

NORTH NEWS

August 25, 2023

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Shining Diamond

Northsider Diamond Cook signs with college gymnastics team.

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Diamond Cook works on her floor routine during a recent workout.

Photo by Kiya Darden



David Pierini,
Editor

Making you wait a month for your North News was bugging us

We get the occasional appreciative reader who wishes North News printed more often than once a month. There are strategic and economic reasons that keep us on a monthly schedule, but we

recognize that some news and stories shouldn't wait.

So we have decided to publish a weekly newsletter that comes each Tuesday to the inbox of anyone who subscribes. We launched The North Newsletter on Aug. 8.

And, like the newspaper you pick up for free around North Minneapolis, there's no charge for the newsletter.

Click on the subscribe button at the top of our website, mynorthnews.org, or send me an email at DavidP@pillsburyunited.org and I'll sign you up.

From The North Newsletter, you can expect a variety of news items that will inform you and help you set your calendar for events happening in the week ahead. There is also a section called "Pride of the Northside," a place to celebrate the many accomplishments of residents (please send in your suggestions).

Subscribers can expect a fun or compelling local photograph in each edition. You may also get information on road closures, healthcare alerts, where to find your polling place, how to appeal your property tax assessment and the like.

We will continue to publish the paper you know and love and should you need information even quicker, North News will continue to use its social media channels to connect with readers.

We hope you like the additional dispatch.

Speaking of additions, we have finally added a page on our website for content generated by local middle school and high school reporters.

You will notice at the top of mynorthnews.org a section called The Tea. When young people greet each other, they often ask "What's the tea?"

Our Tea is not about gossip. It's "Talk, Trends and Truth" according to our young storytellers. Reporter and youth program manager Azhae'la Hanson trains our summer interns and a group in an after-school program at North High School on the rigors of reporting, writing and photography.

For a sample flavor, click on The Tea to see some past work. We're excited for the coming school year to read what is on the minds of our youth reporters.

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A recommended light-rail route comes with a long train of questions

By David Pierini, Editor

Blue Line project managers have settled on a light-rail extension route that will avoid Lyndale Avenue and spare a large section of West Broadway Avenue in North Minneapolis.

Under the recommended route, trains would leave downtown, travel west on Washington Avenue and cross a new bridge over I-94 onto 21st Avenue. Trains would then connect with West Broadway Avenue near James Avenue.

The route recommendation arrives after a solid year of heated community meetings with Northside leaders, residents and business owners. One

official said this is a transportation project that connects a community, rather than wall it off.

But Northsiders are far from being ready to embrace light-rail.

The revised route still raises alarms, especially for a stretch of businesses on West Broadway, between James and Penn Avenues, where trains would eliminate street parking and long periods of construction could potentially damage building foundations and the bottom lines of businesses.

At an Aug. 10 meeting of the Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee, some members voiced concern about discussing a route before the adoption of anti-displacement measures.

"I don't care about transit. If my business is stopped, I lose my home," said K.B. Brown, who owns Wolfpack Promotions in the impacted area and is a member of the committee. "So, I need to know what things are going to be put in place to help us actually keep our (businesses) before, during and after this process."

"The biggest fear with this project

is we're being told how much this will benefit the community but we're not being told how."

Hennepin County Commissioner Irene Fernando, who represents North Minneapolis and serves on the committee, questioned why there wasn't more engagement with businesses that had been identified for possible demolition.

KMOJ Radio could be forced to move because its home in the Five Points Buildings is marked for possible tear down to make room for a station. In the May 26, edition of North News, Lisa Spicer, who owns Dimensions in Hair, said she learned from someone in the community that her business was identified on a map for demolition. No official ever approached her about the designation.

"There could have been greater compassion in the strategy," Fernando said. "I know we're not at this point in the process but people need to know for certain that these community assets will be invested in in the long run."

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said it's important for municipalities to know what money is available for displacement measures before governing bodies along

the route vote on whether to consent to the project moving forward.

Teto Wilson, owner of Wilson's Image Barbers and Stylists, said he opposes light rail but will have to shift his energy into making sure his business remains whole through the process.

"I don't like it and I know a lot of people who don't want it," said Wilson, whose shop is near Penn on West Broadway. "I still don't see how it is going to positively impact community; maybe I am missing something."

Dan Soler, director of transit and mobility for Hennepin County, said the project team is committed to developing that part of West Broadway in a viable corridor for businesses and community.

Said Solar, "Sometimes you hear, 'We can see some benefits, but we're nervous. What will happen? Where will we go? What happens to our business?' All true and very real and all need to be part of how we move this project forward."

The Blue Line Extension Corridor Management Committee will vote on the recommendation on Sept. 14. The full Met Council and consent votes will take place next year.

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Phone: 612-701-3883
Website: www.mynorthnews.org

David Pierini
Editor/Reporter/Advertising

Azhae'la Hanson
Reporter/Photographer/Youth Program Coordinator

Anya Johanna DeNiro **Thomas Toley**
Copy Editor Graphic Designer

Lyle James
Delivery

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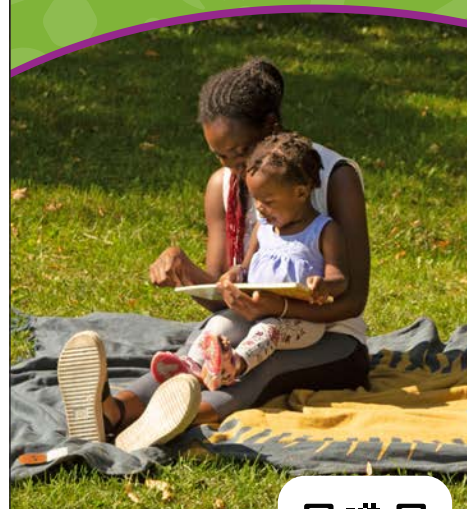
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National Night Out



Cousins Tarvanisha Farr, left, and Jakaree Allen played arcade games in a bus in the Cub Foods parking lot during National Night Out on Aug. 1. A Mother's Love hosted the event with food, games and resources. Jakaree was in awe that his cousin had a high score. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson

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Environmental justice groups demand end date for trash burner

By David Pierini, Editor

Environmentalists, including several Northside residents, are turning up the pressure on Hennepin County commissioners to shut down a trash incinerator that has run virtually non-stop for more than 30 years.

The HERC, short for Hennepin Energy Recovery Center, burns around 1,000 tons of garbage each day and its downtown location is one of a number of polluters that Northsiders say makes their neighborhoods the worst in the state for respiratory illnesses and related deaths.

The calls for closure have gone on for years. Now, HERC opponents feel renewed traction thanks to a zero-waste energy plan adopted by commissioners last year and an incentive from state lawmakers that would give the county \$25 million to fund a key component of the plan.

In order for the money to flow, commissioners must first adopt a timetable to close HERC.

At an August 15 board meeting, Commissioners faced several sign-carrying activists and a strong message to close by 2025.

Two physicians from Broadway Family Medicine spoke and brought with them a letter from more than 20 other healthcare providers in North Minneapolis. All urged commissioners to phase out the HERC.

“I need your help. As a physician, this can’t be all on myself and my colleagues to take care of these folks,” Dr. Aaron Rosenblum said. “We do what we can do to take care of people with all sorts of heart and lung conditions, but if we don’t fix the environment that is exacerbating and causing so many of these problems, we’re stuck, we’re just doing damage control.”

With only a short time allowed for HERC-related comments, environmental justice organizers were strategic about the list of speakers, each with two minutes to make their case. Along with physicians, Northside residents talked about their fear for long-term impacts of emissions from the HERC’s smoke stacks.

“It’s an injustice for the people who look like me as we’re forced to take the biggest



HERC opponents raised their signs outside the Board of Commissioners meeting on Aug. 15. Photo by David Pierini

risks,” said Marco Fields, who is Black and lives in the Camden neighborhood. “I’m sure there was a justification at one time for using an incinerator. But the way I look at it, it’s like a landfill but for the air. It doesn’t make the problem go away, it spreads out.”

But closing the HERC, county officials say, won’t be a simple flip of the switch.

Commissioners say they await direction from waste management staff on how to proceed with the HERC’s eventual closing. County staff await guidance from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, which is currently revising rules around trash incinerators.

A line item in the legislature’s \$2.6 billion bonding bill that passed in the spring earmarks \$26 million for an anaerobic digester, which would handle organic waste (from food scraps



The Hennepin Energy Recovery Center, left, earlier this year. Photo by David Pierini

Continued on page 23

catch up with our Council Members



WARD 4:
LaTrisha Vetaw

Hello, Ward 4! This month, the Mayor delivered his 2024 Budget Address outlining his proposed budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Among his investments, the Mayor announced a \$500,000 allocation towards Turning Point, Inc., a Northside substance abuse treatment center. Turning Point, Inc. is a full-service facility that provides in and outpatient care. A lot of the public safety issues we see on the Northside are related to substance use disorders. Not only does Turning Point help our community from the public health standpoint, they also help with public safety. Turning Point is very successful at what they do, but the need is greater than their capacity. It is important to our community that Turning Point has the necessary resources.

I have been working with Lori

Wilson and Dr. Peter Hayden to find funding for Turning Point. My mother was a client at Turning Point in the 90's and has been clean ever since. After I toured the facility all these years later, it was obvious that there was a need for investment. It was clear to me after my visit that Turning Point desperately needed funds to upgrade their facilities, so that they can increase their client capacity. I worked with the state legislature last session to secure \$1 million and on top of the Mayor's \$500,000 allocation, Turning Point now has \$1.5 million to start the work. This is nowhere close to what is needed to reach the potential capacity, but it is a step in the right direction and something that should be celebrated. Thank you to the Mayor and our partners at the state legislature for recognizing the importance of

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.

supporting Turning Point, Inc. Another exciting investment the Mayor announced in his Budget Address is a \$2.7 million allocation towards parkway maintenance and repair. This is an increase from \$750,000 last year. My office has gotten lots of complaints about the current state of Theodore Wirth Parkway. This investment means we can finally get the problem addressed. Other exciting investments include the following:

- \$3 million to address the opioid crisis, including for culturally responsive treatment facilities, new programming, and additional staff
- \$3 million to the Ownership and Opportunity Fund to provide ownership opportunities to local BIPOC small business owners
- \$420,000 to neighborhood organizations, increasing

the base budget for each neighborhood from \$10,000 to \$15,000

- Continuation of the Community Outreach and Safety Program that provides competitive grants to community-based organizations to provide training for young people interested in public safety careers
- \$2 million to add 16 civilian positions within MPD to bolster investigative and administrative functions
- \$470,000 for new Public Works equipment to get potholes repaired faster and \$1 million for a permanent snow storage location to improve snow emergency response

As always, don't hesitate to reach out to my office by email at ward4@minneapolismn.gov or by phone 612-673-2204.



WARD 5:
Jeremiah Ellison

This summer is flying by, and my office has been doing lot of exciting things. We kicked the month off joining Congresswoman Omar and her team in presenting the check to Avenues for Youth. As a former overnight shelter advocate for Avenues for Youth, this funding and the opportunity it holds means the world to me. I can't wait to continue supporting this life-changing work as we continue to partner to end youth homelessness in our community. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar secured \$24,720,224 in federal dollars through the Community Project Funding for the 5th Congressional District of Minnesota. This funding addresses the most pressing issues our constituents are facing on the Northside. Of this \$24,720,224 investment, \$3 million will be allocated to Avenues for Youth. Avenues for Youth is a nonprofit organization that has supported youth ages 16-24 in Hennepin County for nearly 30

years. Whether a young person needs someplace to stay for just one night, or a year and a half, Avenues support youth to find their path out of homelessness. This federal funding will support Avenues for Youth's Housing and Headquarters Project, which will create a new space on the Northside that will increase the already provided shelter and transitional housing units for youth experiencing homelessness. This new home will offer more housing options for youth regardless of age and gender, providing dignified, youth-centered spaces and contribute to improved outcomes. Public housing has always been a top priority of my office. In 2022, I assisted Council member Wonsley in a budget amendment to allocate \$1.2 million for fire sprinklers in five public housing high rises that did not have them. Mayor Frey announced an intention to include \$5 million public housing levy for

the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) in his proposed 2024 budget. Some additional highlights in his proposed budget are to increase the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to \$18 million to build additional housing units, \$2 million to increase affordable home ownership, and increase of \$1 million to create additional staff capacity. In the realm of climate and public health we are seeing \$4.7 million towards weatherizing homes, starting in low-income neighborhoods, \$1.4 million in workforce training to create well paid union jobs, \$850,000 to add to the City tree canopy, \$3 million to address the opioid crisis, adding \$1 million to the mobile electric vehicle charging stations in Minneapolis. For community safety the Mayor is proposing \$16 million for the federal consent decree, \$2.9 million for the continued expansion of the Behavioral Crisis Response team,

\$3.3 million for the Department of Community Safety, \$200,000 for emergency management training and \$150,000 to update the computers in fire trucks. We have the whole budget cycle to go through these next coming months and are open to hear feedback from the community in suggestions to the budget. If you have any thoughts, please reach out to my office. As always, join me from noon - 1 p.m. every Monday for Open Coffee Hours! These are informal and a chance for me to hear directly from you while we share coffee or a meal (virtually). Office hours is on a first come first served basis. Please try not to call in past 12:50 p.m. as we want to leave enough time to chat about what you'd like to discuss. Please RSVP at www.minneapolismn.gov/ward5, and my staff will follow-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.

Rep. Ilhan Omar gives local youth shelter \$3 million to expand operations

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

Avenues for Youth recently received \$3 million in congressional funds from U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar to build a new transitional housing center in North Minneapolis. Avenues for Youth provides emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportive services for 21 youth ages 18-24. The \$3 million will be used to relocate and build a new Northside building that is better suited for the organization's growing body of tenants. The program supports 170 to 190 young people annually. "Youth Avenues does an incredible job in trying to make sure our young people are

sheltered, that they're cared for and that they receive the support and resources that they need in order to thrive," Omar said. "And we're really excited to support them in that expansion." Minneapolis city Councilman Jeremiah Ellison was also in attendance. As a former employee of Avenues for Youth he was happy to see the program get the funding. "They're trying to serve as many youth as possible, you know, and so, providing more space for those youth I think is a really important priority. And that's going to be met within the new building." Construction will begin in the spring of 2023, four blocks away from its current address at 1708 Oak Park Ave. N. Construction will be completed in Spring 2025. Katherine Meerse, executive director of Avenues for Youth said the new building will go beyond expanded housing. It will make room for support programming and opportunities for youth to grow as well. Homeless youth in the program have gone on to find full-time employment, start businesses, and attend college. "Our young people come to us with lots of really big dreams and it's our job to help them," Meerse said.

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Report: Corporate landlord and shareholders get rich off Northside tenants

By David Pierini, Editor

The rental house in the 4000 block of Fremont Avenue North was advertised for \$1,375 a month. Keela Hardge said she rarely writes the rent check for that amount. The landlord, Progress Residential, demands more.

There are fees for each of her two dogs, a fee for late rent and another \$30 when she uses a debit card not associated with the bank account on file. There are also unexplained service fees that show up.

Unemployed and fearing eviction during the pandemic, Hardge said she paid her rent instead of her water bill. The city switched the bill back to Progress Residential, which charged her a monthly fee for that and continued to charge her even after she paid off her debt and resumed payments in her name.

"I work two jobs and still live check to check," she said. "When my rent fluctuates between \$1,700 and some odd dollars or \$1,800 and some odd dollars that creates a hardship for me. I changed the bill back into my name in May and they're still tapping into my rent."

Progress Residential, a subsidiary of a New York-based private equity firm, owns more than 200 homes in North Minneapolis and has profited handsomely over the years from tenants like Hardge.

A new report by the Private Equity Stakeholder Project and Inquilinx Unidxs Por Justicia/United Renters for Justice claims Progress Residential has extracted more than \$40 million from the historically Black neighborhood. Add the other rental properties owned by Progress in Hennepin County and the amount reaches \$60 million, according to the report.

Pretium did not return a request by North News for comment.

Northside tenants for years have complained about fees and rent increases in homes that in many cases are unsafe to live in. At one point, Progress had 378



Keela Hardge said landlord fees make it challenging for her to save money to buy a home. Photo by David Pierini

open violations among its 215 Northside homes. Tenants organized, brought their stories to investors, place rent payments in escrow and got the attention of the state attorney general office, which filed a lawsuit.

"The Northside is where I am from. I grew up here, it's where I went to school and where I have been raising my children and it's where I prefer to buy my own home. But with Progress and (companies) like that, buying up all of the homes, it makes it harder for me to purchase something in my own community. If they would just get out of my city, I wouldn't be so upset."

Keela Hardge

North News covered the tenants' fight for justice throughout 2022, including a story that January that highlighted the experiences of renters living with mold, crumbling foundations, shoddy flooring, electrical issues and unresponsive management.

Progress Residential was forced into a two-year agreement with the City of Minneapolis earlier this year to make repairs and be better landlords or risk losing its rental license. About 130 of the Northside homes are now vacant. Progress moved some tenants into homes it owns in the suburbs in order to make the repairs.

Organizers say they've seen little evidence progress has made changes that improves its tenants living conditions.

"I think the report is validating," said Samantha Pree-Stinson, a Northside organizer for United Renters for Justice. "We're not crazy, we're not making things up. It's good to see it in print and be tied to data."

Buying a home is one of the most common ways for a family to accrue and pass on wealth to the next generation. It provides "financial stability through predictable expenses and (fosters) savings through the growth of home equity," the report authors said.

Minnesota has one of the nation's biggest racial wealth gaps. Three out of every four white households in Minnesota own their homes. For Black households, its one out of five.



Of the 215 homes in North Minneapolis owned by Progress Residential, about 130 are vacant according to Inquilinx Unidxs Por Justicia/United Renters for Justice. Pictured is one of four small Progress homes on Humboldt Avenue North that are vacant. Photo by David Pierini

How can one landlord extract millions in wealth?

According to the report, Pretium Partners formed Progress Residential (formerly Front Yard Residential) in 2012 at the peak of foreclosures during a four-year housing market crisis.

The group bought up thousands of homes across the country in low-income communities of color and with 90,000 rental homes, Pretium is the largest single family rental company in the U.S.

Corporate landlords take affordable homes off the market and keep homeownership out of reach for low- to moderate-income families.

The Northside homes in Pretium's portfolio on average have since doubled in value, the report said.

Then there are the fees. If rent is not

paid on time, tenants are charged 10 percent of the rent. Two or more times and Progress reserves the right to increase the fee.

There is also a \$40 fee if Progress has to post a notice to pay rent, a \$100 fee to change the lease by adding a person or pet. A \$200 eviction administration fee, a \$75 fee to have a maintenance person come to the house for repairs and a \$300 nonrefundable fee per pet, plus \$35 each month per pet.

"There are fees that traditionally are not part of a standard lease," said Jordan Ash, housing director for the Private Equity Stakeholder Project. "That's one of the things that's unique about private equity landlords. They're going to supersize the profits and promising investors very large returns in a short period of time.

"They're not just content with making money. They want to make lots of money."

Keela Hardge is working with non-profit BuildWealth MN to get financially ready to shop for a home in North Minneapolis.

For one thing, she would like to have a place to hang family pictures. She hasn't hung any pictures, afraid Progress will charge a fee for each nail hole in the walls.

"The Northside is where I am from," Hardge said. "I grew up here, it's where I went to school and where I have been raising my children and it's where I prefer to buy my own home. But with Progress and (companies) like that, buying up all of the homes, it makes it harder for me to purchase something in my own community. If they would just get out of my city, I wouldn't be so upset."

MPD officer shot during pursuit of robbery suspects

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

A Minneapolis police officer was shot in the shoulder Aug. 11 while tracking a car full of robbery suspects.

The Officer Jacob Spies was treated at North Memorial Hospital and later discharged.

His colleagues caught up with the vehicle and arrested four individuals, including a teenaged boy.

The shooting happened around 9:15 p.m. Several squad cars began blocking off the area near 21st and Upton avenues around 9:30 pm.

"MPD officers put their lives on the line every day to protect each and every community member, not knowing what each day of that service may bring," MPD Chief Briana O'Hara said in a statement.

"We are extremely thankful and relieved that this officer is still with us."

According to police reports, Spies spotted a vehicle that matched the description of one involved in a Brooklyn Park robbery. Police tried to stop the vehicle near 33rd and Oliver avenues. Spies was following the vehicle near the 4300 block of Colfax Avenue North when shots were fired at the officer's vehicle. The injured officer drove to the intersection of Webber Parkway and Fremont Avenue North where he was met by officers who transported him to the hospital.

Police arrested four suspects, two men, one woman and a juvenile male. The adults charged were Freddy Davis, Jr, 19, Jamin Bowman, 19 The adult female is identified as Nevaeh Page, 20.

A gun was recovered from the suspect's vehicle, according to the MPD statement.

The two men and the boy were taken to Hennepin County Medical Center with unspecified, non-life-threatening injuries.

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Northsiders shine in Anything Goes

Northsider Aniyah Warren, top right, played the lead part, Reno Sweeney, in the Lundstrum Performing Arts staging of the musical, Anything Goes, which ran Aug. 4-6.

Two other Northsiders, Azirah Sanders, bottom left, and Mychal Dillard, were among the cast. Lundstrum, 1617 Second St. N. offers scholarships for Northside students interested in performing arts. Visit lundstrum.org/northside-strong-scholarships for more information.

Photos by Charlie Quick



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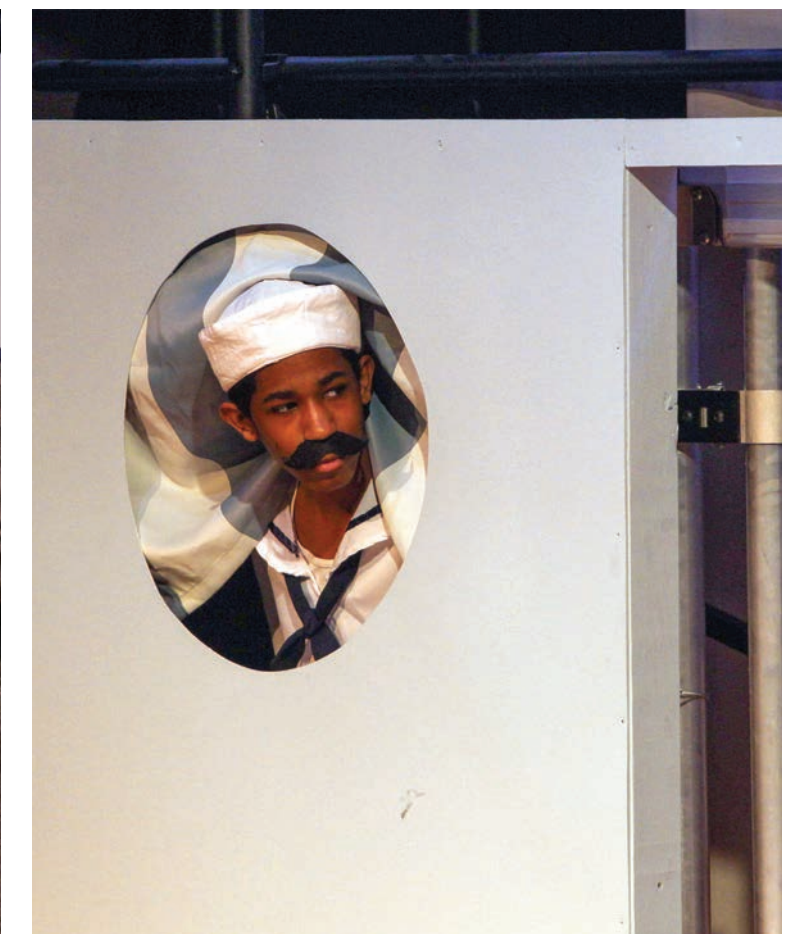


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Diamond Cook's strongest event is floor routine. Photo by Kiya Darden

Northside gymnast makes a college roster and a little history

By Kiya Darden, North News Intern

Diamond Cook, 19, participated in a gymnastics camp earlier this summer with no prospects of a collegiate future in the sport.

By the time the camp was finished, she left with an offer to compete at Talladega University, home to one of only two HBCU gymnastics programs in the country.

She had originally planned to continue competing at a club level in Minnesota in hopes she would eventually catch the eye of a college coach. Her wish came sooner than expected.

It was at a Brown Girls Do Gymnastics camp where Talladega University coach, Aja Sims-Fletcher, recognized Diamond's talent. During a routine, Sims-Fletcher challenged Diamond to go up on the high beams instead of the low ones that they had been practicing on.

Reluctant at first, Diamond tried and succeeded.

She received cheers from the rest of the gym and praise from her coach. From that alone, Sims-Fletcher asked for Diamond's information and to talk to her about going to Talladega. On July 19, she signed her form to commit just a month before she was set to attend the University of Minnesota.

When Diamond met the Talladega coach, she had already assumed it would be impossible to join a college team. Gymnasts generally don't compete after high school.

"It [being recruited] was really exciting because it felt like I was finally being recognized for my talents," Diamond said.

Diamond's elder sister, Danyale Potts-Cook, said Diamond is finally seeing the fruits of her labor.

"She's always been fearless," Potts-Cook said. Potts-Cook remembers her sister doing flips off of couches and counters to release pent up energy when she was a little girl.

Her parents recognized that she needed a place to release that energy and the couch wasn't cutting it. They enrolled her in numerous classes including jazz and ballet but it was gymnastics that won out. Starting at age 6, Diamond learned crucial skills and techniques. And by the age of nine she was on her first gymnastics team.

"I think it's [gymnastics] the only thing that really pushes me," Diamond said. "It really challenges me and I like that."

In her current gym, Richfield Gymnastics Club (RGC), coaches say Diamond is thriving. Even on a recently injured ankle she trained 20-30 hours a week. Jaime Tsurusaki, Director of RGC Gym and Diamond's head coach calls Diamond an "all-around powerhouse" as she dabbles in almost everything.

"She is a hard worker, her work ethic kind of stands above the ground. I think a lot of that is maturity and that she asks questions to make sure she understands what she needs to do in order to get to that game," said Tsurusaki.

After accepting Sims-Fletcher's offer, Diamond had one month to move to Alabama. Her mother, Sharon Cook, said it's bittersweet to see her daughter to follow her dreams in the South. Diamond's family haven't missed any of her competitions since she first began competing.

"I haven't had a chance to really let it sink in that she's leaving," her mother said.

Diamond officially arrived at Talladega University's campus in early August and began training for the upcoming season that begins in January. While in college, Diamond plans to study sports management so she can become a gymnastics coach and eventually open a gym.

Diamond said she works hard because she wants to be a role model for the younger gymnasts who dream about the opportunity she has. She's learned a big lesson to always pursue her dreams and not second-guess herself.

"I like the feeling of being able to do something that I've been working so hard for and looking back at it and say wow, I can actually do this," she said.



Cook takes a break from practice with her fellow gymnasts. Photo by Kiya Darden



Cook's upper-body strength is evident when she climbs rope. Photo by Kiya Darden

Northside schools start year short on tutors. What's your schedule look like?

By David Pierini, Editor

Nancy Sherman has a knack for little psychological nudges to get pre-schoolers believing they are good at something. One stubborn girl sat at her tutor table last year at Nellie Stone Johnson Elementary School and declared her hatred for numbers. Sherman went to work and in no time, the girl tested out of Sherman's group and began calling herself the queen of math.

"The teacher has to keep them on track and keep them going. I try to make the learning fun," said Sherman, about to

start her second year as a High-5 tutor at the Northside school. "Sometimes they think they're going to hate reading or hate math and then they're just shocked when they love it."

"I don't let them 'I can't.' Say 'I'll try.' And there's a big difference. They feel more capable, they feel confident."

Ampact, an educational arm of AmeriCorp that trains tutors, could use more Shermans in North Minneapolis classrooms for the coming school year. Fifty-one to be precise.

The biggest need is for early learning tutors like Sherman, according to Ampact, which is on contract to provide tutors for Minneapolis Public Schools. Ampact needs 36 early learning tutors for Northside schools, 14 for reading and one for math.

At Nellie Stone Johnson, Sherman was one of two tutors at an elementary school that is still short 10.

"We just don't have the big pool of candidates we had pre-COVID," Ampact program manager Carlone Glawe said, referring to the pandemic, which created a crisis in lost learning after schools switched to remote learning. "We're working with those kids who fell behind, especially with distance learning. We have former teachers



Nancy Sherman said her main goal as a tutor is to get kids excited to learn. Photo by David Pierini

who still want to give back. In a lot of cases we have tutors who are kind of on the fence about education (as a career) and this gives them a total immersion kind of experience that really helps them decide."

In Minnesota, fewer than a third of the students are reading and doing math at

Continued on page 23

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As V3 constructs a sports center, it introduces youth to the building trades

By David Pierini, Editor

Ni’Kiyah Cotton, 16, had little chance to plan out her summer. Her mother had already signed her up for a crash-course in the construction business.

V3 Sports, which is building a North Minneapolis complex that will feature two swimming pools, wanted to expose individuals ages 16-22 with a paying program that would expose them to the many professions involved in the construction of the sports center.

Eight were selected for V3’s Discovery Project and met with architects, furniture vendors, project managers, and

construction supervisors to get a taste of the variety of career pathways meeting at the corner of Lyndale and Plymouth avenues.

Much to Ni’Kiyah’s discovery, she would like to pursue a job in construction after high school.

“This is not building Legos. You’re building real buildings, you’re building really public spaces for people to be in,” she said. “I want to be part of this. I have to change my plans a bit.”

Erika Binger, a Twin Cities philanthropist, triathlete and youth worker, founded V3 Sports as a way to expose Northside kids to running, cycling and swimming. In creating a sports center, which will include an Olympic-size swimming pool and a training pool, Binger also saw the potential in the center providing jobs to the neighborhood.

If Ni’Kiyah is an indicator, the Discovery Project could change a few life trajectories. Many of the companies involved in the construction of the sports center, including LSE Architects, TRI-Construction and RJM Construction are giving the project participants a front-row seat to every aspect of a major construction project.

But the Discovery Project covered



Ni’Kiyah Cotton’s summer just may turn into a construction career. Photo by David Pierini

more than nuts and bolts.

Program leaders helped participants figure goals, skills and interests. They not only learned the building trades, but spent time learning health and wellness,

including yoga, talking to a therapist and a personal training session, to understand the importance of taking care of the mind

Continued on page 23

From braiding to business rules, natural hair school gets aspiring stylists ready for salons

By Alanee Wright, North News Intern and David Pierini, Editor

Mi’Angel Williams was working almond oil into a customer’s hair when her fingers encountered stubborn tangles.

Her instructor identified the problem immediately. Williams forgot to heed the advice of detangling hair in small sections.

“Approach the hair with grace,” Afolakemi Lawani told her student. “Everything for me is about grace. We are all here because of grace.”

Here is the Natural Hair Care Institute in a studio on Bryant Avenue in Uptown and Williams is among four Northside women who are students in the school’s first class. The school opened in August and Lawani is the president and instructor of NHCI. Her mission is to close an educational gap in natural hair care with specialized training that include chemical-free treatments.

“If you go to cosmetology school, they teach you how to put chemicals and alter the state of natural hair,” Lawani said. “We will teach you everything on how to keep the integrity of natural hair without any chemicals.”

“The natural hair community is suffering. There are not enough people to do natural hair and there’s not enough education in that field.”

Williams understood what she was getting into. Her mother, who opened a salon, went to school with Lawani and wanted to learn what they had learned as they developed their expertise.

Students get supervised, hands-on training in natural hair styling and hair braiding during the 10-week program. Classes are four, eight-hour days each week.

The course work provides fundamental knowledge in scalp care,



Afolakemi Lawani, center, answers a question from Elle Mack while they both observe Mi’Angel Williams with a client. Photo by David Pierini

shampooing, conditioning, styling, hair structure and types, and how to address chemical damage and hair disorders. Students also learn braiding with extensions, cutting on extensions, extension removal and safety and infection control protocols.

They also learn salon design and how to manage the business side of the profession. Graduates receive a certificate and Lawani helps them secure licensing, clients and jobs.

Elle Mack, a fellow Northsider who stood by watching Williams do a wash, cut and blowout on a customer, said NHCI exceeded her expectations.

“I like it a lot,” Mack said. “I thought we’d touch base on two or three things but we are learning all styles and all types of hair. A natural hair stylist knows all hair.”



A practice head sits on desk while students work with a real client. Photo by David Pierini

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Mural Festival makes its debut in North Minneapolis

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter and Charlie Quick, North News Intern

The inaugural North Minneapolis Mural Festival brought together several Twin Cities artists to the vacant lot at Logan and Plymouth avenues where they painted 10 murals on plywood boards.

The July 29 event aimed to celebrate art's healing power while promoting community safety and positive interactions within the neighborhood. Upon the completion of the murals, Kimmons will store them in a storage unit until the opportunity to display them arises. She hopes there are possibilities to auction off the artwork, or collaborate with local businesses to display the murals on their properties.

"We are in the heart of Minneapolis right now and we need a whole lotta healing. We are hoping that we will spread love and increase the peace and the unity amongst ourselves."

Loretta Day, Northside Artist

Local artist Melody Strong and Queen Kimmons of the grassroots organization One Family One Community want to change the 'norm' of the neighborhood.

"I want the Northside to know that we can have an event without violence, we can live in a community without the gunfights," Kimmons said. "We can do that and this is shown right here, We just need more of it. We need more of this kind of fun."

The festival's origins trace back to an encounter between Kimmons and Strong at North Market last year. Kimmons was struck by a mural that Strong painted 12 years ago. It read "Bury the guns, not the youth," and it resonated with Kimmons.

"We're still facing the same problems," Kimmons said. "We can change community norms, and we're doing it block by block."

Plymouth Avenue North is a street

Continued on page 23



Christopher Harrison, left and Elissa Cedarleaf Dahl paint on a plywood mural. Photo by Aketzally Murillo Alvarado



The Unlimited and Next Level Drill (UNL) and marched down Plymouth to make some noise and let local residents know they are welcome to attend the event. Photo by Azhae'la Hanson



Community members gather around an interactive mural to paint what they see in their future. Photo by Aketzally Murillo Alvarado



Kprecia Adams. Photo by Aaron Rice/Target

Northside artist makes Target debut with designs celebrating joy and diversity

By Azhae'la Hanson, Reporter

Products in the home decor section in Target stores across the country are printed and embroidered with the work of North Minneapolis digital artist Kprecia Ambers. Ambers is an artist and owner of KP Inspires, creating digital art that celebrates diversity, confidence and joy.

Ambers took her first steps into artistic expression at a young age. Always drawn to colors, patterns and the beauty of diverse forms, her innate creative inclination was nurtured by her parents. From childhood sketches to teenage experiments with fashion and photography, Ambers began to recognize the depth of her passion.

"I believe that artists have their talent that has been with them since they were

born, but it took a while for me to find what my style was," Ambers said.

While originally pursuing web design in college, a twist of fate introduced her to the world of graphic design through a mandatory course. This was the spark that ignited her creative flame and led her down a path of exploration. But it wasn't until graduating college that Ambers began to put a pen to her creative ideas.

The idea of creating art that resonated within homes and spaces was fueled by Ambers' desire to counterbalance the negativity in the world.

As a self proclaimed "home body," Ambers was always drawn to making sure her home was well decorated. However,

she always struggled with finding decor that made her feel represented, confident, and at peace.

She began creating designs for pillows for her online shop, but when the pandemic and unrest hit Minneapolis, she felt a calling to produce designs not just for herself, but for others.

"I want people to feel and connect with the image," Ambers said. "I want to evoke those feelings of sunlight, joy, hope and confidence. I want my work to exist as a reminder to keep going. We all go through things but there's a lot of power

Continued on page 23

JUXTA celebrates

Juxtapositions Arts hosted a grand opening of its new headquarters on July 28 with a first-ever Sneakerball. Guests sported their freshest kicks and toured the building that was completed in late Spring. An inaugural exhibition showcased Alumni work, a silent auction, and a debut opening of JUXTA's new archive space were all part of the Sneakerball.

Photos by Azhae'la Hanson



Right: JUXTA's new archive space will feature multimedia from the history of North Minneapolis. Pictured here are materials from an old Regional Rap Wars on the Northside.



Guests made friendly conversation near temporary art installations in the lobby.

An exercise in celebration

A dance exercise class livened the space near the entry way of North Market, which hosted a five-year anniversary event on Saturday. North Market is a full-service grocery store, wellness center and community gathering space opened by Pillsbury United Communities. The non-profit PUC opened the store in the Camden neighborhood in December of 2017 in response to a lack of grocery stores in Minneapolis.

Photo by David Pierini




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Red for Ricky

Friends and family gathered at North Mississippi Regional Park in North Minneapolis on the evening of Aug. 1 to remember Ricky Cobb II, a Black man who was killed by a Minnesota State trooper earlier that day during a routine traffic stop.

State police said troopers stopped the 33-year-old Spring Lake Park man on I-94 near Dowling Avenue for driving without tail lights. Troopers learned he was wanted on a warrant in Ramsey County and proceeded to detain him. He refused to exit, according to a state police statement, and drove off. Moments later, a trooper fired at Cobb but the statement did not say what led to the shooting.

Among those left behind are five children and his twin brother, Rashad, pictured as mourners got ready to release red and white balloons. Red was Ricky Cobb's favorite color.

Photo by David Pierini



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Youth Club: St. Olaf Lutheran Church, 2901 Emerson Ave. N. grades 6-12, Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Transportation available. To enroll, call 612-529-7726

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.

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 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 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.

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

NOTICES

NEWS

Environmental Justice Groups Continued from page 5

to biodegradable packaging) and convert it into fertilizer, compost soil and biogas fuel.

An organic processing center has the potential to reduce the waste stream that goes into the incinerator by a third.

The county must also give municipalities time to find alternative disposal and ramp up programs for reducing trash and recycling. Residents, businesses and manufacturers need to double-down on recycling efforts and make the reuse of recovered materials financially viable.

Only then, could the sun set on the HERC.

County board Chair Irene Fernando, who represents North Minneapolis, said commissioners are not avoiding the discussions around the HERC's fate. They are awaiting details on how to proceed with a plan.

"So that's what's difficult," Fernando said after the meeting. "It's a bit more multi-faceted (than just closure). From a governance standpoint, we have obligations to meet. I can certainly appreciate that government is not moving at the speed that residents expect or desire."

Tutor Shortage Continued from page 14

grade level, according to Ampact. Much of this was exacerbated when COVID shut down schools.

Statewide, schools are short about 1,700 tutors.

Ampact trains those interested in tutoring and pays a small stipend every two weeks. Ampact kicks in an extra \$4,600 toward tuition or student loans.

Sherman, who lives in North Minneapolis, came to Ampact with a fairly unique experience.

She tutored kids in an after-school program at Hospitality House, but developed a special sticktoitiveness helping a son with dyslexia learn to read. Now grown, he is a voracious reader, Sherman said.

Now, the bubbly energy of pre-kindergarten students feeds Sherman's perseverance. Sometimes, they pause to touch the lines and wrinkles on her hands. When she has made that connection, Sherman knows she can get them to have fun learning.

"If people are unhappy with their neighbor or with the state of how things

are, get up, walk out the door and go volunteer," she said. "People complain all the time, but if you're doing something you feel like, 'OK, I can change.' You realize things can change because you see it every day."

Discovery Project Continued from page 16

and body to meet the physical demands of the job.

They spent four weeks reporting on site with the different companies before delving into personal projects where each person identifies a community need and present projects that could be built.

"We talk about not what I want to be when I grow as much as who I am? How does this impact the type of life I want to have?" said Tamira McLuahglin, who oversees Project Discovery. "It's not just a matter of telling people this is out there. You have to show them and give them opportunities to see if it's something they like."

Tatiana Murphy, project manager for RJM Construction, said she and TRI-Constructions Calvin Littlejohn have been trying to find ways to introduce young people to the field.

"We have an aging workforce," she said. "There's not a lot of young people coming in, not a lot of females coming in. It's exciting to get this population interested in construction."

"Like Ni'Kiya said she would never have thought about going into construction, but there she learns there's like 20 different jobs, plus there are all the different trades you can be a part of. The opportunities are endless."

Mural Festival Continued from page 18

with a history of its fair share of both community triumphs and tragedies. Kimmons believes the street was a perfect spot for the event.

"Plymouth is one of the main veins in North Minneapolis," said longtime Northside artist Esther Osiyande. She painted alongside another longtime Northside artist, Loretta Day, who spoke about how the streets haven't changed since their kids were little. It's one of the many reasons the two pursue art.

"We got our warriors over here who believe in North Minneapolis and I'm one of them," Osiyande said, paintbrush in hand.

Strong says art is a form of resistance, an expression of love, and a way both artists and viewers can cope with the challenges they face in their communities.

Two girls approached a muralist as she painted, the three discussed what they want to be when they grow up. One wants to be a police officer, the other an artist, they told the muralist that they just want to be able to help their community. The muralist gave them a spray paint to add their marks next to a word that read "peace".

For Strong, art holds a personal significance as a coping and healing tool. As an art teacher at Franklin Middle School, she constantly witnesses the effects of violence on young lives, prompting her to address issues like racial inequality and violence in marginalized communities through her art and with her students.

Strong shared that she keeps a shrine in her former student's painting palette in her classroom bearing the name "D. Hill," for Deshaun Hill, who she taught for three years and was lost to gun violence in 2022.

Northside Artist Continued from page 19

and resilience."

Thue began her journey into commissioned work. This set the stage for her leap into the world of art with a purpose – to celebrate people, to inspire and create a haven of positivity within the realm of home decor. She wanted her creations to be a breath of fresh air and a reminder that imperfections are part of the human experience. Joy and resilience can thrive even amidst challenges.

As part of its Artist Spotlight, Target reached out to Ambers in January with an offer to have her vibrant designs translated onto various products that resonate with positivity. Her designs can be found in the "Room Essentials" aisle in stores printed on pillows, shower curtains, mugs and more.

"I was super excited, like I was just being reunited back with my original dream," Ambers said.

Ambers says the collaboration with Target is just the beginning of what she envisions as her legacy. It's a stepping stone towards her ultimate goal – to spread her art across the world, touching lives, and inspiring others to fearlessly pursue their dreams.

Looking beyond the Target partnership, Ambers is committed to self-care into her creations.

"As a part of my legacy I want to be

known for celebrating and amplifying Black stories, being supportive, and giving love," Ambers said.

She is currently working on a collection for her own store that stems from the reflections of the tumultuous year 2020. As an advocate for healing, Ambers envisions her artwork making its mark on products like yoga mats, creating tangible reminders of the importance of nurturing one's well-being.



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