something to change it. I chose homelessness.

I thought a great way to try to change people's lives is to ask everyone to do everything in their power to create new housing for homeless and low-income people in Highland Park. My parents told me that there is an organization called Project for Pride in Living (PPL) that is trying to build a housing facility with 44 units for low-income people, including 10 units for long-term homeless people. I understand that PPL needs special permission from the city to create this development.

Highland would be a good place for PPL to build this home because the location is right next to almost anything one could need, like grocery stores, gas stations, pharmacies, entertainment, fast food, schools and a bus line. I am asking all people in Highland Park to give their support to this project and tell their neighbors and council member.

Thank you for your support. I hope this idea becomes a reality.

*Ben Maley
Highland Park*

Sharing the road

Bicyclists are legal on the streets and subject to the same laws as motorists. As a bicyclist and an automobile driver, I find it pretty hard to listen to an automobile driver criticize a bicyclist. Not stopping at stop signs is breaking the law and really stupid for a bicyclist. Let me tell you, it hurts a lot to get hit. In my case, it was by a van running a red light.

Go stand at any corner. When the light turns red, you are pretty much going to see a car running it. Breaking the speed limit (there are not many bicyclists capable of that), not using turn signals, passing a car on the right, not stopping for pedestrians at corners, leaving your car running unattended—all against the law. How about not giving a bicyclist 3 feet clearance as you pass? Also against the law.

You can safely pass a bicyclist in your car. It will take 2 seconds and have no impact on your day. Give a wave to the bicyclist when you pass. He could be a teacher or a fireman

and is for sure your fellow tax-paying (mostly) law-abiding neighbor.

*D. Bucholz
Summit Hill*

Soderholm left his mark on city

Having served on the St. Paul Planning Commission for six years, I can attest to the passion retiring zoning administrator Larry Soderholm displayed in his work for our fair city (*Villager*, April 8). Larry's commitment to preserving the city's past while demanding the best for its future was a testament to his own high integrity.

Larry always treated his customers—residents, district councils, businesses and activists—as assets to the city and the process. He left an indelible mark on the city of St. Paul. One of those marks will be the expertise and institutional knowledge he shared with those who will serve after him.

The St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development has talented planners and administrators in part because Larry Soderholm helped them learn what "St. Paul" really means. Thank you, Larry.

*Matt Anfang
Highland Park*

Bank's policy is questionable

The reasons why Pinehurst Bank would not change a \$100 bill ("Another bank failure," *Villager* Inbox, April 8) raise several questions:

- Does anyone really believe that refusal to change a \$100 bill has any impact on money laundering? It would be nearly impossible to launder millions of drug dollars \$100 at a time.
- Does anyone really believe that this policy is able to short-circuit counterfeiting? If the bank can't tell the difference, who can?
- Is this actually a community bank or a private club for members only?

The reasons given for the refusal are specious. The real reason is directly related to using their access to cash as a marketing tool to make banking less convenient if you are not signed up for their services. This is reminiscent of the 1800s when many banks issued their own currency and discounted the currency of other banks. I would certainly think twice about doing business with any company with these ethics.

*Joseph Stans
Ramsey Hill*

Service you can bank on

I read with dismay the letter from Jill M. Sandeen ("Another bank failure," *Villager* Inbox, April 8) and felt compelled to respond. With so many people losing their retirement savings and watching their portfolios diminish, I find it insulting that she is comparing her inability to make change at Pinehurst Bank with the current "bank catastrophes" on Wall Street. As a customer of Pinehurst Bank since its opening, I have always been satisfied with the

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Dave Arneson: A gamer to the end

BY DAVE PAGE

Most people probably don't think of the Highland Park neighborhood as ground zero for one of the most influential social phenomena of the last 50 years, but it was in the basement of his parents' Highland Park home that Dave Arneson introduced a group of high school and college friends to a new kind of gaming that involved fantasy role-playing. From those initial forays into a world he dubbed Blackmoor, Arneson went on in 1974 to co-create Dungeons & Dragons and the set of rules that spawned almost every role-playing game to follow.

"Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is the granddaddy of all role-playing games," said Landon Pirius, who teaches a class on the computer game World of Warcraft at Inver Hills Community College. "It certainly inspired games like World of Warcraft."

Wizards of the Coast, a subsidiary of Hasbro Inc., which still publishes D&D, credits Arneson for developing many of the fundamental ideas of role-playing, including that each player controls just one hero, that heroes gain power through adventures, and that personality is as important as prowess in combat.

Arneson, who died on April 7 after a two-year battle with cancer, was born in Minneapolis in 1947, moved to St. Paul as a youngster and graduated from Central High School before attending the University of Minnesota. He studied history at the U of M, and enjoyed re-creating historical events and conducting "what if" campaigns similar to what history buffs have been doing since before H.G. Wells wrote *Little Wars* (1913), his groundbreaking book on war-gaming.

In 1969 Arneson attended GenCon, then a new war games convention, where he met Gary Gygax. The two soon found themselves collaborating on a set of rules for sailing-ship combat called Don't Give Up the Ship, which was published in 1971. Gygax and Jeff Perren were working on a set of rules for medieval combat called Chainmail when Arneson suggested mixing in elements of his own role-playing world of Blackmoor with the charts and dice of other war-gaming sets of rules. The result was D&D, and it was an instant success.

Gygax and Arneson eventually had a professional falling out. When Arneson sued Gygax, the former business partners settled out of court for royalties. Still, "we never reconciled," Arneson told the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* last year when Gygax died. "We were polite, but things never came together."

Arneson went on to cofound 4D Interactive Systems, a St. Paul game-design company. Among its myriad projects was an attempt to digitize the Official Records of the American Civil War. When the company's focus turned toward programming for medical devices, Arneson left and founded another company called Adventure Games. In the



Dave Arneson displayed his considerable playful side at one of the many gaming conventions he attended.

early 1980s, he and Adventure Games produced "Johnny Reb" and "Harpoon." Johnny Reb allows war-gamers to refight Civil War battles. Harpoon re-creates modern naval battles. Both games are still popular.

As a leading force in gaming, Arneson was invited to speak at many national gaming conventions. Over the past 10 years, he taught game design at Full Sail University outside Orlando.

When D&D was turned into a movie in 2000, the producers flew Arneson to the Czech Republic, where the film was being shot, so that he could make a cameo appearance in the movie as a wizard. "Don't blink or you'll miss me," he once joked about his abbreviated acting career.

Arneson was very modest and rarely spoke about his many accomplishments, including being inducted into the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts and Design Hall of Fame in 1984 and being named one of the millennium's "most influential persons" by *Pyramid*, a monthly PDF gaming magazine, in 1999.

However, he was always eager to talk about his teaching, and when he moved back to St. Paul several years ago after being diagnosed with cancer, he was especially proud that Full Sail University had named him a professor emeritus.

Never one to shy away from fun, Arneson continued gaming to the end, getting together with old friends in Highland Park to play a new board game or continue the Blackmoor campaign.

10◀ INBOX

service. It is a fine example of a small, independent bank that I am proud to support. I am greeted by name every time I enter the bank. The bank also has hosted my daughter's Girl Scout troop's annual cookie booth sale. Now that's what I call a neighborhood business.

Maybe if Ms. Sandeen would open an account at Pinehurst, she would come to realize the level of service they offer.

Deanna M. Olson
Merriam Park

Unsustainable criticism

I appreciate how Gary Fischbach helps sustain American newspaper tradition by submitting letters to the editor. But his jab at growing government, using "sustainability" sarcastically to attack the present administration ("Sustainable growth?," *Villager* Inbox, March 25), reveals his myopic, destructively dualistic view of politics and sustainability.

Sustainability is a value rooted in America even before our nihilistic consumerism took over. Natives, French traders, Quakers and, yes, even many of our white male founders (William Bradford, Ben Franklin, John Adams, Ralph Waldo Emerson, to name a few) espoused sustainability. What value helped win WWII?

By contrast, what "sustainable" practices did our last president support? Is degradation of resources, the prison at Guantanamo Bay, deregulation of every corporate entity, a war in Iraq, lack of health care for those who serve and disregard for everything but the status quo sustainable?

If Mr. Fischbach checks out the Land Stewardship Project or the Trust for Public Land, he will learn about just two

examples of why his terse, anti-sustainability comment is stale and unsustainable, not to mention unpatriotic.

I urge everyone to realize "sustainability" isn't some naive, hippie, greenie, rural concept. It's more complex than any sophomoric two-party spat, and a fundamentally more simple answer than just "more government." I trust the "conservative" Mr. Fischbach would agree.

Steven Tacheny
West End

A pizza her mind

The last two issues of the *Villager* have contained fliers for a new pizza place in our area. Its menu has five incorrect uses of the comma, eight incorrect hyphens and the word "breadstix." The word "marinara" is spelled with an initial capital letter six times and in all lower-case letters three times. However, the biggest errors were "2 medium-topping pizza's (what do the pizzas own?)," "blue cheese" (enough said) and "sour kraut" (no comment).

When I encountered this flyer the first time, I took it into the pizza place with the corrections in red ink and told the manager I could not patronize a place that, among other things, had "a bunch of ham" on a sandwich. I showed him the grammatical errors, and he said, "Huh?" When the same flyer was enclosed in the latest issue of the *Villager*, all I could do was laugh.

Doesn't anyone care about grammar anymore?

Barbara Grudt
Macalester-Groveland

Editor's note: The writer is a retired teacher of English.

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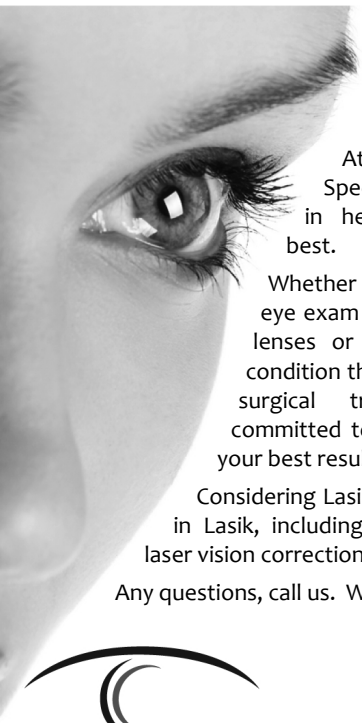
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Crime Report

The following calls were gathered from recent Community Watch reports by the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department. For a list of weekly crime reports by neighborhood from the St. Paul Police Department, visit <http://stpaul.gov/index.asp?NID=2399>.

Highland Park

Theft—A theft from auto occurred between 4:00 and 5:00 p.m. Sunday, March 29, at the Temple of Aaron Synagogue, 616 S. Mississippi River Blvd.

Weapons—Shots were fired at Edgumbe Road and St. Paul Avenue at about 2:00 a.m. Saturday, April 4.

—A man was arrested at Ford Parkway and Cleveland Avenue for possession of a BB gun in public and illegally transporting a firearm at about 4:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 8. People reportedly saw the man waving the gun from his car.

Miscellaneous—The rear window of a vehicle was broken out on the 700 block of South Snelling Avenue between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 31.

Lexington-Hamline

Theft—A black suitcase containing clothing and personal items was found at Ayd Mill Road and Hamline Avenue at about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, April 8.

Macalester-Groveland

Burglary—Siji Kids, 1326 Grand Ave., was burglarized between 7:00 p.m. Saturday and noon Sunday, April 4-5.

Theft—A theft from auto occurred at Summit Avenue and Mississippi River Boulevard at about 10:00 a.m. Wednesday, April 8. A credit card that was stolen from the vehicle was used fraudulently after the theft.

—A bicycle was stolen on the campus at the College of St. Catherine between 3:00 p.m. Thursday and 5:00 p.m. Friday, April 9-10.

Weapons—Police responded to a report of a theft at SuperAmerica, 2051 Grand Ave., at about 1:00 a.m. Thursday, April 2. A male suspect was located and cited for possession of a dangerous weapon and underage drinking. He was taken to detox.

Miscellaneous—Police cited a girl for fifth-degree assault after she punched another female student in the face at about 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 7, at Ramsey Junior High School, 1700 Summit Ave.

Merriam Park

Burglary—A home on the 1600 block of Marshall Avenue was burglarized at about 11:45 a.m. Thursday, April 2. The victim was home at the time.

—A home on the 1600 block of Carroll Avenue was burglarized at about 10:00 p.m. Thursday, April 2. The suspects entered the house through a second-story window and left through the back door.

—A dorm room at the University of St. Thomas was burglarized between 8:30 a.m. Saturday and 2:30 a.m. Sunday, April 4-5.

—A \$2,000 surveillance camera and \$4,000 in merchandise were stolen from Phenom, 153 N. Snelling Ave., before 1:00 p.m. Sunday, April 5. Entry was forced.

Theft—A car was stolen on the 1800 block of Feronia Avenue between 6:00 p.m. Monday, March 30, and 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 1.

—A car was stolen on the 1600 block of St. Anthony Avenue between noon and 5:00 p.m. Thursday, April 9.

Snelling-Hamline

Theft—A car was stolen at I-94 and Snelling Avenue at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, April 4.

Summit Hill

Robbery—A man was the victim of a strong-arm robbery at Grotto Street and Lincoln Avenue at 2:30 a.m. Saturday, April 4.

Burglary—Money was stolen from the coin-operated laundry machines in the

Grand Avenue Apartments, 1180 Grand Ave., between 6:00 p.m. Tuesday and 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, April 7-8.

—An apartment on the 700 block of Grand Avenue was broken into at about 2:00 a.m. Sunday, April 12. The residents were home at the time.

Theft—Scarves were stolen at Karma, 867 Grand Ave., around 1:30 p.m. Sunday, April 12.

Weapons—A man was seen holding a gun while riding a bicycle down the alley behind the 800 block of Lincoln Avenue at about 8:00 p.m. Friday, March 27.

Summit-University

Burglary—A 22-year-old St. Paul man and a 21-year-old Maple Grove man were arrested at Western and Concordia avenues for possession of burglary tools and stolen property just after midnight Friday, March 27.

—A home on the 200 block of Aurora Avenue was broken into between 3:30 and 8:00 a.m. Monday, March 30. The resident was home at the time. The victim's vehicle also was stolen from the backyard.

—An apartment on the 100 block of North Lexington Parkway was burglarized at about 1:00 p.m. Monday, March 30. A witness saw a man crawl out of a window of the apartment building and flee the scene. The suspect was described as a black male, tall, thin, with a short Afro-style haircut.

—Several items were stolen from a home on the 800 block of Ashland Avenue between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 7. En-

try was forced.

Weapons—Police stopped a car for traffic violations at Concordia and Western avenues at about 2:00 a.m. Friday, April 3. One male juvenile and four men were arrested for possession of a firearm with an altered serial number.

Miscellaneous—A woman on the 600 block of Portland Avenue reported that her neighbor threatened to shoot her dog at about 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, April 7.

West End

Burglary—A laptop computer and digital camera were stolen from a home on the 600 block of Canton Street between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. Saturday, April 4.

—A residence on the 300 block of St. Clair Avenue was broken into at about 3:30 a.m. Sunday, April 12. The resident was home at the time. The suspect was gone when police arrived.

Assault—Two 911 calls were made from the 900 block of Armstrong Avenue at about 4:00 a.m. Saturday, March 28. Officers heard babies crying and adults screaming. One man was subsequently arrested for obstruction.

—A man was shot in the right arm at Bay Street and Jefferson Avenue between 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. Saturday, April 4. The victim arrived at the emergency room of United Hospital and was uncooperative with police. A woman was cited for disorderly conduct when she interfered with police who were trying to investigate the shooting.

Weapons—A complainant said he heard up to 10 shots fired near West 7th and McBoal streets at around 10:30 p.m. Monday, March 30.

—Two live 9mm rounds were recovered in the parking lot of the St. Paul Public Schools' Area Learning Center, 1780 W. 7th St., at about 2:00 p.m. Thursday, April 9.

Miscellaneous—Witnesses told police a woman was driving erratically on Randolph Avenue toward Shepard Road at about 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 31. Police found the car parked at a coffee shop on Shepard Road and Eagle Street. The driver was arrested for DWI and driving after revocation of her license.

—A woman was cited for criminal damage to property after she threw a rock through the window of Ali's Market, 43 W. 7th St., at about 7:00 p.m. Saturday, April 4.

Fire Calls

The following calls were gathered from recent reports by the St. Paul Fire Department.

Highland Park—Paramedics responded to a traffic accident with injuries on the 2300 block of West 7th Street at 9:34 a.m. Thursday, April 2. A 60-year-old man had crashed into a teller stand when he stepped on the gas instead of the brake when attempting to park his car. He was transported to Regions Hospital.

—Two 14-year-old boys started a fire in a waste basket at Nova Classical Academy, 1668 Montreal Ave., at around 3:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 8. Damage was minor.

Merriam Park—Firefighters responded to a fire in a dental office on the 1500 block of Selby Avenue at 10:57 p.m. Friday, April 10. An electrical malfunction had caused a fire in a dental machine. Damage was estimated at \$35,000.

Summit-University—Paramedics responded to a call from the 500 block of Concordia Avenue at 3:54 p.m. Monday, April 6, and found a 49-year-old male school bus driver in full cardiac arrest. Bystanders had begun CPR. Paramedics were able to restore the man's pulse on the way to Regions Hospital.

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A command center has been set up at the University of St. Thomas to help find missing freshman Dan Zamlen. Pictured making posters is friend Natasha Wright, left, and Zamlen's sister, Andrea. Volunteers have spent countless hours working to find Zamlen since he disappeared on April 5.

PHOTO BY ANNE BRANDRUD

St. Thomas freshman still missing

The search continues for University of St. Thomas freshman Daniel Zamlen, 19, who has been missing since April 5. The Eveleth native has not been heard from since talking to friends on his cell phone at around 3:00 that Sunday morning. He is believed to have been walking on South Mississippi River Boulevard near St. Clair Avenue after leaving a party when he disappeared.



Police, search and rescue teams, and a state helicopter have scoured the area, along with hundreds of St. Thomas students,

friends and family members. Students have posted flyers, set up a command center at the school and canvassed the area to ask residents to check for Zamlen, who is a Type 1 diabetic.

Zamlen is 6-foot-1, 180 pounds, with light brown hair and blue eyes. He was wearing jeans, a faded blue Hollister T-shirt, a blue Eddie Bauer fleece jacket and brown Doc Martens shoes at the time of his disappearance. He also had a black iPhone, an insulin pump and blue handheld insulin meter.

A \$10,000 reward is being offered for information leading to his return.

A website also has been created at www.finddan.org. Anyone with information about him is asked to call the St. Paul Police Department at 651-291-1111 or the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children at 1-800-843-5678.

School Notes

St. Paul College Continuing Education is offering the following classes: Let's Hike from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 5, at the UAW-Ford-MnSCU Training Center on Ford Parkway (\$19); and Minnesota Workers' Compensation from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, May 20, at the college, 317 Marshall Ave. (\$65). Online courses also are available. Visit Education2Go or call 651-846-1783.

"Power and Possibilities," a leadership program for women of color, will be held from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 29, at the College of St. Catherine. Linda Alvarado, president of Alvarado Construction, will be the keynote speaker. Small group discussions led by local women will follow. The cost is \$10-\$50. Call 651-690-6819.

The Friends of Macalester College International Students Host Family Program is seeking families and individuals who are interested in forming friendships with international students for the upcoming academic year. This is not a homestay program. Most hosts see their students about once a month. Call Nienke Wijnia at 651-696-6849.

Admission Possible's application deadline will close this month for low-income high school sophomores interested in a two-year program to help them get into college. During their junior and senior years, Admission Possible students receive free ACT/SAT test preparation, intensive guidance in preparing college applications, help in obtaining financial aid and guidance in the transition to college. Contact 651-917-3525 or info@admissionpossible.org, or visit www.AdmissionPossible.org/Student_Recruitment.

A **"Build the Books"** campaign is being conducted by the PTA at Randolph Heights Elementary School. The PTA is still about \$10,000 short of its goal to raise \$30,000 to

buy books for the school's library. Checks may be sent to: RHS PTA Library Fund, 348 S. Hamline Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105.

The Princeton Review will offer free practice SAT and ACT tests on Saturday and Sunday, April 25-26, for high school juniors and seniors trying to decide which college entrance exam to take. Students also may take the Princeton Review Assessments (PRA), a shorter test that offers questions found on the SAT and the ACT. Locally, the tests will be administered from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Saturday at the Princeton Review, 1501 University Ave. SE, Minneapolis, and at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus. The tests also will be offered from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Sunday, April 26, at the Princeton Review. Call 1-800-273-8439 or visit www.PrincetonReview.com/NationalTestingDay.

The St. Thomas Academy JROTC academic team won the Midwest regional bowl to earn a trip to the 2009 JROTC Leadership and Academic Bowl at George Mason University in Virginia on June 26-30. The STA team competed in two rounds of online play to win the Midwest region. Competing in the championship round will be junior Tim Mannuzza, sophomores Madison Whalen and Jack Ryan, and freshman James Hartnett.

Free computer classes for beginners will be offered from 10:00 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays in May at the Central Library, 90 W. 4th St. The schedule includes an introduction to computers on May 5, e-mail I on May 12, e-mail II on May 19 and an introduction to the Internet on May 26. Call 651-266-7000, ext. 5.

Minnehaha Academy's lower and middle school, 4200 W. River Road, Minneapolis, will hold an admission open house from 6:45 to 8:00 p.m. Thursday, April 23. For information, call 612-729-8321.

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District Council News

Highland Park

www.highlanddistrictcouncil.org • 651-695-4005

Annual meeting—The Highland District Council will hold its annual meeting and elections from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 22, at Highland Park Junior High School, 975 S. Snelling Ave. The featured speaker will be St. Paul City Council member Pat Harris. The elections will be for six odd-numbered grid representatives and two at-large board members. For information, contact the HDC office.

Board update—The HDC board approved new election rules on April 2. One change is that at-large ballots will not be handed out until the election is to take place. This will prevent any absentee voting. The board also passed a "Civility Resolution" intended to keep board members communicating with each other in a respectful manner, a resolution regarding the process for when written action and e-mail voting can occur, a resolution to forward public questions and concerns to the city about Project for Pride in Living's proposed affordable housing project on West 7th and Springfield streets, and a resolution supporting M & I Bank's plans to redevelop the old Walgreens site at 522 S. Snelling Ave.

Walgreens eyes Ford Parkway—The HDC's Community Development Committee will hold a neighborhood meeting at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 19, at the Hillcrest Recreation Center regarding a proposal to build a Walgreens store at the corner of Finn Street and Ford Parkway. Architect John Kohler of AIA will present the site plan for the project, which would involve purchasing the Oasis Market and Party America building and constructing a Walgreens and a smaller commercial building.

Neighborhood cleanup—The Highland and Macalester-Groveland district councils will hold their annual spring cleanup from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Saturday, May 9, in the parking lot of Ford Motor Company's Twin Cities Assembly Plant (enter off of Mississippi River Boulevard). Those who volunteer to work a shift will receive a voucher to drop off one load of items for free. To lend a hand, contact the HDC office.

Improvement fair kudos—The annual Macalester-Groveland & Highland Park Home Improvement Fair on April 4 was a huge success. More than 800 people came to the fair and the feedback was highly positive from attendees and exhibitors alike. Special thanks go to Cretin-Derham Hall for providing the location, Boy Scout Troop 82 for supplying the food, and all of the sponsors, including Castle Building and Remodeling, White Crane Construction, Restoration Window Systems, TCF Bank, Holy Spirit School, Pinehurst Bank, Building Arts and Otogawa-Anschel Design Build.

Mark the calendar—HDC annual meeting and elections, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 22, Highland Park Junior High School, 975 S. Snelling Ave.; Transportation Committee meeting on April 29—canceled; board meeting, 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 6, Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy.; neighborhood cleanup, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Saturday, May 9, Ford Motor Company's parking lot; Community Services Committee meeting, 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 13, Hillcrest; Community Development Committee meeting,

6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 19, Hillcrest; GarageFest and sidewalk sale on Friday through Sunday, May 29-31, throughout Highland; and Plant Share on Sunday, May 31, at Hillcrest.

Macalester-Groveland

www.macgrove.org • 651-695-4000

Paint the Pavement—The most recent edition of the Macalester-Groveland Community Council's newsletter had the wrong date for the Paint the Pavement project that will take place outside the Edgumbe Recreation Center this spring. The street-painting project will begin at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, June 13. The rain date is June 20. Volunteers are needed to help paint a four-season theme on Griggs Street directly outside the center. For information, contact the community council office.

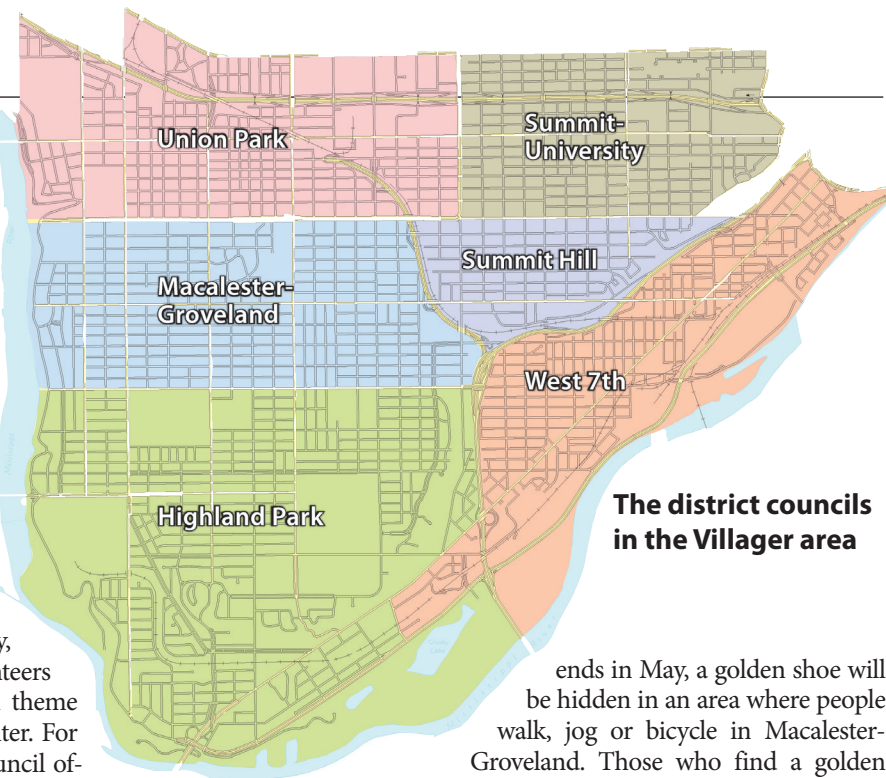
KidsPark carnival—A spring carnival will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Saturday, May 16, to celebrate KidsPark's new home at Desnoyer Park, 525 Pelham Blvd. The carnival will include games, face painting, spin art, inflatable slides and obstacle courses, food and refreshments. There will also be a silent auction to benefit KidsPark, a nonprofit drop-in child-care center. For information, call 651-603-0144 or visit www.kidsparkedropin.org.

Prepare to do battle—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council is seeking competitors for its annual Teen Battle of the Bands that will be held during Grand Old Day on Sunday, June 7. Applications are due by May 12 and are available on the community council's website. Volunteers are needed to review demo tapes, select finalists and plan the event, as well as to help during the day of the competition. For information, contact Afton Martens at the council office.

Plant Share hosts sought—The community council's Beautification Committee invites Macalester-Groveland neighbors to share their extra perennials at its annual Spring Plant Share on Saturday, May 16. Those who do not have plants to share are asked to make a minimum donation of \$2.00 per plant. Morning and afternoon plant share sites are still being determined. For information or to host a site, call the council office.

MacGrove Moves—The fourth annual MacGrove Moves program will be held this spring to promote health and fitness and reduce traffic congestion. To participate, residents leave their cars at home and walk, jog or bike to their destinations at least 15 times before August 12. Log sheets to record the trips are available on the council's website and at the Edgumbe and Groveland recreation centers. Completed log sheets will be entered in a drawing for prizes donated by neighborhood businesses. For information, call the council office.

If the golden shoe fits—The third annual Golden Shoe Hunt to promote walking and bicycling in the neighborhood will be held next month. During each of the first three week-



ends in May, a golden shoe will be hidden in an area where people walk, jog or bicycle in Macalester-Groveland. Those who find a golden shoe may bring it to the council office and win a pair of running or walking shoes donated by Fun N Run. For information, visit the council's website.

Farmers' market task force—A task force is being formed to discuss bringing a farmers' market to the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood. The task force will begin meeting in May. To be added to the roster, contact Melissa Martinez-Sones at the council office.

Walk your way to health—A walking club is being formed in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood. For information, contact Afton Martens at the council office.

Dates to remember—Transportation Committee meeting, 7:00 p.m. Monday, April 27, Edgumbe Recreation Center, 320 S. Griggs St.

Summit Hill

www.summithillassociation.org • 651-222-1222

Spring Progressive Supper—The Summit Hill Association will hold its Spring Progressive Supper on Saturday, April 25. The evening will consist of four courses, each served in a different home. The participation fee is \$5.00. Registration forms are available at the association's office in the Linwood Recreation Center or on the SHA's website. Contact coordinator Tammy Haas at tamarastable@aol.com for details.

Neighborhood garage sale and cleanup—The SHA will hold its spring neighborhood garage sale from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday, May 2, and two weeks later its annual neighborhood cleanup on Saturday, May 16. To register for the garage sale, return the form found on the SHA's website or in the association's office by April 24. Maps of sales location will be available on the website after April 30 or may be picked up at the Linwood Recreation Center or each sale location on the day of the sale. Those who work a 3½-hour shift at the cleanup

DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS ► 15

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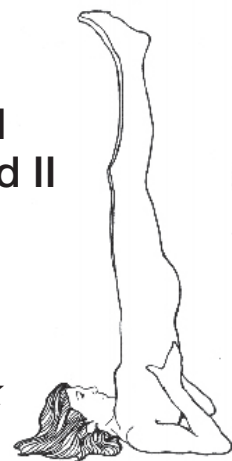
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14◀ DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

will be treated to lunch and may drop off one load of material for free. To lend a hand, contact the SHA office.

Environment Committee—The SHA's Environment Committee is currently working on several projects. Membership on the committee is open to all residents, business owners and property owners in Summit Hill. For information, contact the council office.

Dates to remember—Spring Progressive Supper on Saturday, April 25; SHA Environment Committee meeting on Wednesday, April 29; spring neighborhood garage sale on Saturday, May 2; board of directors meeting on Thursday, May 14; and neighborhood cleanup on Saturday, May 16. Most meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Linwood Recreation Center, 860 St. Clair Ave. Contact the SHA office for meeting details.

Summit-University

www.Summit-U.com • 651-228-1855

Selby Avenue improvements—Selby Avenue from Kent to Arundel streets is undergoing an estimated three-month-long reconstruction that started on April 13. Residences and businesses in the project area will have new gas lines, copper water pipes from the street, updated phone lines, new lighting, and a street that is 10 feet narrower with boulevards on each side that will be either finished with grass or brick pavers. Some boulevards will have trees planted at a later date. The first phase of the project is from Kent Street to approximately the front door of Solo Vino. The second phase will extend to the front door of the St. Paul Curling Club and the third phase will take the project to Arundel Street. For project updates, visit the SUPC website or e-mail the Selby Avenue Business Association at president@selbyavenue.com.

SUPC board elections—The Summit-University Planning Council will hold its annual election on Saturday, May 16. Voting will take place from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Golden Thyme Cafe, Nina's Cafe and Rondo Library; and from noon to 3:00 p.m. at the SUPC office, 627 Selby Ave. Candidates are needed for board seats in all six subdistricts of the Summit-University neighborhood as well as five seats representing local organizations and one at-large position. Absentee ballots may be cast from May 11-15. For information, contact Irna Landrum at the SUPC office.

Earth Day park cleanup—The Summit-University Planning Council and Project for Pride in Living will conduct an Earth Day cleanup of the Western Park Sculpture Garden from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 22. Those who are able to lend a hand may contact the SUPC office.

Senior News

The Aging Splendidly lunch series will continue at noon Thursday, May 14, at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 104 S. Snelling Ave. Don and Eunice Fultz of the St. Paul Area Synod will speak on their many trips to Tanzania. The cost is \$7.00. Call 651-699-5560.

Becketwood, 4300 W. River Pkwy. S., Minneapolis, will hold an open house from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. Sunday, April 26. Becketwood is a cooperative housing facility for independent owners age 55 and older. Call 612-722-4077.

A 55-Alive senior driver refresher course will be offered from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. Thursday, April 23, at the West 7th Community Center, 265 Oneida St. The course is for those who have already completed the eight-hour course and qualify for a refresher to become recertified. The cost is \$15 for AARP members and \$17 for others. Call 651-298-5493.

Health screenings and health information will be provided from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, May 1, at the East Lake Library on Lake Street and 28th Avenue South in Min-

Board notes—The Summit-University Community Council's board of directors will hold its next meeting at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, in the St. Albans Community Room, 665 Selby Ave. A Community Improvement and Safety Committee meeting will take place at 6:00 p.m. Board meetings are open to the public. Contact the SUPC office.

Stay in the loop—To learn more about upcoming Summit-University Planning Council meetings or sign up for electronic news updates, visit the SUPC's website.

Union Park

www.unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

Native plant workshop—The Union Park District Council's Parks and Recreation Committee will host a free native plant workshop from 10:00 a.m. to noon Saturday, April 25, at the Merriam Park Community Center, 2000 St. Anthony Ave. Lynn Steiner, author of *Landscaping with Native Plants of Minnesota*, will discuss the diversity and beauty of the state's native plants and show how best to use them. To sign up, contact the UPDC office.

Rain barrel workshop—Space is still available for Union Park's rain barrel workshop from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Thursday, May 21, at a location to be announced. Participants will create a full-sized rain barrel to take home. The cost is \$25. To register, contact Julie Oney at the UPDC office.

Community-building workshop—The UPDC will host a community-building workshop from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 2, at Wilder Center, 451 N. Lexington Pkwy. Several short presentations will be given on topics ranging from coordinating a single garbage hauler to signing up for this summer's National Night Out. Presenters will be available to answer questions.

Recycling bins—Recycling bins are distributed from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at the Merriam Park Recreation Center, 2000 St. Anthony Ave. The next pickup dates are May 6 and 20.

Union Park news—The UPDC's board of directors will hold its next meeting at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 6, in Concordia University's Library Technology Center, 1282 Concordia Ave. Residents are still being sought to join the Neighborhood Issues, Parks and Recreation, Land Use, and Internal Affairs committees. Visit the district council's website for more information.

Stay connected—The UPDC publishes a monthly electronic newsletter and sends out weekly crime notifications via e-mail. To subscribe to either, e-mail info@unionparkdc.org with "subscribe to e-news" or "subscribe to crime notification" on the subject line.

neapolis. Participants include the Center for Sports Biomechanics, River Lake Eye Clinic, Russell Dental, Southside Community Health Services, and the Nokomis Longfellow and Highland Healthy Seniors Programs, in conjunction with Snyders and US Bank.

An OWLS (Older, Wiser, Livelier Seniors) program on "Mushrooms Galore!" will be offered from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 5, at the Dodge Nature Center in West St. Paul. Call 651-455-4531.

A free class on searching the Internet will be offered at 11:00 a.m. Monday, April 27, at the Thompson Park Activity Center in West St. Paul. Call 651-403-8300 to register.

An AARP driver safety refresher class will be offered from 8:00 a.m. to noon Thursday, May 14, at Ford Motor Company's Twin Cities Assembly Plant, 966 S. Mississippi Blvd. The class is for those who have already taken the full eight-hour course and qualify for a refresher every three years. The cost is \$12-\$14. Call Tracy Ausen at 651-695-3502.

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Names in the News

Dave Pinto of Highland Park has announced his candidacy for Ramsey County Attorney. A prosecutor in the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, Pinto graduated from Harvard University and earned graduate degrees in law and management from the University of Virginia School of Law and the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration. He served in the Clinton White House, in late 4th District Congressman Bruce Vento's office, and as an aide to the chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission. He practiced law with the Minneapolis firm of Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi, and has served on the Highland District Council, the St. Paul Capital Improvement Budget Committee and the board of the Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation.

Technical Sergeant Rebecca Pash has graduated from the Air Force Noncommissioned Officer Academy at Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida. A security forces resource adviser with 11 years of military service, Pash is assigned to the 96th Ground Combat Training Squadron R at Eglin Air Force Base in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. She is the daughter of Maureen Beikler of Merriam Park and Thomas Beikler of Minneapolis. She is a 1997 graduate of St. Paul Central High School and a 2004 graduate of Troy University in Alabama.

Marilea Pierce of Macalester-Groveland has published *Morning Reflections, Quiet Endurance*, a book of photos and reflections on what she discovered on walks with only her camera as company.

Airman Patrick DeVito has graduated from basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. A 2005 graduate of Cretin-Derham Hall, he is the son of Patrick DeVito of the West End and Robbin Hilgert of Bloomington.

Jamie Harris Flynn of Highland Park was selected as the 2009 Distinguished Irish Woman by the St. Patrick's Association for the St. Patrick's Day parade last month in downtown St. Paul. Flynn, 41, runs a 10-year-old business that creates customized photo albums, frames and promotional gifts targeted to national parks, resorts and corporations.

The Reverend Emory Dively of the Twin Cities Deaf Assembly of God Church in Highland Park has received a National Association of Secretaries of State Medallion from Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie. Dively was honored for his efforts to increase the

Remembering Dick Gordon

A memorial service for longtime Twin Cities sports-writer Charles Richards "Dick" Gordon will be held at 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 25, at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, 60 Kent St. A reception will follow at 4:00 p.m. at the Somerset Country Club, 1416 Dodd Road, Mendota Heights.



During World War II, Gordon was a Marine combat correspondent in the South Pacific for four years.

Gordon covered the Vikings for the *Star* until his retirement in 1976. But he was not finished writing. He soon began sending in unpaid freelance stories to the *Grand Gazette*. After the *Villager* bought that newspaper in 1984, he began writing for both publications—for pay—mailing in his typewritten stories.

Even at the end, Gordon was producing all of his stories on a typewriter. He decided to retire from writing when his failing sight made it too hard to hit the right keys. In a *Villager* feature story on him early last year, he told freelance writer Dave Page that he dictated his last story to his son in Buffalo, who typed it and sent it in. "It was probably the neatest typed article they ever received from me," Gordon joked.

Gordon was preceded in death by his parents, Charles William and Charlotte Bishop Gordon, sister Virginia Borup Gordon and his wife of 61 years, Adelaide (Washburn). He is survived by his three sons—Charlie (Jocelyn), Bobby (Stephanie) and Dicky (Catherine)—and 10 grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, donations are preferred by his family to St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church.

participation of blind, deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Minnesota elections.

Airman Toua Lee has graduated from basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. A 2007 graduate of Como Park High School, he is the son of Doua Lee of Summit-University.

Airman 1st Class Christopher Kappes has graduated from basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. He is the son of William and Mary Ellen Kappes of Mendota Heights and is a 2005 graduate of St. Thomas Academy.

Jewish Community Action will offer a Seeds of Justice Fellowship from October 2009 through April 2010. The fellowship is open to students in grades 9-12 who are interested in gaining leadership and community organizing skills by accompanying Jewish Community Action staff on a campaign. The application deadline is early May. The fellowship will begin with a social justice retreat and end with

a graduation ceremony and trip. For information, contact Lauren Bastien at lauren@jewishcommunityaction.org or 651-632-2184.

Christopher Valen, a former Summit Avenue resident who attended graduate school at the University of St. Thomas, has been awarded the Garcia Prize for his debut mystery, *White Tombs* (Conquill Press). The award is given to the best fictional book of the year in conjunction with the national Reader Views Book Awards. The book, which is primarily set in St. Paul, also was named Best Mystery of the Year.

Melanie Huggins, who has served as director of the St. Paul Public Library for three years, has been named executive director of the Richland County Public Library in Columbia, South Carolina. She will continue to work in St. Paul until June 12. The search for her successor has already begun.

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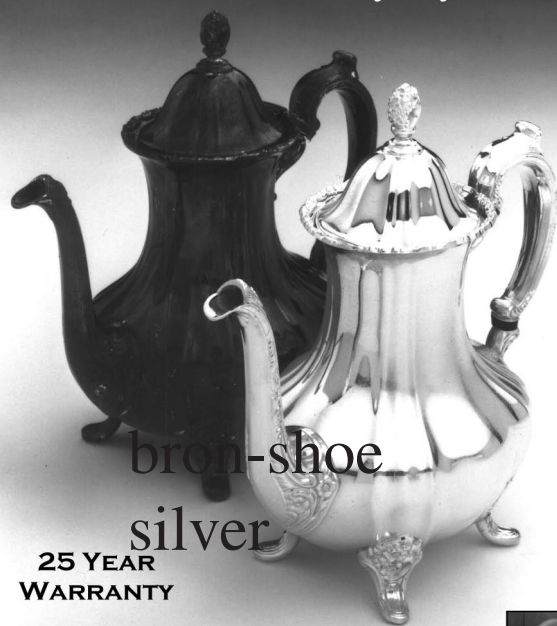
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Real Estate Guide

Have we seen the bottom yet?

Industry pros detect first signs of rebound in housing market

BY LARRY ENGLUND

Local Realtors are cautiously optimistic about the upcoming home-selling season. With low interest rates, a new \$8,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers and the lowest inventory of homes for sale in two years, Realtors are reporting a definite uptick in interest in the housing market. Their optimism is leavened by housing prices that still reflect the glut of distressed properties selling for considerably less than their previous purchase price.

"Pending sales are absolutely up," said Vickie Gay, the sales manager for Edina Realty's Grand Avenue office. "Our showings for the first nine days of April were about 75 ahead of our showings for the first weeks of April 2008."

"We've seen a significant increase since the first of the year," said Tony

Haider, the sales manager for Edina Realty's Highland Park office.

"We're doing pretty well," said Leonard Schwartz, the sales manager for Coldwell Banker Burnet's Highland Park office. "Open houses have picked up substantially in the last six weeks."

"There's ample activity in the marketplace," said Mark Hulsey, an agent in ReMax Result's Crocus Hill office. "The spring market is starting pretty well."

Especially significant is the number of pending sales, which are up more than 47 percent over last year in Ramsey County. In St. Paul proper, there were 279 sales in March, up from 195 sales in March of 2008, or an increase of more than 43 percent.

Helping to stabilize the market is the smaller inventory of homes for sale. Every neighborhood in the *Villager's* coverage area had fewer



Realtor Gretchen Iwen (right) of Coldwell Banker Burnet shows a home to Kelly Nelsen during an open house in the Highland Park neighborhood. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

new listings in March of 2009 than in March of 2008.

According to the St. Paul Area Association of Realtors, the number of homes on the market today would take 6.3 months to sell at the current rate. In the two years prior to March, the inventory has not been smaller than 7.9 months, and a year ago the inventory was at 9.6 months.

The federal government's new \$8,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers has contributed to the increase in market activity, accord-

ing to Hulsey, Gay and Schwartz.

"The majority of buyers are first-time homebuyers," Schwartz said.

"It's a great time to buy for someone who isn't encumbered by selling a property," said Bud Kleppe of St. Paul Realty.

Fixed-rate interest rates on a 30-year mortgage as low as 4.75 percent are also helping. According to Gay, with an interest rate of 4.75 percent as opposed to 6.5 percent, "you'll save \$276 a month on a \$250,000, 30-year mortgage."

Reports by both the St. Paul and Minneapolis area associations of Realtors indicate that though sales activity may be up in the housing market, median sale prices continue to decline. In the *Villager* area, the decline in median sale prices in 2008 range from 5 percent in Macalester-Groveland to 17 percent in Summit Hill/Summit-University to 25 percent in the West End.

Driving the price decline statis-

REAL ESTATE MARKET ► 18

Pricing a home is best left to the experts—three of them

Short sales drive down median price, but what of the value of homes?

BY BOB GILBERT

There's an adage in the real estate business that says there's nothing wrong with a house for sale that the right price won't cure. However, determining the right price can be difficult, especially in today's housing market where mortgage foreclosures has driven down median sale prices.

The median sale price of homes in the Twin

Cities declined 13 percent in 2008. That number includes the "distressed" properties, which are defined as homes in foreclosure or homes whose sale was mediated by the lender. Take those properties out of the equation, and the median-price drop is closer to 5 percent.

Still, one has to be careful when making generalizations about real estate since value is so dependent on location. "Something that might be true in a low-income neighborhood is not necessarily true for the entire Twin Cities," said Thomas Musil, a professor of real estate at the University of St. Thomas.

For example, of the homes for sale in the Highland area, fewer than 10 percent are in the distressed category, according to Tony

Haider, sales manager for Edina Realty's Highland Park office. In St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood, that number is between 30 and 40 percent, Haider said.

Home values have declined in general over the past couple of years, according to Sarah Kinney, a real estate agent for Coldwell Banker Burnet. That fact has been difficult for sellers to swallow because prior to that, property values were increasing by 5 to 10 percent a year.

"We all got spoiled," Kinney said. "Pricing your home today for what it was worth in 2006 probably isn't going to bring a very quick sale because that price is no longer valid. It'll probably be a while before we see the kind of appreciation in homes we've seen in the past."

According to Haider, to sell your home today it has to win the price war and the beauty contest. "There's an art to pricing homes," he said, "and that's why you want a real estate agent with sales experience in your neighborhood. They'll look at comparable properties and see if they're better or inferior to yours."

If your home is superior to the local competition in condition, square-footage, number of bathrooms and bedrooms, curb appeal and age of the roof and furnace, you can come up in price. If not, you may have to lower it.

"Take the time to know the market and preview the competition," Haider advised. "At-

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tically is the number of distressed properties in a particular neighborhood—those that are either being sold by a bank following foreclosure or otherwise being sold for less than the amount owed on the property, known as a short sale.

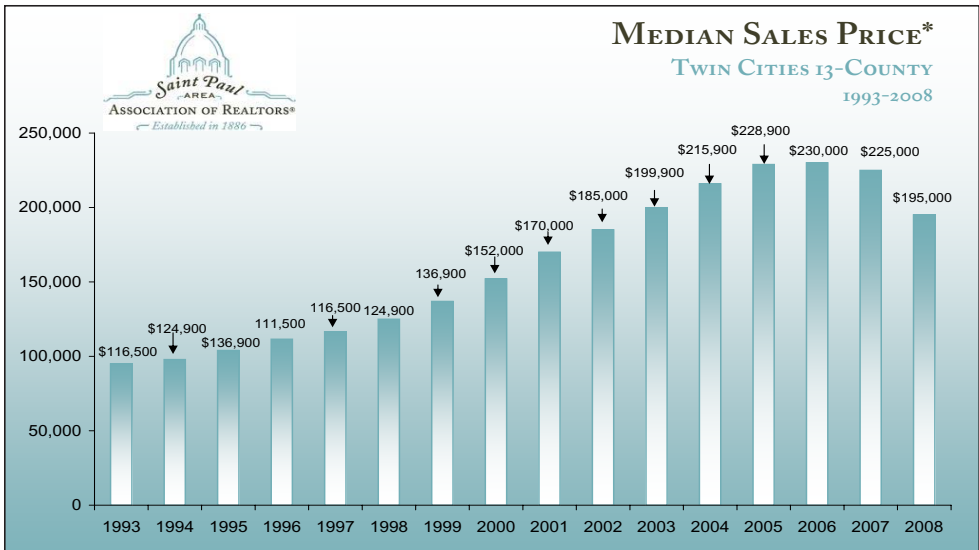
“There are some real trouble spots in the metropolitan area,” said Thomas Musil, director of the master’s program in real estate at the University St. Thomas, “but places like Highland Park and Macalester-Groveland are very desirable. They’re much more stable.”

“Nearly half of our sales have been bank-owned or short sales,” Hulsey said. “Values are coming down since banks must dispose of their assets. It’s a convoluted and complex market,” made more so by the difficulty of pricing a home in the environment.

Kleppe has had a busy spring selling several bank-owned properties. “There are some serious discounts out there,” he said, citing a one-bedroom condo that originally sold for \$195,000 being bought for \$115,000. “And that’s with underground parking.”

“It’s tough to compete with foreclosures,” Kleppe said. “Consequently, it’s hard to understand how to price right now. We won’t see a correction until the banks sell all of their properties.”

“Prices for regular properties are down some,” Schwartz said, “though they don’t seem



The chart above illustrates the rise and fall of the median price of homes sold in the Twin Cities’ 13-county metropolitan area over the past 16 years.

to be going down anymore. We’re seeing more than one offer on many properties.”

Gay has found the same to be true. “We’re seeing the first occurrences of multiple offers for properties that are priced right and in good condition,” she said.

Though foreclosures and short sales may be good buys, they often involve time and expense to get them into shape, and that prospect does not appeal to everyone. “Many buyers see it as way too much work to shape the properties to their taste,” Gay said. “They

don’t have the time, energy and wherewithal. They just want to move in.”

For these homebuyers, the condition of the house is primary. As Hulsey pointed out, “this is a once-in-a-lifetime buyers’ market. Buyers have high expectations. They want a place to be as turn-key as possible.”

Right now, the market is favoring first-time homebuyers and lower-priced homes. Hulsey said Realtors have been busiest with properties priced at under \$150,000. Schwartz said his office was seeing activity at \$275,000 and

less. According to Haider, “if a house is priced under \$250,000 and is in good condition, it’ll fly off the sales list.”

Gay noted that once the lower end of the market heats up, “everyone else on up will see activity. It’s a domino effect.”

Kleppe agreed. “We’ll begin seeing a second round of buying as bank properties are bought up,” he said.

“I think (the housing market) has bottomed out,” Musil said. “We simply have to work through the inventory (of foreclosures and short sales).” That does not necessarily mean sale prices will begin to climb right away. According to Musil, home prices are “likely to remain level for another year or more. There’ll be some increases, but they’ll be slow.”

“Sellers have to be prepared to get a little less than was possible during the housing boom,” Gay said.

Homebuyers, too, should be well-prepared before stepping up to a purchase, according to Musil. They should “be really sure of what they want,” he said. “It’s not a quick play. They need to think of the long-term environment.”

Though there are opportunities for buyers in this market, Musil cautioned them to pay close attention to the market. “You have to remember that generalizations are just that,” he said. “It pays to be financially literate. If you’re committed to buying, then pay attention to your budget.”

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tend the open houses of properties you’re competing against and know what makes your house different.”

Watching housing prices plummet can be devastating for homeowners whose net worth is almost all tied up in real estate, Musil said. That’s especially true for older adults who want to sell their home in order to buy a smaller house or condominium. The fact is, many potential homebuyers are still waiting for the market to bottom out, Musil said. They don’t want to purchase a home and see its value decline.

Even if a buyer and seller agree on a price, the appraiser, whose job it is to make sure the home is worth the sum the bank is lending, will sometimes intervene. Just a few years ago, prospective homebuyers were qualifying for mortgages without income verification, credit checks or down payments. But with changing housing market conditions, there has been a renewed emphasis on more responsible lending.

“Now appraisers are only going back to comparable (home) sales for the past six months, instead of going back a full year or more when the prices were higher,” Kinney said. “That can make a big difference in price. Many houses don’t have a comparable one for appraisers to use, and sometimes they’ll block the sale.”

One telltale sign of the relative health of the local housing market is the inventory of homes for sale. Currently, there’s an

Neighborhood	Homes Sold 2007	Homes Sold 2008	Median Price 2007	Median Price 2008	Percentage price change
Highland Park	270	247	\$276,000	\$247,000	-10.51%
Macalester-Groveland	275	221	\$280,000	\$265,000	-5.36%
Merriam Park	102	104	\$272,400	\$232,175	-14.77%
Homecroft/West 7th	98	122	\$180,000	\$134,500	-25.28%
Summit Hill/Summit-U	239	169	\$267,875	\$222,000	-17.13%
Downtown St. Paul	151	148	\$187,715	\$198,950	+5.99%
Mendota Heights	155	113	\$390,000	\$299,250	-23.27%
Mpls. Longfellow	349	352	\$214,900	\$186,730	-13.11%

For the first time in a long time, the median price of homes sold in areas served by the *Villager* decreased significantly in 2008, according to statistics kept by the Regional Multiple Listing Service and the St. Paul Area Association of Realtors.

estimated 7½-month inventory, which means it would take between seven and eight months to sell all of the homes on the market. That’s an improvement from the end of 2008 when the inventory was 10 months.

Another category to watch is the unemployment rate. Any increase in that rate could lead to an increase in the number of foreclosures or lower prices as homeowners sell before losing their house to the lender.

The conventional wisdom is that while the housing market may not stabilize for a couple of years, it eventually will and housing values will once again rise, albeit probably not at the

rate that homeowners have seen in the past.

If you don’t have to sell your home right now, it may be prudent to sit tight for a while, Musil said. If you do opt to sell—for whatever reason—he recommends interviewing three real estate agents who are knowledgeable about your neighborhood and its home values before listing your property on the market with one of those agents.

“The housing market is still working its way through the foreclosed property inventory,” Musil said. “Once we do work through them, it’ll establish a new base line for property values in each neighborhood.”

OPTIMISM AND REAL ESTATE

Maybe it’s time to buy that first house.

Now that the stimulus package is passed, home sales, perhaps, will begin to turn around. We are very pleased with the housing stimulus measure of the up to \$8,000 home buyer tax credit for first-time buyers. (without the need to repay) Buyers have everything going for them: 50-year low mortgage rates, wide inventory selection, tax credit for first-timers, and a record high affordability index.

Lawrence Yun
Real Estate Insights – March ‘09



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Low rates, new gov't aid makes refinancing attractive to more

Federal program aims to help those who have very little equity in their house

By KEVIN DRISCOLL

With mortgage interest rates almost uniformly below 5 percent, now is a good time to consider buying or refinancing a home, and more and more people appear to be getting the message. Pending home sales across the Twin Cities rose 21 percent in March and closed home sales rose 14.7 percent, according to the Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors. However, refinancing is where most of the mortgage activity is taking place.

"We've had a substantial increase in refinancing over the past several months," said Brad Crandall, CEO of CU Mortgage Services.

"The vast majority of our mortgage business is in refinancing," said Brad Kolstad, an area sales manager for Wells Fargo Home Mortgage. "Nationwide, (the number of) new mortgages have remained flat year after year. But we closed on more than \$100 million in refinanced mortgages in March alone, and we have \$190 million more in applications for refinancing."

"March was a record month for refinancing for us," said Susan Dziedzic, director of real estate lending for Spire Federal Credit Union. "And these record low rates are likely to run into the summer months at least. We're hoping the low rates and spring will bring in more new and first-time homebuyers."

As of April 14, standard 30-year fixed-rate mortgages ranged from 4.75 to 4.875 percent. The standard 15-year rate ranged from 4.375 to 4.5 percent. However, the actual rates borrowers are offered will depend on their credit scores and other personal circumstances. Adjustable rate mortgages, or ARMs, are still available, according to Kolstad, but their popularity has faded with the drop in fixed rates.

There are several reasons to refinance a mortgage, including to lower the interest rate and save thousands of dollars per year in monthly payments, to consolidate debt, to obtain extra cash, to shorten the term of a mortgage, and to switch from an adjustable rate to a fixed-rate mortgage.

If the intent is to save money, homeowners may want to wait until the mortgage interest rate is as much as 2 percentage points lower. Consider a homeowner who has a 30-year \$171,400 mortgage at the fixed rate of 5.75 percent. Refinancing that mortgage at 4.75 percent would lower his or her monthly payments of principal and interest from \$1,000 to \$894, according to Crandall. That's great until you figure in the closing costs; at \$3,500, the savings would be lost.

With the decline in home values over the past few years, refinancing has become a

problem for some homeowners, especially those who are hoping to increase the principal on their mortgage and get some cash. Qualifying for refinancing is easier for those who do not want extra cash, but simply want to lower their monthly payments, according to Dziedzic.

For those who have owned their homes for a relatively short time and built little if any equity in their home, refinancing can be especially prickly. Some of these people may owe more on their mortgages than their houses are now worth, due to the decline in home values over the past few years. Still, "there's hope for them," Crandall said. A plan introduced by President Barack Obama on April 6 would remove some of the loan-to-value restrictions for people who want cash out of their refinancing. The mortgage must be owned by either Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac, Crandall said, but together they own more than half of the mortgages in the U.S.

"Depending on just how far one is under water (on their mortgage to home value), up to 105 percent of the loan may be refinanced," Kolstad said.

More information on this and other refinancing programs is available at www.makinghomeaffordable.gov. The website contains information on several refinancing programs offered by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to help homeowners stay in their homes. The Home Affordable Refinancing plan through Fannie Mae is meant to help otherwise ineligible homeowners refinance their current mortgages. Freddie Mac's Home Affordable Modification plan is intended to establish lower monthly payments for qualified borrowers whose interest rate has increased or income has fallen. According to the website, 7 million to 9 million homeowners nationwide may qualify for one or the other program.

To determine eligibility, homeowners must first find out if either Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac owns their mortgage. To do so, click on the "Find out if you are eligible" button on the government website or contact Fannie Mae at 1-800-732-6643 or www.fanniemae.com/loanlookup or Freddie Mac at 1-800-373-3343 or www.freddiemac.com/mymortgage. Another option is to call the loan servicer to whom monthly mortgage checks are sent.

To qualify for the refinancing program, the homeowner must be current on mortgage payments (meaning no payments more than 30 days late in the past year), the amount owed on the existing mortgage is about the same or less than the current value of the house, the homeowner has income sufficient to support the new mortgage payments, and the refinancing improves the long-term affordability of the loan.

Kolstad, Dziedzic and Crandall all advised prospective borrowers to consider closing costs and the ongoing costs of servicing the mortgage in deciding whether or not to refinance.

Home energy workshop set

City Council member Russ Stark, the Neighborhood Energy Connection and the district planning councils in St. Paul's Ward 4 will present the last of three Greenhab home energy-efficiency workshops on Saturday, April 25.

The workshop will run from 10:00 to 11:45 a.m. at the Hamline-Midway Library, 1558 Minnehaha Ave.

It will instruct residents in how to identify and fix the most common energy problems in their homes. Experts will demonstrate low- and no-cost ways to

conserve energy and live more comfortably. Homeowners will also be connected to local resources, including loan and grant programs for energy improvements and reliable energy contractors.

The goal of the program is to reduce carbon emissions, help homeowners save money on their energy bills and improve the long-term affordability of St. Paul's housing stock.

For more information or reservations, call 651-221-4462, extension 136, or send an e-mail to amberv@thenec.org.



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Market swings back to renters

Unemployment and new buildings lead to increase in apartment vacancies

By KEVIN DRISCOLL

The fallout from rising unemployment and shrinking household budgets is being felt in the Twin Cities rental market. Overall, the apartment vacancy rate for the seven-county metropolitan area was at 5.2 percent for the first quarter of 2009. "That's up from 4.9 percent in the last quarter of 2008," according to Brent Wittenberg, vice president for residential analytics at GVA Marquette Advisors. "And it's up from 3.9 percent a year ago."

Job losses are "really hurting the rental market," said Steve Schachtman, president of Steven Scott Management of St. Louis Park, which manages more than 7,000 rental units in 68 buildings across the Twin Cities. "Even some employed people are having trouble paying some of the asking prices for rent."

Some landlords are helping their cash-strapped tenants, Schachtman said.

"Landlords are working hard to retain renters because, with the job losses, it's hard to fill vacancies," Wittenberg said.

The apartment vacancy rate for St. Paul in the first quarter of 2009 was a little better than in other parts of the metro area—about 4.5 percent, according to Wittenberg. But that is up from 4.1 percent a year ago, he said. In fact, apartment vacancies are expected to increase across the Twin Cities "as we move further into 2009 and the recession hangs on," Wittenberg said.

Nevertheless, the apartment vacancy rate is down significantly from the fall of 2004 when it was hovering around 7 percent due to the then-booming housing market. In late 2006, as the housing boom



Assistant manager Alison Guthrie shows off one of the apartments in the new Pointe at River Crossing development to prospective tenants Brad Hoffman and Jennifer Sicard. PHOTO BY ANNE BRANDRUD

began to fade and mortgage foreclosures became more prevalent, apartment vacancy rates dropped precipitously. People were seeking short-term rental housing rather than risk entering into long-term mortgages on houses that may lose their value.

Apartment vacancy rates remained under 5 percent throughout 2007, and in the fall of that year, fell to 3.6 percent, according to GVA Marquette Advisors. The low

vacancy rate encouraged a spate of new apartment construction.

Opening this spring in Highland Park is one of those new buildings, the Pointe at River Crossing, 133 luxury apartments that constitute the last phase of the 567-unit Gateway Village development at West 7th and Davern streets. According to Schachtman, whose company is managing the Pointe at River Crossing, more than 40 percent of its apartments were leased as of mid-

February.

Also adding to the supply of rental housing and thus the apartment vacancy rate are the many condominiums that people have been unable to sell and are converting to rental housing instead. More and more foreclosed single-family homes are also being rented out, according to Wittenberg. "And many of the people who've been displaced from

RENTAL MARKET ► 21



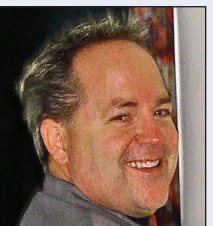
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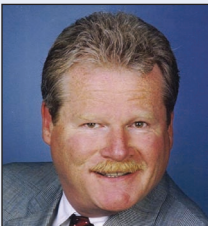
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City sweetens the deal for 'heroic' first-time homebuyers

By JANE McCLURE

People who do not currently own a home have at least two more reasons to buy one in St. Paul. In addition to the federally funded Take Credit! Program, which provides more than \$8 million in federal income tax credits for qualified first-time homebuyers in St. Paul and Minneapolis, St. Paul is offering the Heroes First-Time Homebuyers Program, which offers forgivable interest-free loans of between \$1,000 and \$15,000 that can be used for closing costs, down payments or even to reduce the principal on a mortgage.

The Heroes Program is available to military veterans, active members of the armed forces, firefighters, police officers, emergency medical personnel, health care workers, teachers and other public-sector employees.

"It's for the everyday hero, the teacher, the firefighter," said St. Paul City Council member Lee Helgen. "These workers make up a huge sector of our economy and employment base in St. Paul, with all of the health care institutions and federal, state and local government offices.

"We have a lot of other housing programs that are offered according to income, but nothing that targets this group," Helgen said.

The Heroes First-Time Homebuyers Program offers forgivable interest-free loans of between \$1,000 and \$15,000 that can be used for closing costs, down payments or even to reduce the principal on a mortgage.

"Our message is: 'We appreciate what you do and we want you to live in St. Paul.'"

A report on the program, which was approved in April by the City Council acting as the St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), states: "The government, health care and education sectors of our economy are experiencing challenges never before confronted, both financial and otherwise, yet these sectors continue to provide quality services and safety for the citizenry, due in large part to their dedicated commitment and sacrifice."

The specifics on the Heroes program will not be available until this week. However, that program and the Take Credit! Program are already drawing strong interest, according to Natalie Fedie of the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED). On April 9 alone, the city received more than 30 inquiries about the programs.

City Council members are especially pleased with the Heroes program, hailing it as a way to encourage homeownership in St. Paul. Although there has been a recent uptick in home sales in the city, there are concerns that many once owner-occupied homes are being bought up by investors and converted to rental properties.

To participate in the Heroes program, homebuyers have to also take part in Take Credit!, the new federal mortgage credit certification program for qualified first-time homebuyers. Under Take Credit! a homebuyer may take up to \$8,000 or 20 percent of the mortgage interest paid each year for the life of the mortgage as a tax credit rather than a deduction. There is enough funding in the program to assist up to 130 first-time homebuyers in St. Paul.

To be considered a first-time homebuyer under the Heroes program, a person cannot have owned a home in the previous three

years, according to Michelle Voychek of the PED staff. The program, which was proposed by Helgen and Mayor Chris Coleman, offers interest-free loans of up to \$15,000. The loans need not be repaid until the primary mortgage is paid off, the home is sold or the homeowner no longer uses the home as his or her primary residence. If the borrower lives in the home for at least 10 years, the loan is forgiven.

With \$500,000 available through the St. Paul HRA, the program could assist as many as 33 new homeowners.

Loans through the Heroes program cannot be used in conjunction with adjustable rate mortgages or subprime, interest-only and balloon loans. The accompanying mortgages must be fixed-rate FHA, VA, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Family Housing Service or another insured prime loan product.

Other new programs to encourage new homebuyers in St. Paul and Minneapolis will be announced later this month, according to Fedie. A new website, www.livemsp.org, is expected to be up by April 23 to provide detailed information about Minneapolis and St. Paul neighborhoods, including schools, parks and recreation centers and other amenities. New home listings will also be posted on the website according to neighborhood.

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those homes aren't renting. They're moving in with family or friends," he said.

These factors, plus low mortgage rates and new governmental incentives for buying a home, are all working to make the Twin Cities area "definitely a renters' market" at this juncture, according to Stacey Neameyer, dis-

trict manager for Apartment Search by Cort. "Some areas of the Twin Cities are seeing an 8 to 10 percent vacancy rate while other areas might be looking at 3 to 4 percent," Neameyer said. The situation is forcing many landlords to offer incentives to renters, including up to three months of free rent, she added.

Schachtman echoed Neameyer's assessment. "More and more (incentives) are being

offered," he said, "including wide-screen TVs, free cable TV, free computers or free periods of rent. It all depends on the length of the lease."

"The rental market has softened a lot over the last year," said Nick Boosalis, who with his wife Patti Trongard owns the Twin Cities apartment search company Rent 411. "Rents are not being raised. In fact, some are being

lowered."

The average monthly rent in the last quarter of 2008 was \$906 in the Twin Cities, according to Wittenberg. That's up just 6.7 percent since 2005 when the average rent was \$849. Wittenberg did not have the figures for the first quarter of 2009. However, he said, "we expect the overall average market rent for the metro area to have remained relatively stable."

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Business Briefs

Betsy Buckley of Merriam Park has been presented with the Pathfinder Award from the Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners. The award recognizes women business owners for advocating for women, for helping women through business challenges and for guiding them on a path to success. Buckley is the founder and CEO of What Matters, a St. Paul-based consulting firm.



The Highland Business Association will hold its annual business fair west of Cleveland Avenue across from Highland Bank during the 26th annual Highland Fest on July 17-19. The change was necessitated due to moving the Pinehurst Bank Stage west to Ford Parkway and Finn Street, putting a beer tent at

Highland Bank, introducing a Home Improvement Expo west of Cleveland and moving all of the art fair exhibitors east of Cleveland. Applications are due by May 15. Call 651-699-9042.

The Minnesota Trade Office will hold a seminar on "Export Essentials," on getting the most out of participating in international trade shows, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, April 29, in the conference center of the First National Bank Building, 332 Minnesota St. The cost is \$70 at the door, or \$50 in advance by calling 651-297-4265.

Abbott Paint and Carpet, 1808 Grand Ave., is offering consumers a chance to drop off their old paint at the store during Earth Week, which runs through April 26. The paint will be disposed of or recycled. Call 651-698-5518.

Dick Zehring, a Lilydale resident and president of MSP Commercial, was named chair-elect in the Greater St. Paul Building Owners and Managers

Association's annual election on April 13. Other officers are vice chair-elect Fred Koehler of Meritex Enterprises and secretary/treasurer-elect Jerry Hersman of Colliers Turley Martin Tucker.

Attorney Michael Klutho of Highland Park has been elected chief financial officer of the Twin Cities law firm of Bassford Remele.



All Inc., 185 W. Plato Blvd., is hosting a free Earth Day appliance drop-off on April 24-25. The public may bring their old toasters, microwaves, ranges, refrigerators and other appliances to All Inc. from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday and 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday. Electronics will not be accepted. Items in good working order will be donated to area charities. Call 651-227-6331.

Religious Notes

The Institute of the Himalayan Tradition, 1317 Summit Ave., will offer the following three programs in the coming weeks: a running clinic from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, April 25 (\$40-\$45, includes running book); Superconscious Meditation at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, May 2 (\$35-\$40); and an eight-week Hatha Yoga class beginning the week of May 4 (\$75-\$80). Call 651-645-1291.

"The Root Cause of Your Health Concern" will be presented by Kathy Van Guilder of Heart Wisdom Communications from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Sunday, April 26, at Amore Coffee, 917 Grand Ave. Physical ailments, low energy and specific concerns will be addressed. Admission is \$10. Call 952-440-2419.

Pilgrim Lutheran Church, 1935 St. Clair Ave., will offer a Nordic contemplative worship service at 6:51 p.m. Sunday, April 26. Call 651-699-6886 or visit www.pilgrimstpaul.org.

Holistic healing circles will take place from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on April 26 and

on the fourth Sunday of every month at the Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Ave. The event includes the laying on of hands, anointing with oil and such energy work as reiki and healing touch. Admission is free. Call Kate Meyer, 651-644-9433.

Groveland Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 1671 Summit Ave., will host a Poetry and Music Cafe at 10:15 a.m. Sunday, April 26. Kari Tauring will lead a celebration of May as the month of enlightenment at 10:15 a.m. Sunday, May 3. Call 651-699-2920.

Macalester-Plymouth United Church, 1658 Lincoln Ave., will present a free lecture by the Reverend Steven Haggmark of the Global Mission Institute at Luther Seminary at 7:00 p.m. Monday, April 27. Call 651-698-8871.

The role of forgiveness in individual lives and the criminal justice system will be discussed at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, at the Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Ave. Sponsored by the Justice

Commission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates, the event will feature a talk by Mary Johnson on her personal journey following the murder of her 20-year-old son. For more information, call Faith Fischer at 651-690-7087.

Temple of Aaron's 8th-grade Tikkun Olam class will sponsor a fun run and walk on Sunday, May 3, to benefit the synagogue's library. Local sponsors are being sought to donate money and supplies, including T-shirts, hats, medals, water, fruit, bagels or bread and energy drinks. Donations may be mailed to Tikkun Trek '09, Temple of Aaron, 616 S. Mississippi River Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55116. Call 651-454-5282.

Evensong, featuring hymns, anthems and chants that celebrate the feminine side of Christianity, will be presented on Sunday, May 3, by the women of the St. Clement's Church Choir. The program will begin at 4:30 p.m. at St. Clement's, 901 Portland Ave. A reception will follow in the parish hall. Call 651-228-1164.



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2009

Food



Workers shape Nut Goodies as they pass on a conveyor belt.



Pearson's co-owner and CEO Larry Hassler is shown on the factory floor of the Highland Park candy company, which is celebrating its centennial. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

Oh, Goodie

Century-old Pearson's is still making the candy Twin Citians grew up with

BY DAVE PAGE

Every day, a hoist on the second floor of Pearson's Candy Company in Highland Park deposits eight tons of roasted peanuts in a hopper that starts them on a trip to become 225,000 Salted Nut Rolls and 35,000 Nut Goodies or Bun Bars by the end of every eight-hour shift.

The company's decision to refocus on producing those three regional favorites is a big reason why Pearson's is celebrating its 100th anniversary next month instead of being another casualty of the candy industry.

Pearson's was founded in 1909 by P. Edward Pearson and his two brothers, John and Oscar, as a candy distribution firm that did a little manufacturing on the side. A short time later, brothers Waldemar and C. Fritz Pearson joined the business. The company rolled out the Nut Goodie in 1912 as a premium 5-cent bar, followed by the Salted Nut Roll in 1933.

"The forerunner of the Salted Nut Roll was the Chicken Dinner Candy Bar, manufactured by Sperry Candy Company in the 1920s," said Pearson's co-owner and CEO Larry Hassler. "It was advertised as a complete, nutritious meal in the form of a bar."

The claim was not that far-fetched. "The truth of the matter is that the Salted Nut Roll has no trans fats, no cholesterol and fewer calories, more protein and less sodium per ounce than a typical granola bar," Hassler said.

Pearson's once changed the name of its Salted Nut Roll to the Choo Choo Bar to distinguish it from copycats. However, it soon brought back the original name with "Pearson's" prominently displayed on the wrapper.

In 1951, Pearson's also purchased the St. Paul-based Trudeau Candy Company, which was known for its Seven-Up Bar. According to plant lore, 7-Up Bottling Co. started around the same time and wanted sole claim to the name.

"Every year a lawyer from 7-Up Bottling arrived from New York and handed George Pearson, the founder's son, a blank check," Hassler said. "And every year George handed the check back. One year, he wrote a ridiculous amount on the check. The lawyer looked at it and said, 'Fine.' The story goes that's how George paid for this new plant."

The soft drink company turned around and leased the name back so Pearson's could continue to make the Seven-Up Bar.

The acquisition of Trudeau also added the Mint Pattie to the Pearson's line. The company now churns out 2.1 million of the foil-wrapped candies during two eight-hour shifts each day, accounting for about 50 percent of its sales each year, Hassler said.

While the creation of Salted Nut Rolls and Nut Goodies is highly labor-intensive, the production of Mint Patties is almost completely automated. "And we use real oil of peppermint from Michigan for the Mint Patties.

It's the most expensive thing in the plant," said Hassler, pointing to 55-gallon drums of mint that cost more than \$1,000 each.

In 1959, Pearson's marked its 50th anniversary by moving from downtown St. Paul to its brand new manufacturing plant at 2140 W. 7th St. Three years later, it purchased the Milwaukee-based Sperry Candy Company, then sold it in 1967 to the Schuler Chocolate Factory of Winona.

In 1968, the Pearson family sold the Highland Park plant to ITT Continental Baking of New York. In 1979 it was sold again to a partnership whose owners shifted the company's focus from manufacturing its own brands to packaging 1.5 million granola bars a day for General Mills.

In a 2003 news story, Hassler, who had left Ag-Chem to join Pearson's as chief financial officer, spoke of the dark days in the mid-

PEARSON'S CANDY ► 24

Third diner is a charm for India House



Hot Dish
By Morgan Smith

Joginder Cheema had been working on a farm in the Punjab region of northern India when he immigrated to the U.S. in 1982. Like many immigrants, he landed first in New York City, and like a third of all American adults, he got his first job in the restaurant business. Cheema worked in New York City restaurants for 6½ years before opening his own Indian restaurant in Buffalo in 1989.

Soon after, he found himself running a restaurant in Chicago. Then "a friend told me Minneapolis would be a good place to open an Indian restaurant," said Cheema, 50. So in 1993 he moved to the Twin Cities and started several Indian restaurants, including Taste of India in St. Louis Park and Maplewood and India Palace in Roseville, Woodbury and Eden Prairie, all of which he has since sold.

Cheema still owns three restaurants—India House on Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis, a deli called India Express in Fridley that is slated to become a full-fledged India House

restaurant by the end of April, and a third India House that opened in February in the space formerly occupied by Grand Asia restaurant at 758 Grand Ave.

India House on Grand is open for dinner from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m. daily, and many of the items on its dinner menu are included in the all-you-can-eat lunch buffet that is served from 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. daily (\$7.99).

My friends and I stopped in for lunch recently. We started with the vegetable samosas as an appetizer (\$2.99 on the dinner menu). These pastries, which are stuffed with a generous portion of potatoes and peas, were absolutely marvelous—light but not so flaky that they break apart when you eat them.

As entrées, we tried the bangan bharta (\$9.99) and palak paneer (\$9.99). Bangan bharta is charcoal-baked eggplant peeled and cooked with fresh tomatoes, onions and green peas. My friend reported that it was delicious. Palak paneer is spinach with cheese in a curry sauce. I found it to be somewhat bland and definitely not worth filling up on when there are so many other tempting dishes from which to choose.

The consensus favorite of our group was the chicken makhani (\$10.99), huge chunks of boneless tandoori chicken in a creamy tomato sauce that is heavier on the cream than the tomato. Mildly spicy, the chicken was very tender. Had we not arrived at the restaurant as late as we did, I'm sure I would have gone back for thirds.



The tandoor chicken, palak paneer, curry chicken, onion pakora fried in chickpea batter, rice and salad served at India House on Grand Avenue. PHOTOS BY JANET HOSTETTER

INDIA HOUSE ► 24



The spacious dining room at Grand Avenue's India House. PHOTO BY JANET HOSTETTER

23◀ INDIA HOUSE

Even my friend's girlfriend, who is not a big fan of Indian food, tried some of the chicken makhani and pronounced it excellent. She also liked the chicken tandoor (\$10.99), which are chicken drumsticks marinated in yogurt and freshly ground herbs and spices and then baked in a traditional clay tandoor oven. She wasn't as enthusiastic about the beef curry (\$9.99), which features lean chunks of beef cooked in a green curry sauce. I thought the beef curry was delicious, and I'm more of a red-curry fan.

Because we arrived near the tail end of the lunch period, the lettuce in the buffet was a bit droopy. Still, there were plenty of sauces to liven the meal, including mint, tamarind and spicy pickle sauce. The desserts in the buffet included rice pudding, mango pudding and gulab jamun. I'm not a big rice-pudding fan, and the mango pudding had already been lapped up by the lunch crowd, so I tried the gulab jamun (\$2.99), which are deep-fried milk balls served in a sweet syrup. They

looked and tasted like doughnut holes soaked in milk. No one at our table liked them, but I think it had more to do with their texture than taste.

Naan, the flat bread served at India House, was perfect and would be a terrific addition to any meal. The tea at India House is real tea, and the water is served in large drinking glasses, which is nice if you need to douse some spice-induced fires. However, to be honest, none of the food at the buffet was all that spicy. I definitely need to go back for dinner to try a few of the more adventurous options, including Cheema's favorite: lamb rogan josh (\$11.99), which is cubes of lamb cooked with yogurt and curry spices.

Cheema said he has been kept plenty busy this spring managing his three restaurants, which have been flourishing even in these economic times. Some of that might have to do with the success of the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*, Cheema guessed. My guess is that it has more to do with the fresh and tasty food that his establishments serve at such reasonable prices.

23◀ PEARSON'S CANDY

1980s when loyal Nut Goodie fans not only had trouble finding their favorite candy bar on store shelves, but found that Pearson's had changed the wrapper and the flavor. "(And) if you wanted a Nut Roll," Hassler said, "you had to pretty much beg us."

Not happy with the way the company was headed, Hassler and chief operating officer Judy Johnston purchased Pearson's in 1985 only to see General Mills pull its contract. Pearson's had to let 350 of the 450 workers go, but Hassler and Johnston dug in their heels. They dropped the Seven-Up Bar and brought back the original Nut Goodie recipe and package.

"That year we sponsored a kids' area at A Taste of Minnesota to reintroduce the Nut Goodie," Hassler said. He also convinced stores such as Walgreens, SuperAmerica and Menards to give the Salted Nut Roll and Nut Goodie another chance.

The focus on the two regional favorites as well as the Mint Patties allowed the company to pay off its debts by 1991 and to acquire Bun Bars from Clark Bar America in 1998.

Today, 170 workers transform 350 tons of corn syrup, 200 tons of peanuts, 400 tons of sugar and 100 tons of chocolate a month into the candies, making Pearson's one of the world's 100 largest candy manufacturers.

Although candy sales traditionally go up during economic downturns (the launch of the Salted Nut Roll during the Great Depression was no coincidence), the salmonella scare associated with Georgia peanuts earlier this year created "quite a challenge for sales," Hassler said.

"We didn't have one pound of suspect peanuts in the factory, we never bought any pe-



A kettle maintains the proper temperature and consistency for Pearson's caramel.

nuts from Peanut Corporation of America, we inspect all the facilities of those companies with which we do business," Hassler said, "but retailers were spooked and started pulling all peanut products off the shelves."

Still, sales for the past fiscal year, which ended last month, were "up slightly," Hassler said.

Even so, Pearson's is not planning a big blowout for its centennial. "We just launched a new website (www.pearsonscandy.com) that focuses on the 100th anniversary," Hassler said, "and we'll be at McCormick Place in Chicago for the biggest candy show in the U.S. on our birthday."

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The Kiosk

Thursday/April 23

DAVID WALSH, founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family, will speak on “No: Why Kids of All Ages Need to Hear it—and Ways Parents Can Say It” from 6:30 to 8:30 this evening at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, 60 Kent St. A \$5.00 donation will be requested. Call 651-228-1172.

AN OUTDOOR RUMMAGE SALE will be held by the Japanese American Citizens League from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. today through Saturday, April 25, at 1446 Summit Ave. Visit densho.org.

Friday/April 24

A SOKOL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, including a beer sampling and discussion, will be held at 7:00 this evening at Sokol Minnesota, 383 Michigan St. New members will be welcomed and Czech, German and Belgian beers will be sampled. Bring a tasting glass and prepare to learn a Czech beer-drinking song. Call 651-290-0542.

THE ROSH CHODESH Women’s Group will serve a light kosher lunch at noon today at the Jewish Community Center, 1375 St. Paul Ave. The cost is \$5.00 and the public is welcome to attend. Call 651-698-0751.

A RUMMAGE SALE will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. today and tomorrow and from 9:00 a.m. to noon on Sunday, April 26, in Carolyn Hall at St. Mark’s School, 1976 Dayton Ave. Call 651-644-7724.

A RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE will take place from noon to 5:00 p.m. today at St. Thomas Academy, 949 Mendota Heights Road, Mendota Heights. Donors will receive a gift certificate for a pint of Culver’s frozen custard. To make an appointment, call school nurse Lucy Poole at 651-683-1545.

Saturday/April 25

A RUMMAGE SALE will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. today at Epworth United Methodist Church, 3207 37th Ave. S., Minneapolis. A bag sale will begin at 2:00 p.m. Food will be sold. Call 612-722-0232.

A FREE BIRD WATCHER’S STROLL will be offered at 9:00 this morning at Fort Snelling State Park. Binoculars and bird guides will be available. Call 612-725-2724.

A WOMEN’S HEALTH FAIR will be offered from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. today at the West 7th Community Center, 265 Oneida St. There will be representatives from 25 health and wellness-related agencies, workshops, free health screenings, chair massages, hair braiding, mini-manicures and makeovers. A free lunch will be provided and door prizes from will be awarded. Call 651-298-5493, ext. 215.

A USED BICYCLE SALE will be conducted by the Nativity Boy Scouts beginning at 10:00 this morning in the school parking lot, 1900 Stanford Ave. Anyone wishing to donate or consign a bike before the sale may arrange for pickup. Call Bob Hyland at 651-698-3992.

SOIREE TOURS of the Alexander Ramsey House, 265 S. Exchange St., will be offered at 6:00 and 7:15 this evening. Visitors will learn about evening fun in the Victorian era as a costumed guide leads candlelight tours



Madie Bruski gets help from her mom, Molly, in decorating an Indian drum at Groveland Park Elementary School’s Culture Fair on April 9. PHOTO BY LISA WELTY

of all three floors of the mansion. The cost is \$6.00-\$9.00. Call 651-296-8760.

A RUMMAGE SALE will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. today at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 436 N. Roy St. Lunch, bakery items and nuts also will be sold. Call 651-765-2862.

TWIG PLANT BOXES will be designed and assembled during a program for adults at 9:00 this morning at the Dodge Nature Center in West St. Paul. Bring hand pruners, hammers and small hand saws if you have them. Other materials will be provided. The cost is \$25-\$35. Call 651-455-4531.

RANDOLPH HEIGHTS SCHOOL, 348 S. Hamline Ave., will hold its sixth annual rummage sale from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 pm. today. Volunteers are needed for the sale and on Friday, April 24 (after 1:00 p.m.) to help set up for the sale. Call 651-699-6234.

HOLY SPIRIT SCHOOL, 515 S. Albert St., will hold its annual benefit auction and dinner, “A Night of Spirit,” from 5:30 to 11:00 this evening. Admission is \$35, which includes dinner, drinks, a bidder number and live entertainment. Call 651-698-3353.

THE GREEN PARTIES of the 4th and 5th

congressional districts will hold a kickoff party for a new green watchdog program at 6:00 this evening at the Dunning Recreation Center, 1221 Marshall Ave. A free Indian dinner will be served and Minneapolis City Council member Cam Gordon and Minneapolis Parks Board member Annie Young will speak. Call 651-647-4261.

Sunday/April 26

MARK SEELEY of the University of Minnesota will present a free program on Minnesota weather at 2:00 this afternoon at the Central Library, 90 W. 4th St. Call 651-266-7000, ext. 5.

A SPRING TEA will be served at 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. today at the Sibley House Historic Site in Mendota. A costumed interpreter will portray Minnesota’s first First Lady, Sarah Sibley. Tours of the site and a special favor are included. The cost is \$25-\$29. Call 651-452-1596.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER, 1375 St. Paul Ave., will kick off its third season of participating in community supported agriculture (CSA) with an open house at 10:30 this morning. Mike Jacobs of Easy Bean Farm, the only Jewish organic farmer in Minnesota, will share his

experiences in sustainable farming. The JCC program offers families a chance to purchase an entire season worth of organic produce for \$490. Call Penny Schumacher at 651-255-4732.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY will be celebrated from 10:00 a.m. to noon today at the Temple of Aaron Synagogue, 616 S. Mississippi River Blvd. The celebration will include activities, games, performances, regional food, an Israeli film, an adult debate and the history of a changing Israel using maps. Admission is free. Call 651-698-8874.

Monday/April 27

FREE BLOOD PRESSURE screenings will be provided by a registered nurse from 12:15 to 1:00 this afternoon at the West 7th Community Center, 265 Oneida St. Call 651-298-5493 or visit www.west7th.org.

“**CENT\$IBLE MEALS**,” a workshop for child care providers and parents, will be presented by Barb Wagner of Providers Choice from 6:30 to 8:30 this evening at the Rondo Library, 461 N. Dale St. The free workshop will offer tips and meal ideas to help participants get more bang for their food dollar. Call 763-323-0788.

Tuesday/April 28

A CONVERSATIONAL SALON will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 this evening at the Mad Hatter’s Tea House, 943 W. 7th St. Participants are invited to bring a poem or come and listen to other’s works during an open poetry session. The salon is free, but donations are requested for the program and treats. Call 651-227-3228.

THE ST. PAUL HIKING CLUB will meet at 7:30 this evening in the US Bank parking lot at University and Raymond avenues. Visit www.stpaulhike.org.

Wednesday/April 29

ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY will be celebrated this evening at the Jewish Community Center, 1375 St. Paul Ave. The opening night reception of “Hatikivah—The Hope,” an exhibit showcasing photographs taken in Israel by teens and young adults from St. Paul, will take place at 7:00 p.m., followed by Malka Goodman sharing her experiences fighting during Israel’s War of Independence at 7:30 p.m. and the Orim Israeli Dance Troupe performing at 8:00 p.m. Admission is free. Call 651-698-0751.

Thursday/April 30

GARLIC MUSTARD DAY will take place from 5:30 to 7:30 this evening near 35th Street and West River Parkway in Minneapolis. Dozens of volunteers are needed to help remove garlic mustard plants from the river flats in South Minneapolis’ Longfellow neighborhood. To register, contact Sue Rich at srich@fmr.org or 651-222-2193, ext. 14.

THE FESTIVAL OF NATIONS will return to St. Paul RiverCentre today through Sunday, May 3. The 77th annual festival features ethnic food, music, dance, art, gifts, educational exhibits and demonstrations. Tickets are \$7.00-\$10 in advance or \$7.00-\$12 at the door. Call 651-647-0191 or visit www.festivalofnations.com.

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April 25 at 10:30 am. **Note the New Start Time!**
Admission is free. Get your free tickets from Choo Choo Bob's.
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Field Trip to the St. Croix Railroad!
Sunday, May 17 from Noon - 4 pm.
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"The Choo Choo Bob Show" is now on YouTube!
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25◀ THE KIOSK

J. DRAKE HAMILTON, science policy director at Twin Cities-based Fresh Energy, will speak on renewable energy technologies that can create a healthy environment during a free program from 7:00 to 9:00 this evening at the Dodge Nature Center in West St. Paul. Call 651-455-4531.

Saturday/May 2

THE HIGHLAND PARK LIBRARY Teen Advisory Board will meet at 3:00 this afternoon at the library, 1974 Ford Pkwy. All teens are invited to help get the group started. Call 651-695-3700.

SUMMIT HILL will hold a neighborhood garage sale from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. today. Maps will be available after April 30 by visiting www.summithillassociation.org. For information, call 651-222-1222.

STATE REP. MICHAEL PAYMAR (District 64B) will hold a constituent meeting from 10:00 a.m. to noon today at the Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. Call 651-296-5999.

OPENING WEEKEND activities will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. today and from noon to 5:00 p.m. tomorrow at historic Fort Snelling. There will be a History Hunt program for kids, as well as an interactive schoolhouse demonstration, military drills, period games and a chance to visit with Colonel and Mrs. Snelling in the Commandant's House. Admission is \$5.00-\$10. Call 612-726-1171.

SUMMIT AVENUE WALKING tours will be offered at 11:00 a.m. and

2:00 p.m. on Saturdays and 2:00 p.m. on Sundays throughout May from the James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Ave. The 90-minute tours include a discussion about the Gilded-Age mansions that line the elite avenue and the people who owned them. The cost is \$6.00-\$10. Call 651-297-2555.

THE LIVING GREEN EXPO will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. today and 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. tomorrow at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. The expo will feature more than 270 exhibitors, 62 workshops, music, art, food demonstrations and activities for children. Visit www.LivingGreen.org.

A RUMMAGE SALE will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. today at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, 60 Kent St. A bag sale will follow from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Monday, May 5. Call 651-228-1172.

ST. CLEMENT'S EPISCOPAL Church, 901 Portland Ave., will hold a rummage sale from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. today. Household items, books, small furniture, clothing and more will be sold, along with a Treasure Room with finer items. Tours of the church will be offered from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Call 651-228-1164.

Sunday/May 3

FREE ANTIQUE APPRAISALS will be offered by Midtown Antiques from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. today at the Wellington Assisted Living, 2235 Rockwood Ave. Due to the expected crowd, participants are asked to bring only one item for appraisal. Call 651-699-2664.

Monday/May 4

A RUMMAGE SALE will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. today at St. Mark Lutheran Church, 550 W. 7th St. A bag sale will follow from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. tomorrow. Call 651-224-0228.

Tuesday/May 5

A HISTORY LOUNGE program on "Abraham Lincoln and the Election of 1860" will be offered at 7:00 this evening at the Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. The program is free. Call 651-259-3000.

ROGER MUDD, former Washington correspondent for CBS and NBC News, will speak at 7:00 this evening in the Weyerhaeuser Chapel at Macalester College. Admission is free, but tickets are required and available at the Bibelot Shops. Call 651-696-6203.

THE ST. PAUL HIKING CLUB will meet for a residential hike at 7:30 this evening in the parking lot at 1800 Graham Ave., near Davern and West 7th streets. Call 651-646-6421.

Wednesday/May 6

A GARLIC MUSTARD PULL will take place from 6:00 to 8:00 this evening at the Crosby Farm Park habitat restoration area. Volunteers will be asked to sign a pledge to pull garlic mustard for an additional six hours before June 1. Volunteers will receive a card certifying their participation in the training. Those who put in 20 hours will receive a T-shirt. E-mail srich@fmr.org or call 651-222-2193, ext.14.

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Dental patients today are increasingly asking for metal-free restorations. Dr. Fischbach and his staff employ many alternative materials in CAD/CAM technology, including Leucite, Ceramic, Zirconia, Glass Ceramic, Feldspar Ceramic, Fine Grain Translucent Porcelain, and Yttrium-Stabilized Zirconium. The wide range of materials allows Dr. Fischbach's staff to select the one that is best suited for you. Most other dentists use a technique that fits all patients with just one material.

CAD/CAM dentistry was originally developed for making single crowns. This technology can now be used to make bridges, inlays and onlays (fillings), veneers and even gold crowns. These all can be done without impressions and if not fabricated at the appointment, can be



Staff member Tammy explains CEREC

fabricated in a day or two. CAD/CAM technology also allows Dr. Fischbach's staff to save teeth that most other dentists would extract.

Dr. Fischbach and his staff are in the business of saving teeth, re-establishing function and perfecting glowing smiles. They are also in the business of educating their patients. Dr. Fischbach's office has movies of almost every dental treatment available. The short movies can be burned to a CD and given to you to take home and review with family members before any decision is made. The explanations of the various treatments are also available on Dr. Fischbach's website at

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On the Town

'Suicide' collects kudos Praise continues to pile up for David Oppegaard's debut novel

BY JUDY WOODWARD

David Oppegaard has a fantasy to which many aspiring fiction writers could relate. Frustrated after receiving a string of rejection notices from one of the nation's most august magazines, he envisions running into the offices of *The New Yorker*, throwing down the manuscript of a story on the table, yelling "Read this, you @#\$%&!," then running out before anyone can call for security.

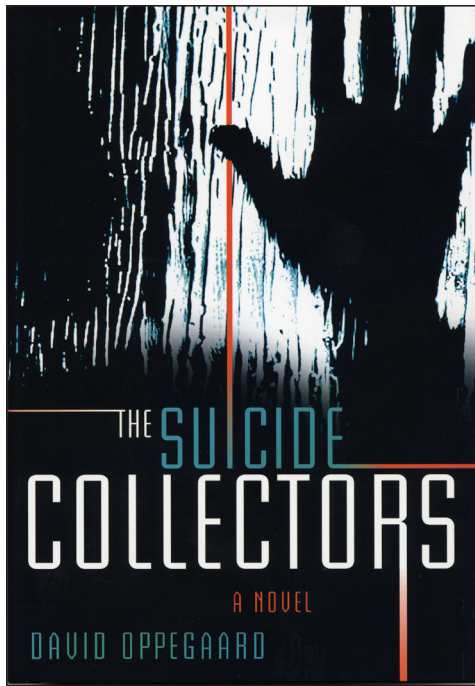
Oppegaard has yet to penetrate that magazine's inner sanctum, but the 29-year-old St. Paul author is otherwise doing pretty well. His first published novel, *The Suicide Collectors* (St. Martin's Press), most of which was written in his Highland Park apartment, has collected a slew of favorable reviews and was recently nominated for the 2008 Bram Stoker Award for Superior Achievement in a First Novel by the Horror Writers Association. Previous winners include such horror heavyweights as Stephen King.

Oppegaard said *The Suicide Collectors* roams over dark terrain, though he did not write it as a horror novel. Set in the near future at a time of great despair when nearly 90 percent of the world's population has committed suicide, the book is "a blend of science fiction, horror and literary fiction... plus a road trip," he said. The story centers on a lone man who journeys across the country to find the one scientist who holds the key to curing the suicide epidemic. The book is something of a post-apocalyptic, picaresque novel in the tradition of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*.

Oppegaard's bleak literary landscape is a far cry from Lake Crystal, Minnesota, where he grew up playing center on the football team and earning a reputation as a middle school wiseacre. Writing came naturally to Oppegaard, who has written four previous unpublished novels, including a 400-page tome that he penned at age 15. "You've got to write a lot of pages to get polished," he said.

Oppegaard's mother, who encouraged him to write, died of cancer when he was 21. His novel is dedicated to her, but he denies that personal tragedy influenced the dark tone of *The Suicide Collectors*. "I try to make everything up when I write," he said.

So why a novel about mass suicide? "I was looking for a new kind of apocalypse," he said. "Nuclear war, disease, earthquakes, alien invasion—they've all been done before."



Oppegaard was not much of a student in school. "I was a smart-ass," he said, "and I got a lot of detention." He did not mind though, since he used the time to catch up on his reading. Nonetheless, his grades were not good and he said he probably would not have been admitted to St. Olaf College had he not shown his manuscripts to writer Jim Heynen, who teaches on the Northfield campus.

Even after Oppegaard earned a bachelor's degree in English literature from St. Olaf, Heynen continued to serve as his mentor. In fact, Heynen was indirectly responsible for one of the transformative moments of Oppegaard's creative life when he put the young man in touch with author Tobias Wolff. Oppegaard said he was nervous meeting one of his literary heroes. "I was intimidated (in part) because I knew that I had misspelled his name in the e-mail I sent him," he said.

But when he entered Wolff's office at Stanford, "he was just a guy in an office eating a sandwich," Oppegaard said. "I realized this famous literary author was just a regular person. That's when I ended the idolatry."

Oppegaard found his meeting with Wolff liberating, but there was still the practical problem of following his own muse and supporting himself while doing it. The reviews for *The Suicide Collectors* have been stellar, but the sales less so. Oppegaard earned a master's degree in writing from



David Oppegaard wrote most of his highly regarded novel *The Suicide Collectors* in his Highland Park apartment. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Hamline University in 2006, which he credits with making him a better writer, but not necessarily a better earner. "To be an artist," he said, "is to perform without a safety net."

Many writers turn to teaching to make ends meet, but that path is not for Oppegaard. "If I taught creative writing," he said, "it'd be draining and take away from my own writing. The key is to find a stable job that you enjoy and that allows you to write at night."

His day jobs have varied from assistant optician to farmhand to trash picker to standardized test scorer. He is now working in a clerical position at the University of Minnesota, but his writing is never far from his mind no matter what he is being paid to do. "Fortunately, I'm pretty good at multitasking," he said.

This fall, St. Martin's Press will publish

Oppegaard's second novel, which is titled *Wormwood, Nevada*. He described it as the story of a young married couple who move to a small desert town that is unraveling due to events set off by a meteor strike. Oppegaard swears that it is less dark than *The Suicide Collectors*, but the comparison may be open to debate.

"The first novel asked, 'Why live?'" he said. "This one asks, 'Why love?'"

Oppegaard has a penchant for exploring existential questions, but right now he is just enjoying seeing his works published for the first time.

"You feel vindicated for all the bad jobs you've had and all the years it's taken," he said. "Holding the book is like holding your own kid—one that will never disappoint you."

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On the Town *Briefly*

Exhibits

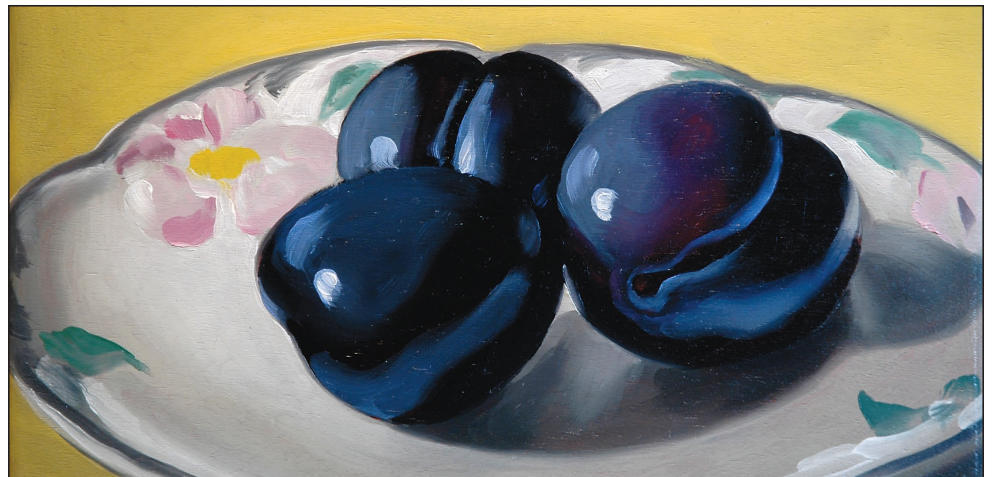
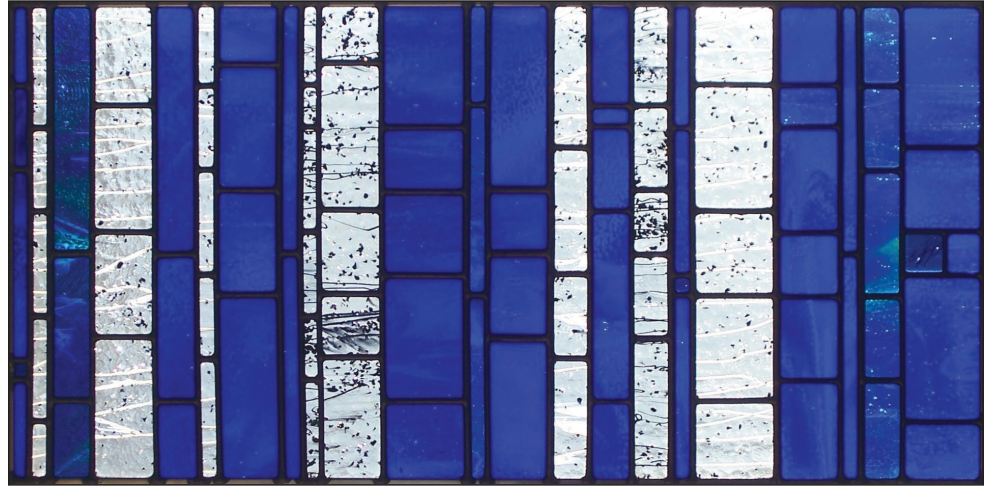
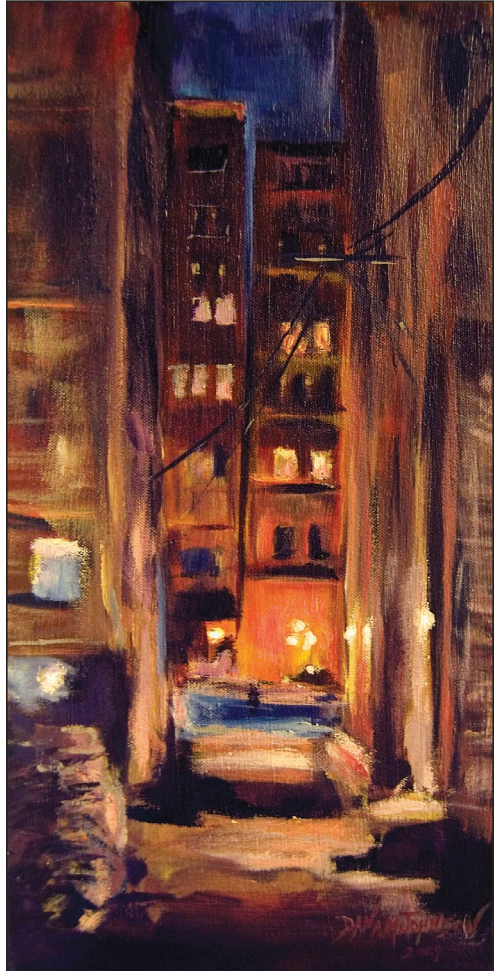
"Saib Kuv (See the Hmong in Me)," digitally altered photos, poetry and prose by emerging Hmong-American artists, is on view through July 24 in the Third Floor Gallery at Metropolitan State University, 645 E. 7th St. In conjunction with the exhibit, free open discussions about what it means to be Hmong in Minnesota will be held from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Saturday, April 25, May 9, June 6 and 20. Call 651-999-5942.

Art work by students at all levels and some professionals are being shown through May 1 at Creative Arts High School, 1037 University Ave. Among the artists are pupils from Expo, Webster and Monroe elementary schools; Crosswinds and Hazel Park middle schools; Creative Arts High School, the College of Visual Arts, MFA student Jeremy Szopinski and professionals Michael Slagle and Wing Young Huie. An opening reception will be held from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Thursday, April 23. Call 651-292-3480.

"Art of Recovery," the sixth annual exhibit of visual and literary works by 21 Minnesotans who have been victims of crime, will run from April 24 to June 30 at the Minnesota State Arts Board, 400 Sibley St. An opening reception will be held from 3:30–6:30 p.m. Friday, April 24. A reading of the literary works will be held from 1:30–3:00 p.m. Sunday, April 26. The gallery is otherwise open from 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Call 651-215-1626.

Seven University of Minnesota master of fine arts students will be showing their work from April 28 through May 21 at the Katherine E. Nash Gallery, 405 21st Ave. S. in Minneapolis. An opening reception for the artists—Mica Lee Anders, Sarah Christianson, Laura Corcoran-Mahnke, Mason Eubanks, Stacey M. Holloway, Anna Metcalfe and Michael Wong—will be held from 6:00–8:30 p.m. Friday, May 1. The gallery is open from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is free.

"Living History: Textiles of India," a collection of textile art gleaned from 20 years of research and travel in India, will be displayed by Elsa Sreenivasam from May 1 through June 6 at the Textile Center, 3000 University Ave. SE. in Minneapolis. An opening reception from 6:00 to 8:00



More than 300 resident, guest and gallery artists will be showing and selling their works during the St. Paul Art Crawl Friday through Sunday, April 24–26, at venues in Lowertown, at the old Hamm's Brewery, in the vicinity of University and Raymond avenues and on Harriet Island, Grand and Selby avenues. Among the attractions will be Dana Johnson's acrylic painting "The Link Between Wall and Waucoma" (left), Josephine Geiger's stained-glass "Indigo Birch" and Kevan Willington's oil painting "Plums 2." Admission is free and so will be transportation between the participating studios and galleries. Visit www.artcrawl.org or call 651-292-4373.

p.m. Friday, May 1, will feature a 7:00 p.m. presentation by Sreenivasam on "India's Traditional Textiles in Transition." Admission is free. Call 612-436-0464.

Books

Common Good Books, 165 N. Western Ave., will present free readings by the following authors: Linda Morganstein from *My Life With Stella Kane*, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 28; and Greg Brick from *Subterranean Twin Cities*, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 30.

The World Is Flat: A Brief History Of The 21st Century by Thomas L. Friedman will be discussed on Thursday, April 23, by the Central Library History Book Club. The

book club meets at noon on the fourth Thursday of each month in the 4th floor meeting room of the library, 90 W. 4th St. Everyone is welcome. Call 651-266-7000, extension 5.

St. Paul poets Naomi Cohn, Jim Heynen, Leslie Adrienne Miller, John Minczeski and Mary Jo Thompson will read in a free program beginning at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, at the St. Anthony Park Library, 2245 Como Ave. Call 651-222-3242.

"Untold Stories," a labor history series sponsored by the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library, continues on Tuesday, April 28, with author Arnold Alanen discussing his book *Morgan Park: Duluth, U. S. Steel and the Forging of a Company Town*. A professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison,

Alanen leads a fascinating tour through Duluth's industrial past. The free program will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Rice Street Library, 1011 Rice St.

The Teens and Tweens reading group will discuss *Valiant*, Holly Black's modern faerie tale, at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, May 2, at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Pkwy. Call 651-695-3700.

The Grand Slam, a showdown between the top eight spoken-word artists of 2008–09, will be held at 8:00 p.m. Monday, May 4, at the Artists' Quarter, 408 St. Peter St. The competition will determine who represents St. Paul at the national poetry slam in August. Folk musician Matt Riehle will perform before the poets. Admission is \$5.00. Call 612-207-7991.

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Bestselling author Leif Enger will read from his new novel, *So Brave, Young and Handsome*, in a free program at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 5, at the Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave. It is the story of an aging train robber on a quest to settle a few matters in his life and the writer who accompanies him. Call 651-222-3242.

Theater

The musical Oliver! is being staged through May 2 by the Morris Park Players. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2:00 p.m. Sunday in the auditorium of Folwell Middle School, 3611 20th Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Tickets are \$15, \$12 for students and seniors. Call 612-724-8373.

Merriam Park actress Sally Wingert stars in *The 2.5-Minute Ride*, a one-woman drama about a father-daughter relationship and how experience shapes who we become. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 8:00 p.m. Saturday and 2:00 p.m. Sunday through May 10 at the Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy.. Tickets are \$12-\$25. Call 651-647-4315.

Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* will be performed April 23-26 by the Macalester College Theater and Dance Department. Paul Herwig of Minneapolis' Off-Leash Area will direct. The curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday and 2:00 p.m. Sunday in the Main Stage Theatre of Mac's Fine Arts Center. Tickets are \$7.00, \$5.00 for seniors. Call 651-696-6359.

St. Thomas Academy and Visitation High school will present *Aida* by Elton John and Tim Rice in six performances through May 3 in DeSales Auditorium at Visitation in Mendota Heights. The drama tells of the unrequited love between two youths who are swept back in time to live out an adaptation of the Verdi opera. Shows are scheduled for 7:30 p.m. April 23, 24, 26, May 1 and 2 and 2:00 p.m. May 3. Tickets are \$10, \$5.00 for students and seniors. Call 651-683-1750.

Lex-Ham Community Theater's reading series continues on Friday, April 24, with Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. The event will open with a potluck supper at 6:30 p.m. at 1184 Portland Ave. The reading begins at 7:00. No registration is required. For information, call 651-644-3366.

Mounds Park Academy will present the musical *Cabaret* on April 24 and 25 in the Nicholson Center at 2501 Larpenetour Ave. Seniors Charlie Brower of Highland Park and Christina Berget star as the Master of Ceremonies and Sally Bowles. The curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. Friday and 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday. Admission is \$10, \$8.00 for students and seniors.

Euripides' tragedy *Trojan Women* will be staged by the Hamline University Theatre at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, April 24 through May 2, in Drew Fine Arts Center, 1536 Hewitt Ave. Tickets are \$7.00, \$5.00 for students and seniors. Call 651-523-2905.

Cretin-Derham Hall's Theater Department will present *Crazy for You* in six shows from April 24 through May 3. A musical comedy about a New York City tap dancer who finds the love of his life in a small Western town, *Crazy for You* will be performed at 7:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2:00 p.m. Sunday at CDH, 550 S. Albert St. Tickets are \$10, \$8.00 for seniors and students, \$35 for the dinner theater that begins at 6:00 p.m. on April 25. Call 651-696-3302.

St. Agnes School presents the musical *Singin' in the Rain* April 24 through May 3 in Bandas Hall at St. Agnes, 530 Lafond Ave. The curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 5:00 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$3.00-\$8.00. Dinner will be served prior to the show on April 25. Dinner-theater tickets are \$25 for adults, \$15 for children age 10 and

under. Call Mary at 651-925-8811.

The Price, Arthur Miller's penetrating family drama, will open on Friday, April 24, at Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave. S. in Minneapolis. It tells of estranged brothers—one a cop who sacrificed his education to care for his ailing parent, and the other an eminent surgeon who walked out on the family to concentrate on his career—who meet after 16 years to bury their father. Show times are 8:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2:00 p.m. Sunday through May 17. Tickets are \$20 with discounts for seniors and students. Call 612-333-3010.

Park Square Theatre marks the 10th anniversary of its long-running production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* with a public showing at 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 27, at 20 W. 7th Place. Tickets are \$20. Call 651-291-7005.

Legally Blonde, a touring production of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical starring Moorhead native Becky Gulsvig as sorority girl Elle Woods, will be staged Tuesday through Sunday, April 29 through May 10, at the Ordway. Tickets are \$49-\$75. For reservations, call 651-224-4222.

The True History of Coca-Cola in Mexico, a bubbly comedy about hypocrisy and the global economy, will be performed May 1-10 by Teatro del Pueblo. Written by Patrick Scott and Aldo Velasco, it follows the antics of two filmmakers and their misguided attempt to expose the exploitation of Mexican workers. The curtain rises at 8:00 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday and 2:00 p.m. Sunday at the Gremlin Theatre, 2400 University Ave. Tickets are \$15, \$12 for students and seniors. Call 1-800-838-3006.

The story of the relationship between a Rwandan genocide survivor and a struggling writer, *I Have Before Me a Remarkable Document Given to Me by a Young Lady from Rwanda* will open on Friday, May 1, at Park Square Theatre, 20 W. 7th Place. Directed by Warren C. Bowles, it stars Sonja Parks and Patrick Bailey. Preview performances are April 24-30. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2:00 p.m. Sundays through May 17. Tickets are \$34-\$39 with discounts for seniors and theatergoers age 30 and under. Call 651-291-7005.

20 Days to Find a Wife, a musical comedy by Laurie Flanigan and Marya Hart about finding true love on a deadline, will be performed May 2-31 at the History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. The play tells of a Lake Michigan lighthouse keeper who is compelled by his boss to leave his post for the first time in nine years to search for a wife, but is granted only 20 days to do so. Show times are 10:00 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 2:00 p.m. Sunday and Saturday, May 16. Tickets are \$28-\$32, \$25-\$30 for seniors, \$20 for students. Call 651-292-4323.

Dance

"Coordinates In Motion," new choreography by six University of Minnesota students working in collaboration with professional choreographers, will be presented April 23-26 at the Barbara Barker Center for Dance, 500 21st Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 7:00 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$7.00, \$5.00 for students. Call 612-625-9217.

Sthree (Women), an exploration in music and dance of the underlying tension between the Hindhu principles of karma and dharma, will be performed April 30 through May 3 by the Ragamala Theater. Written by Twin Cities playwright Zaraawar Mistry with music by L. Subramaniam, the show begins at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 1:00 p.m. Friday and 7:00 p.m. Sunday at the Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Tickets are \$29. A gala performance will be held at 5:30 p.m. Saturday and be followed by a dinner reception at the Weisman Art



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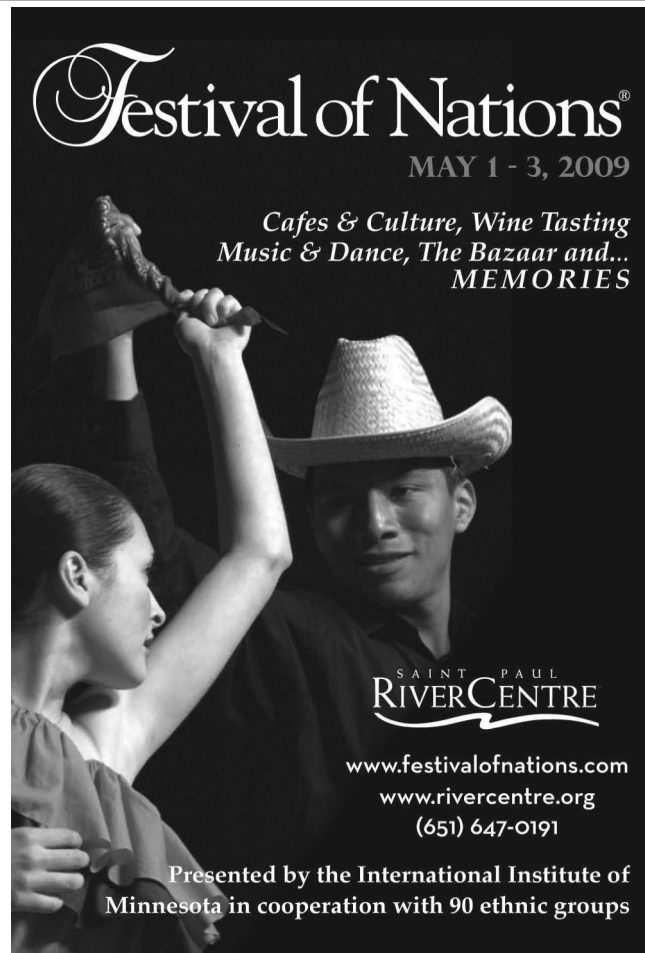
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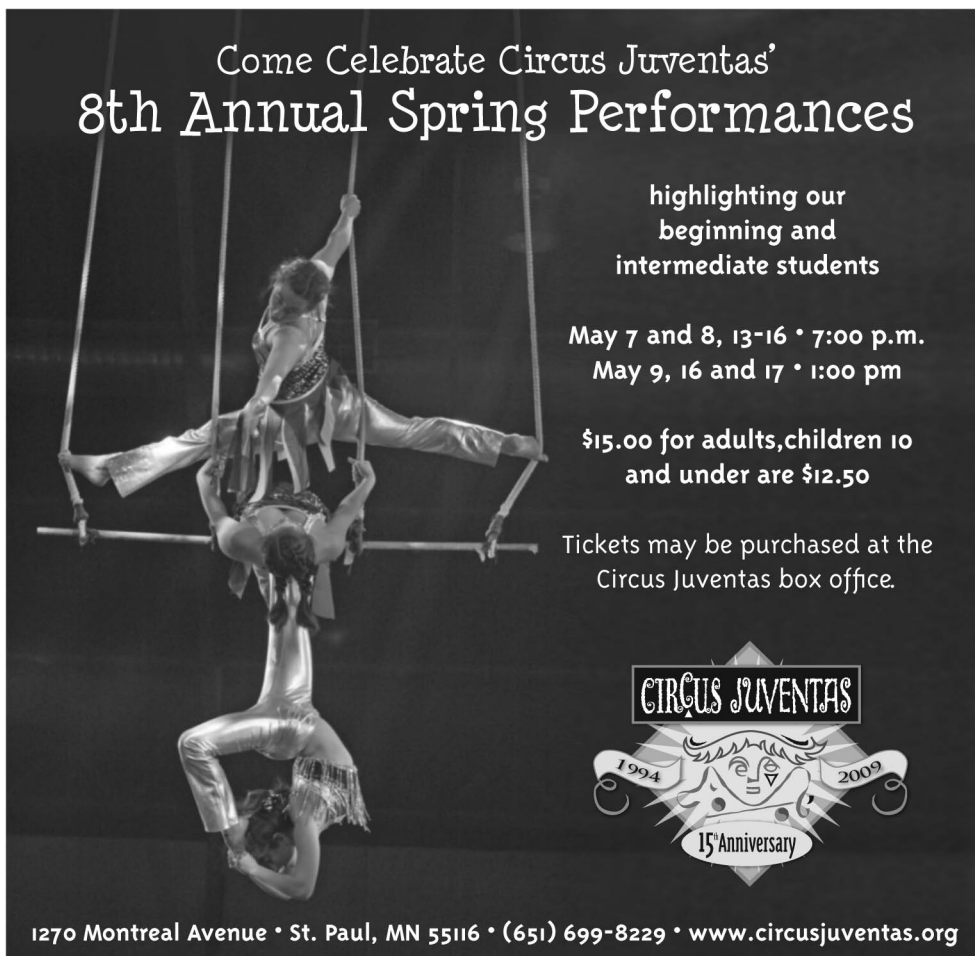
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Music

“Back To Motown,” a celebration of the rhythm and blues sound that sprang out of Detroit in the 1960s, will be held at 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, April 24 and 25, at Parkway Theater, 4814 Chicago Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Hits by Gladys Knight and the Pips, Stevie Wonder, the Marvelles, Marvin Gaye, the Supremes and Temptations will be covered by singers Deb Brown, Connie Olson and Natalie Allen backed by Ronn Easton and his band. Tickets are \$20. Call 612-822-3030.

“After Life,” a concert about death and what follows, will be performed by the St. Paul Vocal Forum at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 25, at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, 2323 Como Ave. The free program will be presented in the form of a requiem Mass with the Kyrie from an African Mass, the Sanctus from Bernstein’s Mass and the Benedictus by Minneapolis composer Jocelyn Hagen. Works by John Tavener, Herbert Howells, Aaron Copland will also be featured along with recitations of written works about dying and the after-life.

“Nature’s Glory Celebrated,” European folk songs, high-energy spirituals and works by Eric Whitacre, David Childs, Copland, Scarlatti and others, will be presented on Sunday, April 26, by the Gar Lockrem Community Choir. The music begins at 3:00 p.m. at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 7600 Cahill Ave. in Inver Grove Heights. Admission is free, but donations will be welcome. Call 651-500-4606.

The Hill House Chamber Players, flutist Linda Chatterton and violinists Catherine Schubilske and Helen Chang will perform on Monday, April 27, in the art gallery of the James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Ave. The 7:30 p.m. program will feature Four Duets for violin and cello by Reinhold Gliere; The Turning of the Year by Jeffrey Van; Sonata for flute, viola and guitar by Joseph Kreutzer; and a string quintet by Mozart. Tickets are \$16. Refreshments will be served at intermission, and a tour of the Hill House will follow. Call 651-297-2555.

Million-selling recording artist Marilyn Sellars will headline a concert of gospel music at 7:00 p.m. Friday, May 1, at Calvary Lutheran Church, 341 S. Hamline Ave. Admission is free, but donations will be taken for Metro Hope Ministries’ Healing House



A Kentucky Derby Bourbon-Smooth Blues Bash, featuring R&B slide guitarist Curtis Marlatt (above) and his band, will be held Saturday, May 2, at Dixie’s on Grand, 695 Grand Ave. Curtis and the Kicks will perform at 5:00 p.m. following the conclusion of the derby and again from 9:30 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. Kentucky cuisine and refreshments will be served all day and a Derby Day hat competition will be held.

treatment program for women struggling to recover from addiction, imprisonment and prostitution. A reception will follow. Call 651-698-6138.

The WolfGang sextet will perform the chamber music of J.C. Bach, Joseph Haydn and others in concert on May 2 and 3. The music will begin at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Central Baptist Church, 420 N. Roy St.; and at 4:00 p.m. Sunday at Christ the King Church, 5029 Zenith Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Admission is \$10. Call 612-927-8766.

The a capella ensemble InVocation will blend traditional choral works with expressions of Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Shinto and American Indian faiths on May 3 and 8. The concerts will begin at 4:00 p.m. Sunday at Calvary Lutheran Church, 3901 Chicago Ave. S. in Minneapolis, and at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Macalester Plymouth United Church, 1658 Lincoln Ave. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted for Second Harvest Heartland.

Beethoven’s Mass in C Major will be performed by the 80-voice St. Catherine Choral Society at 3:00 p.m. Sunday, May 3, in O’Shaughnessy Auditorium at the College of St. Catherine. Guest soloists Kristie Tigges, Angela Keeton, Dan Dressen and Seth Keeton and a professional orchestra will join in the program, which also includes Fauré’s Cantique de Jean Racine and Brent Pierce’s Hosanna. Tickets are \$10, \$5.00 for students.

An all-Schubert recital by Israeli-born pianist Shai Wosner will be presented on Sunday, May 3, by the Frederic Chopin Society. Sonata in A Major, Sonata in D Major and Six Moments Musicaux will be performed at 3:00 p.m. in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center at Macalester College. Tickets are \$20, \$12 for full-time students with ID. Call 612-822-0123.

The women’s choral group Joyful Noyze and the men’s gospel chorus Kingdom Road will perform at 4:00 p.m. Sunday, May 3, at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 285 N. Dale St. A compline and reception will follow. Admission is free, but donations will be taken. Call 651-227-8295.

The Chamber Music Society of Minnesota will perform Mozart’s Sonata in E minor and Paul Schoenfield’s North Carolina Reverie Quartet and Ghetto Songs at 4:00 p.m. Sunday, May 3, at the Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. Tickets are \$25, \$20 for seniors, \$15 for students. Call 651-450-0527.

Family

Red Balloon Bookshop, 891 Grand Ave., will play host to authors Todd and Peggy Snow and their book, *Kindness to Share from A-Z*, at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, April 25; a Maud Hart Lovelace Book Awards celebration at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, April 25; and a publication party for Joe Helgersen’s *Crows & Cards* at 2:00 p.m. Sunday, April 26.

“Saturday Live!” free entertainment for children beginning at 11:15 a.m. Saturdays at St. Paul’s Central Library, 90 W. 4th St., will feature the Woodland Puppets in “The Reluctant Dragonfly” on May 2 and Bill the Juggler on May 9.

The Dark Crystal (1982, rated PG), an animated fantasy by Jim Henson about the nature of good and evil, will be shown at 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 29, at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Pkwy. Admission is free. Call 651-695-3700.

Tiger Tales, a new play about a Hmong-

American family struggling to adapt to life in St. Paul, will be presented May 1-23 by SteppingStone Theatre working in collaboration with Mu Performing Arts. Show times are 7:00 p.m. Friday, 3:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, and 10:00 a.m. and noon on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at SteppingStone, 55 N. Victoria St. Tickets are \$11, \$9.00 for seniors and children ages 2-17. Call 651-225-9265.

Film

Twin Cities Assembly Plant: A Job and a Family, a new documentary by the University of Minnesota Labor Education Service, will be shown on Thursday, April 30. The film tells the history of the 84-year-old Ford Plant in St. Paul, United Auto Workers Local 879 and the community they created both inside and outside the factory. The free program will begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave. A discussion will follow with local historian Brian McMahon.

Et cetera

The First 100 Days: Obama’s and Mine, a solo performance by native Minneapolitan satirist and “Daily Show” co-creator Lizz Winstead, will be presented at 9:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2, at the Parkway Theater, 4814 Chicago Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Comedian Baron Vaughn will open the show with his own stand-up act. Tickets are \$20. Call 612-822-3030 or visit www.parkwaytheater.com.

“Sample Night Live,” a monthly cross-section of Twin Cities artistic talent, will return at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, May 6, to the History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. G-Rated Act 1 will feature the traditional Japanese drumming of Mu Daiko; a scene from the History Theatre’s current production of *20 Days to Find a Wife*; a preview of Silent But Deadly Productions’ film, *Why Am I in a Box?*; the acoustic music of Richard Griffith; Wonder Kid Theatre from SteppingStone Theatre for Youth Development; the band Marvelle; and painter Linnea Doyle. Playing in Unrated Act 2 will be a preview of Cricket Films’ *The Hagstone Demon*; People Sittin’ Around Doin’ Theatre doing *Angels in America*; poetry-slammer Inky; improvisational comedy by Splendid Things; and the band Capital Sons. Admission is \$20, \$10 for students and seniors, \$5.00 for children ages 5-10. Visit www.samplenightlive.com

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Sports



The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

Weather or not, baseball plays on

The sun was shining, but the temperature was a brisk 46 degrees and a stiff north wind was whistling in from left field. Still, as the University of St. Thomas baseball team prepared to host an MIAC game against Concordia-Moorhead on April 7, there was little doubt that the lads were happy to be playing outside.

"You have to have kids who want to play the game no matter what," said St. Thomas coach Dennis Denning. "Sometimes it's a challenge. But though you can't control the weather, you can control the effort."

In the first-base dugout, Concordia coach Bucky Burgau was viewing the day as if he were on a beach in Florida. When the Cobbers took the field against the Tommies, it was the first time they had played outdoors in 17 days. While people in the Twin Cities were muttering about the later arrival of spring, Concordia's players were concerned with more pressing matters—like placing sandbags along the Red River to help keep Moorhead dry.

"This is a hard game to begin with," Burgau said, "but when you have a good spring trip like we did (the Cobbers went 6-3 in Arizona in mid-March) and then have to go back inside for a long period of time, it's hard to handle."

Springs like this one has been make you wonder how Minnesota has managed to produce any Major League Baseball players. You have to be a rugged soul—and someone who can accomplish a lot in a short period of time—to be successful playing baseball here. The regular MIAC season is only a six-week affair, while the Big 10 season goes just two weeks longer. That's hardly enough time to get a hitting streak going. Indoor practices are OK, but there are limits to what skills a team can hone there.

On the aforementioned afternoon, the Cobbers seemed visibly rusty at the outset. In the top of the first inning, Burgau sprinted to the third-base coach's box to get the game under way. However, before UST's Brandon Stone could deliver a pitch, Burgau had to sprint back to the dugout to don the helmet that's now required of all college base coaches. The Cobber batters didn't fare much better in the early going. It took six batters before Concordia managed to hit a ball in fair territory.

Stone tossed a complete game one-hitter with 11 strikeouts for a 3-0 Tommie win in the first game of the doubleheader. In the nightcap, Concordia hit a pair of solo homers to take an early 2-1 lead. Then, in the bottom of the third, the Tommies, who were already playing their 21st game of the season, put together a vintage Denning rally to take the lead for good. A double and a pair of bunts—the second of which went for an infield single by Matt McQuillan—tied the game at 2-2. After a ground out and a walk, Tom Wippler doubled home two runs for a 4-2 lead. Two innings later, a sacrifice fly sealed the deal for a 5-2 Tommie win.

Burgau, who has been coaching at Concordia for 31 years, was philosophical about outcome. "We had some trouble hitting early, but we got better as the day went on," he said. "I guess my (batting practice) pitches aren't as difficult to hit as their pitchers were today. But all in all, it was just nice to be playing outside again."

Denning is a man who bleeds so profusely for baseball that he scheduled his first practice of the season at the stroke of midnight on the first allowable day. He believes that coaches and players simply have to make the best of bad situations.

"The other day it was 37 degrees, but we practiced outside anyway," he said. "I don't like to do it, but you have to make the best of it. You're going to have to play games in cold weather in any case."

Minnesota colleges practice in February in large field houses and take trips to play games in warmer weather to



Highland Park senior pitcher Teddy VanRanst tagged out Central senior Derek Turner in a rundown as the Scots went on to win 5-3 in their conference opener. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Prep baseball preview

Local coaches long to have top talent at short

BY BRIAN JOHNSON

Pitchers and catchers may make a team run, but local high school baseball coaches agree that you shouldn't sell shortstops short when it comes to key positions.

"You have to have a shortstop, a true shortstop, to compete," said St. Thomas Academy baseball coach Paul Weinberg. "Otherwise your opponents will just eat you up. In the majors, the guys that can play shortstop aren't necessarily great hitters. If you get one that can hit, they go right to the top."

Shortstop is a position that demands skill and technique, not just a cannon for an arm, according to Central coach Adam Hunkins. "We emphasize quick hands, quick release, good footwork and following our throws," he said. "Those are the things I try to teach."

Another thing is teamwork. The shortstop had better be able to work with the second baseman to turn the double play, according to first-year Roosevelt coach Randy Naughton. "You want your best athlete to be shortstop," he said. "You have to have a guy who's quick on his feet, ready to make a play and take charge of the infield."

Highland Park coach Peter Brown looks for the basics: a strong arm, a good glove and good range.

Veteran Cretin-Derham Hall coach Jim O'Neill counts on his shortstop and second baseman to make routine plays. "You always want to be good up the middle," he said.

Minnehaha Academy coach Josh Thurow, a shortstop himself in college, looks for his shortstop for leadership. "We want him to be the quarterback of the baseball team," he said. "We want a guy who is constantly communicating with both outfielders and infielders. That's what a great shortstop does. He anticipates and gets his team in the right spots."

Here's a short look at local high school baseball teams as they start the 2009 season:

CENTRAL

League: St. Paul City Conference
Last year's record: 10-10 (10-2 conference)

Coach: Adam Hunkins

Key players and their strengths:

- Ben Nelson, senior center fielder. A varsity player since his sophomore season. Batted .297 last year. Rangy in the outfield with a cannon for an arm.
- Alex Selim, senior shortstop/pitcher. Played second base and catcher last year. Perhaps the team's best overall player.
- Kevin Pitman, senior outfielder. Big, strong and comes through in the clutch. Went five for seven in pinch-hitting appearances last year.

Team strengths/weaknesses: The Minutemen have good team speed and defense. Last year, they tied Highland for the top spot in the conference. The Minutemen hope to score more runs and be more consistent.

Outlook: Johnson, Como Park, Highland and Central should all be in the mix for the conference title. "We expect some ups and downs because of our youth, but I'd expect us to compete in every game," said coach Hunkins.

CRETIN-DERHAM HALL

League: Suburban East Conference
Last year's record: 17-7 (13-3)

Coach: Jim O'Neill

Key players and their strengths:

- Nick Monson, senior pitcher. A capable right hander who mixes up his pitches.
- Matt Johnson, senior pitcher. A fast-ball pitcher who will be one of the Raiders' main men on the mound.
- David Bettenburg, senior outfielder. A University of Minnesota recruit who batted .429 last year with nine home

runs. Runs well and can pitch, too.

• John Kinsel, senior shortstop. Looking to be the Raiders' leadoff man after batting .344 a year ago.

Team strengths/weaknesses: CDH has some good young players who played together in American Legion ball last summer. The team is strong in the middle, with Bettenburg and Kinsel leading the way. The Raiders are a little shy on veteran leaders. "We're counting on a lot of new guys this year," said coach O'Neill.

Outlook: CDH is a bit of an underdog this season in the tough Suburban East. Still, if its young players come through and good pitching emerges, it could compete with the likes of Mounds View, Stillwater and Park.

HENRY SIBLEY

League: Classic Suburban Conference
Last year's record: 9-13 (6-10)

Coach: Greg Fehrman

Key players and their strengths:

- Santiago Morales, senior outfielder. An all-conference player with good speed.
- Kyle Pick, senior second baseman. A good all-around player and a starter since his sophomore year.
- Matt Tessmer, senior outfielder. Has good pop in his bat.
- Drew Shows, senior pitcher/shortstop. A good athlete who also starred on the gridiron for Sibley.
- Other players to watch include senior outfielder Colin Marshall, senior pitchers Sam Nord and Sam Peine, junior pitcher Jim Ryan and junior catcher Jake McHenry.

Team strengths/weaknesses: Sibley has some good, young athletes who are maturing in the game. Pitching is a question mark.

31 ◀ BASEBALL PREVIEW

Outlook: If the pitchers can crank out some good innings, the Warriors should be competitive. Hill-Murray, Mahtomedi and Tartan look to set the standard in the conference.

HIGHLAND PARK

League: St. Paul City Conference

Last year's record: 11-12 (10-2)

Coach: Peter Brown

Key players and their strengths:

- Teddy VanRanst, senior pitcher/outfielder. Has good zip on his pitches and a nice curve ball. Racked up 50 innings last year with a 2.64 ERA.
- Lucas Goodman, senior pitcher/shortstop. Has a lot of talent. Appeared in 20 games last year.
- Sam Russett, senior outfielder. Has a good work ethic and has shown improvement.

Team strengths/weaknesses: Highland has young talent with a solid junior class and some capable sophomores. Some of the players are untested at the varsity level.

Outlook: Highland, the defending conference co-champs, lost some good players to graduation. This year, the young Scots hope to rekindle that winning tradition and be competitive in every game.

MINNEHAHA ACADEMY

League: Tri-Metro Conference

Last year's record: 18-6 (9-2)

Coaches: Josh Thurow and Scott Glenn

Key players and their strengths:

- Alex Breneau, senior pitcher/outfielder. An all-conference pitcher who is destined to play college ball. Hits for high average.
- Alec Johnson, junior catcher. An all-conference pick who throws out a lot of runners.
- Dan Doran, junior shortstop. A returning starter with a dependable glove.
- Jack Johnson, senior outfielder. Packs a punch at the plate.



Highland senior shortstop Lucas Goodman fires to first for an out as the Scots hosted Central. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

- Tim Krahn, sophomore pitcher. Pitched six shutout innings in early-season action.
- Other players to watch include junior outfielder Matt Wolpert, junior third baseman Ben Wadsworth, junior pitchers Bryce Walt and Harrison Hammond, and sophomore second baseman Matt Pryor.

Team strengths/weaknesses: The Redhawks have a solid corps of returning varsity athletes, along with good pitching depth, speed and defense. "We have a lot of good things going for us," said coach Thurow. Minnehaha needs to watch out for the injury bug, which has already bitten the team in the early going.

Outlook: Minnehaha is loaded with talent and should compete with St. Anthony for su-

premacy in the Tri-Metro. "If we're healthy, we'll be one of the top teams in our conference and section," Thurow said.

ROOSEVELT

League: Minneapolis City Conference

Last year's record: 3-17 (2-10)

Coach: Randy Naughton

Key players and their strengths:

- Kolburn Kersten, sophomore shortstop. A fundamentally sound, energetic player.
- Brian Snow, senior outfielder. Can pitch and play outfield. One of the top hitters on last year's team.
- Jesse LaFontaine, junior second baseman. Has a strong arm and can pitch and play third.

Team strengths/weaknesses: The Teddies have some promising young players. Roosevelt won't field a JV squad this year, so there will be good competition for varsity playing time. The Teddies do not have a lot of experience.

Outlook: Roosevelt may not be ready to vie for a championship, but it looks to get better as the season progresses. "We have a good attitude and a bunch of good kids," said coach Naughton. "They're having fun and we want to grow as a team."

ST. PAUL ACADEMY

League: Tri-Metro Conference

Last year's record: 9-14 (7-5)

Coach: Mike Brown

Key players and their strengths:

• Mike Falvey, senior catcher/pitcher. A very good defensive catcher with a strong arm. A dependable leadoff hitter, too.

• Jacob Rice, senior third baseman. A clean-up hitter with a good glove and strong arm.

• Tim Kelley, senior shortstop/second baseman. Fields like a pro.

• Steve Estep, senior first baseman/pitcher. A big, strong player who's good with a glove.

• Zach Pressman, senior right fielder/pitcher. Good at chasing down fly balls and runs the bases well.

• Matt Pitchert, senior left fielder/pitcher. A crafty lefty with good control.

Team strengths/weaknesses: SPA should be able to make most of the plays in the field. The pitchers are young, but they throw strikes. Offense is a concern.

Outlook: St. Anthony and Minnehaha are among the teams to beat in the Tri Metro. SPA hopes to compete with pitching and defense. The Spartans could be a surprise if they hit.

ST. THOMAS ACADEMY

League: Classic Suburban Conference

Last year's record: 12-11 (8-8)

Coach: Paul Weinberg

Key players and their strengths:

- Alex Jurich, junior catcher. Has a strong arm and hits for power.
- Drew Korte, senior infielder. Catches and plays infield. Probably the team's best all-around hitter.

Team strengths/weaknesses: The Cadets can run the bases and the infield moves the ball around well. "Offensively, we can play with anybody," said first-year head coach Weinberg. STA has a shortage of experienced players.

Outlook: The young Cadet nine hope to gain experience and confidence throughout the season and make a run in the playoffs. St. Thomas Academy opened the season with a win over Sibley.



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Next up for Macalester-Groveland fencing phenom Grace Hartman will be competing in women's foil at the North American Cup on April 24-27 in Oregon. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Touché—Unbeaten prep record is just tip of sword for SPA's Grace Hartman

BY BILL WAGNER

Grace Hartman has come a long way since she first accompanied her older brother to fencing practice when she was 7 years old. Now a senior at St. Paul Academy and Summit School, Hartman just completed her sixth consecutive undefeated season in high school fencing and signed a letter of intent two weeks ago to fence for the University of Notre Dame this fall.

Hartman's weapon of choice is the foil, a light fencing sword with which points are scored by touching the blunted tip to an opponent's torso. And she wields it masterfully.

She has been a Minnesota high school champion from 2004-2009 and won the Midwest high school title during each of the past three years. She led the Spartans to first-place finishes in the state high school team championships in women's foil in 2008 and 2009, and to first place in the state's overall women's team competition this year. She has been the school's most valuable fencer since she was in 7th grade.

The Macalester-Groveland resident has also enjoyed major accomplishments in national fencing competition. Hartman was ranked 18th in the country in Junior Women's foil. Last year, she placed eighth in the Elite Division I Olympic Qualifying championships and took bronze in the Junior November North America Cup. And in 2007 she took bronze in the Junior Summer Nationals. She participated in the Junior Olympics in 2003, 2006 (taking the bronze) and 2007 in both the Cadet and Junior divisions.

Hartman anchored the 2007 Junior women's foil team, which received a bronze, and has participated three times in Junior World Cup competitions, winning the bronze medal twice. She has traveled to Germany and Slovakia to represent the U.S. fencing team in Cadet International Competition. She also has participated three times in Senior World Cup events in Las Vegas and has been ranked in the top 24 in the country in Senior Women's foil since 2006.

Fencing is a lot bigger on the east and west coasts than it is in the Midwest, and as a result, much of Hartman's prep career has been spent under the radar. There are also some misconceptions about the sport that Hartman wants to clear up. "When people think of a fencer, they don't really think of an athlete," she said, "but that isn't true at all."

According to Hartman, a good fencer needs

to have quick hands and feet, excellent hand-to-eye coordination and lots of stamina. But the real edge, she said, is what's between the ears. "You have to strategize," she said. "You have to outsmart the other player."

Hartman is looking forward to fencing for Notre Dame, where she knows the Division I competition will be much more rugged. But she knows Irish coach Gia Kvaratskhelia and has great respect for him.

"I know I'm going to be with a new coach and a new team," Hartman said, "but you always want to challenge yourself, and it should be a positive experience. Everybody was so nice when I visited there. I knew Notre Dame was the place I wanted to go."

Hartman will be competing with a well-established program at Notre Dame. The Irish finished second at the 2009 NCAA fencing championships at Penn State last month, trailing only the Nittany Lions.

Kay Hanna, one of Hartman's coaches with the Twin Cities Fencing Club, thinks Hartman has a solid future in the sport. "I predict stardom for Grace," Hanna said. "She's always been a fierce competitor. She's very skilled and she's an outstanding team player. She's one of those who can adjust. Fencing is a sport in which you have to make decisions very quickly. You have to have a plan, but you also need to be able to change that plan as you go."

According to Hanna, Hartman will prosper under the tutelage of Kvaratskhelia, whom Hartman got to know when she first came onto the scene in national competition.

"I remember when Grace was in her first U17 Junior Olympics," Hanna said. "She was 13 when she qualified and was so nervous during warmups. I tried to joke around with her to calm her down, but it didn't work. However, Gia was able to get her to relax. There's something about the way he talks to people. Grace competed very well."

Hartman said one concern for her in college will be the length of the matches. She has been so dominating in high school that she could quickly win 15-0. It won't be that way in college. "I've lost matches in national play because I've simply run out of gas," she said. "It'll certainly test my conditioning."

Hartman is a well-rounded student. Last fall, she played junior varsity soccer and had the lead in the school play. She has also been a member of the Summit Singers since 2005, chaired the Student Discipline Committee, and has been an ensemble member of SPA's spring musicals every year since 2006.

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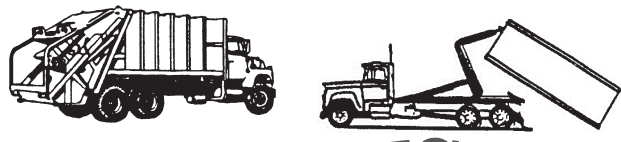
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31◀ WRIGHT CALL

get ready for league games. With rare exceptions, Minnesota high school baseball teams don't get that luxury.

"We had half a practice outdoors before our first game," said Highland Park baseball coach Peter Brown. "There's a limit to what you can do inside. There are no bad hops in the gym, and unless you have a humongous facility, you simply can't work on fly balls."

The Scots' first two games resulted in losses to Minnehaha Academy and Minneapolis South. On April 13, however, it was time for St. Paul City Conference play. First up was Central, who shared the 2008 conference title with the Scots. Highland Park combined timely hitting and some fielding miscues by Central to take a 5-0 lead after two innings. Senior pitcher Teddy VanRanst took it from there, tossing a complete game in a 5-3 win.

"Normally, I wouldn't let a guy throw a complete game so early in the season," Brown said, "but Teddy had already pitched one game that was on a pitch count. His count was fairly low here, too."

That may have been due to the fact that VanRanst is something of a gym rat. "I can't count how many times he asked me to open an area of the gym so he could throw to someone over the winter," said Highland Park athletic director John Heller. It's that type of dedication that eventually separates good teams from the also-rans.

Brown, who is in his second season as head coach at Highland and fourth overall with the program, was happy with the early win, but knows better baseball lies ahead. "By next week we should be close to being as good a team as we can be," he said. "But it takes time. You simply can't simulate outdoor baseball."

All true. But Denning, whose 32-year head coaching career started at Nativity Grade School, thinks there is an intangible that's just as important to spring success. "It's what you make of it," he said. "I've had grade school kids who wanted to play more than some of the high school and college guys."

Farewell to an old pro

As there should have been, several touching remembrances were offered on the occasion of the recent death of WCCO Radio legend Steve Cannon. They were all good and proper, but few of them mentioned his days as a hockey announcer.

When the North Stars first came to town, Cannon served

as Al Shaver's partner for all home broadcasts—but he wasn't your standard color analyst. Although he knew the game of hockey from his days growing up in Eveleth, Cannon didn't tell you much about the inside aspects of the sport. He didn't need to because Shaver, one of the best play-by-play announcers ever to work a radio mic, handled that task with aplomb. Instead, Cannon concentrated on being a true color man. In his distinctive baritone, he painted a verbal picture of what it was like inside the old Met Center on a given night, did the between-period player interviews, and always spoke from the point of view of the fan he was. And he did all this after working his regular afternoon show at WCCO. It takes a pro to be able to make that switch and Cannon did it effortlessly for two decades.

Cannon also accomplished something else. He managed to bring out Shaver's personality. As time went on, Al was able to do his frenetic on-air calls and also conduct an animated, ongoing conversation with Cannon on subjects ranging from Willie Plett's fighting style to what they had eaten for dinner.

North Stars broadcasts with Shaver and Cannon made for terrific radio. Fortunately, we get the same thing for Minnesota Wild games. Old pro Bob Kurtz is spot on with the necessary facts and figures of the game, and Tom Reid, an underrated defenseman in his playing days, offers unique insights from the player's point of view—albeit not always in the King's English. As was the case with Shaver and Cannon, this pair makes the games fun to listen to. And how often do you say that about the art of sports broadcasting these days?

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

Weiss named swimmer of year

Meghan Weiss, senior co-captain of the four-time champion Visitation swimming and diving team, has been named the state's Class A swimmer of the year for the second year in a row.



Weiss dominated the 2008 state meet by winning her third straight title in the 200-yard freestyle, setting a new state record in the 100 free and anchoring the winning 400 free relay, which also set a state record. An honor roll student, Weiss has accepted a scholarship to swim for the University of Minnesota.



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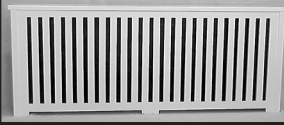
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