

NORTH NEWS

April 28, 2024 | Serving the neighborhoods of North Minneapolis | www.mynorthnews.org

Four-year-old
Dakota Hodges
keeps the pace
with her fellow
dancers.

Photo by
Azhae'la Hanson

Joyful Steps:

Dance City teaches self-love
with space, body and movement.

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out Northsiders
over tree removals.
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first step in the
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opens on Second
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Letter from the Editor David Pierini

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3650 Fremont Ave. N,
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Phone: 612-701-3883
Website: www.mynorthnews.org

David Pierini
Editor/Reporter/Advertising

Azaha'la Hanson
Reporter/Photographer/Youth Program Coordinator

Anya Johanna DeNiro Copy Editor
Thomas Toley Graphic Designer

Lyle James
Delivery

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I was digging through an old box this week when I came across an envelope full of newspaper clips. For the young guided by their gadgets, a clip is short for clipping and a clipping in this case is a cutout article.

The pile of clips were authored by me in the early '90s and several of the stories were about a rural community in Michigan standing firmly against the construction of a landfill on farmland. My colleagues called me the Landfill King for all my dispatches about the search for a place to bury our daily garbage.

If you ignore the charts about the growing waste stream, the latest designs of landfill liners and the efficacy of leachate collection systems, it was classic David and Goliath. It was the power of county government and the sway of business interests versus multi-generational farm families protecting the quiet of their community and refusing to be the solution to someone else's problems.

David slew the giant to end that story. This past month, more than 30 years after the landfill battle, two stories occupied a lot of my reporting time - light rail construction and tree removal. I can say with great confidence that landfills, trains and trees, until this writing, have never shared the same sentence.

But they possess many of the same themes that are as timeless and classic as the great underdog tale of the Bible.

The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, which has legal oversight of the city's trees, has been condemning and ordering the removal of ash trees that are infested with emerald ash borer. While quick removal of the trees is known to slow the spread, the cost to remove the trees, advocates argue, could ultimately force vulnerable residents out of their homes.

The handful of Northsiders fighting to get hardship cases covered remind me of some of the more vocal opponents from the farming community I covered several years ago. There is palpable progress thanks to the pushback.

The Blue Line extension from the northern suburbs to downtown could run right down West Broadway Avenue, displacing some residents, uprooting Black-owned businesses and forcing cultural celebrations to find new ground.

Vocal residents, thought leaders and business owners have forced the Metropolitan Council to draw up alternative routes, connector lines and station locations. We should know by this summer whether engineers and other transportation officials will make recommendations based on the input.

Given the outcomes for groups fighting light rail in other communities, Northsiders

against the plans remain in an uphill battle. Light rail has many advantages, but many fear sending it down West Broadway will wipe out this section of North Minneapolis reminiscent of what I-94 did to the Rondo neighborhood in Saint Paul.

Goliath in this case has more power and money at stake. Project managers say they have learned along the way how to better engage community and have, to their credit, held several community meetings and considered other routes. Yet, the people empowered to make the final decision have not attended those meetings. Instead, engineers and other staff carrying easels and presentation boards show up to take the flack.

Light rail could very well solve a lot of problems and be a positive investment in a part of the city systematically neglected for decades.

But many in the community rightfully feel wary of power and promises when past outcomes felt like something done to them, rather than for or with them.

Garbage needs to go somewhere, emerald ash borer must be stopped, light rail can boost local economies,

Powerful people detach from emotion to make hard decisions. Lean into those difficult feelings and they might make better informed decisions.

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North Minneapolis at a glance

City allows mosques to broadcast call to prayer

The Islamic call to prayer will be broadcast five times a day from a speaker outside Masjid An-Nur mosque on Lyndale Avenue North after the Minneapolis City Council voted unanimously to change the noise ordinance to allow the practice.

The public call is known as Adhan, an Arabic word for announcement. Mayor Jacob Frey signed the change into law on April 17. The previous ordinance restricted public sounds, including church bells, between the hours of 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Times for the five calls vary through the year but the first call can go out as early as 5 a.m. While several cities allow Adhan during the day or for holidays, Minneapolis is the first city in the U.S. to give mosques the freedom to amplify the call five time per day.

West Broadway Business and Area Coalition cancels FLOW Arts Crawl

By David Pierini, Editor

The West Broadway Business and Area Coalition said it will end the FLOW Northside Arts Crawl after 17 years.

The organization made the announcement in a written statement on April 6, saying it needs to focus more attention in supporting West Broadway businesses potentially being displaced by the proposed light rail construction project.

The WBC's governing board wrote a letter to transportation officials last month to express formal opposition to building light rail down West Broadway.

"We are proud of what FLOW has accomplished over the past 17 years, but we recognize that we need to pivot our efforts to better serve the needs of our community," said Kristel Porter, WBC's executive director. "We believe that by concentrating our resources on supporting local businesses and promoting economic development, including anti-displacement efforts, we can have a more significant impact on the community and help to build a more vibrant and sustainable future for North Minneapolis. Especially with the coming light rail, it is vital that we remain focused on the success of these businesses and anti-displacement efforts to ensure that our business district can thrive."

It is unclear whether another organization will step forward to continue the arts crawl.

FLOW was launched in 2006 and has been a popular summer event, showcasing Northside artists and musicians. Opponents have called light rail on West Broadway a death blow to the cultural significance of the iconic business corridor.

To register, call Kevin Czmowski, Coordinator, Henry Community Education, at 612-668-1922 or visit www.mplscommunityed.com and type "Henry Tour in the search box.



Laurel Prenzlow, an assistant ceramics lab lead at Juxtaposition Arts, shows Nicolette Fleming how to create a clay cylinder on a potter's wheel during the 2022 FLOW Arts Crawl. Photo by David Pierini

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MPRB looks for ways to address hardships caused by tree removal costs

By David Pierini, Editor

A small group of relentless advocates seeking relief for Northsiders saddled with the high costs for removing diseased ash trees are making inroads and now have the attention of state and local officials, including the governor's office.

The governmental unit responsible for the health of the city's trees, the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, has been condemning trees and ordering swift removals to try to slow the spread of the emerald ash borer. But with the beetle currently concentrated on trees in North Minneapolis, MPRB has had to reconsider its program, especially around hardship and how it engages with a historically marginalized community.

Since 2013, MPRB has condemned 18,206 ash trees on private property across the city. State law makes property owners responsible for the expense of removing condemned trees.

Emerald ash borer became widespread in North Minneapolis a couple of years ago but drive-by inspections, condemnation notices and tree service costs have caught many off guard and burdened low-income households.

In an attempt to reset the conversation, MPRB Supt. Al Bangoura scheduled four listening sessions for Northside residents so staff could explain the tree inspection and condemnation process. The sessions also gave residents a chance to challenge staff without a three-minute cutoff enforced at Parks Board meetings during public comments.

At an April 12 session at the Harrison Recreation Center, angry residents disrupted a presentation on trees and insects to focus the conversation on "harm to community" and providing more help to residents on fixed incomes.

"At some point in your presentation are you going to acknowledge the harm you have done to the community?" asked Roxanne O'Brien, an environmental justice activist whose mother was forced to remove two trees, during an ash borer primer by MPRB's Sustainable Forestry Coordinator Philip Potyondy.

"It would be amazing if you could actually have a little more grace when you're in our community talking to us about issues impacting us in a way that you seem to keep missing," she said. Potyondy said he understood that emerald ash borer is devastating, but he was cut off.

"Tell me why you're here right now," O'Brien continued. "Not to educate us but because you've been pushed by community to clean up what's happening. So do us a favor. Let's just get to the part where you acknowledge the harm."

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz sent the state's Chief Equity Officer Stephanie Burrage to the meeting. The Harrison Neighborhood Association emailed Walz about the controversy. The neighborhood association has urged MPRB to halt tree removals on the Northside until money could be found to help property owners, especially seniors on fixed incomes, pay the bills.

"I'm not coming here making any promises on anything," Burrage said. "But I wanted to be here in the room to make sure that your issues were heard. I'm going to make sure it gets up to the governor."

"Let's just get to the part where you acknowledge the harm."

Roxanne O'Brien

During a quieter session at MPRB headquarters on April 17, much of the conversation focused on whether MPRB could do more targeted outreach with community partners ahead of the inspection process.

Instead of relying on letters or a website, Lena Gardner said the parks board should consider making human connections.

"If somebody is not responsive to the letter, do you call them or send a human to the door?" said Gardner, executive director BLUU (Black Lives Unitarian Universalism), a faith-based non-profit. "Instead of relying on letters, it would be super helpful to have a hands-on approach to navigate this because it's kind of a maze of bureaucracy."

Forestry Director Ralph Sievert said his department has done presentations in neighborhoods and has relied on neighborhood associations to help get the word out. Forestry recently hired an outreach liaison and when asked whether inspectors could knock on doors instead of just leaving a condemnation notice, Sievert said, "Capacity wise, to knock on doors would be pretty difficult because of the volume of trees."

Why not treat a tree?

The answer to the above question is part of the debate. The ash borer lays its eggs in the bark and the larvae feast on an inner layer that circulates water and nutrients through the tree. For as little as \$200, property owners can hire a tree service to inject a chemical in the ash tree to prevent emerald ash borer infestation.

Other cities have successfully treated ash trees and Northsiders have criticized officials for not promoting treatment before the beetle became so pervasive. Sievert said MPRB felt prohibited from doing so because of a 2010 Minneapolis City Council resolution that discouraged insecticides in order to protect soil, water and pollinators.

More help in the works

MPRB is working to be more responsive to low-income property owners. After a swell of complaints from Northside residents last year, the parks board directed lobbyists to urge lawmakers to help residents with high tree removal costs.

Its legislative agenda includes working with state agencies and other interested organizations for grant funding that can conclude emerald ash borer removal costs.

Another option is to promote a property tax refund for homeowners who qualify based on income.

Whether any of the programs available (see sidebar) will help retroactively is not clear.

At the Harrison session on April 12, MPRB Finance Director Juli Wiseman hinted she would continue to look for ways to address hardship and make recommendations to the parks board.

"We see the extra money on property taxes is still a hardship," Wiseman said. "We have heard a lot from our constituents and the board has been listening. That's why we're having these information sessions. We want the community's input."

Ash Tree Options

Minnesota law makes property owners responsible for the costs associated with the removal of diseased trees. Should a tree be condemned, property owners can hire their own tree service, which can be cheaper than a company hired by MPRB. There are a few options for low-income property owners seeking relief and other grant options are in the works. The following is a list of hardship programs and proposals. It is unclear if retro-active relief will be available.

Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board

- Financial Hardship Program Homestead Properties for persons 65 or older, retired due to a permanent or total disability or active duty military reserves. The assessment is not forgiven, the assessment is levied and is a lien against the property. The unpaid balance accrues interest until paid. Full payment is required when the property is either sold, no longer "homestead" status, or the hardship disappears.

- Levy the assessment for five or 10 years. Interest rate is 3.87 percent.
- Visit: https://www.minneapolis.parks.org/park-care-improvements/trees/private_trees/private-tree-condemnation-and-removal/

City of Minneapolis

Zero percent interest loan based on income that could be applied to tree removal. This was recently announced. Details forthcoming.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Stay tuned. Natural Resource Omnibus bills to fund the MN ReLeaf program are working their way through the State Legislature. As written, these funds could be used to fund private tree care assistance and relief. The DNR also applied for federal funding from the United States Forest Service by way of the Inflation Reduction Act. Competitive Urban and Community Forestry grant programs will be announced.

Voting begins for Patrick Henry name change

By **Azhae'la Hanson**, Reporter and **Victoria Mustin**, Henry High School

The voting process to change the name of Patrick Henry High School is underway.

Last August, the Minneapolis Public School Board voted to change the name of Henry High School after a long debate among students and community. Patrick Henry, a founding father of America, owned enslaved people. Henry students for years pushed for a name change and former board member Kimberly Caprini sponsored the vote that unanimously passed last year.

The process began immediately following the board's approval with a committee of Henry students and staff to create a criteria for a name. Names had to meet a simple criteria, some including playing an important role in the wellbeing of the Northside, a deceased historical figure from an underrepresented community, landmarks that have historical significance to North Minneapolis, and themes that reflect community values and strengths.

"It was very important to make it as inclusive as possible, you know, and have like, true consensus around a name change that the community can be behind."

Marcus Zackery, faculty advisor

The committee narrowed it down to 46 possible names on the ballot, some including options like Camden Community High School, John Francis Wheaton, who was the first African American Man elected to the Minnesota Legislature, and Ujima High School, a Swahili word that means collective work and responsibility.

People can find the voting ballot on Henry's website: <https://sites.google.com/mpls.k12.mn.us/whatsmyname/home>

The first round of voting ends May 3. A date for the second round of voting will be added to the website. After the second vote, the committee will forward recommendations to the MPS board.

The committee has made it so

anybody can vote, and are not restricted by the borders of MPS, or North Minneapolis. The decision to loosen the voting requirements required much more work, but the committee saw it as necessary to the process of separating the accomplishments of the high school from its dark namesake, and letting the community decide what's best.

Henry student Ben Ross supports a name change and new colors, favoring pink to the current red and black of the Henry brand. But he remains ambivalent on a new name for the school.

"I have no opinion on it," he said. "The school district will change it to what they want regardless of our opinion."

Another student, Chakaylah Powell, said changing the name is a good decision, given the controversy tied to Henry's name.

"I don't like it," Powell said of the current name. "I'm cool with (a change) because of the reputation of a slave owner attached to a predominately Black school."

Another student, Newmann Thomas, described the Henry name as "detrimental," but did not have a preferred name among those selected by the student committee. "As long as the name is good," he said.

The committee will submit the winner to the board at the end of May.

"It was very important to make it as inclusive as possible, you know, and have like, true consensus around a name change that the community can be behind," said faculty advisor Marcus Zackery. "We didn't want to make a decision, just like in isolation. There's just so much history and there's so much tradition. We're not doing this to erase anything. We're doing this to just update what the community needs are."

Once the name is decided, the school will undergo the change in 2024 or 2025.



The high school's rebranding will begin as soon as the new name is decided, and take up to two years to complete the transformation. Photo by David Pierini



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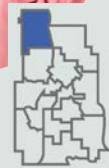
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catch up with our Council Members

Minneapolis City Council members LaTrisha Vetaw (Ward 4) and Jeremiah Ellison (Ward 5) were inaugurated in January 2022 and January 2018, respectively. We have invited them to keep in touch with the community through this monthly column in our newspaper.



WARD 4:
LaTrisha Vetaw



Rent Control Update

City staff recently completed and presented on the Rent Stabilization Staff Analysis Report which provides an analysis of the anticipated impacts that a rent stabilization policy would have on the City of Minneapolis.

A rent stabilization policy would aim to address the problem of renter cost-burden which is when a renter is paying too much of their income for rent (typically paying more than 30% of their household income). The two components of renter cost-burden are 1) an income problem and 2) a housing supply problem. The reports findings are as follows:

1) A rent stabilization policy would not effectively address the problem of renter cost-burden. It does not target relief to renters whose incomes are insufficient to afford rent in the housing market. It would also impede growth of the city's housing stock, which is counter to existing policies designed to promote the production of new housing to ensure residents have access to a range of options to meet their needs.

2) If a rent stabilization policy was adopted in Minneapolis:

a. Some existing renters would benefit from increased housing stability due to the certainty of the limit on future rent increases.

b. Renters may face greater housing instability due to higher rent increases than they otherwise would have experienced, as property owners could begin raising rents to the maximum amount allowed.

c. Renters may experience diminished housing quality, as a rent stabilization policy could disincentivize property maintenance and improvements.

d. There could be a significant decline in the creation and preservation of rental housing units in Minneapolis.

e. Minneapolis could experience a significant property tax levy shift due to diminished rental property valuation between \$55 million and \$95 million.

f. Minneapolis could experience a significant revenue decline due to diminished building permit activity and

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WARD 5:
Jeremiah Ellison



Additionally, the Minneapolis Public Health Department hosted their annual Local Public Health Hero Awards Ceremony. I had the privilege of presenting awards to Pastor Jalilia and DeVon Nolen. We honored Pastor Jalilia for her outstanding efforts to bring healthy, culturally appropriate food to residents, with the belief that this will help interrupt the cycle of violence on the North side through her nonprofit, Change Starts with Community and Devon Nolen for her work in advocating for policy change and programs that bring healthier food to all of Minneapolis, especially North Minneapolis through many organizations and councils such as Metro Food Access Network (MFAN), with the Council on Black Minnesotans Urban Agriculture efforts, and Union of Concerned Scientist Good Food Advocate (GFFA).

The Ward 5 offices wish our Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faith communities a blessed and beautiful Ramadan, Passover, and Easter this month! Mayor Jacob Frey signed an ordinance allowing Minneapolis mosques to publicly broadcast the Adhan, or Islamic call to prayer, five times a day. I was honored to join the Mayor along with Council Member Aisha Chughtai, Council Member Jamal Osman and Wali Dirie, the Executive Director of Dar Al-Hijrah along with other Muslim leaders to sign this ordinance into law.

My office had a productive month. We visited the University of Minnesota law school to meet with Professor Megan Walsh, Director of the UMN Gun Violence Prevention Law Clinic, and her brilliant students to learn more about their work and ways to reduce gun violence in our community through strategic litigation. In partnership with Attorney General Ellison's office, this law clinic is the first of its kind in the nation. The Gun Violence Prevention Clinic will offer students a unique experiential learning opportunity to work on litigation affecting a significant societal problem. The clinic will litigate affirmative cases that will reduce injuries, deaths, and trauma caused by gun violence, challenge overreaching gun laws, and defend gun laws and regulations against legal challenges. I'm grateful to Professor Walsh for welcoming our team into their innovative space and building a partnership between the clinic and our office to better serve Minnesotans, especially our Northsiders.

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MPS board asks interim superintendent to plan to close schools

This piece originally appeared on the news site Minneapolis Schools Voices. You can sign up for their weekly newsletter with resources and updates on everything going on in the city's schools at MplsSchoolsVoices.news

By Melissa Whitler

Minneapolis Public Schools Board of Education Chair Sharon El-Amin has asked Interim Superintendent Rochelle Cox to begin preparing a plan for "school transformation."

School transformation is a phrase board members have used in recent meetings to denote the closure of school buildings, and reassignment of students, educators and staff to different school locations.

"The time is now to have that conversation around the transformation and what that will look like," El-Amin said at a March 28 board meeting.

She added that the board would like the necessary information to begin the process of making a plan before the June 13 board meeting to vote on a budget for the 2023-24 school year. She noted the importance of developing a community

engagement plan and making any decisions that might impact enrollment choices before the February 2024 choice card deadline.

As El-Amin spoke, Cox appeared to take notes. When El-Amin finished speaking, Cox responded, saying, "Thank you Chair El-Amin. My team and I will take that back and get working on it right away."

El-Amin represents North Minneapolis, which has a number of under enrolled schools.

The district has been hinting at the need to reduce the number of school buildings it operates since at least 2017 as part of its annual financial projections, called a pro forma. Using phrases that are the finance equivalent of shouting "iceberg," the district has warned about a growing gap between expenses and revenues, "increasing deficits," "unsustainable fiscal structure," and risk of statutory operating debt.

The district's most recent pro forma, prepared by Senior Finance Officer Ibrahima Diop, again called the district's fiscal situation "unsustainable" and predicted "an unprecedented financial crisis in the 2024-2025 school year." The district operates on a non-calendar fiscal year. The 2024-25 school year corresponds to fiscal year 2025 for the district. The current school year is fiscal year 2023.

The most recent pro forma explains how the district has been using its one-time federal COVID grants to fill in its budget deficits. When those funds are exhausted, the district forecasts a budget deficit of \$108 million, which would deplete district reserves and lead to the closest thing Minnesota school districts have to bankruptcy, called statutory operating debt.

Diop explained in the November 2022 pro forma memo that compared to other

large, metropolitan school districts in Minnesota, Minneapolis Public Schools operates significantly more school buildings with fewer students per building. In addition, the district is staffed to have a much lower student to teacher ratio than other districts in Minnesota, including St. Paul Public Schools, which serves a similar composition of students. Combined, these structures mean the district has significantly higher costs per student than other districts.

On top of its high cost structure, Minneapolis Public Schools is significantly underfunded by the State of Minnesota. The district projects that, without changes by the State, next year it will spend \$78.6 million – about 12 percent of the district's operating expenses—on special education and English Learner services that are not covered by State funding.



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Cierra Burnaugh works through choreography with some of her littles, and says charisma is just as important as getting the moves right. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

Dance City instructor teaches the steps of self-love

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

Dance City director Cierra Burnaugh remembered always pulling together a show. She'd been dancing since she was 5, forming girl groups with her classmates and competing regionally and nationally in dance her whole life.

In 2015, Burnaugh founded Dance City to provide a fun and safe space where Black girls could learn and grow, free of judgment and express themselves through dance.

After all, a dance studio is where Burnaugh herself was able to do the same. Burnaugh is a product of the vetted

Northside dance school, Hollywood Dance Studio. Her mentor and Hollywood Dance Studio Director Diane Robinson showed her what it was to accept and love herself. Burnaugh is creating the same ecosystem of support.

"We share a common thread when it comes to the joy of dance, but also pain," Burnaugh said. "Being a Black woman and trying to navigate and find ourselves in a very white world, especially Minnesota."

When Dance City arrives at competitions, they are often the only Black dance group in attendance. Burnaugh wants to instill in her young dancers that they

should not be ashamed of the way they look when competing, as competition beauty standards are often Eurocentric.

"A lot of times, young Black girls and Black women have to assimilate and code switch and not be our true authentic selves," Burnaugh said. "It's taxing and it's exhausting. I think it's



Five-year-old Yara Blue shows off her dancing shoes. She said she's proud of the wear and tear because that means she's becoming a better dancer. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

super important to have a space where you don't have to do that."

Ironically, those same competitions feature music and dance techniques that derive from Black and African culture.

Dance mom Chandra Eppinger enrolled her daughter Gianna when she was just 3. She understands how early perception of self starts in girls, and wants her daughter to grow up in a space that celebrates her beauty.

"It's in the community, it's diverse, and the curriculum and the dances they are teaching the kids reflect that," Eppinger said. "During the recitals, she [Burnaugh] is very cognizant of the different styles of clothing and their hair, so that all the kids feel confident."

Dancers proudly grace the competitive stage with braids, Afro puffs, updo's and outfits ranging from pink leotards to ensembles that nod to traditional African patterns.

A dancer in the littles program, 5-year-old Yara Blue, was eager to show off her dance moves. She demonstrated a swift leg kick, followed by a hair flip.

"Ms. Jessie and Ms. Cici like my hair and I like my hair, I feel like a pretty princess," she said.

"We are going to dress, speak, choose



DAsia Walker lands her mark during rehearsals. Dancers were excited to practice in North High's new dance studio for the first time, which is more spacious compared to the school's former dance studio. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

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Dance instructor Jessie Rouleau debriefs with her young dancers, one in particular ran all the way back into the dance room once she forgot to give her a hug. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson



During rehearsal, Yara decided to do her own thing and fix her hair before she got back into the groove of practice. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

First step to drug addiction recovery is Fire Station 14

By David Pierini, Editor

Cheap fentanyl-laced pills have spread through Minneapolis streets like wildfire, hooking and killing unsuspecting users.

To fight fire, a fire station on Lowry Avenue in North Minneapolis is offering a first step on a road to recovery with a 24-hour drop-in service to get people into detox, treatment and other services.

The Twin Cities Recovery Project has teamed with the Minneapolis Fire Department to create the Safe Station initiative, the first of its kind in Minnesota and the first of three planned locations.

It is funded for the next three years thanks to a \$1.2 million federal grant from the Department of Justice.

A person struggling can stop by Station

14, 2002 Lowry Ave., at any hour. They will be greeted by a firefighter without judgment or police intervention. There are recovery specialists at the station from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and others from Twin Cities Recovery are on-call during the off hours.

In the off hours, a Twin Cities recovery coach will get paged and arrive within a half-hour to assess a person and get them into services without delay.

"After 5 p.m., people don't know where to go for services, but everybody knows the fire department is open and willing to help," said Thomas Young, peer recovery specialist and the Safe Station project manager. "We fight all substance abuse disorders whether it's alcohol, cocaine meth, heroin. If they come to the door fighting, we will get them services. Right now there is an opioid epidemic out there and this grant is set up to fight that."

The Safe Station opened in early April and shortly after, Twin Cities Recovery outreach workers began to spread the word on foot. They distributed flyers to local businesses and public space and, twice a week, walked the neighborhood blocks to explain the services at the Safe Station.

The variety of services include, counseling, crisis intervention, mental

health programs, medication for managing withdrawals and extended support form a peer recovery coach.

The coach is someone with their own journey to recovery and has the knowledge

to help.

"We're able to assist them all the way on their journey until they're self-sufficient and able to walk for themselves, make good decisions by themselves," Young said.



Thomas Young is Safe Station project manager. Photo by David Pierini



Honor Roll Athletics Owner Charles Caine stands outside of his storefront at the Mall of America. The backpacks he's holding have colorways that represent each Minneapolis Public Schools. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson.

Northside youth athletics mentor opens storefront at MOA

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

Youth mentor and business owner Charles Caine joins the ranks of the 29 other Black-owned businesses that have a retail space inside of the Mall of America. He launched his athletic brand Honor Roll Athletics in 2021 inside the Northtown mall, and then transitioned to the Community Commons in the MOA, a co-op space for BIPOC and local business owners.

A year later, he got the opportunity to expand his corner of merchandise into a full-fledged storefront.

The store sells various athletic gear, ranging from leggings, jackets, jerseys, and backpacks, all with Caine's own brand, Honor Roll Athletics.

The brand was created out of his love for the youth in North Minneapolis, so much so that 10 percent of the store's profits will be put back into his own Northside youth programming, Brothers EMpowered.

Brothers EMpowered was created by Caine after the birth of his first son to mentor youth ages 13-18 in North Minneapolis. The organization teaches the values of community service, health and wellness, self development, and sports.

The store's general manager and Caine's younger sister, Marcia Kroma, proudly stands behind the register to help

Caine maintain his dream.

"I'm so proud of him," Kroma said. "My brother came a long way from blood, sweat and tears."

Caine recalled growing up and being in the wrong crowd. Unlike a lot of people who could look back on their younger years and thank sports for changing their lives, Caine's was the opposite. He says he was too involved in the streets and gang activity to take in the mentoring sports provided. He slipped through the cracks.

"I was more involved in the streets and street life, gangs, drugs," Caine said. "It really took from my academic, athletic interests and career. I was into sports and was pretty good but because of my street activity, I didn't have as much support."

He attributes his success to coming to terms with himself, his actions, and his family. Taking accountability for his life and his outcomes is what Caine finally needed to take control of his life, and once he wanted to instill it in others.

"A lot of times we can point the finger and there are a lot of fingers to point, but everything starts with self," Caine said. "So I had to get on with my process of overcoming inner demons and to overcome those outer barriers."

Caine drew a connection between the lack of male role models in the community

and crime and substance abuse. He remembered being young and needing a symbol of hope. Caine saw the first symbol of hope during the birth of his first son, and then he created another one through Brothers EMpowered: The symbol of Honor Roll Athletics.

He was looking for a way to teach his youth entrepreneurship and financial literacy; they started with candy machines and failed when Caine realized that his students were only interested in free sweets. He revisited the lesson and pitched something that they all had in common: sports and fashion.

"They were extremely excited about it," he said. "I knew it would be something that would definitely be a hit because what it does is make academic and athletic excellence a fashion statement."

Chrishina Mitchell, a high school senior and employee at the store, confidently reps Honor Roll Athletics inside and outside of work.

"The game isn't just the game that you're playing, it is the game of life," Mitchell said. "You have to be great at whatever you do, no matter what it is."

By running Brothers EMpowered in North Minneapolis, and having a storefront



Charles Caine holds his favorite hat, he's proud that the design is a combined effort between him and the youth he mentors in Brothers EMpowered. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson.

at the Mall of America, he hopes the two entities feed into each other. The decision to conduct business outside of his community was fueled by his drive to bring the Northside along with him as he pursues better economic opportunities.

"We want this story to be an anchor for the community of North Minneapolis, Caine said. "So, we're here at the biggest mall in the country, not only just to build economics,

Continued on page 19

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Leslie Parker Dance Project's

Divination Tools: imagine home



Image courtesy of Leslie Parker and Joshua B. Alafia.

May 11-13
GET TICKETS

WALKER

St. Paul-based choreographer Leslie Parker leads a powerful collective of Black visual artists, musicians, and femme dance artists in a liberating world premiere performance.

North Minneapolis has a Black-owned fitness center

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

A self proclaimed gym rat's small obsession has evolved into a fitness center on the corner of 18th and Second Avenue North.

Northside Barbell features a full-service gym, yoga classes, and the option to work with a personal trainer. Owners Norman Alston and Greg Kimbrough officially opened the fitness center at the end of March, an idea the long-time friends have had since they began bodybuilding several years ago.

And it has actual barbells from the Northside.

In 2020, Alston began trading fitness equipment online to build a home gym during the pandemic. He grew a special interest towards York-brand weights because they were the same weights a mentor of his used when he was a student at North High.

"I want to make a positive impact in this community. I want our community and the young athletes to realize that they have a spot to go work at. Work out their bodies and frustrations."

Norman Alston, co-owner

"At one point, the basement was full of them, the garage was full of them. And we even had a storage room dedicated only for workout equipment," said Alston's son, Darius.

Around the same time, Alston was diving into his hobby, North High had an entire weight room's worth of equipment they needed to get rid of. Alston showed up eagerly with his truck. Along with some York plates, he received all of the equipment free of charge.

Between the two of them, Alston and Kimbrough hauled all of the weights and machines into storage units while Alston organized his home gym. But over time, Alston thought it was pointless to pay rent to store the equipment where it would



Owners Greg Kimbrough and Norman Alston stand outside of their fitness center. Northside Barbell sits on the corner of 18th and Second Avenue North in the lower level of the building. The sign was welded by a good friend of Norman Alston's. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

only collect dust. He might as well pay rent to store the equipment where he and the community can put it to good use. In November, the idea of Northside Barbell was born.

"At our gym, the equipment can continue to benefit kids from North, people who graduated from North, people on the Northside, and everyone in between," said Alston.

Both business owners currently coach high school sports, and they are hoping to make Northside Barbell a fitness hub for the community, and a safe place for the youth.

Kimbrough stressed the importance of having a community gym, where trust and familiarity build an environment that encourages the improvement of the body and mind. For Kimbrough, lifting weights has served as an antidepressant, and an outlet for his emotions, which he notices are ever more present in the youth he coaches.

"Everybody's mental health is so fragile and damaged due to the pandemic, and all the things that went along with the uprisings," Kimbrough said. "The world needs to heal. People need somewhere to put that energy. And I feel like this is one of the best forms of medicine out there."

The duo have close to 40 years of professional personal training experience,

having worked larger commercial gyms throughout their careers.

The fitness center has been a labor of love, and Alston leaned on his family to help get programming started.

"When he decided he was going to open his gym, I was there," said Makeda Morris, Alston's mother. "I want to do whatever I can to support my son's success."

She said her son gets his passion for physical fitness from none other than herself. Morris used to be a nurse, and moved on to advocacy in health policy, equity, and researched the social determinants of health. When she retired just a few years ago, she scraped up the money to become a yoga instructor. Patrons can now take a class with Morris three times a week.

"We're here, we're from Northside, we're Black owned, and we're more than qualified to provide good quality personal training and care," said Alston.

The fitness center is open 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends.



Alston holds a York plate he collected during the pandemic, the same type of weights his mentor used when he went to North High School decades ago. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

North High School is redefining its tennis legacy

By Sawyer Erstad, North High

North High School has never been a tennis giant, with the program's most notable accomplishments occurring nearly 80 years ago when they won the State Title in 1952.

Since then, the program changed coaches several times and eventually due to lack of student interest, the program shut down in 2014.

Since then, the program's history has been all but forgotten. Recently, however, coaches Dane McLain and Samuel Wilbur have been trying to change a legacy of losing by bringing tennis back to North.

"I think it's great. I love playing at North Commons and I love when people walk by and see the courts getting used by Northside kids. I think that's huge."

Coach Samuel Wilbur

In spring of 2021, McLain was teaching at North during the pandemic. The school was still closed, and McLain felt disconnected from his students. In an effort to better understand his students, McLain decided to connect with them through a lifelong passion of his – tennis.

"I've been playing tennis since I was five years old, and I thought it'd be a great way to connect with kids," McLain said.

He also saw this as an opportunity for himself to get outside in a time when it was hard to do so. This goal to get outside was shared by sophomore Louis Stillman, who joined the team last year and is returning this season. Louis explained that after three years of being stuck inside, he wanted a way to stay active and get outdoors. Tennis fits the bill.

Wilbur, McLain's co-coach, just wanted to bring in another option for students to stay active at North High.

Seemingly, many people shared the sentiment that offering new options for student athletes is incredibly important, because as soon as word got out, people were offering donations to the team.

With any new activity for teens, however, a big issue is always recruiting. Polar Tennis was no exception.

"It was hard to recruit at first because people didn't have experience with it. No one wants to try something they think they're bad at," Wilbur said.

Louis supported this, saying, "I didn't like it at first, it felt unfamiliar. Now that I've gotten better, I'm definitely enjoying it a lot more."

Last season, Polar tennis marked a new beginning with its first official roster since 2014. The coaches hope to introduce their students to new skills and activities and are thrilled to have the opportunity to put the North Commons courts to use. Their first match of the season kicked off at Lake Hiawatha Park, where new and returning players alike hit the courts, excited to rewrite the program's legacy.



Polar Tennis star Elijah Her returning a serve against South at Folwell Park. Photo by Samuel Wilbur

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Ayanna Melander

Walking out and waking up. Youth in protest

By Ayanna Melander, North High

Activism has always come easily to me. My mother and North High principal Mauri Friestleben has always embodied a spirit that seeks peace and justice, and has instilled those same beliefs in me.

My freshman year, George Floyd was murdered. When it happened I wasn't fully aware of how horrible it was. The morning after his murder, my mom and I went to what is now George Floyd Square and we prayed. I didn't know what we were praying for until she told me later.

We sat on the concrete, we felt the sadness and the unrest from within and around us. She told me to pray for justice and to pray for change.

I carry that prayer with me always when I march.

I still feel the goosebumps from when I decided to walk out of school in March without my mother. When I arrived on the scene, I could sense the energy from all of the students around me. All feeling the horrible weight of seeing Khalil Azad's picture held high in the air and knowing that the form of a photograph is all we will be able to see of him now. Those familiar feelings, the confusing swirl of combined sadness, rage, helplessness, with power, community and solidarity all in one knot in my stomach, returned from mourning the death and murder of so many innocent lives in my own community.

Regardless, I stood in solidarity at the US Bank Stadium with hundreds of other students. It was the afternoon and I was surrounded by the occasional shouts of "Justice!" and "Prosecute the police!"

I was surrounded by people my age who also left their mothers, their comfort, some for the first time, some vetted, flocks of youth fleeing their homes, their schools, some with their families begging them not to, some with families pushing them out of the door, being called a delinquent or a hero as they migrated to the fight and to respond to the call for a change, and demand it.

"With everything going on in the world it sometimes seems like we're all sleeping, going through the same motions and ignoring the problems that happen to others but sometimes we need to face the music, come alive, and wake up."

Ayanna Melander

I keep going out because it's hard to be oblivious. I grew up around so many oblivious people. It hurts to know that a lot of people in general take in injustice as something that just happens. You get to a

point where it's too much. It was just too much for me. I try to, while also trying to protect my mental health, help people who are going through horrible things.

At the event, I took pictures for journalism class. I admired how beautiful this big group of students were screaming the most illuminating things. And when I looked up there was an ad on the screen of the US Bank stadium that said, "Wake up."

Young people have always been a part of the fight for social justice.

The Civil Rights movement was chartered by young people with events like the children's crusade and organizations like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who were instrumental in the Civil Rights movement.

Youth in protest forces people to come to terms with the damage being done to their children. Good or bad, we want a fighting chance for our own future.

With everything going on in the world it sometimes seems like we're all sleeping, going through the same motions and ignoring the problems that happen to others but sometimes we need to face the music, come alive, and wake up.

YOUTH

NEWS



Victor Martinez is a political puzzle but says he's no bully

By David Pierini, Editor

That Victor Martinez wants to represent Ward 5 on the Minneapolis City Council understates the gumption he pours into campaigning. His bright orange signs seemed everywhere when he first challenged incumbent Jeremiah Ellison two years ago.

Martinez gave routine video updates on his Facebook page, promised to make the ward's neighborhoods safe from crime and, like his signs, popped up at all sorts of events in an orange shirt that read "Vote Victor."

But in his second campaign for the seat, Martinez is on defense against accusations of stuffing the ballot box with phony delegates and led a DFL party leader to get a temporary restraining order against Martinez for threatening behavior.

Martinez called the protective order bogus and said in a voice that trailed off, "This is hard because it's an attack on my character."

When campaign season begins, slings and arrows tend to fly in certain races until the final vote is cast. But Martinez seems to possess a unique ability to attract controversy.

An Assembly of God minister, Martinez unapologetically voted for Donald Trump

for president and is against abortion. Those things aside, he runs as a Democrat. When he speaks about these and other conservative views, he often draws the ire of observers on social media.

He is also seen as someone who stands up for North Minneapolis, especially during anti-violence campaigns. Most recently, he was at the Capitol advocating for a law that gave undocumented immigrants the right to get a driver's license.

When he campaigned on a public safety platform in 2021, he saw Ellison progressive views on policing as dangerous.

A crowded field split the votes in 2021 and Ellison won. Now the lone challenger mounting a second attempt at Ellison's seat, Martinez started the spring with enough delegates to possibly seal the endorsement of the Democratic Farm Labor party.

While the party's endorsement does not guarantee an eventual victory, it does give the chosen candidate greater access to campaign funds.

But after a virtual caucus to count delegates, a DFL committee voted to toss well over half of Martinez's delegates because they were registered from a single IP address. A campaign is allowed to register delegates from one computer as long as the candidate can produce the original paper forms signed by the delegates. Martinez said he did not realize he would have to verify the delegates intending to vote for him at the convention in May and threw out the forms.

After the party's decision to invalidate 358 of 512 delegates registered for Martinez, the candidate made several attempts to contact DFL Minneapolis chair Brianna Lee Rose. He took to social media calling out the decision and rallied supporters to do the same.

"She did not respond to our campaign," Martinez said. "She's our only contact to the Minneapolis DFL. She actually told us in an email that she would not respond back to us and because she wasn't going to talk to me, I had my supporters email her (DFL) email."

In a temporary restraining order that went into effect on April 3, Rose accused Martinez of providing supporters with contact information to "harass me over a decision I made that he didn't like."

Rose did not respond to a request for comment and has referred other news organizations to the court order.

She said about 40 people left angry voicemails with her and one threatened her on Facebook by saying "he was picking out my coffin." That same person, according to the complaint, posted blueprints of a friend's home on Twitter.

"He is unhinged and dangerous," Rose said in the complaint. "Victor sent a dangerous person after me. Victor cheated and tried to stuff the virtual ballot box. I

caught him and now he is lashing out."

A court hearing in May will determine whether Rose can have the protection of a restraining order through the November election.

Martinez said the DFL has not provided him the names of the delegates that were tossed out. He believes he can still have most of the tossed out delegates seated if they show for him at the convention. The party could decide not to endorse a candidate in the race.

He believes Minneapolis DFL leadership is working against his campaign.

"I am a pastor, husband and father of three small children, including two little girls," Martinez said, following the court order. "I would never bully, harass, or intimidate women under any circumstances."

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COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Help with homework: St. Olaf Lutheran Church offers after-school tutoring with an "expert mathematician" on hand. Sessions run 3 to 5 pm, Mondays and Thursday and 3 to 6 pm Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The church also offers a Youth Club for grades 6 through 12 on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Transportation available. Call 612-529-7726 to enroll in tutoring or the Youth Club.

Safe Station: Struggling with substance abuse? Start your recovery journey at Minneapolis Fire Station 14, 2002 Lowry Ave. N., where a firefighter or recovery coach can help get you a variety of services. Open 24 hours. No judgment or shame. Safe Station is a partnership with the Twin Cities Recovery Project and the Minneapolis Fire Department.

Free legal advice: Legal Aid takes on civil cases, such as housing, family, consumer tax, immigration and public benefits. The non-profit organization now has a clinic in the office of the Harrison Neighborhood Association, 1501 Glenwood Ave. Services are free for those who qualify. Must be 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines or age 60-plus. Hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Walk-

ins welcome, but appointments are preferred. Call 612-746-3611 to make an appointment.

BIPOC Resource and Career Expo: Saturday, May 20, noon-3p.m. at, North High School gymnasium, 1500 James Ave. N. For information, including registration for vendors, call 612-293-7683 or visit www.sisters-empowered.com.

The Healing Place: The Healing Place is back at Zion Missionary Baptist Church, 621 Elwood Ave. N. It is committed to healing trauma in the Black community by helping to break the cycle of oppression. It is a safe space if you need a prayer, a conversation or just a place to sit. Every Wednesday from 1 to 5 p.m.

Spring/Summer Happenings at Hopewell Music: The music school, 4350 Fremont Ave. N., celebrates its 11th birthday with a spring concert, May 13 at 2 p.m. Admission is free with a suggestion donation of \$20. On May 20 at 2 p.m. is a student recital with free admission plus staff on hand after to answer questions about lessons. Registration is now open for Hopewell summer camps. The camps include: handbell camp June 2-16; Northside United Summer Band Camp, July 10-21; Steel drums, July 31-Aug 5; drop-in choir camp at Webber Library starting in June and drop-in bucket drum camp, Webber Library,

starting in June. visit <https://hopewellmusic.com/2023-summer-camps> to register

Food Distribution: Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, 3355 4th Street N., will distribute free fresh food on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month from 10 a.m.-noon. There are no pre-qualifications. Everyone is welcome.

Free Dinners: The Camden Collective and the Sanneh Foundation sponsor a weekly free food pickup at Salem Lutheran Church, 4150 Dupont Ave. N., each Saturday from 1-3 p.m. Call 612-521-3644 for more information. Walkups are welcome.

Pet supplies: Are you in need of pet supplies or pet resources? The North Minneapolis Pet Resource Center, 1401 44th Ave. N., is open for curbside pickup Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5 p.m.-8 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Call 764-273-0710 to place an order and leave a voicemail.

Radio updates in your language: Tune into Minneapolis's cultural radio programs for COVID-19 updates. The city is broadcasting updates on KMOJ 89.9 FM (English), La Raza 95.7 FM (Spanish), KALY 101.7 FM (Somali) and WIXX AM 1590 (Hmong).

Minneapolis Ward 4 contact info: If you live in Ward 4 and want to reach City Councilwoman LaTrisha Vetaw, contact

NOTICES

Maggie Kohl via email: maggie.kohl@minneapolismn.gov or cell: 612-258-3982. Contact Betsy Brock with other needs via email: betsy.brock@minneapolismn.gov or cell: 612-257-5242. You can also reach Vetaw via email: latrisha.vetaw@minneapolismn.gov or cell: 612-322-1143.

Minneapolis Ward 5 contact info: If you live in Ward 5 and want to reach City Councilman Jeremiah Ellison, call his office at 612-673-2205 or email him at ward5@minneapolismn.gov. You can also contact his policy associate Bethny Turnwall at bethany.turnwall@minneapolismn.gov

Hennepin County District 2 contact info: To reach Hennepin County Commissioner Irene Fernando, call 612-348-7882 or email her at irene.fernando@hennepin.us. For constituent services contact policy aide Bill Emory at 612-348-3526 or at bill.emory@hennepin.us

Minneapolis Public Schools, District 2: Sharon El-Amin is the Board of Education director representing North Minneapolis. She can be reached at 612-986-3281 or Sharon.El-Amin@mpls.k12.mn.us

Do you have an ongoing program, meeting or event you would like to see published in North News? Please send the details to DavidP@pillsburyunited.org

NEWS

continue catching up with our Council Members

Ward 4: LaTrisha Vetaw Continued from page 6

reduction in the housing stock between \$39.3 million - \$74.8 million and \$108.3 million - \$139.6 million.

g. Minneapolis would spend approximately the following amounts per year enforcing and implementing the policy between \$1,032,000 and \$1,516,000.

h. The costs and detrimental impacts of a rent stabilization policy would outweigh any potential benefits in addressing renter cost-burden.

i. Deeper investment in known effective strategies to boost incomes and support renters would more effectively address the problem of renter cost-burden, without impeding the creation

and preservation of rental housing units that are needed for residents.

Based on these findings, staff recommended City policy makers against the adoption of a rent stabilization policy. Instead, staff recommend that the City should continue supporting, and explore deepening investment, in known effective strategies to relieve renter cost-burden. To read the full report go to lims.minneapolismn.gov/RCA/11063

Ward 5: Jeremiah Ellison Continued from page 6

up with the call-in details. If you have any questions or concerns, reach out to Dieu Do, Policy Associate, at dieu.do@minneapolismn.gov.

Dance City Continued from page 9

music, and wear our hair, that represents who we are and I don't want them to be ashamed of that," said Burnaugh. "They don't have to be anything other than who they are, which is brilliant, stellar, and outstanding."

Burnaugh wants to pass down the legacy of Northside dance to her students, just as her former dance teacher inspired her. And she just might.

Bryana Wilson has been dancing with Dance City since she was 3. Today, she's excited to complete her fourth-grade year and head to nationals right after.

"Dance is my specialty, I wouldn't choose anything else over it," she said.

Bryana loves jamming out to her favorite music artists and pulling together dance routines with her friends per request of her family. Her favorite song to jam out to is "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" by Whitney Houston.

"Dance is fun and loving," she said. "Ms. Cici taught me that."

She says Burnaugh is her biggest role model, and one day she wants to be a dance teacher like her.

The program recently raised \$25,000 dollars to compete in the StarPower Dance Competition, a national competition in Las Vegas in June, and are hoping the goodwill of donors keeps coming, so Burnaugh can grow the program and get a permanent

space.

"To have people pour into this program is amazing, I'm so grateful for people believing in us," she said.

They currently occupy space in the dance room at North High, but she has a dream of buying her own studio in the community.

"If anyone wants to help us find a space that would be amazing," Burnaugh said. "I'm hoping that we're able to get some funding where this can be what we do full time so the girls are taken care of and the staff is taken care of."

MOA Athletics Mentor Continued from page 11

make money, and run a business, we're also pouring back into the community and using this platform to be able to do it."

Community can be seen in every aspect from his store design to the employees themselves. The advertisements on his walls are his sons, employees are program participants, and even the backpacks were created with the community of Minneapolis in mind, with color ways that represent each Minneapolis Public School.

The Mall of America generates \$49 million a year. Caine hopes his business can be a part of those numbers. He is excited for the coming year. Soon, he will open another enterprise, a Youth Empowerment Center to teach the trades to youth.

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City Council - March 31

On Friday, the council approved the proposed consent decree between the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and the city to address the pattern or practice of discrimination by the Minneapolis Police Department.

April 13

Approved nearly \$9 million in two police misconduct settlements involving former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who used a knee-to-neck restraint against both plaintiffs in separate instances in 2017, three years before he killed George Floyd using the same restraint. The lawsuits were filed in June 2022.

Adopted an ordinance amending the noise violation exemption related to sounds associated with religious worship. One effect of the ordinance is that mosques, including Masjid An-Nur mosque on Lyndale Avenue North, can broadcast the Islamic call to prayer five times a day.

Pillsbury United Communities' Minneapolis Documenters program pays community members like you to take notes at public meetings. Below is a monthly recap of city, county and school board actions impacting North Minneapolis.

Planning Commission - April 10

Eleven items were approved including:

- Two new, two-story residential buildings with a total of 16 dwelling units at 2426 Inglewood Ave in the Harrison Neighborhood.
- A new mixed-use development with 116 dwelling units and about 2,500 square feet of commercial space at 560 Humboldt Avenue North in the Harrison Neighborhood.

Advisory Committee on Housing - April 13

A key change for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund program is that the maximum amount for awards has been increased to \$35,000, from \$30,000, per restricted unit, at any size, at or below 50% AMI. They also increased it to \$50,000, from \$40,000, per 2+ bedroom units that are at or below 30% AMI. Finally, they added a new award of \$5,000 per unit for sheltering homeless residents. Staff said these amounts had not been adjusted since pre-2020.

Jackie Renzetti is the program manager for Minneapolis Documenters. Visit minneapolis.documenters.org to learn more.

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