## NORTHNEWS

February 24, 2023

Serving the neighborhoods of North Minneapolis

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Melanin in Motion shows communities of color how to embrace the great outdoors

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Lucy Laney boxers punch their way to national titles Page 12

Jessie Ross adds "Developer" to his many titles Page 15

4 year old Axl Lester takes his first dip on the hill and successfully makes it to the bottom. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson



## **Letter from** the Editor **David Pierini**

traffic-orange reflector vest. He carried a their corner of the world. bucket and a trash picker.

He was dressed the part of a hometown hero and worthy of the same place on stage as advocates, activists, a former judge, a retired county commissioner, a titan of business and a group of groundbreaking fire

The Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights honored several Black community members at the Capri Theater on Feb. 16 for its annual History Makers at Home awards.

"We hear a lot about our community, right?" Alberder Gillespie, civil rights director for the city, said. "We hear the deficit piece. But today we want to celebrate who we are and the gifts that have been given to us because we are bigger than any deficit that they try to paint us with. These are the gifts of the ancestors."

Tate, also known as Coach Tate or by his nickname Talley, is one of those gifts, a Latino. North Minneapolis pillar, especially at North Commons Park.

For 43 years, Tate has coached youth football and has spent countless Saturday mornings leading a group of boys and girls around the park picking up trash and

Mike Tate walked on stage wearing a showing them how to take great care of William English; Retired Ramsey County

He acknowledged being intentional about the props. But the humble tools on trips to visit Historically Black Colleges had me wondering about other souls who quietly work for community.

uniform on, you're not ready to play," Tate said in explaining his look. "Our motto is one hour of service. All we have to do is give one hour of service in our community. All we have to do is give one hour of service somewhere in our community, whether it's picking up litter, hugging a young one, giving them a structure of real love... and that will take us to a wonderful state."

Awards also went to the Minneapolis Fire Department's first black chief. Alex lackson, and the department's class of 1972, who, because of a court order, integrated the fire department for the first time in decades. They were Black, Indigenous, Asian and

Former Judge LaJune Lange was recognized for her time on the district court bench but also for work on state Supreme Court task force groups advocating for racial and gender equity. Others recognized were: longtime Northside job advocate

Commissioner Toni Carter; and Joann "Mama" Clark, who leads high school kids and Universities.

Gloria Howard was honored for taking "As I tell my kids, if you don't have the a bullet - two of them literally - for her community. During a surge in shootings in the summer of 2021, she was among the volunteers for 21 Days of Peace who occupied hot spots to interrupt the disturbing patterns of violence.

> On one of the patrols, Howard was struck by crossfire. She survived and continues to show up for people in her

> Howard was not prepared to speak. She thought she would walk to the stage to receive her award and sit back down. But her words likely spoke for all the honorees and for the many in the audience.

> "Community has just always been in my blood," she said. "When you live in a place like East Saint Louis, when you live in a place like Centerville, community is everything. You know the Jacksons, who know the Wilsons and the Wilsons know the Colemans and you know it takes a village and that's how I was raised."

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## North Minneapolis at a glance

## **Showtime** donates \$300K to North High for scholarships

**NEWS** 

Showtime Television Network brought a national spotlight on North High School in the 4-part docuseries Boys in Blue, that followed the varsity football team in their attempt to secure a championship during the 2021 season. The series explored the dynamics of a predominantly Black team with a majority cop coaching staff during a time when the murder of Gerore Floyd had the city at odds over policing.

Right before the release of the series final episode, Showtime and Paramount Global announced that they will donate \$300,000 to North Community High School through their Content for Change initiative. which aims to use storytelling as the medium to challenge stereotypes and create meaninaful change.

The funds will be administered through the non-profit Achieve Twin Cities and will establish a multi-year scholarship program to help students and football players continue their education.

Paramount's press release read: "Over the next six years, the scholarships will be awarded to 22 graduating North Community High School seniors, designated for students and football players. Four \$10,000 scholarships will be awarded beginning this year. Additionally, the school will receive \$10,000 in an annual grant dedicated to providing additional resources such as school supplies, after-school activities and field trips."



## Cries of 'Long live D-Hill' ring out during balloon launch

Friends and family gathered at the convicted on a charge of second-degree said "This is what community looks like." corner of Golden Valley Road and Penn murder. Avenue North on Feb. 9 for a balloon release to remember Deshaun Hill Jr.

The 15-year-old North High student and Polar quarterback was fatally shot blared in support. Lisa Clemons, who

The words "Long live D-Hill" could be heard from children in school buses passing by. A symphony of car horns one year ago and his killer was recently leads the peace group A Mother's Love,

Deshaun's mother, Tuesday Sheppard, smiled and thanked the crowd that gathered around the family in support. "I am not sad today," she said. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson.

**NEWS** 

## Northside Aldi, Walgreens closing is a 1-2 gut punch to residents

By David Pierini. Editor

Patricia Bryant stepped out of the cab in front of the Walgreens pharmacy on West Broadway and was greeted by signs announcing its closing. After March 6, her cab rides get longer and more expensive.

Shari Brandt felt a similar blow when the Aldi on Penn Avenue North closed for good on Feb. 12. It had been an affordable choice amid the soaring supermarket prices to feed her family of five.

The news that North Minneapolis transfer prescriptions would lose a grocery store and pharmacy to its came in the same week and, while a shock, store. was hardly surprising to some residents who see the closings as just two more cases disappointment of disinvestment in their community.

The closing of Walgreens leaves Minneapolis with one pharmacy, inside Cub Foods. Cub, 701 West Broadway Ave. N. Cub is one of three remaining grocery stores that include North Market, 4414 Humboldt Ave, N., and So Low Grocery Outlet, 3111 Emerson Ave. N.

"It's a huge blow," said Minneapolis Ward 4 covers North Minneapolis north of Lowry Avenue. "I mean we have so many challenges already and to have one around food... another essential... This is just so heartbreaking. I am very sad to hear that Walgreens is closing. Our community cannot afford to keep taking big hits like these."

Both Aldi and Walgreens were located on major bus routes and were critical stops for residents without transportation. Neighborhood Facebook pages hosted pictures of specials at Aldi and its discounts helped shoppers whose budgets were sad." otherwise pinched by soaring food prices.

Aldi executives told Vetaw the Penn Avenue location did not fit plans underway nationwide for store expansion and remodeling. Vetaw said the building owner was willing to work with the growing items. supermarket giant

North News talked to an unnamed employee who said theft and an inability to attract people to job openings at the pharmacy were behind the closing.

In a written statement, a Walgreens is gone." spokesperson said: "When faced with the difficult decision to close a particular location, several factors are taken into

account, including our existing footprint of stores and dynamics of the local market, and changes in the buying habits of our patients and customers."

Patricia Bryant's routine for getting her prescriptions is now disrupted. Walgreens automatically Robbinsdale

because this was convenient," Bryant said. "I moved here from Chicago last year so I'm not very familiar with the city.

Nothing surprises me. I've lived through a lot of things so I'm just trying to hang in there."

Four days before the closing of City Councilwoman LaTrisha Vetaw, whose Aldi looked like any other shopping day. If a shopper had missed the closing announcement posted on the doorway, one clue would've been the near empty gisle that famously features an odd assortment of non-grocery items, like weights, shoes, lawn furniture and paper shredders.

A woman named Fatoumata was emptying her grocery cart into a minivan when a passerby told her the store was closing. There are six in her household.

"I like to come shopping here because the food is cheap," she said. "This is very

Shari Brandt said she is very budgetconscious as the main shopper of her family. Feeding three growing children is expensive. Her husband has a gluten intolerance and Aldi had a number of affordable gluten-free

"I was very surprised and sad," Brandt said. "I think especially with inflation and the cost of groceries going up. As a mom of young kids it was just I don't know how to feel like 'oh man.' another affordable option



Walgreens customers have until March 6 to transfer pharmacies. Otherwise, all prescriptions will be sent to the Walgreens in Robbinsdale. Photo by David Pierini



## Family seeks answers in the disappearance of Alexis Whitehawk-Ruiz

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

The Minneapolis Police Department is asking the public for help to find 21-year-old Alexis Whitehawk-Ruiz, who went missing Nov. 16.

She was last seen by her family the night before, leaving her North Minneapolis home in what seemed to be an argument with someone on her phone. She walked down the 2400 block of Irving Avenue North around 8 p.m. and 15 minutes later, her phone's last signal came from 919 W. Broadway Avenue before it was turned off.

Since her disappearance. Alexis's phone has remained off and she hasn't made any contact with her job, social media, or any family or friends.

In an interview with KSTP, Myrna Whitehawk, Alexis's mother said "It's been really hard, I miss her. She's always home, always around family, always letting us know where she is at."

According to police, Alexis is described as 5-foot-3-inches tall, with shoulder length curly/wavy hair that is usually worn in a bun, and dark brown eyes. Both of her ears are pierced twice, and she also has a dimple on her left cheek.

She was last seen wearing a gray Nike sweater, dark green camouflage leggings and black Bearpaw boots.

The office of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives office (MMIR) was added to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety in 2019 to create a task force addressing the epidemic of missing indigenous persons.

Despite making up less than 1 percent of the state's population, the task force found that from 2010 to 2018, indigenous women and girls in Minnesota accounted for 8 percent of all women and girls who were murdered in the state. Additionally, in any given month during that time, between 27 and 54 American Indian women and girls in Minnesota were reported missing.

The epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQI + stem from the disproportionate share of violence, exploitation and inadequate response from



phone was shut off. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

thinking about her."

Minnesota's rural, urban, and, reservation

Juliet Rudie, tribal member of the Lower Sioux Indian Community, took on the role of director of the MMIR office to serve the indigenous community of Minnesota. She herself has family members that have been missing since 2017.

"This issue matters because it affects the whole community. The pain of losing a relative to violence is one that we should not be accustomed to nor accept," Rudie told North News. "Addressing the issues of violence, poverty, system barriers, reporting, and lack of data will overall help families find justice. As citizens of Minnesota, we must stand up for families and victims to begin to heal. This is a community restorative justice

The state of Minnesota declared Feb. 14 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Awareness Day in 2020 and this year, Alexis' family marched alongside hundreds of others to advocate for Alexis and stand in solidarity with other indigenous people who have gone missing or fallen victim to

"It's very important for us to come here and make sure she's heard and seen and a lot of people know about her," said

law enforcement, and the overall lack of her cousin, Angel Running, in an interview moving away from home before she went coverage for missing indigenous people in with WCCO-TV. "I don't know what to think missing. about it. It's sad. There's no trace of her. It's like you can't even sleep, you're always college, she really wants to do that," her

> The family of Alexis began raising funds with a goal of \$5,000 selling fry bread tacos and publishing a Gofundme page to hire a private investigator that can look into her disappearance. As of February, they've on family, friends, and co-workers alike. For surpassed their goal but have yet to find a short period of time last summer, Alexis someone to take the case.

"We are having a hard time finding a private investigator to hire," Whitehawk said. "I didn't think it would be this hard to gathered around the night shift staff and find a good one."

The family plastered 400 missing fliers up and down West Broadway Avenue chatting about life and driving her home to North, Irving Avenue North, Loring Park and her mother after their shift was over. Great River Road.

Her mother told North News that Alexis is someone who is effortless with compassion and a strong work ethic.

"She is a super generous, nice, caring, loving, kind, and helpful young woman," Myrna Whitehawk said.

When in high school, Alexis excelled in school. She took both honors and PSEO courses and sat on the youth city council for call 9-1-1 immediately or call Crimestoppers

She loves animals, especially dogs, and was in the process of saving for college and Crimestoppers website.

"She was passionate about starting mother said. "She was thinking of being a teacher. She wanted to go to Augsburg

Her character doesn't waver. Alexis is loved by all and has had a lasting impact picked up shifts at the Holiday gas station on Washington Avenue north.

Her former co-worker Particia Kunjan spoke to North News about what type of person Alexis is. Kunjan got to know Alexis,

"She is sweet, loving, and really about her family," Kunjan said. "She doesn't seem like the person that would ever go missing."

Her mother and other family members are pleading with the public to help bring Alexis home.

The Minneapolis Police Department asks if anyone has information on the disappearance of Alexis Whitehawk-Ruiz to 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). People with information can also submit tips on the

### 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.



Hello. Ward 4!

Spring is almost here. You know what that means? Construction season is approaching. Here are some updates minneapolismn.gov. on exciting infrastructure projects to look forward to in the 4th ward:

Ave North – 22nd Avenue North to 40th Avenue North project will continue and eventually provide pedestrian safety improvements and ADA accessibility 33rd and Bryant, 33rd and Colfax, 33rd at intersections along Lyndale. and James, 34th and Dupont, 34th and Lyndale is a high crash rate corridor in Minneapolis and carries buses, has Street, 36th and Aldrich, 36th and several schools, parks, and commercial Colfax, 36th and Morgan, and 37th and areas. Safer and easier access is Bryant. Locations were selected based important for Ward 4 residents' ability on traffic crash analysis and feasibility. to access school, work, services, retail, Construction at each location takes and recreation. Improvements will approximately 2 weeks and residents include curb extensions, pedestrian who live near a traffic circle will receive crossing medians, upgraded traffic a letter approximately a week before control devices and APS push buttons, construction begins with more details. new ADA-compliant pedestrian For more info, contact Ethan Fawley at ramps, and bus loading zones. For ethan.fawley@minneapolismn.gov. more details contact Chris Kartheiser at chris.kartheiser@minneapolismn. Street Safe Routes to School project gov or Nathan Kemmer at Nathan. is resuming. The City plans to add kemmer@minneapolismn.gov.

constructing a new north-south parkway, reconstructing Dowling and 33rd Ave, improving the Dowling and Washington intersection, constructing

riverfront multi-use trails, constructing 20 acres of public park with restored shoreline, and constructing new or upgrading existing public utilities. For more details contact Ahmed Omer at ahmed.omer@minneapolismn.gov, Nathan Koster at Nathan.koster@ minneapolismn.gov, or Alexander Kado alexander.kado@minneapolismn.

In Folwell and Webber-Camden, alley storm drain repairs will replace current alley storm infrastructure to prevent failure and future drainage issues. Public works will also replace the alley surfaces affected by this work. If you have concerns on the condition of your alley drain, please contact Will Shutte at William.shutte@

In Folwell, Jordan, and McKinley, the City is continuing to install traffic In Webber-Camden, the Lyndale circles to support traffic safety as an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) project. Traffic circles will be installed in 29th Ave and Colfax, 30th and Queen, Oliver, 35th and Girard, 35th and 4th

In McKinley, the Cityview North 4th traffic calming treatments to 4th Street In Camden Industrial, McKinley, and North and 34th Avenue North near Webber-Camden, the Upper Harbor the school. Treatments may include Terminal reconstruction is continuing. pedestrian median and refuge islands, Last year work began to prepare the curb bumpouts, stop signs, speed Upper Harbor site for the Phase 1 bumps, traffic circles, bike boulevards, Public Infrastructure Project. The 2023- and/or raised crossings. The project 24 Public Infrastructure Project includes will make it safe and convenient for children to walk and bike to and from

Continued on page 19



Northside! The Mayor and City homes. Our office continued to host Council passed a resolution honoring Black History Month. The resolution with neighbors regularly. And so much states that "The Mayor and City more! We cannot list it all. Thank you Council do hereby commemorate the for trusting us to do this work. We are achievements of Black Americans as excited to continue bringing this energy history makers and legacy trailblazers into 2023 and winning more victories and their role in the development of for the Northside. the region and the nation since its inception, and we join in recognizing will be coming through North the annual celebration of Black Minneapolis in the future. Since fall History Month and the anniversary 2022, the Metropolitan Council and of the Minneapolis Black Employee Hennepin County have been working Network." In honor of Black History through the environmental review Month and National Pizza Day, myself, process to understand the potential Councilmember Chavez, and Rainville social, economic, and environmental presented an honorary resolution impacts and benefits of the route that was passed unanimously by the options. Join Metro Transit for Minneapolis City Council declaring community workshops to discuss Thursday, Feb. 9, as Slice Pizza Day to opportunities, impacts and potential recognize Slice Pizza, one of the first solutions for businesses and residents local Black-owned pizzerias in the City. along the route options in Minneapolis.

and we have been reflecting on 2022. the latest design and environmental It was tough in many ways, but I'm updates and take your questions. You extremely proud of the work our office can come and go at any time. did to support North Minneapolis and will continue to do. Here are some of the highlights from this past year: We 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23 hosted 3 community conversations Capri Theater, 2027 West Broadway at Shiloh Temple, Sanctuary Church, Ave. and Cub Foods. We hosted 2 People's Assemblies at the Urban Research Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) 5-7 p.m. Tuesday, March 7 and the Jerry Gambles Boys and Girls Club. We hosted an incredibly successful Black Business Week event at the Northside Economic Opportunity

Network (NEON) office. Our office brought honorable Attorney Ben Crump and his legal team, esteemed Professor Rachel Moran, and law student Sarah Murtada to present on no-knock warrants. Our office closed 435 constituent cases during the course of 2022. Our team attended countless groundbreaking and grand opening events including, but not limited to 927 Building, The Beam, Currie Commons, Hall Stem Academy Observatory, Harrison Townhomes, New Oil Christian Center, Olson Park, Perearine, and ZaRah, Our team successfully advocated for \$8 million Happy Black History Month, to be allocated to Ward 5 in MPLS weekly Open Coffee Hours to engage

The Blue Line Light Rail Extension Nearly 3 months into the new year Project staff will be on hand to share

Target Field Station to West **Broadway Route Options** 

21st Avenue vs West Broadway Route Options Cub Community Center, 701 West

**Continued on page 19** 

## Natural hair, Juneteenth bill signings celebrate freedom

By **David Pierini**. Editor

**NEWS** 

All for a handful of words, witnesses packed the large, ornate room where Minnesota's governors have signed laws

How an additional sentence added to an existing law could be so significant is understood by Black men and woman whose character or professionalism has ever been guestioned because of the texture or style of their natural hair.

With Gov. Tim Walz signing of the CROWN Act on Feb. 3, the state's civil rights laws were amended to prohibit discrimination based on hair. He then signed another law making Juneteenth, which marks the official end of slavery in the U.S. an official state holiday.

Walz said he had never conducted a signing with so many people in the room. The joy and relief was palpable.

### "With this law, we are saying that we will not allow hair discrimination as a proxy for race discrimination."

State Rep. Esther Agbaje

Packed rows of people, many Black women and girls wearing their hair in a variety of styles, seemingly exhaled with joy and relief as Walz's pen swept across the document. People stood beneath large paintings depicting Civil War battles and Lt. and professional appearance. Gov. Peggy Flanagan noted that America In 2018, a Black high school continues to be a work in progress.

Both Juneteenth and the CROWN Act (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) had been proposed and debated in past sessions, but the politics of the day kept it from reaching a final vote. This time, each passed with bipartisan

Two Northside lawmakers, Rep. Esther Aabaie and state Sen. Bobby loe Champion brought bills across the finish line in their respective legislative chambers. Champion also sponsored the Juneteenth bill in the

"We knew this was the time for Minnesota to join 19 other states to say that we are protecting people facing

to show up as their authentic selves," Agbaje said. "With this law, we are saying that we will not allow hair discrimination as a proxy for race discrimination. Yes, we're also saying that it is perfectly fine to show up as you are. Black children, especially young Black gils have been prevented from fully participating in school because of a lack of understanding about

"The CROWN Act helps us move closer to a society where all children are affirmed."

Natural hair, its texture and styles inherent with Black identity, including loss, twists, braids and bantu knots, will be added to the Minnesota Civil Rights Act. Natural hair styles also offer protection from breakage, cover from the sun and warmth in the winter.

A 2019 study by a nationwide CROWN coalition found Black women are more likely to change or cover their hair to meet societal norms and worklplace expectations. Women interviewed for the student said they were sent home or know someone sent home from the

workplace because of their hair. Men also experience these same pressures to conform to white standards of acceptable wrestler in New Jersey was forced by a referee to shave his loss or forfeit the match. A video of the wrestler aetting his hair cut on the sidelines went viral.

"We have so much more work to do because we want to make sure that all of us are included when we think in terms of success and opportunity,"

Champion said. "There is also something to be said that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. God shows us the way we are and that we should have the opportunity to walk in any space and have that boldness of high value."

There was a five minute break between discrimination and we want more people bill signings so that the governor's staff

One of the largest groups ever to witness a Minnesota bill signing celebrates after Gov. Tim Walz signed the CROWN Act on Feb. 3. Photo by David Pierini

could rearrange the backdrop of people his wife returned to the area around the witnessing the signing. Two people. Nothando and Vusumuzi Zulu, were present for both signing and present as Act signing. "There was always this inner teacher at The Way Community Center, thing, the racism, that there was always where Champion spent several formative something wrong with our hair," she said.

"We're so proud of that young man," Vusumuzi Zulu said of Champion as he and

aovernor's signing desk.

Nothando Zulu reflected on the CROWN "Folks were always trying to make it an excuse. So this is a very special day."



Anthony Taylor, co-founder of Melanin in Motion, teaches a student to turn and stop on a downward slope for her first time this winter. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

## Melanin in Motion gives Black and Brown people a taste of winter sports

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

Anthony Taylor has spent years snowboarding on the slopes of Minnesota, trekking up and down the hills alongside a demographic of athletes who never looked like him.

He remembered the strong urge to do something once his kids started to participate in the sport themselves and they too began to notice the lack of diversity.

"I started snowboarding because I wanted to learn something new and have

have a new life experience," Taylor said. freedom," Taylor said. "And then I said 'why not make it more."

He asked himself a question about would shape the scope of his life's work:

"Who's not out there?"

And as someone who has been BIPOC coaching staff. snowboarding for more than decade, the answer was easy.

Taylor co-founded Melanin in Motion with Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson in 2016 by," he said. "And usually, parks that have said. "Equipment is crazy expensive." with the goal to connect Black people to amenities for winter sport activities are active-living opportunities in the outdoors.

"We believe that Black bodies in

Melanin in Motion hosts weekly downhill sports classes at the Trailhead what type of new life experiences that in Theodore With Park for adults, youth, and families that feature lessons in snowboarding and skiing taught by an all

> "The Trailhead is a perfect location because it's an accessible park to the Black and Brown communities very close further than 30 minutes out."

a new life experience, I wanted my kids to motion are the ultimate expression of to the lack of diversity wasn't just about interested in snowboarding, but was

getting Black people to the slopes, it was also everything in between.

There are many barriers, he said, that keep Black and Brown people away: financial, physical access, having a community and the right mentality.

Snowboardina instructor Northsider Tayvontez Larkins remembered the first time he considered snowboarding.

"There's a big financial barrier," Larkins

Winter is his favorite sport, but aside from sledding, he was often indoors and Taylor understood that the solution unsure how to get active. He was always deterred by equipment prices that reach the hundreds of dollars with the average lesson beginning at \$75 per day.

**NEWS** 

"I wouldn't be a snowboarding coach or as consistent of a snowboarder as I am now if it weren't for Anthony." he said.

Melanin in Motion eliminates the financial barrier for those wishing to learn how to snowboard or ski by charging iust \$15. or a "'pay-what-vou-can" fee." including equipment in the price. The only thing he asks of participants is to bring warm gloves, snow pants, and the eagerness to fail and get back up.

Through the youth programming, Taylor hopes to foster community amongst his groups and include families in the process.

Quint Lester moved himself and his three children to Brooklyn Park from Georgia in 2020 and struggled finding the diversity he was surrounded by in the southern state.

"I realized that you have to be of a certain level of income or access and privilege to be active in the winter. When I heard about this program, it struck a really deep chord with me because I wanted to level the playing field and increase access to folks who wouldn't otherwise have it."

Seyla Ou, first year snowboarding coach with Melanin in Motion

"One thing is missing in Minnesota compared to the south: interacting with people of color especially in places that aren't dominated by people of color," Lester

He has three adventurous children - Quinn, 9, Saige, 6, and Axl, 4 - and they needed an outlet to get through the dull winter months. He enrolled Quinn in Saturday lessons last winter and has attended every lesson with her since.

"I came here with Quinn at first and, of course, I brought along my two younger kids," Lester said. "We came around so and so did Axl."

But it wasn't just his kids. Lester also took an interest in snowboarding. He joined fun," she said. "I didn't think I would try the adult lessons that meet every Friday something like this, but I'm happy I did."

"Stuff like this makes the cold more

bearable," he said. "It helps keep my kids active in the winter and I have a place where I can meet people of color, which is less isolatina for me."

the community he was looking for in for himself and children and is arateful Taylor allowed him to be a part of his daughter's lesson in the first place.

"Saige is 6 old and these classes are supposed to be 8 and up," Lester said. "But because we were coming as a family, Anthony [Taylor] made sure we still got to be a part of this."

This year, Axl grew big enough to receive his first snowboarding lesson alongside his big sisters. He took on the bunny hill and successfully made it down, laughing and crashing into the open arms of his father.

"When we provide anything, we don't want to violate the parental authority, we don't want to contribute the narrative of kids getting these basic services for someone else and exclude the parent," said Taylor. "I don't want you to just drop your kid off and disappear, I want you to learn alongside them, and stay engaged and be present throughout the entire process, so that kids can understand that they can get resources from and with their parents."

Taylor wants to encourage people to get past their fears of the cold and focus on having a good experience.

Every Wednesday for six weeks, Melanin in Motion takes a group of Northside youth to the Elm Creek Winter Recreation area in Maple Grove to teach snowboarding.

Among the youth in attendance is eighth-grader Kailey Bell, who mainly dedicated time to express herself through rap and creative writing. Now in her fourth much that eventually, Saige wanted to join, week of snowboarding lessons, she's considering keeping up with the sport.

"I'm falling a lot but I'm having





At the end of the lesson, Taylor gave a shout out to Axl Lester, age 4, for getting back up after a big fall. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

Left: Students from Taylors Wednesday night class prepare to take on a big hill at the Elm Creek Winter Recreation **Area.** Photo by Azhae'la Hanson



After a long 2 hours of snowboarding, Cornell took a tumble down the tubing hill for a last rush of adrenaline. Photo by Azhae'la

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### **NEWS**

## North wrestling pins down first city title in 27 years

By Azalea Petry-Towns, North High School

The North High Wrestling team was recently named city conference champions for the first time in 27 years. Coaches Andrew Caprichio and Norman Alston resurrected the program in 2020 after a long period of low attendance.

"The first step to building the program and improving it was just getting the numbers up," Caprichio said.

He turned to football players and the size of the team went from a handful of grapplers to more than a dozen.

Alston is a North alum, and was both a player and coach at one point for the Polars in the 1980's and 90's. His glory days were a program full of athletes that shook competitors across the state. And

when he saw that the wrestling program at North steered so far from its original glory, he stepped in again after two decades to pin down the problem once and for all.

The level of talent has increased greatly in the past year. Junior Cashmere Hamilton-Grunau leads the team in victories with 40 match wins, doubling last season's win totals.

"Obviously a lot of teams doubt us," Hamilton-Grunau said. "I didn't even think we could do it. We've had a history of losing but we're turning it around

The Polars were hoping to continue their winning ways with sections, which began



Grapplers take their starting positions to spar in preparation for sections. Photo by Azalea Petry-Towns

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### North High esports team places second in Rocket League state championship

By **Kiya Darden**, North High School

**NEWS** 

Four athletes from North High School won second place in a state competition without ever leaving the comfort of their homes - or chairs.

Juniors Luke Bloomquist, Devin Cain, Ahmed Bloeiud and Angel Martinez Pineda, took home the second-place trophy in the Rocket League tournament from the Minnesota Varsity E-Sports League (MNVL) state championship. The gaming quartet have known each other for nearly a decade and have been playing video games together for five years.

North High support staffer and current e-gaming coach Kay Lynn Wong asked herself how to value all kids and not just the traditional athletes. As an avid gamer herself, she started the gaming club inside the robotics classroom in 2020 amidst the pandemic. When COVID-19 restricted all extracurricular activities, the only activity that could withstand a pandemic was e-gaming because it runs totally online.

When school was back in session, new champions began dawning the halls not holding a football, a baton, or basketball but their gaming controllers.

"It doesn't matter how tall you are, your abilities, or gender, anyone can game, Wong said.

The four students joined Wong's gaming club at North High when they were freshmen and began competing in MNVL league tournaments.

Competitive e-sports is new and is rapidly growing as an industry. Gamers who may not possess elite athletic skills can compete to sports-like fanfare. E-sports reached professional status in 2013 and top gamers can average between \$12,000 to \$60,000 in annual earnings.

lacob Utities, a former teacher from Saint Louis Park, helped found the state's e-gaming league for high schools in 2019. In the beginning, there were 10 state schools costs." with e-sports teams.

seen a 400 percent increase in high school registration. Utities predicts that E-gaming influence will grow exponentially to measure hope that gaming will pay off someday. up to the interest in traditional sports.

e-gaming becomes so big in high school of the state's largest schools. Gaming has sports that fan buses are contracted to opened doors for youth to enter professional bring people to watch like any other state sports tournament," said Utities.

video-featured games, including Valorant, League of Legends, Minecraft, Rocket League, and Super Smash Bros.

The gaming quad chose Rocket League because it depends heavily on teamwork and they can work together to defeat their competitors just like they always have.

"We gamers always stick together," said Bloomquist. "It's us versus everybody."

E-sports is not supported by most school districts and teams typically raise money for gear and travel.

Wong makes it work. Everyday she brings her own gaming systems from home for the students to use.

"I pretty much built everything from the ground up aside from some monitors that were donated," said Wong. "We don't have computers and we're not allowed to connect to the school network. Most of our students are on a hotspot, and some rely on their cell phones to practice."

"It takes an amazing amount of courage to do something that hasn't already been done before. And then to do it so well that you can place high in state is just a special kind of principal pride."

Principal Mauri Friestleben

Wong has created logos, t-shirts, and found transportation to support her students when competing and practicing.

But with proper funding and support, e-gaming sports programs are incredibly

"What is interesting is that e-sports has no large continuous cost. Not only is there very little cost after systems and equipment are purchased, unlike traditional sports, there are less coaches and no facilities

Ahmed says that the amount of hours In the span of two years, MNVL has the team spends gaming for practice and fun match up to a full-time job. While striving for schools like NYU and MIT. The students

Each year brings more scholarships "In the next 10 years I hope that to competitive e-gamers and from some gaming companies and offer opportunities for students to pay for college that wouldn't Students can compete in a variety of qualify for academics or sports.



Gaming club members shared their daily routine which consisted of homework, gaming and a lot of soda. Photo by Azalea Petry-Towns



Ron Lynch is a freshman who just started the gaming club this year, his favorite game is Fortnite and he's practicing to compete in MNVL next season. Photo by Azalea Petry-Towns



2nd place champions Devin Cain (right), Ahmed Bloeiud, and Luke Bloomquist. Photo by Kiya Darden



## These Lucy Laney boxers are dominating the ring and making history

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

and men, two girls are hitting hard and fast, championing a legacy that's proven hard to beat.

Lavendar Nelson, 11, Madison McDonald, 9, both of Lucy C. Laney Boxing Academy, are punching their way through the ranks of USA Boxing and ushered in 2023 with two firsts for the state of Minnesota.

In February, Minneapolis Public

Schools celebrated Lavendar being named No.1 in the nation in her weight class in the USA Boxing In a sport long dominated by boys USA Boxing for Minnesota. Since she was recognized the 6, Lavendar has won eight national titles. gap between Madison carries four national titles and male and female was the first girl in Minnesota to step in participation the ring with a boy.

The rising interest in boxing amongst the rules in their girls has steadily grown since it first PeeWee League officially appeared in the Olympic Games to allow co-ed in 2012. About 31 percent of the boxers bouts between registered in the United States are girls, the ages of 8-10 but clubs still have problems finding girls years old. to box.

and changed



Madison wants to be the best of the best. She told North News that once she's locked in on a goal that she works hard to fight for it. Lucy Laney Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

Boxing Academy head coach Morgan McDonald said the girls in his program often get tired of sitting and watching the boys being able to box, while they sit on the sideline.

"The girls work just as hard as the boys do, do the same workouts, the same everything," said McDonald, who is also Madison's dad. "But they weren't getting experience like the young males were getting when we left the school and it wasn't fair."

Both Madison and Lavendar qualified, and in January of 2023, Madison made Minnesota history as the first girl in the state to box a boy.

Madison swung, and she won. But it wasn't the first time she put the gloves up

"I fight with my brothers a lot," Madison said. "So it doesn't scare me to fight a boy."

Madison's win secured her belief that she is not just a good boxer "for a girl" but a good athlete - period.

By day, McDonald is a student support specialist at Lucy Laney School and started the boxing academy out of his garage in 2019. The school provided a home in a Lucy Laney classroom to merge his passions and target kids who struggle with their performance in school.

"I target the tough ones, the ones who don't really get school or like school," McDonald said. "I target them and try to give them something to come to school for, or a place to release their energy, good or bad."

More than one of McDonald's students has helped make a name out of the classroom boxing academy. Since its founding, academy boxers have won 24 national championships, including Lavendar and Madison.

"Boxing is the vehicle for intervention, to get kids passionate about something," Principal Lisa Pawelak said. "But with a coach like McDonald, it really doesn't matter what the vehicle is because his passion ignites their passion. His dedication has transformed these kids."

Both Lavendar and Madison are happy to dominate the competition alongside each other.

"She's a great fighter," said Lavendar. "She's fast. I want her to beat the boys, she already does it in practice."

"I want to hit like Lavendar," said Madison.

When Lavendar is older, she hopes to surpass the number of championships won by two time Olympic gold medalist Clarissa Shields, a boxer from Flint, Michigan who won gold in 2012 and



2014. It's been a goal of Lavendars since she first got in the ring.

"One day she [Lavendar] told me she wanted to be like a lady named Clarissa Shields," said her mother, Lagresha Nelson. "I was shocked when I learned that she [Shields] was a boxer."

Her mother was unsure about her daughter's interest in boxing at first, but when she saw her in the ring, she quickly got on board.

"Lavy is so talented, I'm so proud of my baby," she said.

Madison also hopes to compete far into the future.

"I want to box forever," Madison said. To prepare for their matches, Madison and Lavendar lead the workouts in practice, consisting of 50 pushups, 100 crunches, and 100 squats, combined with sprinting races, and shadow boxing.

On match day, however, the two can be found listening to their favorite tunes, stretching and chugging a Mountain Dew.

Madison and Lavendar will fight their their next matches in an all-girls tournament in California for shot at clipping another belt to the top of the ring at school.





Lavendar shows off the many belts the boxing academy has brought home and hung at the top of their ring. She will be placing yet another among the many as the 2023 Silver Gloves national champ. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

NORTH NEWS 13

Blink and you might miss her. Madison leaves another student in the dust during the relay racing portion of conditioning practice.

Center:

Morgan McDonald coaches students from behind the ring on where to position their hands while facing a competitor. Photo by Azhae'la



Tech specialist Kia Xiong looks over the shoulders of Bethune Community School students working on iMac computers. Photo courtesy of the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation

## Young imaginations will get 'Spark'd' by New Harrison Park tech studio

By David Pierini, Editor

Any kid who declares himself bored programming. while hanging out at Harrison Recreation Center clearly has not been in the green remodeled room with the new brushedaluminum computers, recording studio and large-screen TV for gaming

The aptly named Spark'd Studio was created for that kid.

It is the second Spark'd in the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation system. The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board opened the first one in Powderhorn Park in 2021 and plans are underway to build studios at four other parks in the city.

The studio mission is to help kids gain creative skills in digital arts and cultivate career interests and readiness with access to technology and free multimedia arts

The technology and other tools of enrichment include five desktop Mac computers, 10 MacBook laptops, a recording booth with an engineer work station. 10 mini keyboards with headphones, an eventual camera for learning photography and video. two gaming stations, a high-resolution scanner and 3D printer.

"Our hope and interest we've all talked about is for kids to unlock their dreams," said Anthony Bates, the recreation supervisor at Harrison. "Come into the space, explore, build and dream."



The Spark'd Studio includes a sound-proof booth for recording vocals for music and **Continued on page 19** other projects. Photo courtesy of the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board.

## Jessie Ross gets ready for economic shift approaching North **Minneapolis**

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

Jessie Ross has tried on many hats in his lifetime as a realtor, diversity, equity and leadership consultant, and now is in the final stages of becoming a commercial property owner.

In mid-March, Ross will be closing on the 68,000 square-foot building located at 2518 Second St. in North Minneapolis to rent out to community entrepreneurs.

He grew up on blocks away from the 2518 property and watched his Northside community change all around him. Most kids notice small things like the prices of snacks going up 25 cents, but Ross noticed something else: The buildings and the businesses he knew started to change, and they weren't being changed by Northsiders.

"Typically those who have resources, money, financial capital, and lending opportunities tend to leave out the people who do not have those things," Ross said. "And they take advantage of people and continue to drive the price up."

Ross was a quiet respectful kid who stayed out of the way but carried a fear that rang loudly in his consciousness: the fear of death. After losing his mother at age 11, combined with the random acts of violence occurring in the community, Ross didn't think much about his future because he didn't believe he would live past the age of 18.

"I just always felt like something random would happen to me. You know, didn't really have a good reason why," he said. "I don't think that I had the capacity to communicate what my grief felt like or looked like and so I was angry and quiet."

Ross graduated from North High in 2003 and lived with this burden until his 19th birthday, when he realized that he was still breathing.

He began to use his voice. And it became his career.

"I was like, well, since I'm still here, maybe I could figure out what, what I want to do with my life," Ross said. "And all I knew was I wanted to be connected to the community and I wanted to continue

staying connected to young people.'

"Committed" "hustler", and "integrity" are three words Ross's mentor Chris Brooks uses to describe Ross.

one the most community that I've ever met," Brooks said.

Ross lent his hand to school clothing drives, and various community efforts and started DEI consulting his company. He has led 400 speaking over engagements

diversity and strategy development for colleges, universities, and Fortune 500 companies, one including the NBA. He only recently considered real estate when he met someone who encouraged him to take up the occupation.

Brooks is the managing partner with the Brown Venture Group, a venture capital firm that invests with Black and Brown entrepreneurs. Over 20 years Brooks has watched Ross grow from a teenager that would come to his house to play video games, to an upstanding community member that is now investing in the same thing that he has dedicated

"I am elated that Jessie is buying a commercial property in North Minneapolis," Brooks said. "It's a terrible thing when people outside of the community come in and buy up property. It's a recipe for disaster.'

Ross wants to encourage people to not be intimidated by diving into the realm of property development, because up until recently, he had very little knowledge of the subject.

"There are tons of folks that have money but also don't know what the heck they're doing, but because they have the access and the network and they just figured it out," Ross said. "I just wanted



Jessie Ross. Provided Photo

to dispel this myth that you don't always be the warehouse district, which is now have to know everything that's happening in order to do it."

Ross had the determination, and a time." multi-million dollar project in reach, he just needed the money. He received a loan that covers all but 5 percent of the building purchase. A Gofundme was created in December to raise the remaining \$300,000 dollars. As of February, it has generated that have historically been marginalized, \$73,000. Ross is certain he will fill the gap women, people of color, if we don't create

Jessie Ross joins Houston White, James Staples, Anissa Keyes, Fonzie make it happen for us," he said, "And so Mayfield, Sammy McDowel and many my goal is to step in and do that, knowing others who are among the growing that, you know, the economics will shift in ranks of Northsiders-turned property and community developers who want to provide places to thrive in their own 11 tenants, Ross hopes to make room

as a developer and he is still learning the

He claims you don't need a of color, certification in development or real estate to understand the trend with development and black and marginalized communities.

"I started catching the trends of how development works: [developers] property prices," Ross said. "That used to established businesses alike.

the North Loop. And so right next to that is North Minneapolis. It's only a matter of

He is preparing for the economic shift he sees looming over the community of North Minneapolis

"If we don't, and we as Northside residents, black and brown folks, people opportunities for ownership for ourselves, then we can't count on other people to the next five to 10 years."

The building is currently occupied by for up to 16-20 vendors on a case by The building will be his first project case basis for businesses based on the needs of the community. He is prioritizing businesses owned by women and people

> "My goal would be in the next I would say five years to get to a place where we have over 50% occupancy by women and

Renovations are expected to take start somewhere near or close to a six months after the closing date. Once downtown area, and then go to the the buildout is completed. He envisions closest communities that have the lowest an incubator space for startups and

Sharon Griffin surveyed what remained of an ash tree that was cut down by order of the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board last year. The Harrison Neighborhood Association helped her pay for the removal. Photo by David Pierini

## Northsiders hit with tree removal orders invited to 'visioning' sessions

By David Pierini, Editor

Amoke Kubot looked out the window of her home in 2021 to see a man standing by her backyard shade tree. She thought he had picked her tree for a bathroom break: instead he picked the tree to be removed.

The man was a tree inspector with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and her ash tree, he told her, was diseased with emerald ash borer. He gave her 60 days to hire a tree service to have it removed at her expense or the Forestry Department would select one and send her

And she would learn she was not the only 'Oh no, this practice stops." property owner in North Minneapolis to face a tree removal order

Kubot, a well-known author and artist, has organized two "Listening and Visioning" sessions for Northside residents impacted by tree removal orders at the Community Room at Cub Foods, 701 W. March 8 at 5 to 7 p.m. and March 11 from 1 branches.

what reparations looks like or how to make 2010 and its slow spread through the city's this right for them," said Kubot, who paid \$7,000 to have two tree removed. "How do

More than 900 trees in the Northside zip codes of 55411 and 55412 have either been removed or tagged for removal as the on fixed or low incomes say the removals Parks Board Forestry Department tries to halt or lesson the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer, a beetle that burrows under a tree's park and eats the inner skin that Broadway Ave. Sessions are scheduled for transplants water and nutrients to its

Native to northwest Asia, emerald ash "I want people to brainstorm over borer was first detected in Minneapolis in tree canopy has recently reached North Minneapolis. By state law, property owners "So that began my battle," Kubot said. we come together as a community and say, are financially responsible for the removal

of diseased trees and the Park Board has the authority to issue orders.

But many in North Minneapolis living wrought unexpected financial burdens. Depending on the service and where the tree is located, a large ash tree could cost \$2,000 to \$6,000. The only options to defray costs is to have the bill rolled in with property taxes over a five or 10-year period.

Last fall, North News profiled Harrison residents struggling with the financial impact. One resident said the Park Board

Continued on page 19

## Bill would prevent large corporations from becoming landlords

By David Pierini, Editor

It took organizing from tenacious tenants, an attorney general's lawsuit and an order from the city to get the hedge fund owners of more than 200 North Minneapolis rental homes to address the shoddy conditions of its portfolio of properties.

But a pair of bills introduced in the state House and Senate this session would prohibit large corporations, contractors and real estate developers from purchasing a single-family home for the purpose of converting it to a rental

Rep. Esther Agbaje, whose district includes half of the Northside, introduced the House bill not long after tenants won a Minneapolis City Council order for Front Yard Residential, owned by Pretium Partners, to clean up mounting code violations or face the revocation of its rental license.

"The bill was inspired by the trend of corporate ownership of housing across the country, and this is showing up in Minnesota," Agbaje said. "Groups like HavenBrook (the former management company of the homes) are a good exam-le of what can happen when corporate ownership of housing proceeds unchecked."

The bill faces nervous property owners and scrutiny from a handful of committees before it would get to a floor vote. During a Housing, Finance and Policy Committee hearing in January, some testifying worried such a law would prohibit families or groups who form LLC's to invest in a few properties.

The bill has gone through a handful of language changes to refine the focus on the type of landlords who own hundreds or thousands of properties. New York-based Pretium Partners is the second-largest corporate landlord in the United States with more than 55,000 rental properties nationwide.

At one point last year, city records

showed 378 open violations among the 215 North Minneapolis homes owned by Front Yard Residential, part of the portfolio of Pretium Partners.

In January 2022, North News reported on some of the tenants' efforts to get repairs made and hold property owners accountable for the conditions under which they lived. The following month, Attorney General Keith Ellison sued the owners for keeping its properties "uninhabitable" for tenants.

Tenants reported a wide range of problems, including mold, leaking roofs, shoddy flooring, going days without heat, pest infestations and crumbling foundations. Some described getting served unnecessary fees and rent increases. Their calls to property managers went unanswered.

So they organized with the help of Inquilinxs Unidxs Por Justica. Tenants kept records of their requests for repair and calls to 311. Some put their rent in escrow, held news conferences and attended meetings where they could corner some of Pretium's investors.

North Minneapolis was particularly vulnerable after the crash of the housing market in 2008, when people lost their homes unable to afford the variable interest in subprime loans. The federal government gave corporations. like private equity firms, incentives to buy large groups of homes to create more housing for people. The 2011 tornado did heavy damage to homes in North and many could not afford to rebuild.

"You had displaced people who had to become renters again," said Sam Pree-Stinson, an organizer with Inquilinxs Unidxs Por Justica."People come in to buy up all of the natural occurring affordable housing and there's no rent control or other regulations and its depleting our housing stock. That takes away general wealth building in marginalized communities."

Pree-Stinson said a law like what Agbaje proposes would "de-comodify housing," giving everyone a place to live.

Current housing regulations, she said, give people more time to receive notice and for landlords to resolve problems but do little to address immediate livability issues, sudden fees and soaring rent.

"Why do we give (corporate landlords) every chance in the world?" Pree-Stinson said. "We don't give those chances to renters. By creating a state law, it allows us to deal with issues of livability, environmental issues, bridge gaps in home ownership and allow us to build strong communities."

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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.

Skate through the winter: North Commons Park is offering figure skating lessons and a youth hockey program beginning Nov. 1 at a low cost. Sign up on Wednesday from 6-8 p.m. Transportation is available. Call 612-588-9177 for more information.

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 auglify. Must be 200% of federal poverty guidelines or age 60plus. 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.

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.

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 prequalifications. 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 612-5213644 for more information. Walkups are

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 WIXK AM 1590 (Hmong).

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

**NOTICES** 

Minneapolis Ward 5 contact info: If vou live in Ward 5 and want to reach City Councilman Ieremiah 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.aov

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

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### Spark'd **Continued from page 14**

The Harrison studio opened on Feb. 13 and open studio hours are after 3 p.m. on weekdays plus learning programs in the evenings. Kids will likely be greeted and pulled in by the studio's tech specialist Kia

The Harrison studio is 1,000 square feet and the \$597,000 construction costs brought an upgrade to the Rec Plus School-Age Childcare room and added air conditioning to the entire recreation center. There are bright colors, comfortable future and warm spaces that work for both group and individual pursuits.

Parks Supt. Al Bangoura had hopes for creating these types of spaces when he was hired by the Park Board in 2019. When he was the recreation director at Powderhorn Park more than 20 years ago, he wanted kids to have more options than iust basketball.

He had lost some of his park kids over the years to gun violence and wanted to make sure youth had more options than a gym and basketballs to occupy their time.

Bangoura said he took the kids aside and asked them what would save lives? What is something kids could really connect with? They said music and so Bangoura created a small soundproof music studio at the Powderhorn Recreation Center with proceeds from the park's annual art fair.

"It was incredible." Bangourg said. "We were sitting in a room with kids, some of whom didn't like each other and they were literally writing, singing and producing together. And now they have something in common and it breaks down barriers. The love for that space changes them because it changes their hearts."

Rachel Bosch, youth technology and careers skills manager for the Park Board, said the Harrison studio will continue to grow and add programs to teach, such as drone flying. She said the goal for now is for kids to have fun and let the skills and interests naturally develop in the kids who visit the studio.

"They can pick the work station they want and really self-direct," she said. "Maybe they work on a school project or build a creative portfolio and they get to use technology or software they don't have

Go to minneapolisparks.org/sparkd for more information on Spark'd Studios and follow the "Browse and Register for Classes" button to view current programs offered. Follow Spark'd Studios on Instagram @ sparkdmpls for updates straight from the Studios. Questions? Email sparkd@

minneapolisparks.org.

### Tree Removal **Continued from page 16**

provided a list of estimates from different tree services, the costs ranging from \$4,000

Since then, residents in other Northside neighborhoods have organized, speaking publicly at Park Board meetings and with environmental justice groups.

Many wonder why the Park Board did not present treatment options as the pest began to spread and feel blindsided by the orders and the rush to remove trees. Some have complained officials have been condescending and evasive with requests for information

"Our messaging at the Parks Board has not been great," said Commissioner Becka Thompson, who represents North Minneapolis on the board. "It is an impossible situation in many ways. The Park board is obligated to remove diseased trees through state statute. I think a lot of my colleagues are sensitive to the fact that it's hitting my constituents the hardest right

Thompson said the Park Board is lobbying state lawmakers to provide some sort of third option that would provide some sort of tax credit for low income residents faced with tree removal costs.

Kubot hopes the listening sessions she has organized will raise awareness and lead to some sort of relief or protection for the most vulnerable residents.

"This is just insane what is going on over here," she said. "This is extracting Black wealth and it is displacing elders from their homes."

### continue catching up with our **Council Members**

### Ward 4: LaTrisha Vetaw Continued from page 6

school, enhance bicycle and pedestrian networks, and reduce vehicle speeds next to the school. For more details contact Bria Fast at bria.fast@ minneapolismn.gov. In Folwell and Webber-Camden,

Fremont Avenue North between Lowry and 44th is getting muchneeded safety improvements. The City will install safety treatments using paint and bollards to prevent severe injuries and deaths from traffic crashes. Improvements may include curb extensions, medians, and lane narrowing. For more details contact Kristian Zimmerman at Kristian. zimmerman@minneapolismn.gov.

In Folwell, Jordan, and Webber-Camden, the City is seeking input on a bikeway, pedestrian improvements, and traffic calming for the first phase of the Northside Greenway project. There is an online open house Thursday, April 7 at 5:30 pm for updates on the Northside Greenway. You can find the link at www.minneapolismn. gov/government/projects/northsidegreenway-project/. For more details contact Ethan Fawley at ethan. fawley@minneapolismn.gov.

In Shingle Creek, the City will replace old storm sewer pipes and manhole covers along Shingle Creek Parkway. Storm sewers will be replaced where Shingle Creek Parkway intersects Dupont, 46th and Emerson, Fremont, and 47th. For more details contact Henneh Kota at henneh.kota@ minneapolismn.gov.

### Ward 5: Jeremiah Ellison Continued from page 6

Broadway Ave.

Find additional meetings, materials, request assistance to participate in the events, and find ways to share feedback at the project website at www.BlueLineExt.org.

As always, you are more than welcome to reach out to our office at any time with whatever you may need. Whether it's a meeting with me, a constituent services issue, sharing a concern, or inviting our team to an event, we are here to serve you. You can sign up for the Ward 5 newsletter, RSVP to my weekly virtual office hours (Monday at noon-1 p.m) or request a one-on-one meeting with me at www. minneapolismn.gov/ward5.







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