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Charter schools reopen shuttered district buildings

Minneapolis School Board embraces new partnership with once-rival programs

By KEVIN DRISCOLL

The Minneapolis School Board voted unanimously on November 25 to sell three of the district's 12 vacant school buildings to charter schools for a total of \$10.25 million. The Minneapolis Public Schools have lost several thousand students in recent years to charter schools, cutting into the district's per-pupil aid from the state and forcing the layoff of hundreds of teachers. That trend had made charter schools anathema to the Minneapolis School Board, but not anymore, according to School Board president Pam Costain.

"I realize this is a risk for the school district," Costain said, "because we do compete with charter schools and student enrollment is our life blood. But I'm quite pleased about (the sale). For one thing, we've built up a backlog of vacant properties as we've closed schools during the past five years, and this helps us address that. But it also helps us rethink our relationship with charter schools, because in all three cases, the charters and the district have agreed to work together in a variety of areas."

"I had some mixed feelings about selling to charter schools," said School Board mem-

MPLS. SCHOOLS REOPEN ▶ 4



Annika Dunkel, 6, of Macalester-Groveland and her twin brother Aiden enjoyed the unseasonable warmth of November 28 near the monument at the west end of Summit Avenue. PHOTO BY LISA WELTY

A light at the end of the LRT project

University Ave. businesses seeking ways to survive the four years of construction

By KEVIN DRISCOLL

The owners of the 800 businesses on University Avenue between the state Capitol and the University of Minnesota's East Bank may not know until next spring whether the Federal Transit Administration has approved the financing for the Central Corridor light-rail transit line. But if it does, construction of the line could begin as early as the spring of 2010, severely restricting customer access for extended periods.

The prospect of having the street in front of their shops torn up for months at a time during the four-year LRT construction project drew 30 small-business owners to a November 20 meeting sponsored by the fledgling University Avenue Business Association.

"I understand this is a big project and that a lot of planning is still needed," said Mike Baca, owner of Impressive Print at 1754 University Ave. "But we need to know the long-term effects of the construction so we

can plan. We need everyone in the organizations connected with this to be straight with us. If they don't know something, they need to say so. I can deal with that, but I can't deal with surprises."

Virtually everyone connected with the Central Corridor project is operating on the assumption that the federal government will approve the \$915 million Central Corridor light-rail line and agree to pay half of the construction costs, according to Laura Baenan, a spokeswoman for the Central Corridor Project Office. Even so, the schedule of when and where construction will take place along the 11-mile line between the downtowns of St. Paul and Minneapolis won't be worked out until the federal funding is approved, Baenan said.

The Metropolitan Council will oversee the plan to mitigate the effects of construction on traffic along University and the rest of the Central Corridor, Baenan said. Meanwhile, the

CENTRAL CORRIDOR ▶ 3

St. Paul Schools turn to teaching fellows to close achievement gap

By DAVE PAGE

Although Christine Schwichtenberg said she is "working 10 times harder" than she ever has before, she said she is also "10 times happier" in her first year as a St. Paul Teaching Fellow than she was in her previous job.

Schwichtenberg, 25, who is responsible for teaching five general biology classes at Central High School, is part of a small cohort of teachers in the St. Paul Public Schools who enrolled in the district's innovative teacher-training program last year. As one of about 30

applicants, Schwichtenberg was tested on her knowledge of biology, participated in a six-week summer training program and agreed to continue her teacher's training at Hamline University for the next two years. In exchange, she was given a job as a full-time teacher in the district, where starting salaries are just over \$34,000.

The district is now ready to start its second year of training new teaching fellows for the 2009-2010 school year. Program coordinator Norah Barrett said about 30-40 people are being sought from a variety of professional and academic backgrounds. According to her,

the district is looking for "diverse candidates who reflect the population of St. Paul Public Schools" and are dedicated to "promoting high academic standards." The district is particularly interested in finding teachers for hard-to-fill positions in math, science, special education, and bilingual elementary education in Hmong, French and Spanish. The priority application deadline is December 15.

Currently, 30 percent of the students in the St. Paul Public Schools are African American, 30 percent are Asian, and 13 percent are Hispanic. Though 90 percent of the district's white students surpass the national average in

reading, only 34 percent of the district's African American students do. Just 32 percent of all of the district's students are proficient in math for their grade level.

"We're looking for talented people who work in private industry or for nonprofits who want to close that achievement gap," Barrett said. "They can be graduates right out of college or others who are thinking about making a career change."

Applicants have many of the same eligibility requirements as other teachers, Barrett said,

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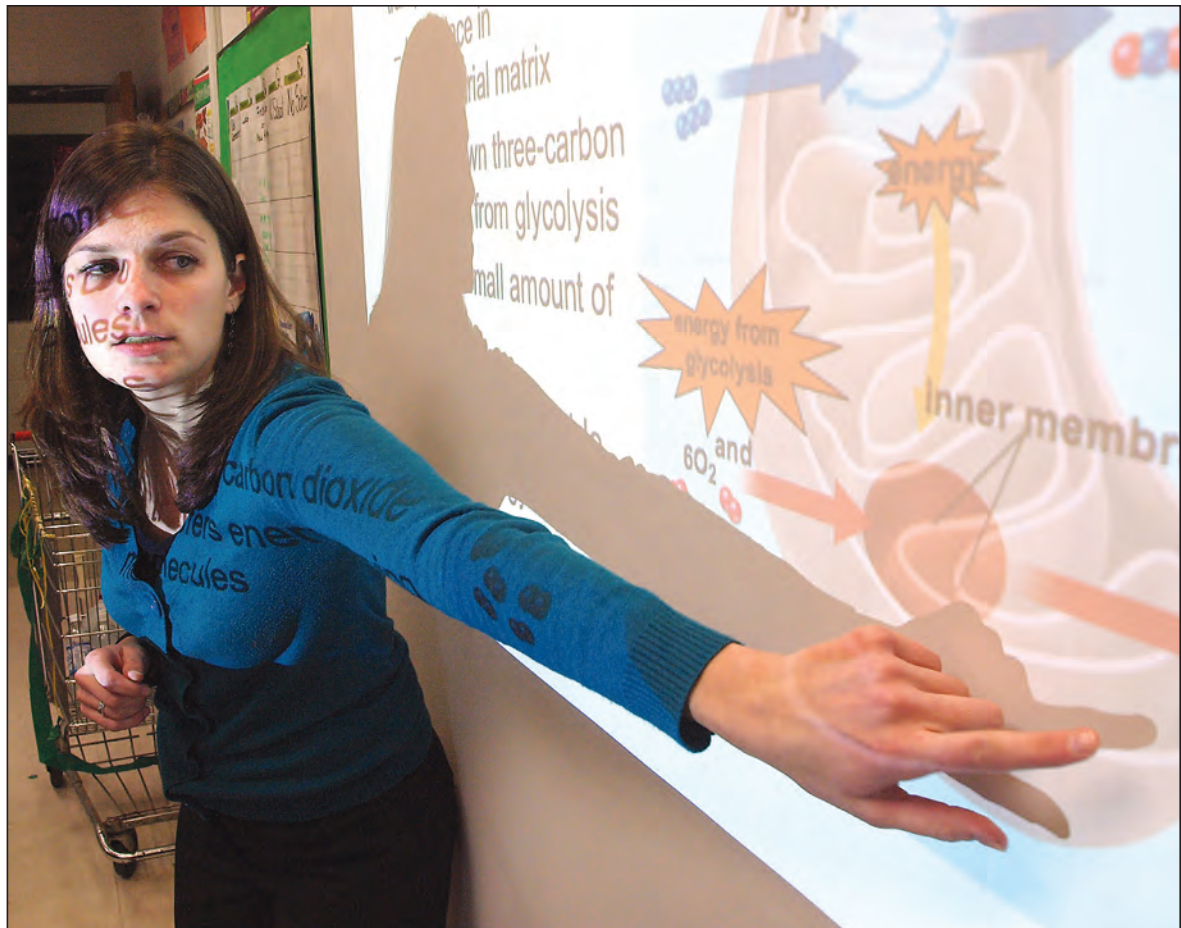


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Christine Schwichtenberg, who is part of the first batch of fellows to begin teaching in the St. Paul Public Schools, is lit by an overhead projector in her Central High biology classroom (above) and provides some individual instruction with 9th- and 10th-graders (left). PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

1 ◀ TEACHING FELLOWS

such as having a bachelor's degree, providing transcripts and submitting to a criminal background check. However, they cannot have finished a teacher licensure program.

The district provides advice and teaching materials to interested applicants so they can pass core knowledge exams. Last year, for example, all of the applicants in special education passed the test. "They studied from the same books that are used in special education classrooms," Barrett said. "Some of them have special needs children of their own."

Schwichtenberg, who lives in the Summit Hill neighborhood and has a bachelor's degree in biology and environmental studies from St. Olaf College, is the kind of enthusiastic applicant for whom the St. Paul school district is looking. She worked summers on Catalina Island teaching sailing while she attended St. Olaf. After graduation, she began teaching

high school students about the environment on the island.

"I'd always enjoyed teaching," she said, "but when I got the job working for a nonprofit, I didn't get the same feeling."

Schwichtenberg thought about pursuing her teaching license at the University of St. Thomas, but when she heard about the St. Paul Teaching Fellows program, she crunched some numbers and decided to apply.

She passed her core knowledge exams and then participated in the summer program, for which she received eight credits toward her master's degree in teaching at Hamline. Like the other applicants, Schwichtenberg had to pay for the credits—although the tuition was partially subsidized by the district—and did not receive a salary for the summer.

Upon successful completion, however, applicants are given a \$2,000 stipend to tide them over until they get their first district paycheck. Applicants are also eligible for up to

"We're looking for talented people who work in private industry or for nonprofits who want to close that achievement gap."

\$4,725 in an AmeriCorps Education Award to help defray the cost of classes at Hamline and forgive school loans.

So far, Schwichtenberg is enjoying teaching at Central. "Things are going very well," she said.

Others in her cohort of teaching fellows are also doing well. "None have dropped out so far," Barrett said.

Matthew Bannon, the training resource manager for the program, said he is also

pleased with Schwichtenberg's cohort. "I can't say enough good things about the fellows we have in the classroom this fall," he said.

To make sure the fellows keep on track, they are each provided with on-site mentors. Bannon also runs monthly professional development programs for the new teachers.

Teaching, taking classes at Hamline and attending training programs keeps Schwichtenberg constantly on the go. However, teaching at Central does have its advantages in the time-management department.

"My job is less than a mile from my house," she said. "I didn't plan that, but I was pretty excited when it happened."

The next informational session for the St. Paul Teaching Fellows program will be held from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday, December 4, at the school district office, 360 Colborne St. For information about the program or to register for the session, call 651-767-8198 or visit www.saintpaulteachingfellows.org.

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Midway Center's for sale

By Jane McClure

Midway Shopping Center, which has occupied the southeast corner of Snelling and University avenues for 50 years, is for sale. Welsh Companies is working with owner RD Management Corporation to sell the 15-acre site and its 293,732 square feet of retail space.

Active marketing of the property could begin as early as this week, according to Welsh Companies senior vice president Bob Pounds. The property will be listed without a price and is tied to the assumption of existing debt.

Despite a sluggish economy, Pounds thinks there will be strong interest in Midway Center because of the strength of the surrounding neighborhoods and the high traffic on Snelling, University and I-94.

The center is currently more than 90 percent leased. Tenants include Rainbow Foods, OfficeMax, Walgreens, Jo-Ann Fabrics, Foot Locker, Big Top Liquors, Family Dollar, Midway Bowl and several smaller shops and restaurants.

Another strength of the property is its proximity to the adjacent Midway Marketplace and SuperTarget, which together with Midway Center total more than 1 million square feet of retail space. Midway Center is also adjacent to the proposed Central Corridor light-rail line, which will run on University Avenue

between the downtowns of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

News of the sale has the local University United organization calling for a new planning process for the Midway Center property and adjacent 9.5 acres that were occupied for many years by a Metro Transit bus maintenance facility. University United's board passed a resolution in November calling for a joint sale of the properties and a new city-sponsored planning process. University United executive director Brian McMahon said the combined properties, which total about 30 acres, offer a unique opportunity for redevelopment that is denser and more oriented toward mass transit.

RD Management had tried for years to buy the former bus barn site. That property is owned by Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council. RD Management has a redevelopment agreement for the property that was approved in 2005 by the St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board. That agreement lapsed in December 2007, but it was renewed in March 2008 for a period that ends in June 2009.

Renewal of the redevelopment agreement was controversial. University United and local district councils objected to RD Management's plan for a \$12 million retail development as too suburban in design. Any reassignment of



Midway Shopping Center and Midway Marketplace behind it. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

the redevelopment agreement to a new Midway Center owner would also have to be approved by the HRA Board.

The Metro Transit site has been vacant since the bus maintenance facility was relocated several years ago. The buildings there were demolished in 2002, though Metro Transit buses are still parked there. The Metropolitan Council has been seeking a new site for a bus maintenance facility in the east metro area, and until it finds one it has been reluctant to give up the Snelling property.

It is not clear what new ownership of Midway Center would mean for RD Management's plan to build a new home improvement store on vacant land at Pascal Street and St. Anthony Avenue. Ten years ago, RD Management worked with the city on a \$1.6 million cleanup of the Pascal-St. Anthony property using grants and tax-increment fi-

nancing. In return, RD Management agreed to spend \$4.4 million to redevelop the site, but only if it could be combined with the adjacent bus barn property.

In 2007 RD Management obtained the approval of the St. Paul Planning Commission to locate a home improvement retailer at Pascal and St. Anthony. That project has languished, but the site plan is still valid until June 2009.

Midway Shopping Center was built in 1958 for \$6 million on a site that had long been used for streetcar maintenance and storage. The center included a Woolworth's and Walgreens stores, the G. C. Murphy Department Store, Klein's Supermarket, Fanny Farmer candies, Kinney Shoes, the All-Star Bowling alley and a variety of other retail and service businesses. Walgreens and the renamed Midway Bowl are the only original businesses that are still there.

1 ◀ CENTRAL CORRIDOR

Central Corridor Partnership's 23-member Business Advisory Council (BAC) is focusing on ways to help individual businesses survive the construction period.

"The BAC is mostly made up of larger businesses, chambers of commerce and other organizations that may not have the same agenda as the smaller mom-and-pop stores on University," said Linda Winsor of University United, which founded the University Avenue Business Association. "That's why we began the business association."

Two other organizations have been established to help small businesses in the Central Corridor secure financial assistance, remain viable during construction and plan for the day when light rail is up and running: the University Avenue Business Preparation Collaborative (UABPC), an organization of sev-

eral nonprofits funded by the city of St. Paul, foundations and private banks; and the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative (CCFC), an amalgamation of several foundations.

Cy Thao of the UABPC said his organization is currently assessing the needs of businesses on University between Rice Street and the St. Paul city limits and raising money to help those firms with annual revenues of \$1 million or less. "Our primary goal is to help small businesses strengthen and improve now in preparation for the construction period so they can better weather it," Thao said.

The CCFC has been studying how such cities as Seattle and Portland helped businesses survive large-scale transit construction projects, according to its spokesman, Jonathan Sage-Martinson. Portland developed a multimedia public notification system during light-rail construction, he said, and Seattle set up a \$50 million relief fund to provide grants and

interest-free loans to businesses along its transit line. Any unspent money was devoted to future development projects along the Seattle transit line. Seattle also sponsored group and one-on-one meetings between small-business owners and marketing experts.

The CCFC is "also looking for funding sources for grants and low- or no-interest loans (for Central Corridor businesses)," Sage-Martinson said.

State Senator Patricia Torres Ray (DFL, District 62) said she will be seeking "Seattle-type funding for the Central Corridor" during the upcoming session of the Minnesota Legislature.

"This is an incredibly complex effort," said Karri Plowman of the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce. "It's important that people don't think of (the Central Corridor) as just one project. There are a series of projects, including the fortification of two bridges and

the moving of utilities."

According to Plowman, who heads up the Central Corridor Partnership, the Business Advisory Council will be discussing aid to businesses along the Central Corridor during its meeting at 4:00 p.m. Monday, December 15, at the Court International Building, 2550 University Ave.

The Metropolitan Council is also holding a series of open houses to update the public on the Central Corridor project. Light-rail engineers and planners will be available from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 3, at Central Presbyterian Church, 500 Cedar St.; from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Thursday, December 4, at the Brian Coyle Center, 420 15th Ave. S. in Minneapolis; and from noon to 2:00 p.m. Saturday, December 6, at Goodwill Easter Seals, 553 N. Fairview Ave.

For more information, call Dana Happel at 651-602-1954.

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HDC committee rejects Highland bike boulevard proposal

Some call it unsafe, others say it's time to share road

By JANE MCCLURE

The Highland District Council's Transportation Committee voted 7-2 on November 24 to recommend rejecting a proposed bicycle boulevard that would extend 3.4 miles along Highland Parkway and Edgcombe Road. The full district council will vote on the proposal on December 3 before forwarding its own recommendation to the St. Paul City Council.

The committee meeting was punctuated by sharp exchanges among district council members. Neighbors presented a petition with more than 300 signatures opposing the project, which would allow the two streets to be shared equally by cars and bicycles. Some people pushed for the city to delay the project in order to study other options.

The bike boulevard would be paid for by a \$250,000 grant from Transit for Livable Communities (TLC), a St. Paul-based group that is administering a larger federal grant meant

to provide more opportunities for biking and walking. Citing the federal funds, HDC member Georgia Dietz claimed that the proposal is part of an agenda by Congress. "I think the message is that cars are bad and bikes are good," she said.

Dietz expressed concern that children could be killed if the bike boulevard is built. However, HDC member Chris Priebe called her comments and those of others against the proposal "ridiculous." He questioned why such vehement opposition has been directed at the bike boulevard.

"I'm more uncomfortable at this meeting than I would be on a bike (on the street)," said Priebe, who was heckled by opponents of the project. "We're going to have to start sharing the road. We're going to need to start providing choices."

Other district council members expressed mixed sentiments about the proposal, with some saying it needs further study.

Board member Paul Krech disputed the traffic-calming aspects of the project, among them the lowering of the speed limit on the bike boulevard to 25 mph. "I don't support the idea that putting a bike in front of me will calm me down," he said.

Opponents of the project also raised concerns that the bicycle boulevard would cause traffic problems, thereby prompting the city to put traffic signals on Highland Parkway's intersections with Cretin and Fairview avenues, although that is not part of the present plan.

"We absolutely do not want traffic signals at those locations," said Highland Parkway resident Roger Maulik, who added that the bike boulevard would take "a situation that is very, very safe right now and make it dangerous."

Don Muske, the Highland area's representative on St. Paul's Bicycle Advisory Board, questioned many of the claims against the proposal. "The idea of this is to offer transportation choices to people," he said.

"We think this is an important project," said Paul St. Martin, traffic engineer for the St. Paul Public Works Department. He said the project is being designed to meet state and federal regulations, disputing claims by foes that its design is not.

Highland Parkway was chosen as the route to meet the federal funding condition that bike boulevard connect with Minneapolis' trail system. The route would cross into Minneapolis on the west end via Mississippi River

Boulevard and the Ford Bridge. On the east end, the bike boulevard would extend from Highland Parkway to Edgcombe Road and Lexington Parkway, where it would be close to the I-35E bike trail that connects to other parts of St. Paul's bike route system.

Under the proposal, bicyclists would travel in the traffic lanes and the pavement would be marked to indicate that bicycles share the road. Street and directional signs would be added, but not traffic lights or stop signs. Sidewalks would be installed in areas where there are none and countdown timers for pedestrians would be installed at intersections where there are existing signal lights. No streets would be widened and on-street parking would remain as is. Only a few trees would have to be removed to accommodate sidewalks.

St. Martin said Public Works was willing to consider a smaller project that only extended to Snelling Avenue and would involve painting markings on the street, lowering the speed limit and putting up limited signage. However, that idea drew a mixed response, with some opponents in support and others questioning how a partial project would be removed if it was deemed unsuccessful.

1 ◀ MPLS. SCHOOLS REOPEN

ber Lydia Lee, "but I feel very good that these are very strong charter schools."

The three charters buying district buildings "went through a lot of vetting to determine the types of students, the programs offered and their academic success," Costain said. "The three we settled on are all very high quality and will work closely with us."

Minnesota law prohibits charter schools from owning their own buildings. They must be purchased by a third party and then leased.

Hiawatha Leadership Academy, sponsored by Augsburg College, will move into the former Morris Park Elementary School at 3810 E. 56th St. The nonprofit Charter School Development Corporation will buy that building for about \$2.55 million, and Hiawatha Academy will lease it. Currently a K-2 school largely serving Latino and African-American students, Hiawatha will add a grade each year for the next 10 years, according to principal Shannon Blankenship.

WISE Charter School will move into the former Franklin Middle School at 1500 Aldrich Ave. N. following its purchase by the

Friends of WISE for about \$5.3 million. The charter currently serves about 300 students in grades K-7 and will expand to 8th grade next year. Lee hopes it will become a feeder school for Minneapolis North High School, which has lost many students in recent years.

YBC Incorporated will purchase the vacant Putnam Elementary School at 1616 NE. Buchanan St. on behalf of Yinghua Academy, one of the state's first Chinese immersion programs, currently based on Pierce Butler Route in St. Paul. That purchase price is expected to be about \$2.4 million.

All three charter schools will move into their respective buildings by the beginning of the next school year, according to Steve Liss, the Minneapolis Public Schools' chief of policy operations. The new partnerships between the individual charters and the Minneapolis school district will vary depending on need, Liss said.

"Staff development and sharing curricula will be two primary ways they work together," he said. "Teachers will be comparing their techniques and learning which techniques work best with which types of students." Joint summer schools as well as after-school enrichment and recreational programs are other

possibilities. "And after school, the buildings will be open to the public for meetings and recreation," Liss said.

"That is basically what sold the Nokomis East Neighborhood Association on the Morris Park sale," said Doug Walter, NENA's associate director. "Some people wanted another public school at Morris, but when they learned that just wasn't going to happen, their mood improved. The NENA board determined that Hiawatha was very much the strongest charter of those that bid on the building. It's a great little building. Several million dollars have been put into it, including Part 150 airport sound insulation."

The staff of Hiawatha Leadership Academy "is really excited by this," Blankenship said. "The Morris Park building can accommodate 400 students. As we expand, we'll be looking for separate buildings for our future middle and high school students. We've been working closely with (Minneapolis deputy superintendent Dr. Bernadeia) Johnson on establishing a strong partnership with the district."

Hiawatha Leadership Academy's student body is currently about 60 percent Latino and 35 percent African-American. Virtually all of them come from households that qualify for

lunches that are wholly or partially subsidized by government. With a motto of "Scholars Today, Leaders Tomorrow," the academy is dedicated to imbuing all of its students "with the knowledge, character and leadership skills to graduate from college," according to its mission statement. "We will cultivate a sense of social responsibility in scholars to make a positive impact on their school community everyday and prepare to be the future leaders of the Twin Cities and the world beyond."

Academic and leadership goals are set by Hiawatha students and teachers every day, according to Blankenship. "Our students are honored for their academic and behavioral excellence every day," he said. And as the school adds grades, he said, the older students will help tutor younger ones.

As for the remaining nine vacant school buildings, their fate "may differ," Liss said. "Some may be used for senior housing and some for other uses."

Listed by NorthMarq, the next district school buildings up for sale include Howe Elementary at 3733 43rd Ave. S., Northrop Elementary in the Nokomis East neighborhood, and Holland Elementary in the Sheridan neighborhood.

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Village's time has come

Back-lit tower clocks complete the award-winning Village at Mendota Heights development

BY BOB GILBERT

Four 67-inch clocks will be installed this week in the tower at the center of the Village at Mendota Heights. For Ross Fefercorn, they are the cherry on top of the sundae that is his office, retail and residential development at Highway 110 and Dodd Road.

The Color Kinetics clocks were custom-made by the 80-year-old Electric Time Company of Medfield, Massachusetts, and they are the first of their kind in the world, according to Fefercorn. The clocks are back-lit by 650 LED lights that come in every color of the rainbow and can be programmed for stunning light shows radiating from all four sides of the tower.

Fefercorn is hoping the clock tower becomes an icon for his three-year-old civic and commercial center. According to him, the Village at Mendota Heights is rare among suburban developments in that it transcends the traditional Euclidean zoning that separates multi- and single-family housing from retail and office uses.

Fefercorn's 23-acre village includes 39 townhouses, 36 loft condominiums, 60 units of senior housing, a public square and open green spaces, 32 retail stores and office space for more than 20 other businesses. "I wanted to transcend the traditional reservations city people have about suburban living by creating a self-contained complex with sidewalks where you can walk to meet most of your needs," he said.

Fefercorn took his inspiration from Lake Forest, Illinois. In 1905

the Chicago suburb on Lake Michigan included the grand homes of many millionaires but no downtown, so the town fathers hired an architect to develop one. What they created was the first suburban mixed-use development in the country, according to Fefercorn.

However, the value of the Village at Mendota Heights is more than mere convenience. According to Fefercorn, the development has generated 225 new jobs and more than \$900,000 a year in property taxes, or close to 12 times the taxes generated by the previous use of the property.

The Mendota Heights City Council considered many proposals for the site before selecting Fefercorn's, according to Mayor John Huber. The city's original intent was to provide a small commercial center so that local residents didn't have to travel to Highland Park, Eagan or West St. Paul to shop, he said.

"One thing that we didn't want was corporate architecture that always looks the same," Huber said. "The design Ross created turned out really well, and we're pleased with it. It has taken a little time to fill up the retail side of the project, which caused a little bit of frustration on the City Council. But he seems to have chosen carefully, since none of the original businesses has failed."

Choral director Dale Warland moved to the Village at Mendota Heights two years ago from his longtime home in St. Paul's Macalester-Groveland neighborhood. Warland lives in a 2,000-square-foot condo that he helped design to accommodate his music studio and office.



Developer Ross Fefercorn on the public square of his Village at Mendota Heights. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

"The condo is what attracted us to the Village," Warland said. "It's designed thoughtfully and in good taste, both on the outside and the inside. The overall atmosphere is very welcoming. There's still a deep down yearning in all of us to belong to something that resembles a community, and we find that the Village has attracted some great people."

Fefercorn, who lives in Minneapolis' Uptown area, grew up in Golden Valley and studied architecture at the University of Minnesota. A developer for the past 20 years, his first retail project was Oxford Square on the northwest corner of Grand Avenue and Oxford Street. Though he is not a practicing architect, he said he had his hand in all aspects of the Village at Mendota Heights' design.

"It's a great place to do business," said Elizabeth Blosser, a Highland Park resident who opened her gourmet E's Cheese store in the Village at Mendota Heights three years ago.

"Ross is a good landlord because he cares about the development and our general success. He tries to create synergy among his retail tenants. My cheese shop is right next to the Wine Market, and our businesses complement each other."

The Village at Mendota Heights has received several design awards, including a 2006 STARR Award from the Minnesota Shopping Center Association for best mixed-use project, a 2007 Merit Award for public landscape design from the Minnesota American Society of Landscape Architects, a 2007 Best in Real Estate Mixed-Use Development Award from the *Business Journal*, and recognition in 2007 by *Finance and Commerce* magazine as one of the 25 best construction projects in the state.

"The problem with zoning codes is that they were written years ago by planners who believed that the only way people got anywhere is by

car," Fefercorn said. He hopes the Village at Mendota Heights will set a new standard for suburban development.

Traditional suburban zoning ordinances can be prohibitive, Fefercorn said. Before he broke ground in Mendota Heights in 2004, he spent three years setting up workshops, neighborhood meetings and presentations in hopes of winning over the citizens.

Fefercorn is now inviting those citizens and others in the area to the third annual Mendota Lights celebration from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday, December 6, at the Village at Mendota Heights. In addition to the unveiling of the tower clocks, the event will feature live holiday music, hay rides, face painting, a holiday tree lighting ceremony and an appearance by Santa Claus. Restaurants and stores in the Village will also be offering free refreshments and a variety of other specials.

Council vote solidifies support for Rock-Tenn power source

BY JANE McCLURE

The production of biogas through anaerobic digestion could keep Rock-Tenn's Midway plant recycling paper for years to come if a recommendation approved by the St. Paul City Council on November 29 becomes a reality. The council capped off months of debate by unanimously endorsing a proposal brought forward by the Rock-Tenn Community Advisory Panel (RCAP) and a St. Paul Port Authority-led consulting team.

The council's vote, following public testimony in support of the proposal, drew applause from the more than 40 people on hand for the hearing. The next step is for the Port Authority to seek a federal loan guarantee to

move the project forward.

The anaerobic digestion facility would be built in rural Minnesota to produce biogas through the decomposition of corn byproducts, sugar beet waste or animal manure. The biogas would not be piped directly to Rock-Tenn. Instead, it would be used to garner energy credits that would reduce the cost of natural gas burned at the plant. Rock-Tenn derives about 25 percent of its power from natural gas and 75 percent from fuel oil. That ratio would flip under the biogas option.

"There's still a lot that has to be done to make anaerobic digestion work," said Ward 4 City Council member Russ Stark. Still, he said he is pleased that an option that won widespread public support has emerged from the

months of sometimes emotional debate over Rock-Tenn's need to find a new energy source and save its 475 jobs.

"This has been a real team effort," said Port Authority director of development Lorie Louder. She said the notion of an off-site anaerobic digestion facility is very different from what was contemplated for Rock-Tenn at first. Many people assumed a new power plant would have to be built at Rock-Tenn or in the West Midway industrial district. The proposed anaerobic digestion facility would be built by private investors, with assistance from the Port Authority.

If the biogas option does not materialize, the Port Authority's second option is to build a natural gas turbine at Rock-Tenn to generate

electricity and steam. The third option is to build a gasification facility at Rock-Tenn that would use a renewable form of biomass fuel, such as agricultural or wood waste.

Rock-Tenn's need for a new power source was created by the construction of Xcel Energy's new natural gas-powered High Bridge plant. For years Rock-Tenn was powered by steam generated by Xcel's old coal-powered plant.

Area residents who had fought the possibility of burning garbage to power Rock-Tenn praised the process and the outcome. "We've kept in mind that this is about keeping a paper recycling facility with good jobs open," said Neighbors Against the Burner co-founder Nancy Hone.

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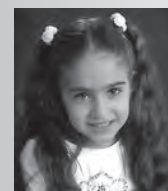
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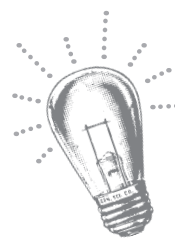
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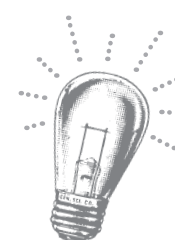
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Viewpoint

The seduction of 'free' money

BY MICHAEL MISCHKE

It's one of the most seductive enticements that can be dangled before an unsuspecting public eager to take the bait: "free" money to pay for this capital project here, if only everyone agrees we ought to bite on it before it's spent on that capital project there.

We see the seduction in the proposal to spend \$250,000 on converting Highland Parkway and Edgcumbe Road into St. Paul's first "bicycle boulevard." We see it in the proposal to spend \$750,000 on "calming" traffic by installing landscaped medians on a six-block stretch of Snelling Avenue. We see it in the proposal to spend \$915 million on the Central Corridor light-rail line on University Avenue. And we see it in the proposal to spend \$400 million on a passenger train between the Twin Cities and Duluth.

In each of these instances, it's the "free" money—not the need, not the benefit, and certainly not the value of those projects—that's driving local decision-making.

Take away the much larger federal grant being funneled through the St. Paul-based Transit for Livable Communities and would we even be discussing the prospect of spending \$250,000 in taxpayer money on the proposed bicycle boulevard? Where's the need, the benefit or the value—much less the public safety—in putting bicycles on an equal status

with motor vehicles in the Highland Parkway and Edgcumbe Road rights-of-way? Wouldn't a simple striped bike lane on those roadways suffice?

Nowhere locally are skewed priorities more evident. When "free" money talks, common sense walks.

Take away the \$200,000 from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the \$550,000 from Macalester College

and would the proposed 10-foot-wide medians on Snelling Avenue between Grand and St. Clair avenues even be on the St. Paul Department of Public Works' drawing boards? Where's the need, the benefit or the value in restricting access to and egress from streets and businesses in the dubious name of "calming" traffic and making it easier for pedestrians to cross the street? Wouldn't a series of smaller and less restrictive pedestrian islands suffice if pedestrian safety is the overriding concern?

Take away the \$460 million that the federal government may or may not decide to contribute to the cost of constructing the proposed Central Corridor light-rail transit line and would we even be considering reducing existing bus service and compensating University Avenue businesses for the potentially devastating effect that the light-rail line's construction will have on them? Wouldn't improved bus service be more effective, not to mention far less costly, on Metro Transit's already most-traveled route?

Take away the 80 percent federal financing of the capital costs for developing the proposed passenger rail line to Duluth and would we even be entertaining the prospect of spending over \$400 million to build it and millions more to operate it each year? Exactly how do government officials plan to convince people to abandon the convenience of their cars when riding the train would actually add an hour to the trip to or from Duluth?

The U.S. Congress came under withering heat in 2005 after countless national news stories and talk-show jokes made the "Bridge to Nowhere" a national symbol of wasteful pork-barrel spending. The proposed \$398 million Gravina Island Bridge was to replace the ferry that connects Ketchikan, Alaska, to Gravina Island's mere 50 residents. The project encountered fierce opposition outside of Alaska, and as a result Congress removed the earmark for the bridge.

I'm not suggesting that Highland Parkway, Edgcumbe Road, Snelling Avenue, University Avenue and the rail line to and from Duluth are routes to "nowhere," but nowhere locally are skewed priorities more evident. When "free" money talks, common sense walks.



Inbox

Snelling median overkill

To the editor:

I support St. Paul City Council member Pat Harris in his efforts to get Macalester College to redesign its proposed median on Snelling Avenue. Macalester officials have been less than candid about the process they used to reach this point. In their arguments, they continually use a neighborhood request to "do something to calm traffic on Snelling Avenue" as a mandate to do whatever they want. As a result, they presented only two options that were acceptable to them and then brought in people from outside the neighborhood to support the one option they really wanted.

All that the neighbors need is a safe way to cross this state highway. Pedestrian islands would serve that purpose as well as full-length medians. If a median were needed, a 6-foot-wide median would do. Pedestrian crossing lights would also help. But Macalester refuses to discuss anything other than a 10-foot-wide median from Grand to St. Clair avenues that would block access to businesses and the neighborhood across Snelling from Macalester. In addition, the 10-foot-wide option eliminates parking as well as bus-loading areas, forcing traffic in the right lane to come to a screeching halt every time a bus stops or attempt to go around the bus without knowing if there might be a pedestrian trying to cross.

If Macalester were truly interested in helping the neighborhood, they would listen to the original request from the neighborhood to "do something to calm traffic on Snelling Avenue" rather than push an overkill solution that doesn't calm traffic, is dangerous to pedestrians and is anti-neighborhood, anti-business and anti-transit.

Brian Ashley
Macalester-Groveland

Labor in the public interest

To the editor:

E.J. Becker's letter to the editor concerning Local 789 of the United Food & Commercial Workers Union and public monies for Mississippi Market was either a case of not knowing the entire story or not getting all the facts (*Villager* Inbox, November 5). The story was simple: Mississippi Market wanted money from the public trough, and the union wanted them to sign a code of conduct in regard to labor relations. They refused.

The money Mississippi Market applied for was through the

city of St. Paul's STAR grant and loan program—a voluntary program and not an automatic business subsidy entitlement. All the union wanted was an agreement between the employer (Mississippi Market) and the union (United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789) that spelled out rules for both sides and would have allowed the workers to freely choose to join or not. The union and the company would have worked out an agreement outlining the behavior, time frame and process for the workers to decide whether or not to join the union.

We at Local 789 are not supporters of business subsidies in general for retail developments, especially for businesses that will impact existing employers. And given the fact that subsidies are voluntary, we support labor peace agreements, project labor agreements and card check agreements to protect the taxpayers' investment.

Mississippi Market in its own letter to member owners highlighted its sales of \$15.5 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, up more than 14 percent from the previous year. With that information, why are we subsidizing a successful for-profit operation?

Bernie Hesse, Director of Special Projects
UFCW Local 789

Crime prevention does pay

To the editor:

Georgia Dietz's letter to the editor regarding Highland District Council crime prevention efforts ("Taxpayer money well spent?" *Villager* Inbox, November 19) demands comment and correction. First, Ms. Dietz suggested that the HDC is paying an additional \$1,000 to our community organizer to gather e-mails. In fact, the HDC board simply recategorized \$1,000 of her scheduled compensation, moving it to the crime prevention portion of our budget from another category. This properly reflects her work on crime prevention matters during the course of the past year, including a new assignment to compile an e-mail address database. The board's action did not increase her compensation.

Second, Ms. Dietz's rather contemptuous attitude toward efforts to gather e-mail addresses is misplaced. Most members of the HDC board believe that an informed citizenry is one of our most potent crime-fighting weapons. To that end, we hope to create a community network that will serve a number of crime reduction purposes. These include

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alerting residents and businesses in the Highland area of crime problems on a timely basis so they can prevent crime and protect themselves and their property. Creating this network also will assist the HDC's efforts to help organize and strengthen block clubs. In the long run, e-mail is the quickest, most economical way to accomplish this communication. The board also hopes to foster increased community interaction with police to reduce criminal activity and enable quick responses when crimes occur. The board concluded that these efforts had more potential long-term benefit than Ms. Dietz's proposed alternatives, such as subsidizing self-defense classes for a few neighborhood residents.

Finally, the HDC Community Services Committee's recommendations that were adopted by the HDC board were drawn from suggestions solicited by the HDC crime prevention coordinator from board members, community residents, businesses, area schools and others. These proposals were offered by the committee after considerable open, public discussion over several months. In contrast, the proposals Ms. Dietz offered at the November HDC board meeting represented a minority report of one committee member—herself.

*Bill Klein, President
Highland District Council*

A bureaucrat's bark

To the editor:

I resent the remarks of St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department program manager Eric Thompson, who blamed the Macalester-Groveland Community Council for voting against the city's proposal to let dogs run free in fields used heavily by youth sports organizations (*Villager*, November 5). Mr. Thompson sarcastically attributed this outcome to the claim that "Every kid on every team apparently slid through a pile of (dog waste)."

In reality, the Macalester-Groveland council heard from several youth sports organizations offering a number of concerns regarding Mr. Thompson's ill-conceived proposal. They also heard from seniors, neighbors and others with a variety of viewpoints. The community council ultimately decided the matter in the way they should—by listening to the people who would be most affected.

Mr. Thompson obviously thinks that he is a better judge of what the neighborhood wants than those who live here. I would like to think that our city Parks and Recreation Department does not share Mr. Thompson's disdain for citizen input on government decisions.

*Dennis J. Merley
Macalester-Groveland*

Editor's note: Mr. Merley is the commissioner of the Highland-Groveland Recreation Association's baseball program.

Off-leash parks are off base

To the editor:

Rumors abound once again about forces desiring a dog park on park land in Highland. It is disappointing when the advocates include officials within the St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation, since such a proposal contradicts planning policies to protect parks. Worse, any proposal that includes open space within the Mississippi River Critical Area must come from individuals who are less than informed

about protections necessary for the Mississippi River Critical Area or who forget that it is also part of the National Park system.

Fencing vast areas of open space and environmentally sensitive areas is a bad idea. It is detrimental to the community, lacks foresight and is unnecessary considering the lack of enforcement and the existing availability of dog parks. There is a dog park in Minneapolis just across the river from Highland.

Arguments that dog owners can control other dog owners is naive. Ask any dog owner to place his dog on a leash while you are enjoying a walk in the park and he is more likely to berate you than comply with the law. Nevertheless, until the Park Police have the full authority to enforce laws through the ticketing and arrest of dog owners, there is no such thing as policing a dog park. The present bureaucratic layering of enforcement between the Park Police and the Police Department hinders the effective policing of dog parks.

Fencing public open spaces is categorically a bad idea. To suggest any area within the Mississippi River Critical Area is ripe for a dog park is not acceptable—ecologically or within any existing policy to protect this area of the National Park system. Likewise, eliminating open space degrades the value of a scarce resource. It is unnerving to continually watch city officials minimize the requirement for open space in the development of ill-advised projects.

*John E. Grzybek
West Side*

Editor's note: Mr. Grzybek, a former member of the Highland District Council's board of directors, was a member of the St. Paul task force that addressed zoning changes within the Mississippi River Critical Area.

Neighbors for the bike boulevard

Dear editor,

Neighborhoods First! supports the proposed bike boulevard on Highland Parkway and Edgumbe Road. We believe it would provide a valuable new east-west route for bicyclists and an important link to the I-35E bike trail and the future Ayd Mill Road bike path. It would enable recreational bicyclists and bike commuters to more easily and safely reach downtown St. Paul and other parts of the Twin Cities, and it would further encourage bicycling as an alternative to automobile use.

The proposed bike boulevard would cost the city nothing. It would be installed through a \$250,000 grant from Transit for Livable Communities.

In other cities, bike boulevards have been shown to reduce motor vehicle speeds and increase foot and bike traffic, making streets safer for pedestrians as well as cyclists. As such, they have often had the effect of increasing property values and bringing communities closer together.

Neighborhoods First! believes the proposed bike boulevard is compatible with its long-term goals of an Ayd Mill linear park, better public transit and land-use reform that reduces travel demand.

*Andy Singer
Macalester-Groveland*

*Mike Madden
Merriam Park*

Editor's note: The writers are members of the steering committee of Neighborhoods First!, an organization that was founded 11 years ago during the controversy over the reconstruction of Ayd Mill Road.

VILLAGER

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Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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INBOX ▶ 10

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9◀ INBOX

Back to the basics

To the editor:

In the story "St. Paul Schools gird for change" (*Villager*, November 19), I noticed the usual jargon, such as restructuring, consolidating, repurposing, neutralizing and right-sizing. It reminded me of what Paul Ingrassia said in the November 10 *Wall Street Journal* about what the automakers would do if they received large sums of money from the federal government: "Management would turn its energy to producing pretty PowerPoint slides with all the requisite buzzwords: synergizing, transformation, downsizing, right-sizing and exercising. What's needed instead is exorcising."

Perhaps that is what is needed for the St. Paul Public Schools administration, too. They could exorcise the buzzwords and replace them with terms like teachers, children, parents, families, community, education and future.

Joy Walbert
West End

Nuclear: Energy of the future?

To the editor:

Thank you for the *Villager's* continuing coverage of Twin Cities light-rail projects. More than 100 U.S. cities have similar projects. From Albuquerque to Winston-Salem and from Boise to Tucson, we are attempting to catch up with Europe and Asia in using energy-efficient electric urban transit. This effort, coupled with electric hybrid cars, will add substantially to the demand for base load electric power.

Fueled by coal and uranium, base load power plants run around the clock, supplying about 70 percent of our electricity. Most of the rest comes from natural gas-powered "peaking plants" that are turned on when demand rises in the evening hours or on sultry summer days when all air conditioners are running.

Environmental concerns are restricting construction of new coal-powered plants. Burning coal produces particulate matter like sulfur, mercury, lead and arsenic. This can be controlled with expensive modifications to the plant. But burning coal also produces greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide (CO₂). A large, 1,000-megawatt coal plant burns a 100-car train load of coal (10,000 tons) every 24 hours. During combustion, each carbon atom in the coal unites with a pair of oxygen atoms to form the heavier CO₂ molecule. This is why that coal plant puts 20,000 tons of CO₂ into the air daily.

There are plans to capture the CO₂ and store it in underground formations such as saline aquifers. Saline aquifer is a fancy name for waterlogged porous rock. Studies show that this can add about 50 percent to the cost of a coal-based power plant. Burying a significant portion of the 7 billion tons of CO₂ emitted in the U.S. yearly could require about 100,000 new injection wells. They would cost at least \$1 trillion, plus more for extensive pipelines. And new wells are constantly needed, as the buildup of CO₂ causes the aquifers to resist more injections.

Wind power is being touted by environmentalists. But the U.S. Energy Information Administration is forecasting

that erratic wind will only provide about 2 percent of our electric power by 2020. Our trend to energy-efficient urban electric rail is well under way. Nuclear energy may be the only practical way to power it.

Rolf E. Westgard
Macalester-Groveland

Ear plugs and motorcycles

To the editor:

Although some motorcycles are indeed obnoxiously loud, that is not why motorcyclists wear earplugs (*Villager* "Inbox," October 22). When I purchased my first highway-legal scooter, which was quieter than my Buick LeSabre automobile, I was advised to purchase earplugs because 60 mph winds for 30 minutes is enough noise to damage your ear drums. Although the padding in helmets reduces the noise somewhat, wind noise will still cause permanent damage to your hearing if you ride for prolonged periods. Hopefully, all motorcyclists wear earplugs, regardless of the volume of their engines.

Tara Gibbs
Highland Park

Republican Armageddon

To the editor:

On Wednesday, November 5, the fundamentalist Earth-was-born-in-the-Holocene Republicans adopted Sarah Palin as their leader. They lined up and stared across the Republican battlefield at Mitt Romney and the old-line Wall Street Republicans. Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal watched the carnage from the bleachers. After the battle, Jindal descended from his perch and gathered the survivors to begin preparations for the 2012 election.

Rolf E. Westgard
Macalester-Groveland

Palin's prospects

To the editor:

Sarah Palin, after her vice presidential bid failed, jokingly held up a T-shirt touting 2012. Poor Sarah, the joke was on her. The Peter Principle states that we rise to the level of our incompetence. Stay home, Sarah, and stick with moose killing.

Tom Birbilis
Tulsa, Oklahoma

What the U.S. needs now

To the editor:

This may sound like a big catch at Red Lobster, but I believe a \$40 bill would make a great addition to our currency. Ronald Reagan could grace the face of the new bill. A credit union teller agreed, adding "I do see a gap in our paper currency, maybe a \$25 or \$30 bill." Simultaneously, other currency, like the \$2.00 bill and the \$1.00 coin, could be eliminated.

Steven Hubbell
Downtown St. Paul

A tragedy in the making

To the editor:

The Guthrie Theater has a very nice view over the Mississippi River and very good acoustics, but even a good thing can be improved. The Guthrie's three-story-long escalator is impressive, but does it have adequate shut-off functions in case a person stumbles at the top and falls? The balcony in the main theater has very steep and very narrow stairways. Is there adequate space between the rows of seats there when an obese person has to walk out to the stairway and down a few steps to allow others to enter a row and get seated? One section in the top balcony has an exit to the corridor that only allows the passage of two people at a time. Compare that to the exits at the Xcel Energy Center, Target Center or Ordway.

It is certain that the Guthrie Theater had several inspections before it opened, but so did the I-35W bridge.

Stan Gerfast
Mendota Heights

Write-ins worth noting

Dear editors,

Most everyone is focused on the changing vote totals for Franken and Coleman in the U.S. Senate race. Overlooked by everyone is the astonishing U.S. Senate write-in totals as seen on the Minnesota Secretary of State's website. Since last weekend, Michael Cavlan has upped his total write-in votes from one to 13. This does not augur well for a speedy resolution of the race. On the bright side, Anthony Keith Price holds steady at 12 write-in votes, so there is some hope.

Paul Alper
Macalester-Groveland

A holiday gift that grows

To the editor:

There are holiday gifts and then there are living holiday gifts. Here is one that doesn't need gift wrap, makes birds and wildlife happy, benefits the community and delights and honors the recipient for many years. Just the thing for the person with everything or that special someone for whom you have run out of ideas:

Have a tribute tree planted in a park. Next spring, after the tree is planted by park staff, the recipient of the tribute will receive a map showing the location of the tree. Tribute trees may be planted in Dakota and Ramsey County parks or in parks in St. Paul, Mendota Heights, Eagan, Woodbury, Apple Valley, Cottage Grove, South St. Paul, Maplewood, Falcon Heights, Roseville, Little Canada, Vadnais Heights, North St. Paul, White Bear Township, Shoreview, Arden Hills, Blaine, Brooklyn Park, Champlin and St. Louis Park.

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Peggy Lynch, Executive Director
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Truth-in-taxation hearing set Dec. 11

By JANE McCLURE

Property tax increases, coupled with tight economic times, could draw more people than usual to this year's annual truth-in-taxation hearing for the city of St. Paul, Ramsey County and St. Paul Public Schools. The hearing will be held at 6:00 p.m. Thursday, December 11, at Arlington Senior High School, 1495 Rice St. City, county and school district officials will briefly present their 2009 budgets and levies before giving the public a chance to weigh in on their effects.

Though taxes in general are going up, many St. Paul homeowners could see reductions in their individual property taxes due to the slumping housing market and resulting decrease in home market values. However, commercial and industrial property owners are likely to bear significantly greater tax increases for next year.

The 2009 tax estimates were mailed out in mid-November to all property owners. Since then, local government offices have fielded many calls from people with questions and complaints. County assessor Stephen Baker said his office will have staff on hand starting at 5:30 p.m. December 11 to discuss the assessments with individual property owners face to face.

In September, the City Council set an 8 percent levy increase, the County Board set a 4.5 percent increase and the St. Paul School Board adopted a 4 percent increase. The total tax levy increase

for all three local units of government is 5 percent.

One person likely to attend the upcoming truth-in-taxation hearing is Highland Nursery owner Sue Hustings, who saw the property taxes jump on one of her parcels from \$500 to about \$6,000—a 1,200 percent hike. "I was absolutely shocked," she said. "It's just ridiculous."

Baker said the Albion Avenue side of the Highland Nursery property had been incorrectly assessed at a lower rate in the past. Though it is unusual to find such an assessment error and then have to correct it, he said it is not unheard of. That is why he said property owners should look carefully at their truth-in-taxation estimates to see if corrections should be made.

Hustings fears that if her property taxes continue to increase, she will be forced to close a business that has been in her family for 61 years. Hundreds of customers have signed a petition to ask elected officials to provide her with property tax relief and keep the business open.

Hustings has been discussing the increase with local officials and staff of the assessors office. Though she said she does not blame county staff, she does want to see changes in the property tax system that would protect nurseries that want to remain in urban locations.

What is also affecting Highland Nursery and other commercial property owners along West 7th Street is that recent land sales have been robust despite

a difficult economy and slumping real estate market.

"We're seeing a lot of strength along West 7th Street," Baker said. Sales have been as high as \$45 per square foot along the street, which is what HighGrove Community Federal Credit Union reportedly paid for its land on West 7th and Montreal. Land sales in any one area are a key factor when properties are assessed and tax rates set.

Baker said the county also has heard from the former Schmidt Brewery owners, who also have seen a spike in the value and real estate taxes of their 15-acre property on West 7th Street.

With other commercial sites along West 7th for sale, Hustings is concerned that property values in the area could rise even further.

One of the difficult issues for a business like Highland Nursery is that as land values increase, arguments could be made that having a nursery there is not the highest and best use of the land. That kind of rationale is upsetting to Hustings and her customers.

"There's really no good answer for that," Baker said. He compared the situation on West 7th to that along Grand Avenue, where rising property values and taxes have squeezed out many of the small, independent businesses that helped revive the street years ago.

"It's a David vs. Goliath situation," Baker said. "Property taxes can increase greatly as an area becomes more popular and that can create a burden for long-standing businesses."

Third time may be charm for West End auto repair

By JANE McCLURE

A proposed West End auto repair business that had its opening delayed by a bureaucratic snafu could win St. Paul Planning Commission support as soon as December 5. The commission's Zoning Committee unanimously recommended on November 25 to re-establish a nonconforming use permit for the auto repair business to operate on the northeast corner of West 7th and Tuscarora streets.

Javad Seyed Feghahati had to go through three consent petition processes before obtaining the committee's nod last month. The hearing lasted less than 10 minutes, in contrast to the lengthy debate the request sparked in September. No one appeared to speak against the permit request on November 25.

The West 7th/Fort Road Federation

recommended approval of the permit with conditions. The federation is especially concerned that vehicles are not sold at the lot, according to community organizer Betty Moran.

City staff also recommended that several conditions be placed on the property, including a requirement that all repair work be done inside the building and that there be no outside storage. Hours of operation would be limited to 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Saturday. All vehicles would have to be parked on-site. Any vehicles not claimed by their owners would have to be removed from the premises and stored elsewhere. A 10-foot landscaped buffer would be required adjacent to neighboring residential properties and the parking lot would have to be paved and striped.

Feghahati owns an airport taxi busi-

ness as well as a used vehicle sales business in Minneapolis. He told the Zoning Committee that taxis would not park at the West 7th shop unless they were waiting for repairs. He also said vehicles would not be sold on the property.

The property is a triangular lot of about 8,000 square feet, with a building at one end. A gas station was built there in 1920 and that use continued until an auto lube business moved in about 1970. In 1989 the owner sought to rezone the property for a used car sales lot, which was denied by the city. Since then, auto repair businesses have operated there.

The most recent occupant, a transmission repair shop, moved out more than a year ago. It was considered a legal, nonconforming use because the property's zoning classification does not allow auto repairs. Feghahati is seeking to re-establish that nonconforming use.

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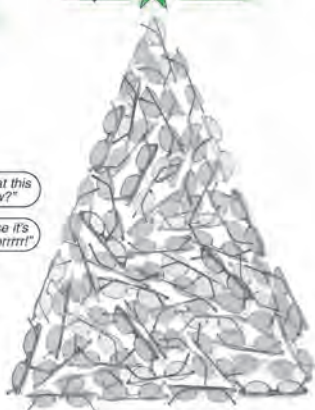
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News Briefs



Preschooler Henry Karelitz reaches for ribbon to decorate a box for food shelf donations during Horace Mann School's second annual Family Service Night on November 21. Children and parents also prepared sandwiches for the homeless, made fleece blankets for the needy and created get-well cards for children awaiting surgery.

PHOTO BY ANNE BRANDRUD

Mac-Groveland street paving among list of 2009 projects

One of the St. Paul's largest street reconstruction projects will get under way next year in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood. The Cretin-Goodrich Residential Street Vitality Project (RSVP) was approved by the St. Paul City Council on November 26. The project will include sections of Finn Street, Mount Curve Boulevard and Lincoln, Goodrich, Princeton and Sargent avenues. The area is bounded by Summit, Cleveland and St. Clair avenues, and Mississippi River Boulevard.

The estimated \$4.4 million project will be paid by the city and adjacent property owners. The city's share is about \$3.7 million. Older paved and oiled streets will be rebuilt, with new curbs, gutters, sidewalks, driveway aprons and lantern-style street lights added. Lead water service connections also will be replaced.

The area includes some brick streets on sections of Mount Curve, Princeton, Sargent and Goodrich. Some property owners have asked that the brick streets be rebuilt, which would mean a higher assessment for those areas.

Work will take place from next spring through the fall.

No one spoke against the project at a public hearing on November 19. At that meeting, the council also approved an 8 percent increase in the assessment rate for 2009 residential street reconstruction projects. The new assessments will be \$38.65 per street frontage foot for paving and \$6.84 per foot for lantern-style lighting.

The city's 2009 RSVP list also includes one in the West 7th and Douglas streets area of the West End as well as projects in St. Anthony Park and Payne-Phalen. Area projects penciled in over the next five years include Davern-Jefferson (2010), Prior-Goodrich (2011), Madison-Benson (2012) and Fairview-Bohland (2013).

St. Paul wants to give tenants more warning of foreclosures

Landlords who do not inform their tenants of looming mortgage foreclosures or cancellations of contracts for deed could lose their rental certificates of occupancy under a plan that will be heard by the St. Paul City Council on December 3.

The growing mortgage foreclosure crisis has hit landlords and tenants hard throughout St. Paul. City officials have seen an increase in cases where tenants have been unaware of a landlord's financial straits until lenders show up to take the property. Tenants then have little or no time to find new housing.

The ordinance change was introduced by Ward 1 council member Melvin Carter III. Pockets of his ward, which includes the Summit-University and Frogtown neighborhoods,

have been especially hit hard by foreclosures and contract-for-deed cancellations on rental properties.

Under the proposed ordinances, a landlord would be required to quickly notify tenants and any third-party lease payors if the landlord receives a notice of a mortgage foreclosure sale or a contract-for-deed cancellation. An example of a third-party payor would be a family member who is paying the rent for another family member.

Property owners would be restricted from leasing unless prospective tenants are clearly notified in writing of the pending legal actions and the possibility that the landlord could lose the property. The form of notice required is certified mail no later than 10 days after a landlord is notified of the pending action.

Failure to comply with the requirement would be a misdemeanor. The landlord would also be unable to lease the property until going through a process to redeem the property and restore the certificate of occupancy.

City receives \$100,000 grant to study 'green' reuse at Ford

A \$100,000 grant for a study of "green" manufacturing at Ford Motor Company's Twin Cities Assembly Plant was accepted by the St. Paul City Council on November 19. The grant, which was approved by the 2008 Minnesota Legislature, will be used by city's Department of Planning and Economic Development to explore the potential of environmentally sustainable manufacturing as a future use for the Ford property.

Ford is slated to close the plant in 2011. It was supposed to close this year, but received a reprieve until 2009 and then a two-year extension over the summer to continue producing Ranger trucks. However, the plant will be idle during much of December due to slumping motor vehicle sales.

A St. Paul Planning Commission task force has been studying the possibility of new uses for the Ford property. A variety of mixed-use developments are on the table, including manufacturing. Several neighborhood groups have banded together to bring forward their own options for the site, which include green manufacturing.

Although some studies have focused on the production of motor vehicles that use alternative fuels, other studies have considered a broader range of manufacturing. The state grant will allow the city to hire consultants to conduct the study.

Ward 3 council member Pat Harris said any reuse of the Ford site needs to be studied with an eye toward compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. "My concern is that we not look at manufacturing uses that wouldn't fit in as well as Ford has," he said.

News Briefs compiled by Jane McClure.



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New songs for the season

MacKenzie's 'Theotokos' gives voice to the Biblical moment where the deity and humanity meet

BY JANET LUNDER HANAFIN

Christians have struggled for at least 1,600 years with the seemingly contradictory divine and human natures of Jesus of Nazareth. Macalester-Groveland composer Ruth MacKenzie turns that struggle into art with "Theotokos," a musical retelling of the Annunciation and Nativity of Christ that will receive its premiere at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, December 14, in Our Lady of Victory Chapel at the College of St. Catherine.

A powerful singer in her own right, MacKenzie will be joined in the performance by the 10-voice Mila Vocal Ensemble and the Unity Singers from Unity Unitarian Church.

According to MacKenzie, *Theotokos* is Greek for god-bearer. The name was given to Jesus' mother, Mary, during the 5th century as Christian theologians debated the dual divinity and humanity of Jesus.

"Something about that idea intrigued me," MacKenzie said. "I started looking at the story

of the Annunciation as an archetype, trying to find what in this story might be countercultural to what I see the Christmas season being about today, which is buying, buying, buying. I was trying to figure out if there is something in this story that can talk to us about another way of being during this season."



"Theotokos" is a blending of narrative and music. In addition to writing the text, MacKenzie composed three original songs — one for herself, one for Mila and one for the mixed voices of the Unity Singers. She also borrowed music from various Christmas traditions to add nuance and depth to the production.

For Mila, which specializes in the folk music of Eastern Europe, "I took a run at the Magnificat," said MacKenzie, referring to the canticle that draws on the Gospel of Luke. With her original "Oh, My Soul," she joins the countless composers who have been inspired by Mary's response to the announcement that she would bear the Christ Child. MacKenzie's text is in English, and the

song employs hard-voice singing and visceral, earthy harmonies.

MacKenzie enlisted the Unity Singers to render the more traditional choral music in the program. For the award-winning choir, she wrote "New Nazareth," a song "about a new way of looking at this time of year, a new way of letting it affect us," MacKenzie said.

As the choir is singing, MacKenzie will be reciting the Annunciation story from Luke's Gospel. "It's a juxtaposition between the spoken word and the sound of the choir," she said. The choir will also perform a song that draws on a poem by Henry David Thoreau in which he compares the Virgin Mary to the landscape.

For her own voice, MacKenzie has set the words of English poet Penelope Shuttle to music. Beginning with the spine-tingling "Now you are in the ark of my blood, in the river of my bones," Shuttle's verse explores birthing and makes a dramatic connection between the earth and the body, according to MacKenzie.

Though the program is billed as a concert, MacKenzie expects a sense of worship to prevail. "In 'Theotokos' I'm taking the tradition of Christianity and the beginning of the life of Jesus and using it to talk about how the transcendent and the profane meet," she said. "If

we really take this story to heart, it can change how we live."

MacKenzie does not consider "Theotokos" to be a great leap from her 1997 musical drama *Kalevala, Dream of the Salmon Maiden*, which was based on ancient Finnish lore. "Myth should be understood not as falsehood, but as something that lies between fact and fiction," she said. "It talks about some deep truth without necessarily knowing what that truth is."

"Theotokos," she said, "is right in the trajectory of my wanderings as an artist. My compass has led me in a lot of different directions. The medium I use is music, but it has expanded to writing and being a playwright."

MacKenzie is now studying at United Theological Seminary in New Brighton, an institution that she describes as "a very liberal, ecumenical seminary with a heavy emphasis on art."

"Much of my work is not just about singing or trying to find a good song," she said. "It's about meaning. When I perform or when I write, I'm trying to figure out the meaning, and I think that is what most good artists are also trying to do."

Tickets for "Theotokos," priced at \$23, \$20 for seniors, may be reserved by calling the O'Shaughnessy box office at 651-690-6700.



Ruth MacKenzie (foreground) and the Mila Vocal Ensemble rehearse for "Theotokos." PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

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February 5, 6:30 p.m.
New Student Application Deadline 2009-10
February 26
Spring Concert - May 28 6:30 p.m.

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Religious Notes

Temple of Aaron, 616 S. Mississippi River Blvd., will offer three adult education mini-classes on Wednesdays in December. The schedule includes "Rembrandt and the Jews" on December 3, "Challenges in Health Care in the U.S." on December 10 and "End-of-Life Care at the Beginning of Life: Bioethics and Decision-making for Children" on December 17. The cost is \$15 per class. To register, call Kathy Berg at 651-698-8874.

Christ Church Lutheran, 3244 34th Ave. S., Minneapolis, will hold special morning and evening Advent events on Wednesdays, December 3-17. Worship services at 11:30 a.m. on those days will be followed by a soup lunch at 12:15. There also will be soup suppers at 6:00 p.m. those days, followed by evening prayer at 7:00. Call 612-721-6611.

An intergenerational Advent event will be held from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Sunday, December 7, at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 104 S. Snelling Ave. The afternoon will feature music, a visit from St. Nicholas, crafts, tree decorating and an authentic German dinner. The cost is \$6.50-\$8.75 for dinner, with an extra \$6.00 per person for the craft. To register, call 651-699-5560 by December 1.

Groveland Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 1671 Summit Ave., will offer the following at 10:15 a.m. on Sundays: Laurel Sandberg will speak on "Shamanism: How These Practices have Enriched My Spiritual Life" on December 7 and Maisie Wolson will speak on "Creativity: Or Muddling Through to Something New" on December 14. Call 651-408-7022 or visit www.grovelanduu.org.

Lessons and Carols for Advent will be presented by parish musicians and lectors during a service at 4:00 p.m. Sunday, December 7, at St. Mark's Church, 2001 Dayton Ave. Call 651-645-5717.

"Making Room for Each Other: Catholics and Jews in Early St. Paul" will be discussed at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, December 9, at the Minnesota History Center 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. Linda Schloff of the University of Minnesota's Center for Jewish Studies will lead a conversation about the interfaith alliances that helped create St. Paul. Admission is free. Call 651-259-3000.

Jonathan Rundman will perform in concert at 6:51 p.m. Saturday, December 13, at Pilgrim Lutheran Church, 1935 St. Clair Ave.

Rundman, who grew up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, has been writing songs and performing across the country since he was 18 years old. The concert will be followed by a reception, silent auction and wall of wine raffle. Tickets are \$8.00-\$12, with proceeds supporting Pilgrim's ministry. Call 651-699-6886 or visit www.pilgrimstpaul.org.

A Christmas Praise Concert will be held at 5:00 p.m. Sunday, December 14, at Minnehaha United Church of Christ, 4001 38th Ave. S., Minneapolis. The concert will feature the church choir, the Girls (vocalists Lori Dokken, Patty Peterson, Erin Schwab and Judi Donaghy) and the James Grear & Nu Friends Community Choir. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$8 for children. Refreshments will be served at 4:15 p.m. Call 612-729-7556.

The Nativity Men's Club is sponsoring its annual Christmas tree sale from now through at least December 14 at its newly expanded tree lot on the east side of the school parking lot at 1900 Wellesley Ave. Trees will be sold from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Saturday and 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Sunday. There also will be a limited number of wreaths, garland and swags on sale. Beverages and snacks are provided. Free delivery and setup of trees are provided for those in need. Contact Matt Anfang at 651-699-1338 or 6451-274-9160.

House of Mercy, 104 S. Snelling Ave., will host its third annual silent auction following 5:00 p.m. services on Sunday, December 14. Proceeds will be applied toward the church's operating fund. Visit www.houseofmercy.org.

Pilgrim Lutheran Church, 1935 St. Clair Ave., will continue its monthly Celtic contemplative worship at 6:51 p.m. Sunday, December 14. The evening's theme is "God's Dreams: As if for the First Time." Call 651-699-6886.

St. Clement's adult and children's choirs will present a service of carols, readings and anthems for Advent at 4:30 p.m. Sunday, December 14, at the church, 901 Portland Ave. A gala reception will follow in the parish hall. Call 651-228-1164.

A Christmas vespers service will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Monday, December 15, in the Graebner Memorial Chapel at Concordia University-St. Paul, 1259 Carroll Ave. Admission is free.

Names in the News

Army Reserve Private Christina Chea has graduated from basic combat training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Chea is a 2007 graduate of Sibley High School and the daughter of Bopha Gagnon of Mendota Heights.

Readus Fletcher of Summit-University has been named the interim director of the city of St. Paul's Human Rights Department. He will serve in the position until a director for the new Department of Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity is appointed. A director is expected to be in place by January. Fletcher currently serves as director of economic opportunity in the city's Department of Planning and Economic Development.

Bonnie West of Merriam Park wrote an original contribution that has been published in the newly released book *The Ultimate Dog Lover: The Best Experts' Advice for a Happy, Healthy Dog with Stories and Photos of Incredible Canines* (Health Communications Inc., October 2008). The story, "This is True Love," takes the tack that while the husband is away, wife and dog will play.

Keith Meyers of Macalester-Groveland has joined the board of directors at Resources for Child Caring, 10 Yorkton Court. Meyers

is an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota, where he teaches organizational design and leadership development.

Sarah Lutman of Highland Park has been named the new president and managing director of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. Lutman comes to the SPCO from Minnesota Public Radio/American Public Media, where she served as senior vice president of content and media.

Eli Allen of Highland Park is one of 23 youth leaders who will represent the United States at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Poznan, Poland, this month. Allen is a Wesleyan University student on the SustainUS delegation that is calling for American leadership on a just international treaty for mitigating global warming.

The Club With No Name will hold its 60th reunion party on Monday, December 15, at the Prom Center in Oakdale. The club met on Sunday evenings at the YWCA of St. Paul from 1948-1958. Help is needed in tracking down former members. Anyone with information is asked to call Jodelle Ista at 651-455-4244 or Carol Schuldt at 651-306-0542.



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New developer sought for old Schmidt Brewery on West 7th

By JANE McCLURE

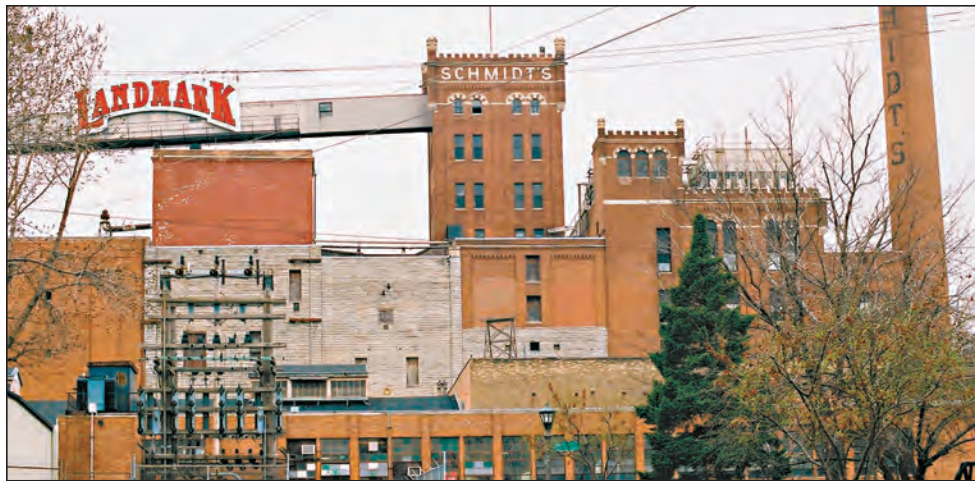
The owners of the former Schmidt Brewery property have opted not to extend a purchase agreement with Brewtown LLC for a third time, according to David Kreitzer, who manages the West End property for the owner, BHGDN. The purchase agreement, which was extended last April and again in October, expired on November 21, costing Brewtown \$600,000 in earnest money.

Talks between city officials and BHGDN, whose principals are former Minnesota Brewing Company owners Bruce Hendry and Glen D. Nelson, are expected to continue as a new buyer for the property is sought. In November, the St. Paul City Council voted unanimously to take over the purchase agreement and become active in negotiations to buy the property.

"We're very interested in continuing to work with the city," Kreitzer said.

Brewtown LLC is composed of father and son developers Jeff and Craig Cohen and the West 7th/Fort Road Federation. Together, they had been working on a \$200 million plan to redevelop the 15-acre site for housing, retail, office and entertainment.

Ward 2 City Council member Dave Thune



The brewery property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

said that though he is disappointed that the purchase agreement was not extended, he is committed to working with the neighborhood and property owner to seek a new developer. It is likely that the West 7th Federation will be involved in any new development plans, Thune said, but at this point everything is up in the air.

Thune believes a new developer can be found, though it may be difficult in the current economic climate. He said many West

End residents have expressed concern that the brewery property will not be redeveloped.

Kreitzer said the property owners have already heard from other interested parties. One attraction could be the money that has already been set aside for redevelopment of the site. The Metropolitan Council and state have approved more than \$1.5 million to clean up the property. The city has also earmarked \$300,000 in Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization funds toward the cleanup. Pol-

lutants known to be on the site include lead and asbestos.

Historic tax credits, obtained through the listing of the property in the National Register of Historic Places, could be another incentive. However, Kreitzer warned that historic designation could also be an obstacle in the eyes of some developers.

Redevelopment plans up to this point have called for saving the brewery's three most historic buildings: the "castle" or main brew-house, the rathskeller and office building, and the oldest section of the bottling house. The office building and rathskeller date from the 1930s. The brewhouse and bottling house are about 100 years old.

Brewtown had announced earlier this year that Dominion Development would purchase the bottling house and turn it into 115 artists' lofts. Dominion also planned to build 16 townhouses on a nearby vacant parcel. The housing project had a price tag of \$47.8 million.

City officials and BHGDN have continued discussions with Dominion, but Kreitzer said many issues must be weighed before any redevelopment plans can proceed. "People may need to re-evaluate what the priorities are for the property," he said.

Agency proposes \$11.5M supportive housing project in Highland

By JANE McCLURE

The Highland District Council's Community Development Committee got its first look on November 17 at Project for Pride in Living's plan for a three-story, 48-unit affordable housing development on West 7th Street and Snelling Avenue. The committee will hold a public meeting on the plan in January.

The \$11.5 million project is in its very early stages and has no set timeline, according to Project for Pride in Living executive director Steve Cramer. PPL officials have been discussing financing assistance with the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development and has already received financial assistance to extend its purchase agreement on the property until the end of 2009.

The building would be constructed on a 1.3-acre site that includes six parcels, including two homes and the Movie Station video

rental store. The current zoning allows multi-family housing, but a variance would be needed to build more than 46 rental units.

Twelve one-bedroom, 23 two-bedroom and 13 three-bedroom apartments are planned. Household incomes would be restricted to 60 percent or less than the Twin Cities' median for 18 of the units. That would allow households to earn up to \$45,000 per year. The remaining units would be restricted to 50 percent or less of the median income, or about \$37,000 per year.

Ten of the larger apartments would serve families who have been homeless. Tenants would have to meet eligibility requirements and pass criminal background and credit checks. PPL plans to limit the number of residents to no more than two per bedroom. It is anticipated that the three-bedroom apartments would only be rented to families.

PPL senior project manager Matt Soucek said the West 7th Street site is attractive be-

cause it is on a major bus line and close to shopping. The building will have a precast concrete and rock-face block exterior meant to complement the colors and style of buildings at Fort Snelling. There will be 48 underground parking spaces.

PPL helps low- and moderate-income people become more self-reliant, and those who live in the new building would be able to take advantage of many programs offered through the agency, including employment programs and after-school activities for children.

PPL has a good track record of providing housing and supportive services in the Twin Cities, according to Barb McCormick, PPL's vice president for housing and development. The nonprofit agency owns more than 800 housing units and a majority of their residents participate in the agency's programs.

Most of the questions raised at the November 17 meeting centered on parking and housing density. Committee member Georgia

Dietz argued that the development would increase the housing density in an area where there are already many apartments and condominiums.

Committee member Bob Brantjen also said the development pattern in the area seemed to be "constricting and consolidating people."

However, other committee members and PPL officials disagreed with those statements. Cramer and Soucek said the apartments would be consistent with land-use plans for West 7th Street.

The project has the support of Ward 3 City Council member Pat Harris, who has pushed for more supportive housing in the city's western neighborhoods.

The City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority, provided about \$100,000 to help PPL extend its purchase of the site. The agency had sought Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, but lost out to three other projects in a city ranking process.

School Notes

Sunny Hollow Montessori, a preschool and elementary school for children ages 33 months through 12 years at 636 S. Mississippi River Blvd., will hold open houses for prospective students and their parents from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 3, and Thursday, January 15. Call 651-690-2307.

A "Tots at TTSP" program for children ages 3-4 will take place at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, December 11, at the Talmud Torah of St. Paul,

768 S. Hamline Ave. Parents may accompany their children or attend a discussion on child development led by school social worker Barb Neren. The second "Tots at TTSP" program will take place on February 5. For information or to register, contact Jennifer Zacks at jennifer.zacks@ttsp.org or 651-698-8807.

Michael Waul, a 21-year-old senior at Macalester College, has been named a Rhodes Scholar from his native Jamaica. A biochemis-

try major and geography minor, he is the only recipient this year of the prestigious scholarship from the Caribbean. Waul is the fourth Caribbean student in the past eight years from Macalester to be awarded this honor and the 13th in the college's history. He plans to pursue a master's degree in medicinal chemistry at Oxford University next fall.

School District 197 will hold an all-district kindergarten open house from 6:30 to 8:00

p.m. Thursday, December 11, at Pilot Knob Elementary School, 1436 Lone Oak Road, Eagan. The event is geared to prospective kindergarten students and their parents. There will be presentations from all district elementary schools and principals, Superintendent Jay Haugen, and a kindergarten alumnus and current Henry Sibley senior about the kindergarten offerings in the West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan area school district. Call 651-405-2788.

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Crime Report

The following calls were gathered from recent Community Watch reports by the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department and from reports by the St. Paul Fire 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

Robbery—An attempted bank robbery occurred at US Bank, 711 S. Cleveland Ave., at about 7:00 a.m. Friday, November 14.

Theft—Several Pioneer Press newspaper boxes were broken into at Cleveland Avenue and Ford Parkway and change was stolen from them between 10:00 p.m. Saturday and 6:00 a.m. Sunday, November 15-16.

—A man stole a computer from Radio Shack, 2026 Ford Pkwy., at about 6:30 p.m. Monday, November 17.

—A theft from auto occurred at Crosby Park between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. Sunday, November 16.

—Thefts from autos were reported in an underground parking garage on the 700 block of South Mississippi River Boulevard between 9:00 p.m. Saturday and 10:00 a.m. Sunday, November 22-23. Windows were broken out of several of the cars and property was stolen.

Lexington-Hamline

Arson—A van was intentionally set on fire and the fire spread to two other vehicles before firefighters were called to the 1300 block of University Avenue at 1:07 a.m. Friday, November 14. Damage was estimated at \$8,000.

—An intentionally set fire was discovered in a car on the 1300 block of University Ave. at 1:30 p.m. Friday, November 14. Damage was estimated at \$1,000.

Macalester-Groveland

Robbery—A woman was robbed at gunpoint on the 2100 block of Grand Avenue at about 10:30 p.m. Saturday, November 15.

Burglary—Pilgrim Lutheran Church, 1935 St. Clair Ave., was broken into between 9:00 p.m. Thursday and 8:00 a.m. Friday, November 13-14. Credit cards and cash were stolen. Fireworks were also set off at the church between 10:00 p.m. Saturday and 6:00 a.m. Sunday, November 15-16.

—Nativity Church, 1900 Wellesley Ave., was burglarized between 4:00 p.m. Saturday and 10:00 a.m. Sunday, November 22-23. Entry was gained by force into the church and its interior offices.

Theft—Bras and underwear were stolen from an apartment building's laundry room on the 1200 block of Grand Avenue between 9:00 and 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 12. The suspect was described as a white male, in his mid- to late 20s, with short dark hair and tattoos.

Merriam Park

Burglary—Two stained-glass windows were taken from a vacant house on the 1600 block of Selby Avenue between October 22

and November 22. Entry was forced through a window.

Theft—A theft from auto occurred on the 400 block of Dewey Street at about 6:00 a.m. Saturday, November 15.

—A car was stolen at the University of St. Thomas between 10:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Friday, November 21.

Summit Hill

Burglary—Three suspects forced their entry through a locked patio door and tried to steal the ATM machine at Billy's on Grand, 857 Grand Ave., at about 12:30 p.m. Thursday, November 13. The alarm was activated and the suspects fled.

—Multiple items were taken from a home on the 200 block of South Lexington Parkway between 8:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Thursday, November 13. Entry was forced.

—A home on the 800 block of Selby Avenue was broken into between 11:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Friday, November 21.

Summit-University

Robbery—Two men robbed a male juvenile at gunpoint at Lexington Parkway and Portland Avenue at about 3:00 p.m. Saturday, November 15. The victim had driven from Bemidji to meet an acquaintance. Police cited the victim for driving without a license and driving after suspension.

—A gun was used in a robbery on the 600 block of Portland Avenue at about 2:00 a.m. Sunday, November 16. An 18-year-old West End man and a juvenile were arrested for the robbery at Dale Street and Ashland Avenue about a half hour later.

Burglary—Two men fled after they were found inside an apartment on the 500 block of Grand Avenue on Thursday, November 13. Police arrested the suspects for burglary and possession of burglary tools at about 10:00 a.m. One suspect, a 40-year-old Frogtown man who was arrested at Summit Avenue and St. Albans Street, was also wanted on a Hennepin County warrant for burglary. The other suspect, a 41-year-old Minneapolis man, was arrested on the 600 block of Portland Avenue.

—The side door was pried open and four bottles of liquor were stolen from Selby Wine & Spirits, 778 Selby Ave., at about 3:30 a.m. Saturday, November 15.

—A computer was stolen from a home on the 600 block of Hague Avenue between 3:30 and 6:00 p.m. Saturday, November 22.

West End

Miscellaneous—The FORCE and SWAT units executed a search warrant on the 900 block of Tuscarora Avenue between 7:30 and 10:30 p.m. Friday, November 21. A 45-year-old male resident was arrested on a Dakota County warrant for drug possession, a 41-year-old female resident was arrested for methamphetamine possession, and a 51-year-old male resident was cited for operating a disorderly house.

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25 - 10:00 AM
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SUNDAY, JANUARY 4 - 4:30 PM
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District Council News

Highland Park

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Board meeting set—The Highland District Council's board of directors will meet at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 3, in the gym of the Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. The agenda will include a presentation by Bob Hammer of the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development on the city's district council budgeting process. The board will also vote on its Transportation Committee's recommendation on a bicycle boulevard. An at-large position on the board of directors also will be filled. Those who are interested in running for the seat should contact the district council office.

Transportation update—The HDC's Transportation Committee met on November 24 to make its recommendation on a proposed bicycle boulevard on Highland Parkway and Edgumbe Road. Neighbors living along the proposed route presented the committee with a petition against the project that had more than 300 signatures. Their main concerns included safety, the loss of trees when sidewalks are added, the cost of the project and enforcement issues. After discussion, the committee voted 7-2 to recommend rejecting the proposal.

Community Development update—Project for Pride in Living presented its plans on November 17 for a proposed 48-unit affordable housing development on West 7th Street and

Snelling Avenue. The committee will hold a public meeting on the proposal in January.

Community Services update—The St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation is looking for a volunteer from Highland Park to sit on its Dog Park Advisory Council. The HDC's Community Services Committee will meet at 7:00 p.m. Monday, December 8, to hear speakers address the city's position on dog parks. For information, contact the HDC office.

Mark your calendar—HDC board meeting, 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, December 3; Community Services Committee meeting, 7:00 p.m. Monday, December 8; and Community Development Committee, 6:30 p.m., Monday, December 15. All meetings will be held at Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy.

Union Park

www.unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

Fall fund drive—The Union Park District Council is conducting its second annual fall fund drive. A nonprofit organization that represents Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline and Lexington-Hamline neighborhoods to the city of St. Paul, the UPDC gathers local feedback on issues such as street improvements, commercial development, crime prevention, the revitalization of Merriam Park and the environmental impact of the Rock-Tenn paper recycling plant. In addition, the council

publishes a quarterly newsletter, distributes a monthly electronic newsletter and weekly crime notifications, maintains a website and co-hosts annual neighborhood cleanups. Donations are needed to help pay for those and other services. This year's fundraising goal is \$9,000, and contributions are tax-deductible. For information about the UPDC or to make a donation, visit the council's website or call the office.

Merriam Park master plan—The Union Park District Council's board of directors will hold its next meeting at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 3, at the Merriam Park Recreation Center, 2000 St. Anthony Ave. There will be a presentation on the Merriam Park master plan and a discussion of the next steps to be taken. All board meetings are open to the public. For more information on the master plan, visit www.u-plan.org/MPMasterPlan.htm.

Recycling bins—Free recycling bins are handed out 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 December 3 and 17.

Stay connected—The UPDC publishes a monthly electronic newsletter that updates residents on upcoming events, meetings and programs. Weekly crime notifications are also sent to subscribing residents giving the date, case number and location of crimes in the neighborhood. To subscribe to either, e-mail info@unionparkdc.org with "subscribe to e-news" or "subscribe to crime notification" on the subject line.

Volunteers

Fabulous Fern's Horseshoe Club and the St. Paul YWCA will organize the Adopt-A-Family Christmas Gift Drive for the third year in a row. The YWCA has many needy families participating in its transitional housing program. They are people who are working to get ahead and just need a little help from their friends. Everything from toys and winter boots and coats to pots and pans may be dropped off at Fern's, 400 Selby Ave., and Mississippi Market, Selby and Dale. Lists of needed items may

be found at each location. Gift cards also are sought. A wrapping party will be held at Mississippi Market on Saturday, December 20, followed by refreshments at Fern's. To participate in the wrap-athon, call 651-341-9419.

Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County suggests having a tree planted in a park this season as a living holiday gift. A hand-stamped holiday card announcing your gift will be sent to the person

you wish to honor. After the tree is planted next spring, the recipient will receive a map showing the location. The tribute trees are \$75 each or three for \$200. Call 651-698-4543 or visit friendsoftheparks.org.

The Highland Friendship Club will hold its second annual Lanes for Friendship fundraiser featuring Minnesota Twin Joe Mauer and other guests from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Saturday, December 6, at Flaherty's Bowl in Arden

Hills. Proceeds will benefit activities for young adults with disabilities. Contact club director Mary McKeown at 651-698-4096 or mary@highlandfriendshipclub.org.

Ramsey County Volunteer Services needs help providing general assistance and information to visitors of the Ramsey County Government Center East. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old. Call 651-266-4090 or e-mail volunteerservices@co.ramsey.mn.us.

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Merrick to take over delivery of Mac-Grove senior chore service

By Jane McClure

Senior citizens in the Macalester-Groveland, Highland Park and Summit Hill neighborhoods will no longer have the Job Connection to call for help with snow shoveling, housecleaning and other chores after this month. The Macalester-Groveland Community Council has learned that it will lose an \$18,000 annual grant from the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging that supported its Job Connection program. That money and the responsibility for delivering the chore services will go to Merrick Community Services on St. Paul's East Side beginning January 1.

According to Merrick and Macalester-Groveland representatives, those seniors who receive the services, as well as the independent contractors who provide them, will not notice many changes.

Macalester-Groveland executive director Melissa Martinez-Sones said the district council is working with Merrick to ensure a seamless transition. "People will still receive the same services, and probably with the same contractors," she said.

However, the district council will no longer administer a program it has operated since 1989. The Job Connection was recognized nationally when it first started offering senior citizens and people with disabilities assistance with household chores so they could continue to live independently.

The Job Connection served more than 200 seniors in the Macalester-Groveland, Highland Park and Summit Hill neighborhoods. The merger with Merrick will result in a program that serves more than 400 people.

Merrick is a large community service agency that operates children, family and senior citizen programs at locations throughout the East Side. The agency is currently working with the St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation and the St. Paul Public Library on ideas for a larger, multipurpose center in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood that would include a new library.

Fran Ivory, executive director of Merrick, said the agency is preparing for the expansion. "We're pretty much an East Side-based agency, so this is new for us," he said. However, Merrick staff believe it should not be difficult to meld the two programs into one, according to Ivory.

Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging as-

sociate director Bob Anderson said seniors who have used the Job Connection in the past should be confident that they will continue to receive good-quality services through Merrick. "In the long run, we see the Merrick staff's ability to manage and grow the chore service program as a real plus," he said.

Under the Job Connection, people who called for services were given the phone numbers of workers to call. Merrick, on the other hand, will contact the workers and refer them to the clients.

Ivory said Merrick wants to continue working with as many current Job Connection contractors and volunteers as possible. "Our goal is to take the best from both programs, learn from both and have the best program possible," he said.

Chore services are supported through federal Title III funds. Over a three-year period, the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging has \$490,000 available for Title III programs. The money is to be used to provide services that allow senior citizens and people with disabilities to live independently in their homes.

The grants for chore services are awarded competitively each year. Fourteen organizations received money in the last round. Anderson said there is no reason Macalester-Groveland could not reapply in the future. However, he noted that the federal funding has been cut in recent years.

Martinez-Sones said the change to Merrick follows a pattern as chore services delivered for years by smaller agencies get centralized. The St. Anthony Park Community Council, for example, is now delivering chore services to more than half a dozen St. Paul neighborhoods, including Merriam Park and Snelling-Hamline.

The challenge for smaller chore service programs is that there are fewer options for money beyond the MAAA. Grants for many programs have dried up altogether or have been redirected to other needs. For years the Macalester-Groveland program was supported through grants from faith-based organizations.

For several years the program also received Civic Organization Partnership Program money from the city of St. Paul. COPP fell victim to city budget cuts and evolved into a smaller grant program whose money is awarded at the discretion of each of the seven City Council members.

Senior News

The Aging Splendidly lunch series will continue at noon Thursday, December 11, at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 104 S. Snelling Ave. Congregation members Dave and Sue Klevan will speak on "Healthy Cooking, Healthy Lives." An optional health check will be held at 11:30 a.m. The series will continue on the second Thursday of each month through May. The cost is \$7.00. Call Russ Carlson at 651-699-5560.

Phyllis Chickett of Macalester-Groveland was named third runner-up at the Ms. Senior Sweetheart Pageant of America held in late October in Massachusetts. Chickett, 82, was the second oldest woman in the competition and the only one in her 80s to finish in the top five. A former volunteer coordinator and social worker with the Macalester-Groveland



Evelyn Dzik marked her 100th birthday on November 21 at Rosewood Estate of Highland Park. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Living at Home program, she was the winner of the St. Paul Winter Carnival's Klondike Kate competition in 1996.

Winter Carnival Senior Royalty candidates are being sought. Individuals 55 and older may apply to become one of the three men and three women who will reign as this winter's Senior Royal-

ty. The application deadline is December 26. Contact Mary Livingston at 651-266-6447.

The Temple of Aaron Synagogue's new Hazak Group for Jewish adults 55 and older will visit the Russian Museum of Art in Minneapolis at 2:00 p.m. Sunday, December 14. Admission is \$5.00 Call 651-698-4358 for carpooling.

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Playtime oasis

Wonderment specializes in natural toys that cater to kids' imaginations

BY JUDY WOODWARD

Nearly all retail stores promote themselves as unique, but Wonderment, the new children's toy store at 949 Grand Ave., has a more solid claim in that department than most. How many establishments, after all, feature their own life-size indoor tree?

A mighty tree trunk rises at the back of Wonderments, its lifelike branches scraping the ceiling and providing access to a play area and upper loft. Wonderment co-founder Joyce Olson-Kapell designed the tree to be "a little bit mysterious," said colleague Lisa MacMartin. Although the tree is man-made, it is one of the few things in the store that is not constructed from natural materials.

MacMartin said the store focuses on offering "natural toys that we view as the heirlooms of tomorrow." They are the kind of sturdy playthings, in other words, that are likely to be passed on to grandkids.

There are certainly plenty of items to catch the eye of grandparents looking for ways to share their childhood memories with modern youngsters. Wooden toys set the tone. From building blocks to elaborate dollhouses and child-size kitchen appliances, the store is a playtime oasis in a plastic world. Old-fashioned marbles are a big seller, MacMartin said, as are model airplane kits and costumes for would-be young princesses and pirates.

Beeswax candle sets and Magnetic Poetry kits—those staple decorations of many a refrigerator door—have crossover appeal to parents and kids. Olson-Kapell and her husband invented Magnetic Poetry, and Wonderments carries the kits in eight languages, including Swedish, along with "Big Words" for small kids.

Other toys suggest a more contemporary sensibility. Noncompetitive games are a popular item, said employee Laurel Hovetausend, who explained to a visitor how a board game called Roundup works. "There are wild horses

that you need to get into the corral," she said, "but it takes teamwork to move the boulders in the way."

MacMartin said everything sold at Wonderment has a common theme. "We want a toy that has broad uses," she said, "one that isn't a one-trick pony, but something where a child can enter into creative play and use it for a long time."

She cited a remote-control car as a typical "one-trick pony," and contrasted it with an elaborate wooden dollhouse. "The remote-control car is run by a child with a handheld gizmo and that's all it does," she said. "But the dollhouse is the centerpiece of the playroom. It sets the stage for play with friends and alone. It's a theater of creativity that will last from the time the child is 3 until she's 10 or beyond."

Fostering creative play is crucial and can often mean Wonderment staff gently discouraging adults who want to fast-track their precocious offspring into toys beyond their age level. According to MacMartin, creativity for a 4-year-old means art supplies and pretend play, such as the kind involving the store's popular line of wooden groceries.

Creativity for a 10-year-old, on the other hand, often involves the world of handicrafts, which is another area in which Wonderment excels. "We all love crafts," said MacMartin of herself, Olson-Kapell and fellow co-owner Suzanne Fenner. From whittling kits for young carvers to a vast array of ornamental handicrafts, the store offers supplies to fan the most modest sparks of creativity into a blaze of accomplishment.

During a recent craft class, five girls and two moms gathered in the loft to turn felt and colored feathers into handicraft birds. At the end of the class, MacMartin said, the moms had an attractive holiday ornament and the girls were playing with their fledgling "birds" in the cloth nest provided by the store.

Boys scornful of beads and feathers can try the sword-making workshop or pirate map-



Waldorf-style dolls await playmates at Wonderment.



Assistant manager Laurel Hove Tausend holds a Folkmanis Griffin puppet surrounded by other treasures in Wonderment on Grand. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

making sessions. Or there could be some father-son bonding over the catapult kits.

"Dads who feel like fish out of water" at more conventional toy stores gravitate naturally to the science kits and the catapults at Wonderment, MacMartin said.

Wonderment will showcase its craft classes during the annual Grand Meander on Saturday, December 6. Between 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. or while supplies last, the store will offer materials and instruction for making Advent wreaths. Participants will be asked only to make a \$5.00 donation to the Joyce Food Shelf in Minneapolis.

If the three founders seem to have an uncanny knack for picking great toys, maybe it is because they mastered the basics of the art of matching up kids and playthings long before they opened their first Wonderment store in the Linden Hills neighborhood of

Minneapolis in 2005. MacMartin, Olson-Kapell and Fenner have known each other since their children attended Minneapolis' City of Lakes Waldorf School together nearly a decade ago.

"We did volunteer fundraising for the school," MacMartin said, "and we liked working together."

Part of that fundraising involved organizing toy fairs and the three noticed that many of the best items were available only through catalogs. By the time their own children were ready for high school, the idea for Wonderments was born.

"Based on the work we did at school toy fairs," MacMartin said, "we knew there was a need in the broader marketplace."

For more information about the shop, including a class schedule, visit www.wondermentshop.com.

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Wesley Norquist, 1, and sister Natalie, 4, met the jolly ol' elf at a previous Breakfast with Santa. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Breakfast with Santa will be offered by the Highland Business Association between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Saturdays, December 6 and 13, at the Chatterbox Pub, 800 S. Cleveland Ave. All children and their adult guests are invited to enjoy a complimentary breakfast. Admission is with either a nonperishable food donation for the Francis Basket Food Shelf or a new toy for Toys for Tots. Santa will be on hand to listen to children's wishes and the Hillcrest Recreation Center staff will be organizing a craft project for kids. Space is limited. To register, call the Chatterbox at 651-699-1154.

Mendota Plaza at Highway 110 and Dodd Road in Mendota Heights is collecting gifts for Neighbors Inc. through December 19. Suggested donations include puzzles, board games, books, dolls, coloring books, arts and crafts supplies, gift cards, radios, bath and body products, sports equipment, socks, hats and mittens. For information, call 651-455-1508.

Martha's Gardens, 2484 University Ave., will hold an open house from 3:00 to 11:00 p.m. Friday, December 5, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, December 6. There will be food, wine and live music. The floral studio is owned by Macalester-Groveland resident Martha Gabler Lunde.

Music Together is offering free demonstration classes of its early childhood music program on December 11 at Cinema Ballroom on St. Clair Avenue and on December 9, 11-12, 14 and 20 at the Dancer's Studio on Snelling Avenue. The 10-week winter session begins January 5. To register for the demonstration classes, call 651-439-4219.










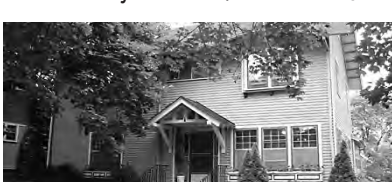



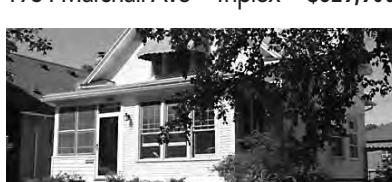










The Highland Business Association will hold a holiday social from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 10, at Summit Brewing, 910 Montreal Circle. The cost is \$15-\$20 and includes food catered by Buca di Beppo, Summit beer and root beer. Call the HBA office at 651-699-9042.

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A Family Christmas

BY ROGER BARR

Driving home from work, Matthew Bartholomew stopped in front of his house. As he often did, he paused to conduct a quick inspection of the crèche that filled the front yard. Normally when Matt looked at this panorama of 50 figures, he felt the holiday spirit rise in him, but tonight another feeling he couldn't put a name to nagged at him.

All of the life-size figures looked to be in perfect order. The simple wooden stable constructed by his father some 50 years ago gave shelter to Mary, Joseph and the Christ Child. A cow and a donkey stood behind them in the shadows. On one side of the stable, the Three Wise Men stood in elegant robes, each bearing a gift. Their camels stood grandly behind them. On the other side of the stable, a group of shepherds worshipped the Infant, their abundant flock milling around them. A multitude of angels hovered above the stable, singing praises to the newborn King. In a moment, Matt would throw the switch that illuminated the scene and the figures would almost come to life.

Sitting in the car, it suddenly seemed to Matt that the Christmas display was a bit excessive, to say nothing of all the work it involved. Why did he do this year after year?

Turning into his driveway, Matt pushed the remote and the double garage door lurched upward. Deidre's car was already in the garage. He pulled in beside it and got out. He threw the switch and the front yard lit up. At the top of the steps, he paused to get the mail, then turned to look at the crèche from a different perspective and wondered again why he kept doing this year after year. There were other, simpler ways to observe the holiday, he thought.

Deidre was sitting at the kitchen table, the morning paper spread out before her. She looked up. "And how was your day?"

"The usual," Matt said as he picked through the stack of circulars and credit card offers that passed for mail these days. Among the junk he found a white, hand-addressed envelope, the first Christmas card of the season. He glanced at the return address and drew in his breath. It was from the family whose son had nearly destroyed the crèche seven years earlier. Quickly, he tore open the envelope and removed the card. "Dear Mr. Bartholomew," he read to himself. "Last Christmas, you gave us a great gift by calling to tell us that our son Geoffrey was alive and safe. We want you to know that Geoffrey came home to visit last summer. He told us that visiting you had given him the courage to come home to his family. He is back in California, but plans to visit us during the holidays. Sincerely, Gordon and Jeanne Lewis."

He handed the card to Deidre. "Look at this."

Deidre took the card and opened it. "Good for him," she said, closing the card and handing it back. "He's lucky he has parents to go home to."

Matt waited for her to go on, sensing the unspoken point behind the statement. Deidre turned a page of the newspaper.

"There's a voice mail from your brother, Tim," Deidre said. "Something about getting together for lunch tomorrow."

"Tim wants to have lunch with me?" Matt said. "Now, there's a switch."

Matt scanned the menu and debated whether to order something healthy or succumb to temptation and order the cheeseburger and mountain of fries he had watched the waitress carry to the next booth.

"I'll have the basic burger," Matt said, forgoing the cheese in the way of compromise. "The house salad instead of fries." Another

compromise. "And a Diet Coke."

Across the table, his brother Tim appeared unfettered by any dietary deliberations brought on by middle age. "Double cheeseburger and fries," he said, flipping the menu shut and handing it to the waitress. "And a real Coke."

The waitress pocketed her order pad and headed toward the kitchen. Tim rested his elbows on the table, laced his fingers together and formed a church steeple with his index fingers. He pulled his hands apart and placed his palms on the table. "Well," he began, "you're probably wondering why I wanted to have lunch." He stared at his hands and tapped out a rhythm with his fingertips. "We never get together, just the two of us."

He's stalling, Matt thought, which was not his usual way of doing things. Of the eight Bartholomew siblings, Tim was the direct one. No touchy-feely moments for him. A conversation with Tim was like stepping into the ring with a Golden Gloves champ, all quick jabs and no pulled punches. But a messy divorce three years ago had brought forth his softer side, which seemed to thrive in the sunlight of his recent marriage to a lovely woman named Linda. Matt knew his brother well enough to know the one subject that would leave him grasping for words.

"But it was nice to have the whole family together the other night," Matt said. Tim's eyes flew up to meet his own. Jackpot, Matt thought.

The waitress returned and set their beverages in front of them. Tim tore the end off the white paper wrapper, drew out the straw and stuck it in his glass. "Getting together with the Bartholomew clan is like beating your head against the wall," he said.

"Meaning?"

"It feels so good when you stop."

"You and Linda are coming over on Christmas Eve, aren't you?" Matt asked. "You've come over the past two years. Just because you got married doesn't mean you can skip out on us."

"I told Linda you'd be inviting us," Tim said. "She's thinking about it..."

"Thinking about it?" Matt said.

"Linda was a little overwhelmed at the crèche lighting ceremony dinner the other night," Tim said. "You know how this family can be."

"You mean she feels intimidated in a house full of people who eat too much, drink too much, talk too loud and play Trivial Pursuit and Monopoly like they're contact sports?"

"Wouldn't you?" Tim asked.

"I would," Matt replied. "I do."

"She doesn't feel like part of the family," Tim said. "I don't blame her. Sometimes I don't feel like part of this family. Half of our loving siblings hardly spoke to me for a year after Sandy and I split up. They talked to Sandy, though."

"Give it time," Matt advised. "It'll work out."

"There's something else," Tim said. "Well, maybe I shouldn't say anything. It's your crèche now."

"What?"

"Well, Linda knows the story behind the crèche figures, how Dad created a new one every time someone joined the family. She'd never say anything, but I get the feeling she was disappointed the other night that nothing had been added for her."

Matt suddenly understood why Tim had wanted to have lunch. "I'm not sure what I can do," he said. "The yard is full. There's no room to add a figure. Other than restoring figures after the vandalism, I've never really changed anything."

"It's your crèche and your decision," Tim said. "If you want it to be a museum dedicated to the old man, fine. Let's change the subject before I stick my foot in my mouth."

"No, tell me."



"Well, you can leave Sandy's piece in the shed as far as I'm concerned," Tim said of his ex-wife. "It certainly won't hurt my feelings. Like I said, it's your crèche and your decision."

"Well, I'll take it under advisement," Matt said.

"Just don't take it the wrong way," Tim said. "I don't mean it like that."

The waitress reappeared and set down their plates, mixing them up. "He gets the geezer food," Tim said. Matt snatched a French fry before the waitress switched the plates.

"Sorry 'bout that," the waitress said as she made the switch. "Anything else?"

"Check back with me in a bit for pie," Tim said.

In an indirect way, the direct one had put a name on the feeling that was nagging at Matt. The crèche was more than a display that honored Christmas and its promise of salvation. The crèche honored the members of the Bartholomew family as well. Each figure had been made by Matt's father in honor of a new member of the family. Each of the angels that hovered over the stable honored a family member who had died. But the yard was full—no room at the inn, as it were. The family was changing. Soon enough, his nieces and nephews and his own children would be getting married. New babies would be born. Then what would he do? How would he maintain his father's tradition?

Having put a name on the feeling didn't make the decision any easier for Matt. He went back and forth on it for a couple of days. Maybe there was a way to cram more figures into the yard, but standing on the boulevard studying the front yard, he couldn't see one. Maybe he should just declare the crèche finished and let it be a museum dedicated to the old man, as Tim had said.

It was his crèche and his decision, but it was also Matt's habit to walk through family issues like this with Deidre. If Tim was the direct one, Deidre was the outsider, an impartial arbitrator on all things Bartholomew.

The opportunity to discuss the issue presented itself late one afternoon, before the annual White Castle run and Christmas tree shopping expedition. Deidre was in the living room sorting through a large cardboard box filled with Christmas decorations. He looked over her shoulder into the box.

"So Tim and I had lunch the other day," he began.

Just then the front door opened and slammed shut hard enough to send a shudder through the house. Allison was home from volleyball practice. Her face was red from the cold—and her fury. She dumped her backpack in the recliner, followed by her coat. She crossed her arms on her chest and blew a strand of blond hair out of her face.

"My chemistry teacher thinks I only have

one class," she seethed. "He gave us a whole stupid chapter to read by tomorrow. I've got stupid history to do, and stupid math, which I don't get. It'll take me all night! And everybody's gonna hang at the coffee shop."

"Don't forget we're all going out for supper and then Christmas tree shopping," Deidre said.

Allison grabbed her backpack, leaving her coat behind. "Not me! I'll be doing stupid chemistry!" She trudged upstairs.

"Miss Hit and Run!" Matt said. "Whew! Were you like that?"

"I don't know," Deidre said. "I don't remember." She looked away, but not before he saw a forlorn look pass over her face. He had seen that look before.

"You OK?" he asked.

"Yes," Deidre said. She looked down into the box and rummaged around. "I don't remember," she said, "and I don't have anyone I can ask about what I was like when I was a kid."

"I'm sorry I upset you," he said.

"It's not you," she said quickly. "It's just the way things are. It's been 25 years, but..." she sniffed back her tears, "...it's still hard sometimes."

"I don't think you ever get over losing your parents," he said. "I haven't."

Deidre dug into the box again, then pushed it aside and, getting up a little too quickly, followed Allison up the stairs.

There was a time in their relationship when Matt would have immediately followed her to offer words of comfort, but he had long since learned that this was her topic and she dealt with it in her own way. Most of the time, the subject of her parents remained tucked away, like a piece of furniture that had been removed from the living room and stored in the attic.

The whole story about her parents had come out one sunny summer afternoon early in their relationship, as they walked hand in hand along the river. Although they had known each other less than a month, they were already serious and it was time to confess past sins and share their deepest secrets.

"I was married before," Matt confessed as they walked along. "It was a mistake. She was ready, I wasn't. I spent a long time running away, until I realized that I was running from the very things I told myself I wanted. By that time it was too late. It took awhile, but...I finally learned how to stop running...and there you were."

"If you hadn't stopped, I would have caught up with you," Deidre said playfully. "I've always been a fast runner."

They walked along in a comfortable silence. "Now it's your turn," Matt prompted.

"I'm an only child," Deidre said. They walked in silence for more than a minute. Then Deidre suddenly stopped and pulled on his hand to turn him toward her. "My parents



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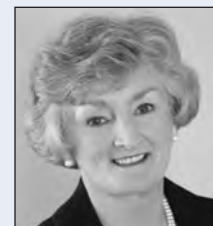
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23 ◀ 'A FAMILY CHRISTMAS'

were killed in a car accident when I was 20."

Just hearing her say it made Matt gasp. "I'm so sorry," he said.

She squeezed his hand to acknowledge his words. Then slowly and with great detachment, she told him of the phone call she had received in her college dorm room, how time had suddenly stopped. The college administrators, her friends and old neighbors had been wonderful, she said, helping her get through the funerals. Afterward, she returned to school because there seemed to be nowhere else to go. She decided to sell the house, finding that she was unable to be in the rooms that looked the same but were forever changed. She threw herself into her studies to distract herself from the grief, accumulating enough credits to graduate in three years.

After graduation, she found a job in health care. She put her head down and dedicated herself to her work. And now, eight years later as they walked along, her hand in his, the burning grief had faded away.

"I get sad sometimes," she said matter-of-factly, "when I see something that reminds me of them or I hear something I know Mother or Dad would have liked."

They walked along in silence, the river bubbling beside them. When Deidre spoke again, it was to suggest a restaurant for dinner.

In 17 years of marriage, Matt had come to understand how much Deidre was shaped by her tragic loss. The recognition that you could be gone in a flash was, he knew, the root of her philosophy to enjoy each day given her. He attributed her immense practicality and independence to the fact that she had faced so many major decisions alone.

The absence of her parents explained her absolute and fierce devotion as a mother to Allison and Christopher. It explained why she embraced his family, especially his parents, during their courtship and early years of marriage, why she had taken his mother's death from breast cancer in 1994 so incredibly hard. It explained why she seemed so withdrawn when his own father became terminally ill. But she soon righted herself, as she always did, and soldiered on, devoting herself to family and work.

Through the years, Matt had learned to take his cues from Deidre, listening on those rare occasions when she wanted to talk about her parents or remaining silent and respecting her privacy. But not this time.

He found her upstairs, digging more Christmas boxes out of the hall closet.

"What can I do?" he asked.

"You can help me carry this stuff downstairs."

"Anything else?"

She smiled a sad smile. "No, what I need is not within your power. But thanks for asking."

In the living room, Deidre started unpacking the boxes. From one large box she withdrew the plastic Santa Claus that lit from within and from another box Rudolph with the red light-bulb nose. She positioned the figures in their traditional places next to the fireplace. Getting down on her hands and knees, she plugged in the two electrical cords. The Santa Claus lit up. Rudolph's red nose brightened and began to blink. She sat back on her heels.

"Santa and Rudolph are one of the few things I took from the house," she said. "I got rid of almost everything because I couldn't bear to look at it. Now...I wish I had kept more. Oh, well. Spilled milk."

Matt put his hand on her shoulder, and she reached up and covered his hand with hers. "I don't know why, but I've been thinking about them all fall," she said. "They were there one moment, and then in a flash they were gone, and I had no family."

"We're your family," he said, meaning the whole Bartholomew clan, and instantly regretted the remark for its unintended callousness.

"I know," she replied, pushing herself to her

feet. "But it's not the same."

"No," he said. "I guess it's not."

Later, after the expedition to the Christmas tree lot, after the tree had been decorated and all the other holiday decorations hung in their traditional places, Deidre sat down beside Matt and took his hand. "I snapped at you earlier," she said. "I'm sorry."

"Are you OK?" he asked. "Really OK?"

"My memories of them get fainter every year," she said. "It's hard to even remember what they looked like. I don't know why it's so hard this year."

He put his arm around her shoulders and slowly tipped her head onto his own shoulder.

"You said earlier you had lunch with Tim," Deidre said. "What did you learn?"

"Not much. He said we never got together anymore, just the two of us."

The absence of family on Deidre's side certainly made holidays less complicated. But at the same time, it left a void in all their lives. Matt sometimes pictured in his mind the proverbial family tree, its single trunk bearing the names of Allison and Christopher dividing into two great limbs representing Deidre and himself. Matt's limb branched out with seven siblings, their spouses and families, but Deidre's limb was brutally sawn off just beyond her name, leaving a flat oval plane of exposed yellow wood that somehow never grayed with the passage of time.

The absence of those family branches did not go unnoticed by Allison and Christopher. Several days after the Christmas decorations had gone up, Matt was flipping through the channels when Christopher sat down beside him.

"Tell me about Grandpa," Christopher said.

"Well," Matt began, "he originally made the crèche, you know—"

"Not Grandpa Bartholomew," Christopher interrupted. "Grandpa Collins. Mom said that he gave her the Santa and Rudolph when she was little. When I asked her about him, she just said he died a long time ago. She never talks about him."

"Well, it's hard for your mom to talk about him," Matt said, embarrassed by his assumption. "I don't know much about him. He and your grandma died years before your mom and I met. I know your mom misses them every day."

"I miss Grandpa and I never even met him," Christopher said.

"I feel the same way," Matt said.

They all missed Duncan and Teresa Collins. To everyone but Deidre, they were two figures in a formal portrait hanging on the wall in the upstairs hallway, plus a few stories.

Matt kept a discreet watch on his wife. As Christmas drew nearer, there were no more references to her parents. Holiday music played on the CD player. Meticulously wrapped presents began to appear underneath the Christmas tree. When the mother in charge of costumes for the church Christmas pageant broke her arm in a fall, Deidre spent several nights at her sewing machine.

On the Saturday morning before Christmas, Deidre woke Allison and Christopher before 9:00 and filled them with pancakes. "We're going out," she told Matt. "You're not invited."

Devoting herself to work and family, Matt thought. What could a guy do? He pulled on his coat and went out to the front yard. As he often did, he walked down to the street to look at the crèche, not as its keeper but as a visitor seeking inspiration.

For 10 years, he had kept the crèche tradition in unerring devotion to his father's original plan. Except, he realized as he stood there, the plan he had followed for 10 years was only the last of a succession of plans his father had made. His father never regarded the crèche as finished. Through the years, his father had employed considerable ingenuity to keep his custom of adding a figure each time someone

'Family Christmas' read

Merriam Park author Roger Barr will read his new short story, "A Family Christmas," on Thursday, December 4, in a benefit for the Department of Indian Works food shelf. The reading will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the chapel of the St. Paul Area Council of Churches, 1671 Summit Ave.

Prior to the reading, the St. Paul Area Council of Churches will host a boutique featuring American Indian jewelry, crafts and food from 3:00 to 6:30 p.m. Admission to the boutique and reading is free. However, those attending the reading will be asked to make a donation of money or nonperishable food to the food shelf.

"A Family Christmas" is the 11th annual holiday story about the fictional Bartholomew family that Barr has written for the *Villager*. Chapbook copies of the story will be for sale at the reading, with all proceeds going to the food shelf.

joined the family: camels for the Wise Men, a cow and donkey for the stable, a phalanx of shepherds and finally an ever-expanding flock of sheep.

Now, as Tim had so inelegantly put it, it was Matt's crèche and Matt's decision. Deidre's words from the other night came back to him: "What I need is not within your power." Perhaps not, but there was something he could do after all. According to the Bible, an angel of the Lord appeared before the shepherds tending their flock one night and told them of the birth of the Christ Child. An angel could carry a message to Deidre.

Downstairs in the basement workshop, Matt pulled the map of the front yard from its cardboard tube and unrolled it on the workbench. Each of the crèche figures was represented on the map by a circle with a year written inside it. He studied the circles that represented the angels, paying attention to the dates. He opened the composition book in which his father had recorded additions to the crèche and read through the entries.

He found the entry for the first angel his father created: "Mother died October 3, 1959, while I was making an angel for crèche. Dedicated this angel to her memory." And then he found another entry: "Created angel for Aunt Evelyn, called home to our Lord's family, June 17, 1964." There wasn't time to create a new angel for Deidre, but this angel had fulfilled one mission and could take on a new one.

Outside in the front yard, Matt climbed up the back of the stable and, balancing himself on the roof, removed Aunt Evelyn's angel from its anchor. If anyone asked about the angel's absence, he would simply say it needed repair. He carried the angel downstairs to the workshop, then headed back upstairs. In the upstairs hallway, he removed the portrait of Duncan and Teresa Collins from the wall and took it to the study. Carefully he slipped the portrait from the polished wood frame and scanned it on the printer. He slid the portrait back into the frame and returned it to its place on the wall.

In the workshop he studied the portrait, comparing the forever young face of Teresa Collins to the painted face of the angel. With paint, he could approximate the auburn hair. He could rouge the cheeks lightly, change the eye color. It wouldn't be perfect, but...

As he worked, a plan for the angel's presentation unfolded in his mind. He phoned Tim. "You two are coming on Christmas Eve, right?" he asked. "It's important that you come."

On Christmas Eve, Tim and Linda came over for dinner after candlelight services. Deidre had added a leaf to the diningroom table to accommodate two extra family members. In keeping with tradition, the table was set with the family china. The menu, as requested by Allison and Christopher, consisted of spaghetti with red sauce

and canned corn, a salad and garlic bread. The family members took their places at the table. Instead of grace, Matt read the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke, his voice nearly breaking on the phrase, "And an angel of the Lord appeared to them."

Afterward, the adults took their coffee and everyone adjourned to the living room. The room was lit only by the Christmas tree lights and the red and white glow of Santa and Rudolph. The conversation drifted from one Christmas story to another. In a quiet moment, Matt cleared his throat. "I know we traditionally open gifts on Christmas morning," he said, "but this year I have some gifts that I need to give tonight."

Allison and Christopher exchanged glances, shocked that their father would commit such a breach of protocol after years of steadfastly refusing their pleas to let them open just one gift on Christmas Eve.

Matt hurried downstairs to the workshop and returned with the angel covered by a white sheet. He stood before Deidre, holding the angel beside him.

"No wrapping paper, I'm afraid," Matt said, pulling off the sheet. "In memory of your mother, who watches over you from above. At least at Christmastime...you'll have...you won't be completely alone anymore."

Deidre's hands came up to her to face as she recognized the features. "Oh, my!" she said. "What have you done? How did you—?" She buried her face in her hands, then reached out to touch the white robe. Slowly her hand reached up to caress the angel's face. "Oh, my!" She laid her head against the angel's breast. Her shoulders began to shake.

For a moment, Matt was terrified that he had made a mistake. Around them, Allison and Christopher stirred uneasily. Tim and Linda leaned forward on the couch in stunned silence. Deidre rose to her feet. Her face was streaked with tears.

"You!" she said. Matt felt himself caught in a fierce embrace. He slipped his arms around his wife's shoulders. He felt dampness against his shoulder. After a long moment, Deidre pulled away. She grasped his hand and turned to look again at the angel.

"I'll put it in the crèche tomorrow," he promised. "For Christmas."

"No," Deidre said. "Let's keep it in here, where I can look at it."

"Well, guess what?" Matt said after a moment. "I'm not finished yet." He turned to Linda. "I have something for you." He gave her a red box tied with green ribbon. Linda slipped off the ribbon and removed the lid from the box. She drew out a white card and squinted to make out the words: "I.O.U. one sheep to honor your joining the Bartholomew family, to be created and displayed next Christmas. Welcome to our family. Matt, Deidre, Allison and Christopher."

"Now I'm going to cry," Linda said. "Thank you! I'm honored." She pulled at her husband's sleeve. "You didn't tell me your brother was a prince."

"You don't know him like I do," Tim said.

The members of the Bartholomew family fell silent in the warmth of the moment. Matt stole a glance at his wife, who was gazing at the face of the angel, her own face clouded with memory. This, he thought, is why I do this every year.

"Well, that's it," he said lightly. "I got nothing else."

"I do," Deidre said. "Chocolate! We've got brownies for dessert."

On their way to the dining room, Tim delivered a short punch to Matt's ribs. "Did good—for a geezer," he said in Matt's ear. "Thanks."

"No, thank you," Matt said. "You gave me the idea."

"What are you two whispering about?" Linda said from behind them.

"Guy stuff," Tim answered.

At the table, Matt noticed that Deidre wasn't sitting in her usual place. Instead, she had switched places with Allison so that she could look into the living room at the angel and receive its healing message.

Grand Meander

In the frosty air

Grand merchants get into the holiday spirit with annual Meander on Dec. 6

There will be a holiday feeling in the air when Grand Avenue businesses host and toast the 36th annual Grand Meander on Saturday, December 6. The Grand Avenue Business Association has compiled the following list of Grand Meander attractions and activities:

MEANDER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Breakfast with Santa.** Santa will once again be on hand for a free pancake breakfast from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the Tavern on Grand, 656 Grand. Each child will also receive a free treat.
- **Winter Carnival button unveiling.** St. Paul Winter Carnival royalty will unveil the 2009 carnival button design at 10:30 a.m. at Dixie's on Grand, 695 Grand. Carnival button discounts will be available at participating Grand Avenue businesses throughout the day.
- **Free family movie.** *The Muppet Christmas Carol* will be shown at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. in the downstairs theater of Macalester College's campus center on the southwest corner of Grand and Snelling. Seating begins 30 minutes before each show.
- **Art at Ramsey.** The Grand Meander's 14th annual juried art show and sale will be presented from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the gym at Ramsey Junior High School, 1700 Summit. The show is sponsored by Highland/Macalester-Groveland Community Education and the Artists' Circle.

- **Youth Art Fair.** The 15th annual Youth Art Fair will be presented from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the cafeteria at Ramsey Junior High. The artistic talents of more than a dozen local artists ages 12-18 will be on display.
- **Live reindeer.** Visit Santa's lead reindeer from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Frattallone's Ace Hardware, 650 Grand.
- **Free trolley rides.** Hop aboard an antique trolley that will travel up and down Grand from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The trolley will pick up and drop off passengers at all bus stops on the avenue.
- **Free fire truck rides.** Take a free ride down Grand in a fire truck that will be traversing the avenue from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. beginning and ending at Dixie's, 695 Grand.
- **Soup tasting.** Nine Grand Avenue chefs will serve free samples of their signature soups from noon to 3:00 p.m. Participating businesses include Whole Foods Market, 30 S. Fairview; D'Amico & Sons, 975 Grand; Cooks of Crocus Hill, 877 Grand; Billy's on Grand, 857 Grand; Cafe Latte, 850 Grand; Bruegger's, 800 Grand (noon to 2:00 p.m.); Golden Fig Fine Foods, 790 Grand; Wild Onion, 788 Grand; and Dixie's, 695 Grand.
- **Tree lighting ceremony.** Enjoy refreshments and carols as the official Grand Avenue holiday tree is lit at 5:00 p.m. outside Charlemagne Fine Jewelry, 1262 Grand.
- **Toys for Tots.** Put a smile on a needy child's face this holiday season by dropping



Jack Mountain, 3, and sister Bridget, 11, of Macalester-Groveland shared in the holiday magic of last year's Grand Meander. Jack enjoyed some chocolate and they both got acquainted with a live reindeer outside Frattallone's Ace Hardware. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER



Cafe Latte owner Linda Quinn tried a sample of chef John Michael Lerma's beer cheese soup at the Golden Fig during last year's Grand Meander.

- off new toys at A. Johnson & Sons Florist, Treadle Yard Goods, Flirt, Kowalski's, Bibelot Shop, Wuollet Bakery, Phresh Spa Salon, Red Balloon Bookshop, CorePower Yoga, Bead Monkey, SteppingStone Theatre, Lillian's on Grand, Inner Strength Fitness, Grand Ole Creamery or Muska Lighting. The toy drop will run through December 15.
 - **Second Harvest.** Grand Meanderers are invited to support this local charity by dropping off nonperishable food items at A. Johnson & Sons Florist, Treadle Yard Goods, Flirt, Grand Health Chiropractic, Benevolent Acorn, Cooks of Crocus Hill, CorePower Yoga, SteppingStone Theatre, Lillian's on Grand, Golden Fig Fine Foods, Punch Neapolitan Pizza, Inner Strength Fitness, Grand Ole Creamery, Muska Lighting and Aspire Chiropractic. The food drop will run through December 15.
 - **Salvation Army kettles.** Meanderers also are invited to support the Salvation Army by donating money to its annual kettle drive at various locations along Grand.
 - **Santa sightings.** Watch for the jolly old elf as he meanders along the avenue and makes special visits to Che Bella, 611 Grand, and Wonderment, 949 Grand.
 - **Sounds of the season.** A variety of carolers and other musical groups will be performing along the avenue throughout the day.
 - **Holiday food and refreshments.** There will be scores of opportunities to sample complimentary holiday treats and beverages inside and outside stores all along the avenue.
- enticements to welcome shoppers during the Meander. Those that will be offering free items and activities include:
- **Subway, 1820 Grand.** Stop in to meet Subman and get a free necklace and temporary tattoo from noon to 3:00 p.m.
 - **Whole Foods, 30 S. Fairview.** Sample the flavors of the season from noon to 3:00 p.m.
 - **A. Johnson & Sons Florist, 1738 Grand.** Door prizes, hot refreshments and cookies will be given away during the floral shop's annual holiday open house from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Santa will be on hand from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 - **Wet Paint, 1684 Grand.** Virginia McBride will demonstrate how to create decorative wrapping paper and gift tags using printmaking techniques from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
 - **Treadle Yard Goods, 1338 Grand.** Select two complimentary pieces of fabric and stitch up a holiday gift bag from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Holiday treats will be served from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 - **Sixth Chamber Used Books, 1332 Grand.** Donations will be accepted for AmericanForests.org Global Relief campaign.
 - **Picky Girl, 1326a Grand.** Warm up with hot cocoa while shopping.
 - **Kowalski's on Grand, 1261 Grand.** Free food samples will be on the menu.
 - **Baby Grand, 1137 Grand.** Sample free holiday treats and refreshments.
 - **Grand Health Chiropractic, 1154 Grand.** Warm up with hot beverages and cookies and get a free photo with Santa between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
 - **My Sisters' Closet, 1136 Grand.** Flutists

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Art of the miniature

Mac-Groveland man's tiny works show big talent

BY BILL STIEGER

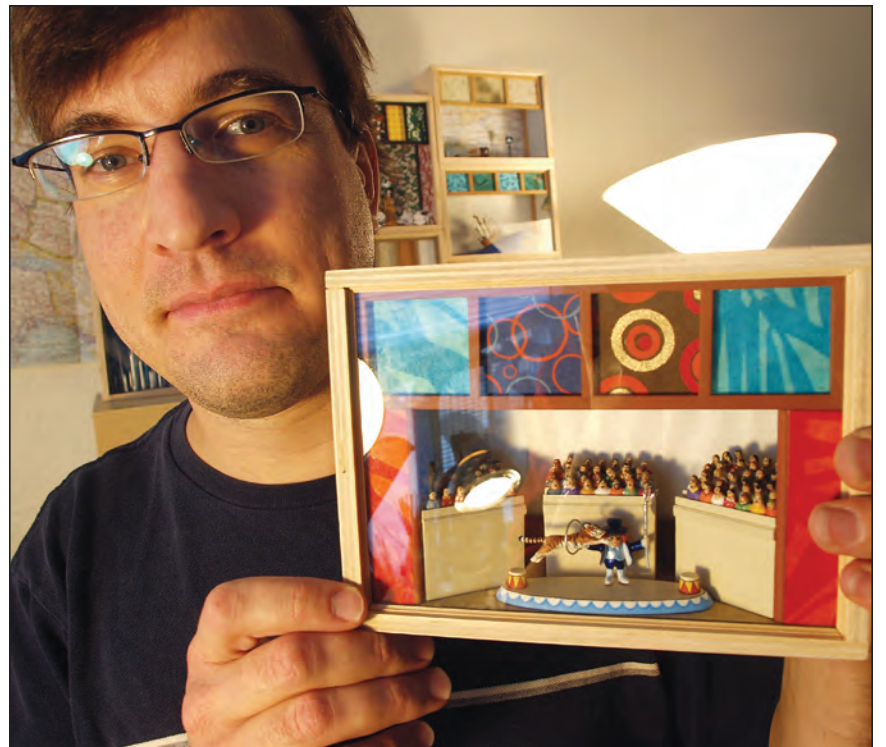
Woodcarver Steve Tomashek lives in a small world. He has hundreds of carvings of animals, airplanes, trains and ships that are no bigger than a popcorn kernel. The knives, gouges and drills that he uses to carve his boxwood and basswood figures could have come from the toolbox of a Lilliputian. The sable paint brushes he employs aren't large enough to paint a fingernail without having to make 100 strokes. His Macalester-Groveland apartment is so modest it would make a mouse yearn for more generous digs. But that's just the way he likes it.

"This is my work," he said. "It's low budget, with limited space. And working small keeps things portable. I can carry my work with me wherever I go."

Tomashek's intricate carvings are not the cloyingly cute figurines you find under grandma's Christmas tree or perched atop her sideboard. His figures are carved in the tradition of Japanese, Mexican and Hopi Indian artists, and his skill with a knife and brush is breathtaking.

"I'm influenced by the various branches of woodworkings and less by individuals," Tomashek said. "But I've been influenced by the work of Alexander Calder and Joseph Cornell, too."

Tomashek is one of 60 local or regional artists who will display their work in the juried Art at Ramsey show and sale, held on Saturday, December 6, in conjunction with the Grand Avenue Business Association's annual Grand Meander. Sponsored by the Highland/Macalester-Groveland Community Education program, the 14th annual event will run from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. in the gymnasium of Ramsey Junior High School, 1700 Summit Ave.



Macalester-Groveland artist Steve Tomashek displays one of his shadow boxes containing a miniature carved wooden circus scene. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

Among the featured arts and crafts will be painting, photography, sculpture, pottery, printmaking, hand-blown glass, basketry, jewelry, wearable art, pressed flower art, dolls, mosaics, holiday ornaments and works in fiber, leather, metal and wood. A Youth Art Fair featuring the creations of more than a dozen local artists ages 12-18 will run from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. that day in Ramsey's cafeteria.

Tomashek displays his wood carvings at nearly 30 art festivals a year. He is also a filmmaker, creating animated videos that have become something of a sensation on YouTube. His animated short, *Titanic*, has already had 60,000 hits.

"I make the films with my photographer friend Glenn Gordon," Tomashek said. "He helps me with the photography and the narrative. It's really a lot of fun."

Tomashek stores his finished carvings in Rubbermade cartons stacked with near-military precision against a wall in his apartment. The adjacent walls are festooned with maps of Caribbean islands that Tomashek has either visited or plans to visit.

"I travel whenever I can," he said. "Travel has had a large influence on my work. This winter I'll be spending three weeks in Puerto Rico."

Tomashek, 37, grew up in Winona, the youngest of seven children. His fa-

ther, who had a shop in the basement of the home, liked to work with wood and sculpt with steel. It was in his father's workshop that young Tomashek began to fashion the miniature duck decoys that he sold at art fairs while still in high school.

Tomashek attended the University of Indiana where he majored in history and dramatic arts. However, a college class in the studio arts rekindled his love of wood carving. "There was a carver I met in Indiana who encouraged me," Tomashek said. "Every artist needs a person like that, someone who points the way. He convinced me that I had talent. I knew when I finished that class that carving wood would be a lifetime hobby. But I didn't yet think of it as a profession."

After graduation, Tomashek taught junior high science. "Teaching was cool, but science wasn't my study area," he said. "So I decided that I was going to sell my carvings full time."

He began selling his work at art fairs across the Midwest, where he detected a growing fascination with his work. He survived lean times by renting a room in his sister's home. Eventually, he began making enough money to get a place of his own.

ART AT RAMSEY ► 29

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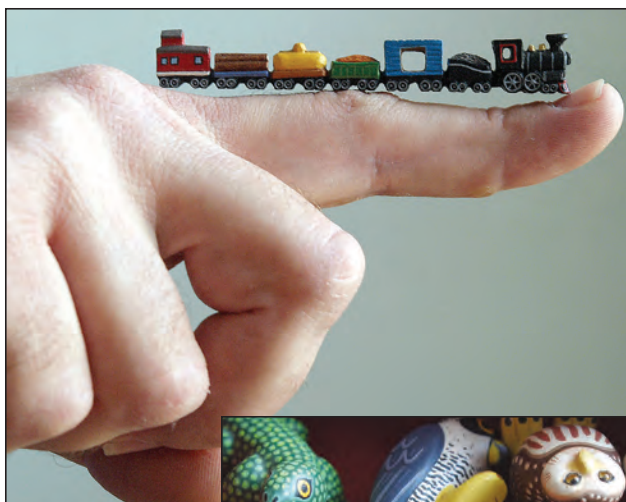
"I'm doing pretty well, considering," he said. "Anytime I have money in the bank at the end of the year is a good year. I also sell photos of my work for greeting cards."

"Steve's a good artist," said Gordon. "If you see him at his booth at an art fair, you'll see how people are drawn to his stuff. Especially children. Steve is extremely skilled, and his animals and people really do look like they're alive."

Tomashek and Gordon's collaborations are posted on Tomashek's website. The photos are visual puns: Two zebras standing amid a pile of bar codes that suddenly resemble zebra pelts; an owl looking genuinely embarrassed to be seen standing on *The Book of Knowledge*; a hound sniffing the back end of a wiener.

"Having humor in your work is seen as not being relevant in the field of art," Gordon said. "But humor is integral to our collaborations, and we take it seriously."

Are Tomashek's carvings folk art or are they



A carved wooden train fits nicely on the index finger of artist Steve Tomashek, who also created the miniature menagerie at right.



high art masquerading as whimsy?

"I don't know," Tomashek said. "I guess to be a folk artist, you're not supposed to have an education. So I don't fit into that category. I don't worry about it, though. Categorizing my work isn't something that keeps me awake at night."

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will be playing seasonal songs and cookies and sparkling cider will be served.

Irish on Grand, 1124 Grand. Irish tea and cookies will be served while a bagpipin Santa plays Christmas carols.

Wuollet Bakery, 1080 Grand. Sample holiday cookies, gingerbread houses, Yule logs, tortes, all-butter peanut brittle, almond bark and more from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Creative Kidstuff, 1074 Grand. A reading of Jan Bret's new book, *Gingerbread Friends*, will be held at 11:00 a.m., followed by a gingerbread craft activity until 2:00 p.m.

Starbucks, 1062 Grand. Stop in for samples of a holiday beverage trio: Peppermint Mocha Twist, Espresso Truffle and Gingersnap Latte.

Caribou Coffee, 1055 Grand. Samples of Reindeer Blend coffee and holiday treats will be served.

Artful Belongings, 42 S. Oxford St. Enjoy complimentary holiday treats and beverages and take advantage of complimentary gift wrapping with each purchase.

Traditions, 1039 Grand. Stop in for complimentary holiday treats.

Grand Jete, 975 Grand. Complimentary candy canes and hot cider will be offered.

Stogies on Grand, 961 Grand. Enter a drawing to win prizes.

Wonderment, 949 Grand. Children may make an Advent wreath from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (while supplies last) with a \$5.00 donation to support the food shelf.

Phresh Spa Salon, 937 Grand. Warm up with hot cider.

Paul D. Amble, DDS, 960 Grand. Glicce art and steelhorn forms by Steve Swanson and bronze sculpture by Tom Christiansen will be on display from noon to 7:00 p.m.

First Grand Avenue Liquors, 918 Grand. A wine tasting will take place from noon to 4:00 p.m.

J. Crew, 870 Grand. Complimentary cookies and personal shopping services will be offered.

Amore Coffee, 917 Grand. Gift wrapping will be provided by volunteers from the Summit Hill Living At Home Block/Nurse Program in Milton Mall.

Stems & Vines, 917 Grand. Join the floral shop's designers for half-hour seminars at 10:00 a.m., noon and 2:00 p.m., highlighting the latest holiday decorating tips, and enjoy free cider and cookies.

Red Balloon Bookshop, 891 Grand. Sara Waters will lead a storytime for infants age 2

and younger at 10:30 a.m. There will also be a storytime with Santa and photo opportunities at 6:30 p.m. The Grand Meander will herald the bookshop's "Be An Angel" holiday gift-giving program to benefit children's shelters.

Garden of Eden, 867 Grand. Stop in for hot cider and cookies and view the portraits of Grand Avenue photographer Jill Fiebigler.

Karma, 867 Grand. A noon trunk show will feature treasures from India, including jewelry, scarves and accessories.

Ten Thousand Villages, 867 Grand. Warm up with hot cocoa from Equal Exchange between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. (while supplies last). Free gift-wrapping with each purchase will be offered from noon to 3:00 p.m.

Chipotle Mexican Grill, 867 Grand. The Chipotle Prize Wheel will be loaded with chips, burritos, T-shirts and more from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Aspire Chiropractic, 333 Grand. There will be complimentary health screenings, mini-massages for mom and dad and a beanbag game for kids from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

SteppingStone Theatre, 55 Victoria St. N. Stop in before the 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. showings of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever!* and create a holiday ornament. Children's tickets will be only \$2.00 with the purchase of an adult ticket for those who mention the Grand Meander.

Trade Winds, 857 Grand. Stop in for hot cider.

Juut Salon Spa, 857 Grand. Enjoy a complimentary hand massage, stress-relieving treatment and makeup touch-ups between noon and 3:00 p.m.

Starbucks, 857 Grand. Sample the shop's holiday beverage trio: Peppermint Mocha Twist, Espresso Truffle and Gingersnap Latte.

Billy's on Grand, 857 Grand. Billy's annual pig roast will be served up on the patio from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There will also be free hot cocoa and cider for the kids.

Lillian's on Grand, 841 Grand. Stop in for holiday cookies, hot cider, mini-manicures and chair massages from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Punch Pizza, 769 Grand. Enter a coloring contest to win Punch gift cards and receive an extra "punch" on your pizza card with a food donation to Second Harvest.

Caribou Coffee, 757 Grand. Samples of Reindeer Blend will be served on the patio and holiday treats such as gingerbread and FaLaLattes will be found inside.

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Grand Spectacle, 764 Grand. Chestnuts will once again be roasting on an open grill outdoors, and hot cider, coffee and cookies will be served indoors.

Sunny Sky, 760 Grand. Have your name written in Chinese and sample hot tea all day.

Inner Strength Fitness, 758 Grand. Warm up with a cup of herbal tea and enter a drawing for a free month of classes.

Grand Ole Creamery, 750 Grand. Sample yogurt and fruit smoothies.

Authentic Construction, 740 Grand. Get your picture taken in royal regalia and visit with the former queens of the St. Paul Winter Carnival.

Muska Lighting, 700 Grand. Holiday decorating tips will be offered by Stems & Vines designers featuring Muska home decor at 11:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Coffee and cookies will also be served.

Dixie's on Grand, 695 Grand. Get your photo taken with Santa between noon and 3:00 p.m.

Penzeys Spices. 674 Grand. Stop by for cookies and hot mulled cider between 9:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Evla Pottery, 42 S. Dale St. Visit the shop's new location, enjoy refreshments and meet the artists.

Grand Hand Gallery, 619 Grand. Judith Kinghorn will have a jewelry trunk show, and from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. live holiday music will be provided by jazz pianist Chuck Solberg. There will also be hot cider and holiday treats.

Che Bella, 611 Grand. Stop in and meet guest artists, receive an updo and sample holiday sweets.

For information, contact the Grand Avenue Business Association at 651-699-0029 or visit www.grandave.com.



Artist Alexandra Boese displayed her paintings and block prints at Quince during last year's inaugural Art of Grand. PHOTO BY ANNE BRANDRUD

Art of Grand joins Meander

Local artists will display their works at a variety of businesses during the Grand Meander on December 6 as part of the second annual Art of Grand.

The promotion is a renamed and revamped version of the Grand Avenue Business Association's annual Shop & Dine by Candlelight event. It was rolled out last year in mid-November to showcase the avenue as a haven for the arts and local artists. This year, GABA decided to hold it during the Grand Meander to give the artists even more exposure.

The lineup for this year's Art of Grand exhibitions includes the following:

- A. Johnson & Sons Florist, 1738 Grand. Pottery by Natasha Poppe and paintings by Christina Anderson-Adewale.
- Picky Girl, 1326a Grand. Mixed media by John Alspach.
- Paul D. Amble, DDS, 960 Grand.

Gleece art and steelhorn forms by Steve Swanson and sculptures by Tom Christiansen.

- Garden of Eden, 867 Grand. Photography by Jill Fiebiger.
- Karma, 867 Grand. Mixed media pieces by Deb Getsug.
- The Bead Monkey, 867 Grand. TBA.
- Starbucks, 857 Grand. Paintings by Kate Pearce.
- Golden Fig Fine Foods, 790 Grand. Paintings by Kevan Willington.
- Sunny Sky Asian Antiques & Gifts, 760 Grand. Chinese calligraphy and paintings by Bob Schmitt.
- Inner Strength Fitness, 758 Grand. Jewelry by Marsha Holdhausen.
- Evla Pottery, 42 S. Dale St. Pottery by Michael Coon and paintings by Kimberly Christenson.
- Grand Hand Gallery, 619 Grand. Jewelry by Judith Kinghorn.
- Che Bella, 611 Grand. Photography by Adrienne Page.

Artists' receptions will be held from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the various locations. For more information, call GABA at 651-699-0029 or visit www.grandave.com.

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Food



Home Fires By Jo Marshall

Pinched for giving? Head to the kitchen

Look on the bright side: If you're afraid this holiday season may be a little lackluster in terms of giving, you're not alone. Virtually everyone is feeling the pinch. Just look at the retail numbers. At a store near you, someone is plenty nervous.

Fortunately, we're cooks—resourceful ones at that—and there are plenty of gifts that can come from the kitchen, gifts that are long on flavor and short on the money required to make them.

My popularity soared the year I made a batch of mango chutney, packed it in pretty, albeit inexpensive, canisters and gave them to my neighbors. But you don't have to get mired in mangos. Terrific chutneys can be made with everything from cranberries to dried apricots and dates.

Flavored oils are another welcome gift. Snag an inexpensive jug or tin of extra virgin olive oil. Gather several corked or lidded bottles from a craft or home accessories store. (Of course, if you're a true penny-pincher, you've already amassed a collection of empty bottles that were just too pretty to throw away.) Then make a flavorful oil by combining several tablespoons of minced garlic or fresh or dried hot peppers with cold oil in a bottle.

Or make an herbal blend by stuffing an empty bottle with several sprigs of fresh rosemary, thyme or tarragon (or a blend of the three), then pouring hot oil over the herbs. Seal the bottle. After letting it sit for a few weeks (or less if you place it in a sunny window), you have a flavorful brew that just needs a pretty ribbon or some raffia and a fun label to turn it into a thoughtful gift.

You can create flavored vinegars in pretty much the same way, and vinegars seldom need to be heated in order to absorb the desired flavors.



Dried apricot chutney (above left), oils flavored with thyme or rosemary or hot peppers (above) and peanut brittle (right) from your kitchen make welcome, inexpensive gifts. PHOTOS BY JANET HOSTETTER



The high-quality chocolate that's required in making truffles may seem extravagant in hard times, but there are plenty of other candies you can make without breaking the bank. Consider an old-fashioned peanut brittle, or a peppermint bark made by melting semisweet chocolate chips mixed with a little cream, layering it with melted white chocolate and topping it with crushed candy canes.

On the subject of sweets, how about caramel corn made special with a handful of inexpensive roasted peanuts? Or homemade marshmallows to be tossed in a hot cup of cocoa? They're unexpected gifts and especially thoughtful when packed in a colorful mug.

The price of everything from sugar to eggs this year may put the kibosh on any holiday baking extravaganzas, but there are plenty of recipes that don't require a pound of butter. Think biscotti or quick breads. They're always welcome, especially because they freeze so well and can be appreciated weeks or even months later.

The soup makers on your list will appreciate classic little packets of bouquet garni, and they're simple to make. Just cut 4-inch squares of cheesecloth and pack them with a crumbled bay leaf, a tablespoon of dried parsley and one teaspoon each of marjoram, savory and thyme. Bring the corners together and tie the bags up with butcher's twine to look like little peddler's bags. They're now ready to add to soups and stews.

Or make your own bean soup mix. Pack clear plastic canisters with colorful layers of beans and provide a recipe on the gift tag.

Speaking of recipes, they can be a gift unto themselves. If you've got a son or daughter setting up his or her first kitchen, you might be surprised at how much they will appreciate a collection of the recipes they grew up on.

The point is, when we're too stretched to splurge, maybe we need to think outside the box and inside the bottle or bag. We may not really need another tie or sweater, but we all need to eat.

Peanut Brittle

Since timing is critical in candy-making, have the pans well-buttered and all the ingredients ready before you begin.

- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups raw Spanish peanuts
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon butter (plus more for buttering the pans)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

In a heavy 3-quart saucepan, heat and stir the sugar, syrup and water until the sugar dissolves. Cook over medium heat to soft ball stage (234 degrees), then add the nuts and salt. Continue to cook, stirring often, to hard crack stage (305 degrees). Remove from the heat and quickly stir in the butter and soda. Immediately pour into two well-buttered 15½-by-10½-by-1-inch pans and spread with a spatula. (You can also allow it to cool slightly first, then pull with forks to stretch it thinner.) Break the brittle into pieces once it has fully cooled. Makes about a pound and a half of candy.

— Jo Marshall

Restaurant owners united in opposition to license fee hike

By Jane McClure

St. Paul bar and restaurant owners will find out on December 10 if a 5 percent city license fee increase is on the menu for 2009. The City Council will vote that day on next year's fees, which many business owners and managers say are already too high in today's economy.

More than three dozen business owners and managers attended a November 19 public hearing on the fee increase, and the following week the council postponed setting the

amount. "We heard some pretty compelling testimony about the impact the increase would have," said council member Dan Bostrom.

However, council members Kathy Lanry and Lee Helgen said if the increase is reduced it would create a hole in the 2009 budget that would have to be filled by making cuts elsewhere. Not increasing the license fees at all would leave a \$135,000 budget gap to fill.

Bob Kessler, director of the city's Department of Safety and Inspections, said timing is important, since many bar and restaurant license fees are due in January. A delay in rais-

ing the fee would mean that some businesses would still be paying the 2008 rate.

Some bar and restaurant owners asked the City Council not to increase fees at all in 2009. However, the city is facing budget issues of its own as well as dealing with past administrative decision to hold license fees at the same level for 12 years. A 2006 study indicated that the fees needed to be raised to cover the costs of providing services.

A 25 percent increase in the restaurant license fee was originally proposed for 2008. The City Council lowered that to 10 percent

and then approved a 5 percent increase, with the understanding that another 5 percent increase would go into effect in 2009.

While joking that he has been able to "unite the hospitality industry as no one else has," Kessler said he understands the concerns about rising fees. Still, he pointed out that St. Paul's fees would still be lower than those charged by Minneapolis and suburban cities.

The average business permit and license fee increase proposed for 2009 is 5 percent,

Ordinance would put a premium on plastic grocery bags

BY KEVIN DRISCOLL

Paper or plastic?" We've all heard the supermarket baggers' query. Grocery shoppers who opt for plastic will be soon be paying a few extra cents if St. Paul City Council member Russ Stark has his way.

Stark is asking city officials to lobby the Minnesota Legislature this spring for the authority to impose a tax or fee on the use of non-compostable plastic bags to support local efforts to reduce waste and reuse or otherwise recycle products. According to Stark, plastic bags, though recyclable, are not biodegradable. Plastic is a petroleum-based material, and "the bags don't decompose," he said. "They break down into small toxic pieces that eventually work their way into water systems."

"The idea is that the fee would be passed on by retailers to the consumer," Stark said. The ultimate goal would be to "reduce plastic bag use and excessive litter by encouraging the use of reusable bags," he said. In the meantime, the revenue generated by the tax or fee would be used to further waste reduction efforts.

According to Jaime Pfuhl, president of the

Minnesota Grocers Association, most grocers do not think "a fee at checkout is the best solution to the problem, especially in this economy." Consumer choice is a more practical way of addressing the environmental problem, she said. "Our members already offer (plastic bag) recycling at their stores, and several thousand reusable bags have already been picked up by consumers there."

Some MGA-member stores charge a minimum amount for the reusable bags, Pfuhl said, and some have even offered them for free. "Grocers care deeply about the environment," she said, "and we have every confidence that the city will work with us to solve this problem."

"Los Angeles, San Francisco and even China, where 3 billion bags a day were being used, have all banned non-compostable plastic bags," Stark said. According to him, San Francisco's ban, which took effect in November 2007, affects only supermarkets with annual gross sales of \$2 million or more and retail pharmacies with five or more locations in the city.

Ireland's retailers were spending \$50 mil-

lion a year on plastic bags before 2002 when that country imposed a 15-cent tax on plastic bags, Stark said. The tax on consumers generated \$9.6 million for Ireland's government the first year, he said. The result has been a 90 percent reduction in the use of plastic bags in Ireland, a significant reduction in litter and the conservation of 4.7 million gallons of oil, according to Stark.

A 20-cent "green fee" on disposable bags was scheduled to take effect on January 1 at grocery, drug and convenience stores in Seattle, Stark said. However, a petition by the American Chemistry Council will now put that measure to a vote.

Stark said he is exploring the possibility of limiting the plastic-bag fee or tax to retail stores. "It would be hard to justify charging for plastic newspaper bags meant to protect the product from the elements," he said. Stark said he does not see the tax or fee "as a big onus on consumers. It's not a difficult move to reusable shopping bags."

Mayor Chris Coleman's deputy director of environmental policy, Anne Hunt, said her office is taking a close look at Stark's proposal.

"We need to do more research on it," she said.

Stark and Hunt both acknowledged that it requires more energy to make paper bags than plastic ones. "Some plastics are recyclable," Hunt said, "but it's best to get reusable cloth bags or even reuse plastic and paper bags."

City Council member Lee Helgen said he is "supportive of the idea (of a plastic bag tax or fee), but I'm concerned about St. Paul doing it alone, because it would put St. Paul businesses at a competitive disadvantage."

"I don't think a lot of people would travel outside of the city just to save a few cents on a plastic bag," Stark said, "but there'd be some who would."

According to Stark, the ideal solution would be to implement the tax or fee statewide. State Representative John Lesch (DFL-District 66A) "introduced a bill last session that would have required retailers to recycle plastic bags," Stark said, "but it didn't get very far."

A City Council committee gave its preliminary approval to including the proposed plastic-bag tax or fee on the city's legislative wish list for 2009. The full council will consider it on December 3.

31◀ RESTAURANT LICENSE FEES

although there are some variations. A look at four area businesses shows increases that would pay for items ranging from on-sale liquor licenses to charitable gambling licenses. Mancini's Char House, for example, would see its cost for 13 permits and licenses go from \$8,145 this year to \$8,542 in 2009. Great Waters Brewing Company's costs would go from \$7,372 to \$7,732, Skinner's Pub's would go from \$6,028 to \$6,319 and Fabulous Fern's would go from \$6,661 to \$6,984.

Fern's co-owner Charles Senkler said conditions have changed greatly since the busi-

ness owners tentatively agreed to next year's 5 percent fee increase. "(The economy) has hit our businesses hard," he said. "Higher-end restaurants have been hit even harder."

For the first time in 18 years of business, Senkler said, he and his business partner recently borrowed money to keep the restaurant open. He argued that the city needs to curtail its spending. "Stop building ice rinks and dog parks," he said.

"We all want to pay our fair share," said Dave Cossetta, owner of Cossetta's Italian Market and Pizzeria. "The question is, what's our fair share?" He said property taxes on his West 7th Street property have risen more than

100 percent since 1999.

Other bar and restaurant owners said higher food and liquor costs and a recent increase in the minimum wage have hit them hard. And that's on top of the downturn in the economy.

"Restaurants are going to close by the dozens," said Mike Runyon, co-owner of Shamrock's and the Nook.

Dan O'Gara, owner of O'Gara's Bar and Grill and a leader in both the St. Paul Hospitality Association and Minnesota License Beverage Association, said the proposed 5 percent license fee increase has brought out business owners who have never been active in city issues before. "The tough times are bringing

everyone out," he said.

O'Gara's business, like others, has seen a slump due to the economy. "On a Friday night I used to have nine servers," he said. "I have six on right now."

Local bars and restaurants were also affected by the Republican National Convention in September, but not with the business bump many hoped for. "We all know what great business we got from the GOP convention," said Great Waters owner Mike O'Byrne, referring to the fact that the downtown area was "shut down" for two months when the Xcel Energy Center stopped booking concerts and other events leading up to the convention.

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Wednesday/December 3

NORMA NOONAN, a professor of political science at Augsburg College, will discuss the expansion of the European Union and how it may play out with a new U.S. president during a Great Decisions discussion from 7:00 to 9:00 this evening in the College of St. Catherine library. The cost is \$10. Call 651-690-6666.

A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS will be celebrated beginning today and through the end of December at the Alexander Ramsey House, 265 S. Exchange St. The mansion will be decorated with original Ramsey family heirlooms, blown-glass ornaments and a trimmed tree in the parlor, and the dining room table will be set for an 1875 Christmas dinner with Mrs. Ramsey's own Havilland china. Cookies fresh from the wood-burning oven will be served. Hours are from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays and from noon to 3:00 p.m. Sundays. Admission is \$3.00-\$9.00. Call 651-296-8760

DRAMATIC READINGS inspired by Victorian life will be accompanied by music played on an 1872 Steinway piano during a program from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. today and tomorrow at the Alexander Ramsey House, 265 S. Exchange St. Included are refreshments and a first-floor tour of the house, which has been decorated for the holidays. The cost is \$28. Call 651-296-8760.

THE SUMMIT HILL MOMS CLUB (Moms Offering Moms Support) will meet at 9:30 this morning. The nonprofit organization provides activities and support during the day for mothers who are raising their children full- or part-time. Call 651-699-8522.

Thursday/December 4

LANDMARK CENTER will host its 30th annual Holiday Bazaar today through Saturday, December 6. The bazaar will feature a marketplace handcrafted gifts, along with holiday music and treats. Bazaar hours are from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. today and tomorrow, and from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. Admission is \$3.00 for adults and free for children. Call 651-292-3225.

Saturday/December 6

HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE RIDES will be offered around Irvine Park from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. today and Saturday, December 20, from the Alexander Ramsey House, 265 S. Exchange St. The cost is \$10 for a 15-minute ride. Call 651-296-8760

HOLIDAY-THEMED TOURS will be presented from 1:00 to 3:30 this afternoon at the James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Ave. Costumed actors will portray servants preparing for the holidays during the one-hour tours, which will take place in the first-floor spaces and basement servant work areas. The tours will continue on Saturdays and Sundays through December 28. The cost is \$4.00-\$8.00. Call 651-297-2555.

A "SPREAD THE SPIRIT" holiday fundraising party and open house will be hosted by Kate and Jon Pearce from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. today at their home at 830 Grand Ave. Free coffee, cocoa and cookies



Volunteers packed buns at Cretin-Derham Hall on November 26 to be included with the more than 14,700 meals that were delivered to Twin Cities families the next day by Thanksgiving Meals on Wheels. Below, Ashley Olson, 6, slides a tray full of pumpkin pie slices onto a rack. Some 4,000 pies were sliced prior to delivery.

PHOTOS BY ANNE BRANDRUD

will be served. Donations collected during the event will benefit Women's Advocates, a Grand Avenue shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. A raffle drawing will also be held for prizes from local businesses.

AN INTRODUCTION to the Minnesota Historical Society Library, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd., will be offered at 9:15 this morning. The free class is held each Saturday of the year and offers tips on using catalogs, requesting materials and purchasing photocopies. Call 651-259-3300.

A HISTORY FORUM on the 1892 Homestead Strike in Pennsylvania will be offered at 2:00 this afternoon at St. Paul College, 235 Marshall Ave. Professor Heather Cox Richardson will reveal how the labor dispute between steelworkers and their employer, Andrew Carnegie, became a struggle not just for wages, but for the nation itself. Admission is \$12-\$16. Call 651-259-3419.

A WORM COMPOSTING WORKSHOP will be conducted by Eureka Recycling at 10:00 this morning at the Merriam Park Recreation Center, 2000 St. Anthony Ave. The cost is \$5.00. Worms and information materials are available for an additional \$45. Call 651-222-7678 to register or visit www.eurekarecycling.org.

A HOPE FOR RECOVERY WORKSHOP will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. today by the National Alliance on Mental

Illness of Minnesota, 800 Transfer Road, Suite 31. The workshop will provide information on mental illnesses, practical coping strategies and hope for recovery. To register, call NAMI at 651-645-2948.

A FUNDRAISER to benefit liver and kidney transplant recipient Geri Svoboda will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. today at St. Stanislaus Church, 598 Superior St. There will be a silent auction, country store, bake sale and more. Admission is \$5.00, which includes brunch. Call 651-274-0575 to make a donation to the silent auction. Cash donations may be sent to: Svoboda Benefit Fund, TCF Bank, 3380 Denmark Ave. S, Eagan, MN 55121.

MENDOTA LIGHTS will take place from 3:00 to 8:00 this evening at the Village at Mendota Heights on Dodd Road and Highway 110. The third annual holiday open house will feature hayrides, caroling and face painting. The Visitation School choir will perform at 5:30 p.m., followed by a ceremonial tree lighting and Santa's arrival at 6:00 p.m.

Sunday/December 7

"WHO HAUNTS HERE?" True Tales of Hauntings in Minnehaha Park and Minneapolis will be told by ghost hunter Duke Addicks at 2:00 this afternoon at the Historic John H. Stevens House, 4901 Minnehaha Ave., Minneapolis. Addicks' stories will include those of the ghosts of "Fish" Jones and William Herrick who

haunt Minnehaha Falls, the ghost of Cloudy Day who haunted members of Wabasha's band, and the ghosts of Minneapolis City Hall and the old Guthrie Theater. Admission \$10. To register, call 612-827-0138.

Tuesday/December 9

THE COMO-MIDWAY LA LECHE League will meet at 7:00 this evening to discuss nutrition and weaning. Current and expectant mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527.

THE ST. PAUL HIKING CLUB will meet at 11:30 this morning at the corner of Goodrich Avenue and West 7th Street. Call 651-646-6421.

THE MAD HATTER'S TEA HOUSE, 943 W. 7th St., will hold a conversational salon from 6:30 to 8:30 this evening. Those who attend are encouraged to bring their ideas for an "alternative Christmas." The salon is free, but donations are encouraged for the program and treats. Call 651-227-3228.

Wednesday/December 10

COSTUMED GUIDES will read excerpts of *A Christmas Carol* and explain what Victorian life was like in 1840s London and 1870s St. Paul during tours at 6:00, 6:30, 7:00 and 7:30 this evening at the Alexander Ramsey House 265 S. Exchange St. Visitors will also sample plum pudding made from a popular recipe of the era. Admission is \$9.00-\$10. Call 651-296-8760.

Thursday/December 11


A WORLD WAR II HISTORY Round Table on "The Alamo in the Ardennes—Attack on the Center of the Bulge" will take place at 7:00 this evening at the Fort Snelling visitor center. John McManus, author of *Alamo in the Ardennes*, will be joined by veterans of the 28th Infantry and 10th Armored Divisions in telling the story of the December 1944 race for Bastogne. Admission is \$5.00 and free for students. Call 612-726-1171.

Friday/December 12

DINNER WITH MR. & MRS. CLAUS will be served from 5:30 to 7:00 this evening at the Langford Recreation Center, 30 Langford Park. The spaghetti dinner is offered to all those who are served by recreation centers in the southwest area of St. Paul. Along with dinner, there will be holiday crafts, face painting, cookie decorating and an opportunity to take photos of Mr. and Mrs. Claus. The cost is \$5.00 before December 5 (\$20 maximum per family) and \$6.00 afterward (no family maximum). Call 651-298-5765.

Saturday/December 13

A CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL will be celebrated from 10:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. today at Minnehaha Academy, 3100 W. River Pkwy., Minneapolis. The festival will include a holiday market of gifts made by more than 60 local artisans, a Scandinavian dinner and a performance by the Minnesota Boychoir. Food will be sold, including the school's famous caramel rolls. Call 612-728-7721.



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33 THE KIOSK

A BASKET-WEAVING WORKSHOP will be conducted from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. today and from noon to 3:00 p.m. tomorrow at Fort Snelling State Park. Workshop participants will learn how to make their own traditional baskets from red-osier dogwood and willow cuttings. The cost is \$10. Call 612-725-2389.

Sunday/December 14

A HANUKAH PARTY will be held from 10:00 a.m. to noon today at the Temple of Aaron Synagogue, 616 S. Mississippi River Blvd. The party will feature a musical performance by elementary school students at 10:00 a.m., followed by games and free traditional Hanukah food of latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganeot (doughnuts). The synagogue's annual Menorah contest will also take place. Admission to the party is free with a donation of food or new or gently used children's jackets, hats, mittens or gloves. Call 651-698-8874.

SKANDIA: A Scandinavian Holiday Festival will take place from noon to 4:00 p.m. today at Landmark Center. The festival will feature Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Icelandic and Finnish music, dance, arts and food. Admission is \$3.00-\$5.00. Santa and his reindeer also will pose for photos outside Landmark Center and the Wells Fargo WinterSkate rink will be in full swing. Call 651-292-3276.

CAFE V'LVRIT will be serving up coffee and a chance to converse in the Hebrew language at 1:00 this afternoon at the Jewish Community Center, 1375 St. Paul Ave. The program is free. For information, call 651-698-0751.

Tuesday/December 16

THE ST. PAUL HIKING CLUB will meet at 11:30 this morning in the parking lot of 1800 Graham Ave. and again at 7:30 this evening in the parking lot by the Historic Highland Water Tower on Snelling Avenue and Ford Parkway. Call 651-646-6421.

THE MAD HATTER'S TEA HOUSE, 943 W. 7th St., will hold a conversational salon from 6:30 to 8:30 this evening. Christmas stories and poetry will be read and simple holiday recipes will be shared. The salon is free, but donations are encouraged for the program and treats. Call 651-227-3228.

Wednesday/December 17

CHILD'S TOURS of the Alexander Ramsey House, 265 S. Exchange St., will be offered at 6:00, 6:30, 7:00 and 7:30 this evening. The mansion will be decorated for Christmas, including some of the dolls in the Ramsey collection. Hot cider and cookies will be served. Participants are encouraged to bring a doll and dress in holiday attire. A craft activity will be available in the Carriage House. The cost is \$9.00-\$10. Call 651-296-8760.

FARE FOR ALL EXPRESS, a cooperative food purchasing program, will be hosted by the UAW Local 879 and Ford Motor Company from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. today at the UAW/Ford MnSCU Training Center attached to the Ford Plant. Consumers may purchase food packages at up to 50 percent discounts. The December holiday package features a complete ham dinner for \$25. Also available are packages that feature meat, fresh fruits and vegetables, or a combination of both. There is no income limit and no registration required. Call 651-699-4246 or visit www.fareforall.org.

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By Elena Lombardi
Freelance Writer

Jackson, New Jersey Donald Paquette, 72, a former assessor from Anaheim, California thought that his driving days were over. "I could not read the street signs soon enough and I couldn't pass the vision test at the DMV office."

Gonzalo Garcia, 74, Albuquerque, New Mexico, wanted to be able to read and write more easily. He wanted to see the nails and screws when he tried to use them in home repairs. He wanted see his grandchildren singing in the church choir. But he thought those days were over when he was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration.

Neither Donald nor Gonzalo knew that a low vision optometrist could help with some of those issues.

"In New Jersey, Biotopic Telescopic Glasses can be used to pass the vision test for driving", says Dr. Chris Palmer,

optometrist in Minneapolis, Mn. "This can allow some with conditions like macular degeneration to continue driving".

"Amazing!" says Donald. "I can read the street signs twice as far as I did before and even see the television better!" Mr. Paquette received biopic telescopic glasses and also special prismatic reading glasses for easier newspaper reading.

People don't know that there are doctors who are very experienced in low vision care. "Not many doctors like to work with people who are often upset and anxious" says Dr. Palmer, who traveled to California for special training recently. "I love to see their faces light up when they see again."

Macular Degeneration is the most common eye disease among the senior population. As many as 25% of those over 65 have some degree of degeneration. The macula is one small part of the entire retina, but it is the most sensitive

and gives us sharp images.

When it degenerates, ARMD leaves a blind spot right in the center of vision making it impossible to recognize faces, read a book, or pass the driver's vision test.

The experts do not know what causes macular degeneration. But major factors include UV light from the sun, smoking, aging, and improper nutrition.

Vitamins can help. The results of two studies, AREDS and LAST deonstrated a lowered risk of progression by about 25% when treated with a high-dose combination of vitamins.

A new, proprietary supplement based on the scientific studies is available from these doctors. A very powerful formulation, Macula Therapy Formula is available from Dr. Palmer's office.

Nine out of ten people who have macular degeneration have the dry type. There is no medical treatment ex-

cept for vitamins. The wet type is more aggressive and results in more dramatic vision loss. It involves leaky blood vessels that sometimes can be sealed with hot or cold laser. Newer treatments, such as Macugen, Lucentis and Avastin are injections to prevent leakage.

"Our job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning," says Dr. Palmer. "Whether it's driving, reading, watching television, seeing faces, playing bridge...we work with whatever is on the persons "wish list".

"Telescopic glasses usually cost over \$2000", says Dr. Palmer, "especially if we build them with an automatic sunglass". Reading glasses start at \$500 and hand magnifiers under \$100. Every case is different because people have different levels of vision and different desires.



RICHARD DOUGHERTY WITH TELESCOPE GLASSES

Richard Dougherty, 89, of Palmdale, California came to Dr. Shuldiner in June, 2003. He has returned every two years to have the DMV vision report form filled out to keep driving. Dr. Shuldiner prescribed biopic telescopic glasses to read signs and see traffic lights farther away in June, 2003.

At his visit on March 3, 2007, Mr. Dougherty said "The telescopic glasses keep getting better and better!". "They are actually better, by far, than the day I got them. The doctor is a genius! Definitely worth the \$2300 I paid for them". On his visit this past March, Mr. Dougherty reported that the special prismatic reading glasses were still working fine.

The following are some of the very experienced doctors working with low vision patients. They are members of the International Academy of Low Vision Specialists and are happy to speak with you:

Chris Palmer, OD Minnesota	888 882 2040	Brian Saunders, OD Georgia	877 948 7784
Yanna Nachtigal, OD Pennsylvania	877 523 2020	Marc Gannon, OD, FFAO Florida	866 942 2020
Randolph Kinkade, OD Connecticut	800 756 0766	Ross Cusic, OD Washington	877 823 2020
Richard Shuldiner, OD, FFAO Southern California	888 610 2020	Sheldon Smith, OD Michigan	877 677 2020
David Armstrong, OD Virginia	866 321 2030	Larry Chism, OD Texas	888 243 2020

On the Town

Master stylist

Guitarist Dean Magraw is at home playing all kinds of music—and the world is better for it



Macalester-Groveland guitarist Dean Magraw, right, and Irish music phenom John Williams will reunite for their 10th anniversary concert at 8:00 p.m. Saturday, December 13, at the Cedar Cultural Center in Minneapolis.

BY BILL STIEGER

Say you wanted to come up with the name of a Twin Cities musician who “does it all.” He’d be a musician who is just as comfortable playing jazz with some of the world’s finer players as he is playing East Indian or traditional Irish music. Does he play the blues you ask? Check. Rock ‘n’ roll? Easy enough. As far as expertise, playing all styles with effortless authority and expansiveness, one would have to conclude that Macalester-Groveland guitarist Dean Magraw occupies a seat at the top.

Magraw is a headliner when he plays with beboppers at the Artist’s Quarter. He also may be found regularly touring Europe with the French progressive jazz group Next. He has performed with South Indian vocalist Nirmala Rajashekar, collaborated with Japanese shamisen prodigy Nitta Masahiro and classical violinist Nigel Kennedy, appeared with Irish super group Altan, and played on “A Prairie Home Companion” with Garrison Keillor, along with countless others.

Those who want to hear his artistry for themselves will get the chance on Saturday, December 13, when Magraw will appear with internationally renowned accordion/concertina virtuoso John Williams for their 10th anniversary concert at the Cedar Cultural Center, 416 Cedar Ave. S., Minneapolis. The two will perform traditional Irish music and their own compositions beginning at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$18 at the door. (For tickets, call 612-338-2674, ext 2.)

So how does one come to play all those

styles of music, especially when mastering a single style takes most musicians a lifetime?

“I get asked that a lot,” said Magraw, a 1971 Highland Senior High School graduate who has lived in the area nearly his entire life. “I’d have to give the credit to my family. My parents loved all kinds of music. One weekend, they’d take me to hear the Minnesota Orchestra. The next week it would be a jazz concert. And my parents liked to dance. They’d dance in the living room to Duke Ellington records. When my older brother, who was in the Peace Corps, got interested in the music of southern India, the whole family began listening to it. Many people note the differences in styles of music; I’ve always heard the similarities.”

Like most musicians, Magraw learned his craft through emulation. “My early hero on guitar was Wes Montgomery,” he said. “I tried to play exactly like he did on his earlier, non-commercial recordings, but I found out through trying to copy his style that I could only be myself. It’s a paradox, but a musician has to eventually learn how to be who he or she is. On acoustic guitar, I was influenced by Norman Blake and Leo Kottke. But the same rule applies—to attain mastery, you have to be yourself.”

After studying music at Berklee College in Boston, Magraw returned to the Twin Cities and began playing with local jazz and blues bands. He became a regular at the old Minneapolis Artist’s Quarter, played with the Bees Knees Band on the “Bar Wars” recording—a record shared with Willie and the Bees and the Lamont Cranston band. He held a steady gig at the Curry House

“I think the secret to Dean’s playing is his adherence to a song’s melody. Of course, Dean has incredible technique. But no matter how far out the music gets, he’s always there, being faithful to the music.”

on Hennepin Avenue, playing with tabla drummer Marcus Wise. In the ensuing 20-something years, he has become a world gypsy, playing and recording throughout the United States, Europe and Asia.

“Dean is a musician who believes in what he’s doing at any given moment,” said jazz drummer and oftentimes bandmate Jay Epstein. “It doesn’t matter what style he’s playing in, he always sounds like Dean. I think the secret to Dean’s playing is his adherence to a song’s melody. Of course, Dean has incredible technique. But no matter how far out the music gets, he’s always there, being faithful to the music.”

For those who are familiar with traditional Irish music, the artistry of Chicagoan John Williams needs no introduction. “Whenever I travel to Ireland,” Magraw said, “I’ll invariably see John’s picture on the wall, next to those of the very top-rated Irish musicians. I met him about 14 years ago when I was

working with Laura MacKenzie. We’ve been touring off and on ever since.”

Williams’ mastery of the concertina and button accordion has made him a favorite around the world. He has won five all-Ireland titles and is the only native-born American to ever win in the Senior Concertina category. Williams founded the groundbreaking Irish group Solas in 1995 and composed music for the DreamWorks film *Road to Perdition*, starring Tom Hanks and Paul Newman.

“What I love about Dean’s playing is that he breathes a new vibe into each song we play,” Williams said. “I’m like any other musician—I want to play the best possible music with the best possible players I can find, and playing with Dean offers me that opportunity. He also has an urgent humor in his playing and performing that has helped me develop as a player. I can honestly say that playing with Dean has been the high point in my musical life.”

A listen to “Raven,” the duo’s new CD, reveals the near telepathic rapport between Magraw and Williams. On ballads, the melodies are played with an effortless poignancy that tugs at the heart. And burners like “Le Nuit Sauvage/Alice’s Reel” leads the listener to believe the two could levitate, should they care to.

The duo has performed in the Royal Concert Hall of Glasgow, at the Dublin National Concert Hall, on the BBC, and in the best music pubs throughout Ireland and Scotland.

When it comes to the modern hybrid of Irish music, Magraw and Williams are as good as it gets.

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On the Town Briefly

Books

Common Good Books, 165 N. Western Ave., will present free readings by authors David A. Lanegran from *Minnesota on the Map: A Historical Atlas* at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, December 6; and William Cleveland from *Art and Upheaval: Artists on the World's Frontlines*, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, December 9. Call 651-225-8989.

"A Little Steinway Music," a dramatic reading of an original short story accompanied by a live performance on an 1872 Steinway piano, will be presented on Wednesday and Thursday, December 3 and 4, at the Alexander Ramsey House, 265 S. Exchange St. The program will run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and includes a tour of the first floor of the historic home of Minnesota's second governor. Tickets are \$28. For reservations, call 651-296-8760.

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood, Marjane Satrapi's story of a young girl's life under the Islamic revolution, will be discussed on Thursday, December 4, by the Highland Park Library Book Club. The group meets at 7:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month in the Activity Room of the Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. Everyone is welcome. Refreshments are served. Call 651-695-3700.

Macalester College geography professor David A. Lanegran, author of *Minnesota on the Map*, will give an illustrated lecture on the imagined, real and changing landscapes of the state on Thursday, December 4. The free program begins at 7:00 p.m. at the Mill City Museum, 704 S. 2nd St. in Minneapolis. Lanegran will also be available to sign copies of his new book. Call 612-341-7555.

"Understanding A Christmas Carol?" Costumed guides will read excerpts of Dickens' tale and explain what life was like in 1840s London and 1870s St. Paul on Wednesday, December 10, at the Alexander Ramsey House, 265 S. Exchange St. Tours of the Gilded Age mansion are included in the program, which begins at 6:00, 6:30, 7:00 and 7:30 p.m. Plum pudding made from a popular recipe of the era will be served. The cost is \$10, \$9.00 for seniors and children. For reservations, call 651-296-8760.

Six local poets, each with a new book, will



Real-life siblings Lucas and Taylor Bolstad play the Warner children in *A Servant's Christmas*, which is being performed through December 28 at the History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. The heartwarming holiday musical tells of a young St. Paul girl in 1899 who tries to keep her Jewish heritage secret when she takes a job in the Summit Avenue home of a Christian widower. The curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and at 2:00 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$25-\$32, \$10 for students. Call 651-292-4323.

read at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday December 16, at the University Club, 420 Summit Ave. Emceed by St. Paul poet laureate Carol Connolly, the free program will feature Todd Boss and *Yellow Rocket*, Sharon Chmielarz and *The Rhubarb King*, Heid Erdrich and *National Monuments*, Margaret Hasse and *Milk and Tides*, John Minczeski and *November*, Tim Nolan and *The Sound of It* and Kimberly Nightingale and *St. Paul Almanac*.

Dance

The Chamber Ballet of St. Paul and the Hopkins Youth Ballet will present *Nutcracker Magique* on December 5-7 in O'Shaughnessy Auditorium at the College of St. Catherine. Sixty dancers ages 7-56 will take the stage for "Autumn Reveries" by Phillip Carman and "A Sugar Plum Dream" set to the music of Tchaikovsky. The curtain rises at 8:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at 2:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$30, \$20 for children age 12 and under, at the door; \$25 and \$16 in advance by calling 651-699-6700; or two for \$25 for the Saturday matinee.

The Little Match Girl, a contemporary version of Hans Christian Andersen's holiday tale about a young girl who has only her matches and imagination to keep her warm, will be performed December 11-28 by Ballet of the Dolls. The curtain will rise at 8:00 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and at 7:00 p.m. Sundays at the Ritz Theater, 1345 13th Ave. NE. in Minneapolis. For ticket information, call 612-436-1129.

Zenon Dance Company sets nursery stories to Tchaikovsky's music in *The Nutcracker According to Mother Goose*. The adaptation of the holiday favorite is playing weekends, December 13-21, at the Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Tickets are \$18, \$12 for children age 12 and under. Call 612-340-1725.

Theater

The best of Sample Night Live, a dozen favorites from 2008 in 10-minute trial sizes, will be rolled out at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 3, at the History Theater, 30 E. 10th St. G-rated Act I will feature Quest

Mode Productions' *Versa-Style Tribe*, vaudevillian Dylan Fresco, the Prime Time Players, flutist Julie Johnson and the Dregs. Unrated and uncensored Act II will shine a light on poetry-slamers Ruth Kohtz, Casey Degnan and Khary Jackson (*aka 6 is 9*), the burlesque of Stilettoes and Straps, *Slow Clap for Pi(e)*, comedian and magician David Harris and the Auto Body Experience. Tickets are \$10, \$15 for students and seniors, \$5.00 for children ages 5-10. Beer, wine, and other refreshments will be available. The first 25 people through the door after 6:00 p.m. get a free T-shirt. Visit www.sampleneightlive.com.

Park Square Theatre's 2006 production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will return for two public performances at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, December 3 and 10, at 20 W. 7th Place. Directed by Jef Hall-Flavin, it stars Hope Cervantes, Aaron Cook, David Coral, Paul de Cordova, Terry Hempleman, Kate Eifrig, Nicholas Harazin, Dave Gangler and Sarah Chandler. Tickets are \$34 with discounts for seniors and anyone under age 30. Call 651-291-7005.

Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol, Tom Mula's magical sequel to Dickens' holiday tale, is playing through December 21 at Park Square Theater, 20 W. 7th Place. Jim Lichtscheidl plays a host of earthly and celestial beings as well as Marley, the late business partner of Ebenezer Scrooge who at the outset of the play applies for a transfer in Hell. The curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and at 2:00 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$15-\$39. Call 651-291-7005.

A Christmas Carole Petersen, Tod Petersen's heartwarming and hilarious musical tribute to his Mankato childhood, is playing through December 21 at the Ordway. Tickets are \$29-\$35. For reservations, call 651-224-4222.

Irving Berlin's White Christmas, the beloved musical about two showbiz buddies who put on a show in a Vermont inn and find their perfect mates in the bargain, is being performed Tuesdays through Sundays through January 3 at the Ordway. Tickets are \$63-\$125. Call 651-224-4222.

Deer Camp, the comedy by Actors Theater that follows four fearless deer hunters into the woods, has been extended through December 28 at the Lowry Theater, 16 W. 5th St. What happens at deer camp stays at deer camp. The problem is, the wives are

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getting suspicious. After decades of hunting trips, the guys have yet to bring home a deer. Greg Eiden, Paul Reyburn, E.J. Subkoviack and Eric Webster star. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 5:00 and 8:30 p.m. Saturday and 5:00 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$29-\$39. Call 612-673-0404.

The Skid Row Kids Save Christmas, Minrod and Shirley Mier's high-energy musical comedy, will be performed December 4-13 by the Morris Park Players. The curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday at Folwell Middle School, 3611 20th Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Tickets are \$15, \$12 for seniors and students. Call 612-724-8373.

A Christmas Carol, Dickens' beloved ghost story, will be served with a feast befitting the holidays on weekends, December 4-14, in Wigington Hall on Harriet Island. The renovated banquet hall has been transformed into Dickens' 19th-century country estate for the show. Guests will be treated to a roaring fire, hot-spiced cider, Victorian carolers, Celtic musicians, a seven-course gourmet dinner and a picturesque four-act performance. The dinner theater is served at 7:00 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, 5:00 p.m. Sunday and also at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, December 13. Tickets are \$74.50. For reservations, call 612-673-0404.

Fool for Love, Sam Shepard's Obie Award-winning drama about passion and the mythic American West, will open December 5 on Gremlin Theatre's new stage at 2400 University Ave. Stacia Rice, Peter Hansen, Ed Jones and Seth Patterson star in this story of a cowboy and a small-town girl whose forbidden love plays out in a modern-day showdown. The curtain rises at 8:00 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and at 4:00 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$20, half your age for those under 30, or whatever you can pay for the additional show at 8:00 p.m. Monday, December 15. Call 651-228-7008.

It's December 24 and all hell is breaking loose as the delightfully eccentric residents of Tuna, Texas, cope with a disaster-prone production of *A Christmas Carol* and a yard-decorating contest gone awry. That is the setting for *Tuna Christmas*, a comedy by Actors Theatre of Minnesota playing at 8:00 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and at 6:00 p.m. Sundays, December 11-21, at the Lowry Lab Theater, 16 W. 5th St. Scott Jorgenson and Charles Hubble portray all 24 citizens of Tuna, where the Lion's Club is too liberal and Patsy Cline never died. Tickets are \$31-\$39. Call 612-673-0404.

The Winter's Tale will be read by all comers on Friday, December 12, when Lex-Ham Community Theater's Shakespeare reading series continues at 1184 Portland Ave. The free event will open with a potluck supper at 6:30 p.m. The reading commences at 7:00 with parts reassigned at the start of each scene. First-timers are welcome. No registration is required. Call 651-644-3366.

Music

Mississippi Peace will perform free of charge at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 3, in the auditorium of McNally Smith College of Music, 19 E. Exchange St. The acoustic quartet features Christopher Cunningham on guitars, fretted stringed instruments and voice; Michelle Kinney on cello, Melissa Matthews on violin and Graham O'Brien on drums. Call 651-291-0177.

Macalester-Groveland lutenist Richard Griffith will present an evening of festive Renaissance music and seasonal poetry beginning at 7:00 on Friday, December 5, at the Mad Hatter Cafe, 945 W. 7th St. Admission is free, though the hat will be passed.

The New Standards, the trio of bassist John Munson, pianist Chan Poling and vibraphonist Steve Roehm, will interpret a sleighful of holiday classics in minimalist jazz on Satur-

day, December 6. The concert begins at 8:00 p.m. at the Fitzgerald Theater, 10 E. Exchange St. Musical guests include Jeremy Messersmith, the Electric Arc Radio, the Frantzych Brothers, the Warblers, Mason Jennings, Lucy Michelle, Matt Wilson and Jello Slave. Tickets are \$29. Call 651-290-1221.

The Minneapolis Guitar Quartet will perform works by Piazzolla, Bach, Joaquin Rodrigo and others in a rare Twin Cities appearance on Saturday, December 6. The music begins at 8:00 p.m. in Sundin Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave. Tickets are \$22, \$17 for students and seniors, and available at Cadenza Music on Snelling Avenue or by calling 612-677-1151.

"Born Light of Lights," a free yuletide concert by the Gar Lockrem Community Choir, will be presented on December 6 and 7. The program at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 8600 Fremont Ave. S. in Bloomington, and at 3:00 p.m. Sunday at Augustana Lutheran Church, 1400 S. Robert St. in West St. Paul, will feature works by Giulio Caccini, Franz Biebl, Morten Lauridsen, John Rutter and Minnesotans Stephen Paulus, Robert Morris, F. Melius Christiansen and Paul Christiansen. Call 651-500-4606.

Classical guitarist Tony Hauser will present a concert of classical, flamenco and Latin-American music at 2:00 p.m. Sunday, December 7, at the Central Library, 90 W. 4th St. Admission is free. Call 651-266-7000.

The Musical Offering will perform at 3:00 p.m. Sunday, December 7, in Sundin Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave. The program includes Haydn's "Sunrise" string quartet, Ligeti's Six Bagatelles for wind quintet, Laillet's Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano and Schoenberg's string sextet "Transfigured Night" with guest violist Ken Freed and cellist Kristen Whitson. Tickets are \$17, \$14 for seniors, and \$8.00 for students. Call 651-523-2459.

The 3M Club Sounds of Harmony will join choruses from Travelers and Wells Fargo in a holiday show at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, December 7, at Central Presbyterian Church, 500 Cedar St. Admission is free with a donation of nonperishable food for Project Home. Refreshments will follow the concert.

Veteran Twin Cities pianist and composer Kurt Metzger will give his first-ever public performances on Tuesdays, December 9 and 16, at Landmark Center. "The Warmest Christmas" concerts will celebrate the release of two Metzger CDs, one of holiday music and the other of Broadway and Hollywood tunes. Joining him will be tenor George Dyer, the Land of Lakes Choirboys and other musicians. Tickets are \$20 at the door and \$15 in advance at kurtmetzgermusic.com.

The Star of the North Concert Band will perform free of charge at 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, December 10, in the cortile of Landmark Center. Call 651-292-3276.

Handel's masterwork for chorus and orchestra, *Messiah* will be performed by the Minnesota Orchestra and Minnesota Chorale on December 10, 11 and 14. Klara Ek, Kirsten Sollek, Michael Slattery and Thomas Meglioranza will be featured as soloists in the shows at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Basilica of St. Mary, 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Cathedral of St. Paul and 2:00 p.m. Sunday in Orchestra Hall. Tickets are \$21-\$51. Call 612-371-5656.

"Christmas Memories," a musical revue of holiday music through the ages by Classic Sounds and the Woodbury Community Theatre, will be presented at 7:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday, December 12 and 13, in the restored art gallery of the James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Ave. Tickets at \$14, \$12 for seniors and \$10 for children include tours of the Hill House. Call 651-297-2555.

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present an Acoustic Christmas at 8:00 p.m. Thursday and Friday, December 12-13, at the Fitzgerald Theater, 10 E. Exchange St. Tickets are \$38, \$33 and \$28. Call 651-290-1221.

Eclectic Christian folk-rock
Jonathan Rundman will perform at 6:51 p.m. Saturday, December 13, at Pilgrim Lutheran Church, 1935 St. Clair Ave. A reception, silent auction and wall of wine raffle will follow. Tickets are \$15. Call 651-699-6886.

The Kantorei choir will present both the obscure and familiar in a Christmas concert at 3:00 p.m. Sunday, December 14, in St. Mary's Chapel at the St. Paul Seminary, 2260 Summit Ave. Tickets are \$15, \$10 for students and seniors. Call 651-367-9995.

Schubert's 5th Symphony will highlight St. Paul Chamber Orchestra concerts on December 13, 18 and 19. Mozart's Ballet Music from *Idomeneo*, Schubert's Rendering for orchestra, and Bach's Ricercare from *The Musical Offering* will also be performed in the shows at 8:00 p.m. Saturday at St. Paul's United Church of Christ, 900 Summit Ave.; Thursday at Trinity Lutheran Church in Stillwater; and Friday at Wayzata Community Church. For ticket information, call 651-291-1144.

Rihanna, "American Idol" runner-up David Archuleta, pop-rockers Boys Like Girls, pop pianist Lady GaGa and the up-and-coming Shontelle will share the stage at the annual KDWB Jingle Ball on Monday, December 15, at Xcel Energy Center. Rapper T.I. will emcee the 7:00 p.m. concert. Tickets at \$17, \$37, \$57 and \$103.30 are available at the Xcel box office or by calling Ticketmaster at 651-989-5151.

Family

Red Balloon Bookshop, 891 Grand Ave., plays host to storytimes for babies at 10:15 a.m. Tuesdays, toddlers at 11:00 a.m. Tuesdays and preschoolers at 10:30 a.m. Wednesdays. Featured in other free programs will be scenes from SteppingStone Theatre's *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, December 13; and *PEEF the Christmas Bear* author Tom Hegg reading at 3:00 p.m. Saturday, December 13. Call 651-224-8320.

The Bell Museum of Natural History, 10 Church St. SE. in Minneapolis, will offer two programs for children in the coming weeks. In Nature Tots from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. Thursday, December 4, kids will learn the clever ways in which animals have adapted to winter. To register, call 612-624-9050. During Nature Play from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Saturday, December 13, kids may bring in old egg cartons, paper towel rolls and other household trash and turn it into art. Both programs are free with museum admission, which is \$5.00, \$3.00 for children ages 3-16, and free for all on Sundays.

Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins, the story of a visitor who spends eight nights in an old synagogue battling those who would prevent Helmsbergville from celebrating Hanukkah, will be staged December 4-19 by the Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company. Show times are 7:00 p.m. Saturdays, 2:00 p.m. Sundays, and Tuesday through Friday mornings in the auditorium of the Hillcrest Recreation Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. Discussions with cast and crew will follow the shows on Saturday, December 6 and 13. Ticket are \$16. Call 651-647-4315.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever, the beloved story of how a cast of siblings from the wrong side of the tracks pulls off the unexpected, returns December 5-23 for 31 matinee and evening performances at SteppingStone Theatre, 55 N. Victoria St. Tickets are \$12, \$10 for seniors and children ages 2-17. Call 651-225-9265.

A reading group for teens and tweens meets at 2:00 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Pkwy. The group will discuss *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie on December 6. Refreshments will be served. Call 651-695-3700.

"Saturday Live!" free entertainment for children at 11:15 a.m. Saturdays at St. Paul's Central Library, 90 W. 4th St., will feature a show by the Hunter Marionettes on December 6; the Wildlife Science Center's "All about Wolves" nature program, December 13; an American Swedish Institute presentation on "A Year of Swedish Traditions," December 20.

"Paw Pals." Catherine Roach and her

dog Taylor will read with children ages 6-11 in a free program on Saturday, December 6, at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Pkwy. Fifteen-minute sessions are available between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m. Call 651-695-3700.

The Daddy-Doo Band will celebrate the release of its fourth CD, "The Complete Daddy-Doo" from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday, December 6, at Trotter's Cafe and Bakery, 232 N. Cleveland Ave. Formed by Macalester-Groveland resident and Early Childhood Family Education teacher Todd Seabury-Kolod, the band has distributed more than 3,000 CDs over the past six years with all proceeds going to the Rondo ECFE Parent Advisory Council for scholarships, field trips and special events. Visit www.daddy-doo.com.

Mickey and Minnie Mouse will transport audiences to the worlds of *The Little Mermaid*, *The Lion King*, *Lilo & Stitch* and *Peter Pan* on December 11-14. "Disney On Ice" takes to the Xcel Energy Center rink at 7:00 p.m. Thursday; 10:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Friday; 11:00 a.m., 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. Saturday; and 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. Sunday. Tickets at \$11-\$65 are available at the Xcel or by calling 651-989-5151.

Et cetera

A Gilded Age Christmas is brought to life by costumed actors portraying servants preparing for the holidays at the James J. Hill House. The one-hour show moves through the first-floor spaces and basement work areas of the historic mansion at 240 Summit Ave. Shows begin between 1:00 and 3:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, December 6-28. Admission is \$8.00, \$6.00 for seniors and students, \$4.00 for children ages 6-17. Call 651-297-2555.

Horse-drawn carriage rides through historic Irvine Park will leave every 15 minutes between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays, December 6 and 20, from the Alexander Ramsey House, 265 S. Exchange St. The cost is \$10. Call 651-296-8760

A Scandinavian holiday festival will be presented from noon to 4:00 p.m. Sunday, December 14, at Landmark Center. Admission is \$5.00, \$3.00 for children and seniors.

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Sports



The Wright Call By Dave Wright

Going bowling no longer a privilege

Cleveland Amory, the late bestselling author and astute observer of American life, once noted, "One thing you have to say for the system—there is one."

Amory's adage came to mind the other night when the final score was announced: Iowa 55, Minnesota 0. The Golden Gophers' final game in their home-away-from-home, the Metrodome, ended on a decidedly down beat. Although most teams that take such a thrashing at home get to spend Christmas with their families, the vagaries of the college football system will send the Gophers to a bowl game next month because they finished high enough in the Big 10 and had a winning season record.

The site is still to be determined—it may be San Antonio, Tempe or even Detroit—and there will be some national gnashing of teeth about it, but it's the system that college presidents must want. Bowl games are no longer considered a reward for a job well done. They're now handed out the way a dog gets a treat for sitting up. The Gophers got theirs for merely suiting up.

Minnesota coach Tim Brewster pointed with pride to the fact that his team improved to 7-5 this year after finishing 1-11 last season. True, but Minnesota beat only one major school with a winning record. In the big picture, wins at Purdue and Illinois are minor achievements at best.

Still, thanks to an unbalanced conference schedule that allowed them to skip Michigan State and Penn State—in a year when both teams were fearsome—and a cupcake non-conference schedule to boot, the Gophers were able to cobble enough victories to play another game. That's the system.

It's also the good news. The bad news is that the bowl game format is tightly structured. The little looseness that is available doesn't figure to help Minnesota because Gopher football fans are notorious for not traveling and not spending a lot of money in other towns. The good folks of San Antonio, Tempe and Detroit can't be particularly excited to host a team

WRIGHT CALL ▶ 42

Prep hoops preview

Interest in girls' basketball reaches new heights

BY BRIAN JOHNSON

According to a recent poll conducted by the Minnesota State High School League, basketball is the most popular girls' high school sport nationwide. In Minnesota, it's the fourth most popular prep girls' sport behind volleyball, track and softball, but local coaches say it's continuing to grow in popularity.

"Our numbers all the way down to middle school have been on the rise the last few years," said Minnehaha Academy girls' basketball coach Josh Thurow.

Henry Sibley coach Nathan McGuire also sees signs of the sport's growing appeal, with the increasing popularity of summer and fall basketball leagues and the growing number of prep sports websites. "It's exploding," McGuire said of girls' basketball.

Roosevelt coach Tim Williams is not surprised at the sport's popularity. He said one factor is that Minnesota is producing some great teams and players. Three of the "Fabulous 50" girls' prep teams on espn.com are from Minnesota, including Roosevelt (rated 31st), Minneapolis South (41st) and St. Paul Central (46th). "A lot of top kids are coming out of here," Williams said.

"Most girls aren't playing for scholarships; they're playing to have a good time," said Central coach Willie Taylor. "In Minnesota girls' basketball, you have a lot of good coaches, too."

Highland Park coach Deb Williams said the level of play has really picked up over the past few years. "You're seeing more balance, where it's not just one powerhouse," she said. "It's getting more competitive and the girls are wanting to play."

Visitation coach Brian Kramer agreed



Highland Park senior guard Alonia Chess looks for an open teammate to pass to during practice. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

about the increasingly competitive nature of the game. "Every year there are better players," he said. "The kids seem to be able to do more and more each year. Stuff I never thought of doing in the past, we're doing now."

The girls' basketball season is just getting under way. Here's how the local teams size up:

CENTRAL

League: St. Paul City Conference
Last year's record: 28-4 (12-0 conference)
Coach: Willie Taylor

Key players and their strengths:

- Theairra Taylor, senior guard. Averaged 15 points a game last year. A great all-around player. Plans to play at Iowa

next year.

- Samantha Robinson-Ricks, senior guard-forward. A terrific leaper and solid offensive player who improved greatly over the summer.

- Kyana Johnson, senior point guard. A good ball handler, with quick hands and feet on both offense and defense.

- Jen'Von'Ta Hill, freshman guard. Another good ball handler and tenacious defender.

Team strengths/weaknesses: Central will have good overall quickness and strong guard play. However, the Minutemen were hit hard by graduation and have some question marks on the front line.

GIRLS' BASKETBALL ▶ 40



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39 GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Outlook: After winning the state tournament for the past two years, Central's goal this year is to just make it to the big dance. The Minutemen have a winning tradition and should never be underestimated. Humboldt and Highland Park will provide good competition in the conference.

CRETIN-DERHAM HALL

League: Suburban East Conference
Last year's record: 16-12 (10-5)
Coach: Amy Bellus

Key players and their strengths:

- Sarah Hendricks, senior forward. A 6-foot-1 player who is athletic and versatile. She can shoot the three, score from the post and drive to the basket.
- Kendra Harris, senior center. A talented 6-foot rebounder and defender and "one of the strongest kids I've ever coached," Bellus said. Harris and Hendricks are the keys to the team's success.
- Kailyn Wilcox, senior forward. A good shooter who is learning to play with her back to the basket.
- Lisa Springer, senior guard. Takes good care of the basketball and has good instincts.

Team strengths/weaknesses: The Raiders have good size and solid varsity experience. "We should create match-up problems for other teams," Bellus said. "We also have an enthusiastic and energetic group this year with several role players who can contribute in a number of important ways." However, CDH lost most of its scoring power from last year and some younger players will have to emerge to fill those shoes.

Outlook: The Raiders should be competitive in a balanced Suburban East Conference and in its section. Teams to beat in the conference include Woodbury, Roseville, Park and Forest Lake. Central is the favorite in the section, but Woodbury will be tough, too.

HIGHLAND PARK

League: St. Paul City Conference
Last year's record: 16-10 (8-4)
Coach: Deb Williams

Key players and their strengths:

- Alonia Chess, senior guard. An outstanding defender who guards the other teams' top players.
- Leah Smith, senior guard. A point guard with good quickness. Was a double-digit scorer last year.
- Adele Simerson-Wallfred, senior forward. Led the conference last season with 17 points a

game and pulled down 10 rebounds a game.

Team strengths/weaknesses: With a host of talented players back from last year, including a half dozen seniors, Highland will put a seasoned team on the court. The Scots don't have any major concerns. They just need to stay healthy.

Outlook: Highland hopes to go toe-to-toe with rivals Central and Johnson and compete for the City Conference title. Another goal is to advance deep into the section playoffs.

HENRY SIBLEY

League: Classic Suburban Conference
Last year's record: 11-15 (4-10)
Coach: Nathan McGuire

Key players and their strengths:

- Bri Allen, senior forward. A returning 6-foot starter with a strong inside presence and a nifty outside shot.
- Katie Ahlstrom, senior shooting guard. Another returning starter who hits from the perimeter. Was the team's second-leading scorer last year.
- Eleanor Garcia, senior forward. Led the team with 14-plus points a game last year. Strong on both the inside and outside.
- Chelsea Miller, junior guard. Has great speed and ball handling ability.
- Emily Larson, freshman guard. A young player who is able to drive to the basket.

Team strengths/weaknesses: Sibley has good speed at guard, accurate outside shooters and decent size. However, the Warriors lack experience at some positions. Depth is also a concern.

Outlook: Sibley finished sixth in the conference last year but hopes to crack the top three this year and win a section playoff game. It's a goal that's within reach for a team that will put some talented returning starters on the court. Richfield is the conference favorite.

MINNEHAHA ACADEMY

League: Tri-Metro Conference
Last year's record: 27-5 (15-2)
Coach: Josh Thurow

Key players and their strengths:

- Rachel Hansen, junior guard. A talented player who averaged more than 13 points a game last year and has been a starter since 8th grade. She was a big reason why Minnehaha went to state.
- Sarah Peterson, senior forward. Was all-state honorable mention last year when she scored 13 points per game and led the Redhawks in rebounds.
- Katelyn Adams, sophomore center. A 6-

foot-4 player with a nice touch. Is already getting a lot of interest from Division I colleges.

- Analisa Ballinger, junior forward. A sharp-shooter from three-point range who made great strides in her game over the summer.
- Liz Mrozek, senior guard. Has good quickness and is a strong defender.
- AnnaMarie Martino, senior forward. A great passer who also can shoot the three.

Team strengths/weaknesses: The Redhawks have a wealth of returning players with varsity experience. Many have been key contributors to Minnehaha teams that have gone 51-10 over the past two years. This year's team is taller than last year's and will probably be able to do a better job of rebounding. Depth is a possible concern. The Redhawks' starting lineup will be as good as anybody's, but the bench is a question mark.

Outlook: Minnehaha has been on a roll in recent years and the team looks strong again this season. The Redhawks return three of their top four scorers from last year's state tournament team. DeLaSalle is among the top conference rivals and Hill-Murray and Highland Park will provide tough competition in the section playoffs.

ROOSEVELT

League: Minneapolis City Conference
Last year's record: 17-13 (8-4)
Coach: Tim Williams

Key players and their strengths:

- Suriya McGuire, junior guard. A returning starter who had a great summer on the court. Ranked 58th in the country for her graduating class on espn.com and is a second team preseason all-state pick. She already has options with a variety of Division I colleges.
- Shakila Boler, junior guard. A transfer from Bloomington Kennedy and another nationally ranked player. Has committed verbally to play for the Gophers.
- Tyesha Wright, junior guard. Another top college recruit and solid point guard who can shoot the ball and dish it off.

Team strengths/weaknesses: The Teddies are quick and athletic. With a blue chip backcourt, the team will play an up-tempo game. Scoring and rebounding won't be a problem. With a couple of transfer students in the mix, the biggest challenge will be getting everybody to play as a team.

Outlook: Roosevelt should battle with South for bragging rights in the Mill City. Williams has high hopes for the team, which returns some talented athletes from last year's squad. A nice run in the post-season and a state tournament berth are within reach.

ST. PAUL ACADEMY

League: Tri-Metro Conference
Last year's record: 10-17 (6-11)
Coach: Mark Heiser

Key players and their strengths:

- Niambi Mitchell, senior guard. A prolific scorer who already has 906 career points. Averages about 15 points a game.
- Megan Leslie, junior guard/forward. A third-year starter who is athletic and versatile. Can shoot threes, drive to the basket and play the post.
- Jen O'Brien, freshman guard/forward. Already has varsity experience going into her freshman year. Can play in the post and at guard.

Team strengths/weaknesses: SPA is athletic and scrappy, with at least eight players who will use their quickness up and down the floor. However, the team lacks size—the tallest player is 5-foot-10—and it's young. A lot of underclassmen will see playing time.

Outlook: Minnehaha and DeLaSalle stand out in the conference. After that, the league is competitive and SPA hopes to be in the mix. After winning a half dozen games two years ago and 10 last year, the Spartans are shooting for at least 13 this year.

VISITATION

League: Tri-Metro Conference
Last year's record: 14-13 (12-6)
Coach: Brian Kramer

Key players and their strengths:

- Maddy Oliver, senior forward. Will see significant playing time as one of a handful of key seniors.
- Emma Russ, senior guard. Another key player who returns to her role as the Blazers' starting point guard. Has shown continued improvement.
- Allison O'Neill, senior guard. Should be one of the team's top scorers. Averaged 13 points a game last year.
- Claire Kranz, junior forward. Will be counted on for her rebounding ability. Pulled down about a half dozen boards a game last year.

Team strengths/weaknesses: Visitation has good chemistry and quickness, but the Blazers aren't very big and they're not as deep as they've been in the past.

Outlook: Visitation has big sneakers to fill with the graduation of Courtney Kranz, who racked up 15-20 points and double-digit rebounds a game. But with good teamwork, they hope to be competitive in the tough Tri-Metro.

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New Minnehaha Academy boys' hockey coach Darin Thompson puts the Redhawks through their paces at a recent practice. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Boys' hockey preview

Local coaches hope that more 'O' will produce more W's this season

BY DAVE WRIGHT

It has been 30 years since Jim O'Neill was a center for the University of Minnesota hockey team. During his playing days, he was considered a sniper on the net, scoring 50 goals in one season for Cretin High School and 20 as a freshman for the College of St. Thomas. Because he put up such big numbers, the occasional missed open net was more of an annoyance than anything for his coaches at those schools.

But when he got to the U of M, O'Neill's coach was Herb Brooks, who didn't react so forgivingly when a great scoring opportunity was blown and was never reticent in letting his players know it. It's a concept O'Neill thinks needs to return to high school hockey.

"When I played, we had a lot of 6-4 games that also had good goaltending," O'Neill said. "Now a 4-2 game is considered a high-scoring affair."

He has a theory about that. "Players and coaches don't seem to get as upset about missed scoring chances as they do when a defensive mistake is made," O'Neill said. "We need to go back to teaching goal scoring."

St. Paul Academy coach Craig Norwich, an offensive-minded defenseman in his decade of playing professional hockey, agrees. "Scoring goals is hard work," he said. "A lot of guys know just one or two moves. Great goal scorers have a variety of them and are constantly changing their approach. When I played in high school we had a lot of guys who could shoot in stride or off either foot. That's not easy to do."

O'Neill does not disagree, but thinks the lack of offense in prep hockey today is partly psychological as well. "If you make a mistake on defense, everybody knows it," he said. "The same isn't true at the other end. I want our forwards to take more responsibility for mistakes like missed open nets. We played good defense last year and went something like nine games without giving up a power play goal. That was great, but we didn't have the offense to go with it."

Tom Vannelli, who was a talented goal scorer for both St. Paul Academy and the U of M, co-coached St. Thomas Academy to the boys' state Class A title last year and had the highest scoring team in the state. "Defense is easier to teach than offense," Vannelli said. "To get more offense into the game, you have

to get creative and aggressive."

Vannelli tells his forwards they should each get four good shots in the course of a game and three of them should be on net. "That's not an unreasonable goal," he said. "Of course, good goal scorers don't need to be told that."

In many ways, high school hockey today imitates the college and pro game. As of last week, the Minnesota Wild had played 10 consecutive games in which the combined scoring output for both teams was five goals or less. (Of course, playing without Marian Gaborik for most of the season had something to do with that.) The scoring had been so sparse, in fact, that even Wild coach Jacques Lemaire, a famous advocate of tight play, was imploring his team to get more aggressive on offense.

Here's how the goals for the five boys' high school hockey teams in the Villager area stack up this season:

CRETIN-DERHAM HALL

League: Suburban East Conference

Last year's record: 12-15

Coach: Jim O'Neill

Key players and their strengths:

- Tom Zimmerman, senior forward. A four-year player with a big shot. Scored eight goals last season.

- Mark Alt, junior defender. Moves from quarterbacking the football team to manning the blue line. Has already committed to the U of M for hockey. A great skater for his 6-foot-4 size.

- Mychal Bongs, senior forward. Could become a big goal scorer this season. With eight goals and 11 assists, he's the top returning scorer from last season.

- Neil Batholomay, junior defender. Played regularly as a sophomore. A solid defenseman.

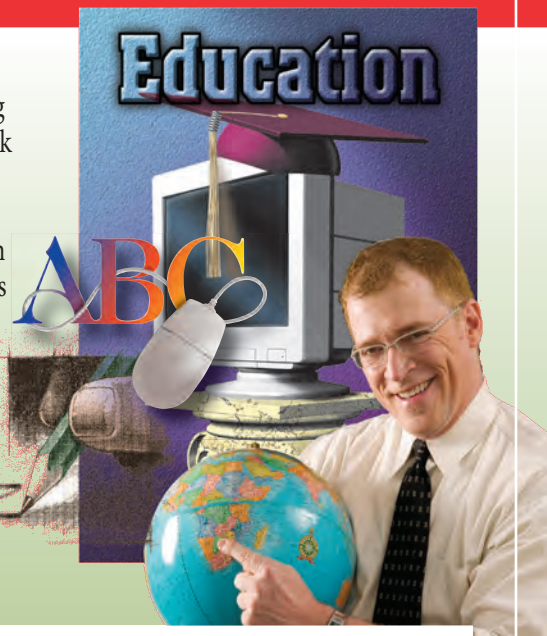
- Ben Walsh, senior goalie. Had a 3.16 goals against average in limited action last year. A steady netminder who should step into the starter's role.

Outlook: The Raiders are hoping several players can fill the void created by the graduation of Ryan Bohrer, who led the team with 31 goals last year. O'Neill feels the returning veterans, plus a new faces like Jessie Parent, should be of help in that regard. Still, he thinks the team needs to be a lot more offensive-minded in general to compete in

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39 ◀ **WRIGHT CALL**

that dropped its regular-season finale by 55-0 and generally travels with a contingent that numbers far fewer than the Swiss national army.

That, too, is the system. These bowl games aren't being played out of the goodness of those cities' hearts. They're being played to make money and gain national recognition for a city. If you want to avoid spending Christmas in Detroit, there's a simple way to do so—don't be the Big Ten's number seven team.

One doesn't have to be that old to recall when we were told that moving into the Metrodome would be the panacea for what was ailing the Gophers' football program. It wasn't. College football is more complicated than that.

TCF Bank Stadium looks like it will be a major improvement over the Metrodome. Still, the state didn't agree to spend \$137.2 million for a facility just so the U of M can beat Montana State.

College football at the Division I level is very much a "What have you done for me lately?" affair. Just ask Ron Prince. In his first season, he coached Kansas State to a bowl game for the first time in three years. Last year, the Wildcats walked into one of the hotbeds of college football and defeated the University of Texas. A couple of weeks ago, his team fell behind rival Kansas early and lost 52-21. The next day, it was announced that Mr. Prince would not be invited back for the 2009 season. "We just ran out of time," he said.

A victory in a December bowl game might make for a happy holiday celebration for some folks. But 55-0 losses at home to a longtime rival are not the sort of games that boosters forget easily—and it can make a fellow run out of time in a hurry.

Officially speaking, the job is tough

Long before he began his career as the impresario of the old St. Paul Civic Center, the late John Friedmann decided he'd make a little side money as a football official. Friedmann, a

Highland Park resident, was placed on a crew headed by Don Wheeler, a man known for running games with a firm, but benevolent hand. At halftime of his first game, Friedmann complained to Wheeler that he had tried, but just couldn't spot any penalties. "You're not supposed to look for penalties," Wheeler said. "They come to you. You'll know them when you see them."

There's an old adage that a good official is one you never notice. That's not exactly true. Sometimes you need to make a tough decision and live with the sometime conspicuous consequences.

For example, in the Vikings' home win last month against the Packers, Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers was running for his life in his own end zone when he saw a body dressed in green off to his right. Rodgers did his best Brett Favre imitation and tossed the ball underhand toward the receiver, who couldn't have caught it with a fishing net. The referee declared it an illegal forward pass, later changing it to intentional grounding. Since it was in the end zone, that meant it was a safety, a deciding call in what ended up to be a one-point victory for Minnesota. The Packers immediately protested, but it was a judgment call, thus escaping the long arm of instant replay.

A couple of days after the game, it was revealed that Minnesota running back Adrian Peterson should have been penalized for removing his helmet after scoring a touchdown late in the game. The penalty should have been assessed on the kickoff and could have made a big difference in field position. Granted, this is one of the silliest rules in the history of the game. No matter. The officials clearly missed it and the league supervisor was on the radio a few days later wanting to know why.

In the NFL, each play can be examined from a multitude of cameras and angles. As a result, instant replay has become an integral part of NFL games. Admittedly, this technology is handy when you're trying to look through seven guys the size of a Mack truck to see if that 5-foot-9 running back crossed the white line.

But the fact remains: Good officials are the ones who

are calm in a crisis, call what they see and live with the consequences. They understand mistakes will be made, but hope they'll be kept to minimum. Technology be damned, all officials really have at the end of the day is their reputation.

A little common sense helps, too. Once, Friedmann was assigned to a St. John's vs. St. Thomas game. As luck would have it, he spent the afternoon running up and down the sideline in front of Johnnies legendary head coach John Gagliardi. Nowadays, the octogenarian Gagliardi stands and supervises the team's comings and goings with a calm demeanor. However, in his youth—when he was, say, 60—he was very active on the sidelines and was known to be rough on officials.

At one point during that perennially lively Johnnie-Tommie tilt, Friedmann told Wheeler, "John is yelling some unkind things at you. I think you need to go talk to him."

Wheeler shook his head. "If I go over there now, I know I'm going to end up flagging him," he said. "I can hear everything he says anyway. If he gets out of line, I can nail him from here just as well."

Fundraiser for former St. Luke's principal

When Mary Mitzuk was the principal at St. Luke's School, she could be counted upon to help wherever needed. Unfortunately, it's she and her family who need help now. Mitzuk was diagnosed with breast cancer a year ago. Her husband, Mark, underwent back surgery a few years ago and is on disability. Her son, Alex, is a former football player who is now a senior at Central and hopes to attend college next year. A benefit dinner has been scheduled for Mitzuk at the Rosetown American Legion Post from noon to 5:00 p.m. Sunday, December 14. The cost is \$10 and includes a chance to win a 32-inch flat-panel TV. There also will be a silent auction. Call Barb Gutzmer at 651-453-9516 for details.

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

41 ◀ **BOYS' HOCKEY**

the rugged Suburban East Conference.

HENRY SIBLEY

League: Classic Suburban Conference

Last year's record: 7-18-1

Coach: Tony McGee

Key players and their strengths:

- Troy Hoban, sophomore defender. A skilled player who's very smooth on the blue line.
- Garrett Dykmann, junior defender. A physical presence who is particularly good in his own end of the ice.
- Tom Ahern, senior forward. Top returning scorer with seven goals. A very strong and skilled player.
- Aaron Westmann, junior forward. A lanky forward with a very good shot.
- Luke Meyer, junior forward. A small

player with a big heart who's a good finisher around the net.

Outlook: McGee takes over a team that has struggled in recent years in the Classic Suburban Conference. He is a defensive-minded coach who believes in controlling the boards and the neutral zone and playing at the hashmarks. "We're not going to blow anybody out with our offense this year," he said, "so we need to be tight in our own end." Ryan Lynch, who split the goalie duties last season, returns in the net—and that's a good thing. The Warriors were competitive in many games last year (half their losses were by one or two goals) but couldn't finish off a lot of their opponents. McGee said the first month could be a struggle as the team adapts to his system. "After Christmas, however, I think we'll be pretty tough," he said.

MINNEHAHA ACADEMY

League: Tri-Metro Conference

Last year's record: 14-11-1

Coach: Darin Thompson

Key players and their strengths:

- Louis Hamel, senior forward. The team captain and top returning scorer with 10 goals.
- Peter Knutson, junior forward. A smart player who sees the ice well. Had seven goals last year.
- Andrew McNamara, senior forward. Has good size. A potential presence by the net.
- John Van Winkle, senior defender. A physical force at the blue line who added 12 assists last season.
- Sam Anderson, senior defender. Reads the ice well. A smart, steady player.

Outlook: Thompson, who had been an assistant at Blaine the past four years, is Minneha-

ha's third head hockey coach in three years. He's still getting to know his players, but he's happy with what he's seen so far. "They have a great work ethic and their desire to learn is impressive," he said. Unfortunately, there isn't a lot of experience returning. As for his new conference, Thompson admits he has a lot to learn there, too. However, he has learned one thing already. "We played Breck when I was at Blaine," he said. "They're very good."

ST. PAUL ACADEMY

League: Tri-Metro Conference

Last year's record: 7-19

Coach: Craig Norwich

Key players and their strengths:

- Michael Falvey, senior forward. The team captain and top returning scorer from last season with 11 goals. Has great tenacity.

BOYS' HOCKEY ▶ 43



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Visitation swimmers win record fourth straight state title

Visitation School won an unprecedented fourth consecutive Class A state swimming championship on November 20-22 at the University of Minnesota Aquatic Center. The Blazers scored 268 points to easily outpace Monticello, which finished second with 197 points.

Eight new Class A records were established at the meet, including four by Visitation swimmers. The Blazers' 200-yard medley relay team of senior Julie Steege, freshman Olivia McNeely, junior Maddy DeMeules and senior Sophie Pilhofer took first with a record-setting 1:48.12, knocking four-tenths of a second off the mark set in the preliminaries the day before. Visitation's 400-yard freestyle relay team of Steege, senior Meghan Weiss, freshman Meg Foster and sophomore Molly George also finished first with a record-setting 3:34.97, which was three-tenths of a second faster than the mark that had stood since 1997.

Weiss, who is headed to the University of Minnesota and was last year's Class A

swimmer of the year, repeated as the 100-yard freestyle champion, breaking her 2007 record with a time of 51.17. McNeely won her third straight 100-yard breaststroke title, also eclipsing her 2007 mark with a time of 1:04.31.

Weiss also won her third straight title in the 200-yard freestyle with a time of 1:52.04 and Pilhofer won the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 23.83.

Sartell-St. Stephen upset Visitation's 200-yard freestyle relay team of Pilhofer, Weiss, DeMeules and George by two-hundredths of a second to end the Blazers' three-year winning streak in that event.

Class AA

Cretin-Derham Hall senior Lauren Weiss broke the 200-yard freestyle record in the Class AA prelims, but was edged out by sophomore teammate Kiera Janzen by nearly a full second for a new record of 1:47.86 in the finals. Janzen and Weiss also finished one-two in the 500-yard freestyle event with times of 4:51.22, 2 and 4:53.80, respectively.

The Raiders' 400-yard freestyle relay team of Janzen, Weiss, freshman Nicole Hutchins and sophomore Sammi Fox placed second. CDH finished sixth overall at the state meet with 137 points. Stillwater won the team title with 290 points.

Sports Shorts

St. John's University's nationally ranked 2008 rugby team included local high school graduates Teddy Fagrelus of Cretin-Derham Hall, Connor McIntee of St. Thomas Academy, Sam Douglas of Highland Park and Ryan Moran of Minnehaha Academy. The Johnnies recently completed a successful run through the Midwest Division II collegiate playoffs, defeating Marquette University, the University of Iowa and Kent State. Fagrelus, the team president and leading scorer, and fellow senior McIntee led the team deep into the Division II playoffs before losing to third-ranked Miami of Ohio on November 8 to end the season. This is the second year that the St. John's rugby team advanced to the national playoffs.

Concordia University-St. Paul will host the 2008 NCAA Division II volleyball tournament from December 4-6 at Gangelhoff Center. The Golden Bears of Concordia, the defending national champions, will be competing in their fourth Elite Eight tournament

in six years. They will open the tournament at 7:30 p.m. Thursday against the University of New Haven. Other Thursday quarterfinal matches will feature Cal State San Bernardino vs. California University of Pennsylvania at noon, Truman State University of Missouri vs. Nova Southeastern University of Florida at 2:30 p.m., and Grand Valley State University of Michigan vs. Armstrong Atlantic State University of Georgia at 5:00 p.m. The semifinals will be held at 5:00 and 7:30 p.m. Friday and the national championship game at 7:00 p.m. Saturday. Admission is \$8.00 for adults, \$5.00 for students and free for children age 5 and under.

Wells Fargo WinterSkate will be open for free outdoor skating from now through February 1 next to Landmark Center in downtown St. Paul. Skate rental is \$2.00. The adjacent Rice Park will be lit for the holidays 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from now through January 1. Call 651-291-5608.

42◀ BOYS' HOCKEY

- Jacob Rice, senior defender. A very coachable player who has totally recovered from a fractured knee. Excellent in his own end.
- Wyatt Wenzel, junior forward. A speedy forward who's also becoming a goal-scoring threat.
- James Trevathan, junior defender. Expected to be a defensive stalwart. Is also effective on the power play.
- Max Hommeyer, sophomore defender. Saw considerable playing time as a freshman and is expected to anchor a power play unit this season.

Outlook: The future looks bright for SPA, which also draws players from Mounds Park Academy. The Spartans have excellent junior and sophomore classes. They also have something they've not always had—numbers. Thirty-eight players came out this year, giving Norwich much appreciated depth. "It's a good nucleus of kids," he said. "If we can stay healthy, we should show improvement over last season." The former NHL defenseman is particularly high on Hommeyer. "He has potential to go somewhere in this game," Norwich said. Still, the Tri-Metro is a tough conference for this small school. A .500 record would be a good year and a big—albeit reasonable—goal.

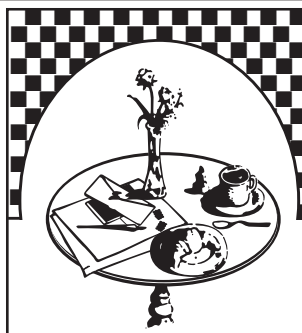
ST. THOMAS ACADEMY

League: Classic Suburban Conference
Last year's record: 26-5
Co-coaches: Tom and Greg Vannelli

Key players and their strengths:

- Kurt Altrichter, junior goalie. A competitive stopper with very good hands. Had a 2.18 goals against average last season.
- Christian Isackson, junior forward. A savvy player who had 22 goals last season.
- Justin Crandall, junior forward. A hard worker who is expected to pick up the scoring pace this year.
- Noah Gavin, junior forward. Might be the best sniper on the team
- Kevin Sienko, senior forward. At 6-foot-3 and 200 pounds, a physical presence on the ice.

Outlook: The bad news is that the defending Class A state champs graduated 10 players and had two other players depart to play junior hockey. The most notable losses are at defense, where only one regular from last year returns. "We'll probably see more shots this year," said Tom Vannelli, "but we have established goaltending." The good news is that STA has a lot of firepower returning. The Cadets led the state last year with 199 goals. They may not get that many this year, but Isackson is an offensive threat from anywhere on the ice and Vannelli also calls Gavin "a gifted scorer."



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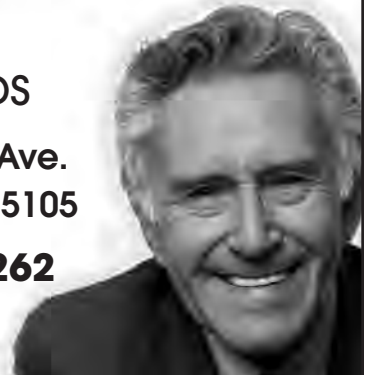
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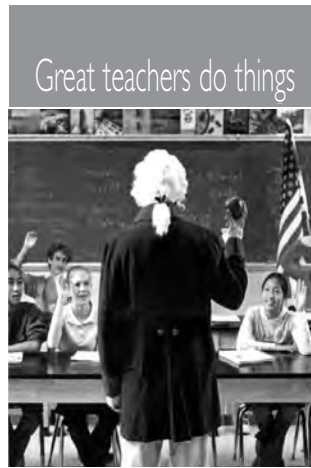
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