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Inside our “O”

One of the state’s two historic political primary victories took place in North!

Fue Lee defeated ten-term Northside politician Joe Mullery in the August 9 Minnesota House District 59A DFL primary. Fue Lee and Ilhan Omar of South Minneapolis, who both unseated longstanding Democratic incumbents, are immigrants who spent parts of their childhood in refugee camps. “We dare great things because they are hard. That’s what makes us Americans. That’s the spirit of fighting that my family has not endorsed any candidates for the November 2016 elections.

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Letter to the Editor

Welcome to the back to school issue of North News! In just a few short days our students will be returning to school, and North News will be joining them as we co-teach our first elective class at North High. We (and our sponsors — see page 20) wish everyone a wonderful start to their school year!

The beginning of school also means that this is the third and final newspaper that our summer interns (pictured on page 20) have helped produce. Keep an eye out for writing and reporting done by them in this issue and beyond. We know they will continue to create and contribute great things to this community!

Keeping with the school spirit, our North Now story is education-related this month. As many of you know, Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) test results were released by the Minnesota Department of Education in late July. In taking a peek at the report cards for our Northside schools, I noticed that the opt out numbers amongst high school students had skyrocketed this year. A little digging and a lot of talking with MPS officials, teachers, parents, and students led to the story on page 8, which investigates why these numbers have dropped so dramatically.

In other news, it has been an exciting month on the Northside as a number of nationally newsworthy events have taken place. Green Party presidential nominee Jill Stein participated in a forum on Black America hosted by Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (page 4), and Jovonta Patton, a gospel singer raised on the Northside, landed the number one spot on the Billboard gospel charts (page 16).

On a more local, but equally positive level, people had a lot to celebrate this month. Though our Northside streets often get a bad rap, our photo essay on page 6 is proof that happy events transpire too — block parties, gatherings, concerts, and carnivals. One of these photos, from Redeemer Lutheran Church and Harrison Neighborhood Association’s Annual Block Party, is our cover photo for this issue. Though it is not representative of the most breaking or exciting news on the Northside, we believe it is representative of something some often forget — there is so much good that happens here. People take to the streets to support each other, to eat together, to listen to music together, and to BE together on beautiful summer nights. Those images of strong Northside community are published much less often than the ones featuring police cars, crime scene tape, and mourning mothers. North News seeks to represent both truths, and this month, we seek to voting in North Minneapolis.

North News welcomes letters to the editor as long as they are relevant to life in North Minneapolis. Unsigned letters will not be run. Send to okeefek@puc-mn.org.

Alex Pennie, chair of the Northside Greenway Council
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Food by Soul 2 Go, Gastrotruck, Xstream Cuisine, Breaking Bread Cafe, Sammy’s Avenue Eatery and many more
Check out the annual Battle of the Badges: Minneapolis Fire and Police Department BBQ cook off at North Commons Park 11-4, the first annual Shrimp, Crab, and Crawfish Boil at 4th Street Saloon 12-9, and the first ever Boom Island Beer Garden Stage sponsored by Broadway Liquor Outlet at the new Freedom Square (across from the Capri Theater) 12-9.
By Kenzie O’Keefe | Editor

Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein was in North Minneapolis on August 16 – speaking at a community forum on Black America at the Capri Theater, hosted by MN Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC). The predominantly black audience numbered over 200.

Stein is the second presidential candidate to visit North Minneapolis during this election cycle. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders visited Patrick Henry High School in February, also for a NOC event. The events were not endorsements of either candidate, though NOC says it may choose to endorse local candidates in the future.

During a Q&A session moderated by NOC Executive Director Anthony Newby and featuring questions from panelists on stage and those collected on comment cards, Stein discussed reparations, racial inequity, independent political power, and her plans for political action which she says prioritize “people, planet, and peace over profit.”

“I think I’m the only presidential candidate out there that is advocating for reparations,” she told a cheering crowd, which was vocally supportive of her throughout her nearly two hours on stage.

She spoke of a need for community-controlled police reform, education reform (“we need to fund our schools like they matter”), and economic and environmental justice, and she expressed a desire to forgive student debt and legalize marijuana if she were to win the presidential race. She spoke of a need for a $15 minimum wage set at the federal level, an issue NOC has been fighting to get on the Minneapolis ballot this November.

“Dr. Stein articulated a vision for reparations and independent political power that clearly resonated with the room,” said NOC executive director Anthony Newby in a press release after the event. “The question is, can the Green Party or other independent structures convert this type of energy into actual political power and structural influence?”

The event opened and closed with artistic performances by community members, including musician Jayanthi Kyle, spoken word artist Harun Abukar, and the S.A.G.MNIC Dance and Drill Team. NOC staff spoke on stage throughout the night.

Video of the full event can be viewed at http://www.mnnoc.org/livestream_stein

Wirth Co-op inches closer to an opening date

By Mark Peterson | Contributor

Wirth Cooperative Grocery (WCG) recently received a few financial boosts that bring it several steps closer to getting off the ground.

On August 5, the City Council voted to authorize a $75,000 forgivable loan to Wirth Cooperative Grocery for construction and start-up costs for its store to be located at 1835 Penn Ave. N. The loan, at 3% interest, will be forgiven if the coop hires up to 11 employees and pays a city-defined “living wage.”

The store will occupy 4000 square feet of the street-level corner space in the new Commons on Penn building, 3200 square feet of which will be for retail sales. Local developer Building Blocks completed the 45-unit mixed-use apartment building last year.

WCG Board Secretary Alex Hubbell said, “The co-op has not set a specific date, but is on track to open later this year. Funding is nearing a close, but we don’t want to make an announcement until we have all the details in place, especially given our history of missing opening dates.”

He also noted that WCG has had a $75,000 grant application approved by the McKnight Foundation, and on August 16 the Hennepin County Boards Public Works, Energy and Environment committee approved a Not-To-Exceed grant of $75,000 to WCG.

The co-op is in the closing stage of hiring a general manager, and has signed a lease with Building Blocks. Co-op shareholder membership is currently around 700.

Asked for his thoughts for the coop’s future, Hubbell said, “We are closing on our funding, we are getting new commitments every week, and are optimistic about opening in the very near future. We need people to become members, and our members to bring in new members, and for the community to have a stake in the co-op.”

Fue Lee ousts longtime Northside politician

By Kenzie O’Keefe | Editor

Ten-term Northside politician Joe Mullery was defeated by Fue Lee in the August 9 Minnesota House District 59A DFL primary. Lee took 55.5% of the votes. Lee who was raised on the Northside and currently lives in Lind-Bohanon, spent part of his childhood in a refugee camp in Thailand. He will run against Republican Jessica Newville in November.

After his victory, Lee took to Facebook to thank his supporters. “We cannot be complacent and play the same old politics. We cannot observe at the sidelines and hope that someone else will fight for us or speak for us, and be integral to our values. Democracy is not a spectator sport. You must get rough and tumble with the hardest of them all, yet you must not forget to help the weakest and most vulnerable of them all,” he said.

The US House and MN Senate primary races were won by the incumbents in a landslide. In the District 5 DFL House race, Keith Ellison defeated Gregg Vernon and Lee Bauer with 91.7% of the votes. Champion will run against Republican Jennifer Carnahan and Ellison will run against Republican Frank Drake in November. Data is from the Star Tribune. See North News’ September 29 issue for your guide to candidates and initiatives on Northside ballots.
New McKinley coffee shop takes eco-friendly to the extreme

By Amaya Pettis | High School Intern

You will not find any paper cups at Serendripity Spot, the new coffee shop slated to open in the McKinley neighborhood during the week of September 12.

The McKinley Community will be leasing a space at 3300 Lyndale Ave. N to the shop, which is a woman-owned social enterprise. Kelley Skumautz, the owner and sole funder, hopes it will be “the heart of conversation, coffee, and the encouragement for people to share their ideas with one another and form plans for neighborhood activities and improvements.”

The shop aims to give people better and easier access to healthy foods and in-depth community engagement. It plans to be almost entirely waste-free and is committed to advocating for a consumer culture where nothing has to be thrown away as landfill waste, recycling, or litter.

The shop makes drinking to-go more eco-friendly by asking customers to bring their own reusable travel mug. For those that do not, the shop offers a small selection of tumblers for sale at affordable prices.

Light bites such as baked goods, salads, sandwiches, waffles, and veggie plates will also be served at Serendripity Spot. They say all of their ingredients will be “whole, healthy, high-quality, and [not] from distributors, so customers are getting more for what they pay for.” All the produce used will come from McKinley Community’s Urban Farm, strong side terra farma, along with ingredients from local food makers and co-ops.

“Serendripity Spot hopes to inspire and support community members in making sustainable shifts in how they shop, live, and work,” says Skumautz. For updates and more information about Serendripity Spot, like them on Facebook or sign up for their monthly newsletter at serendripityspot.com.

Neighbors gathered at Serendripity Spot for a preview of the shop on National Night Out.

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Out and about: photos from a Northside summer

The 11th annual FLOW Northside Arts Crawl took place on July 28-30. Artists from Wild Seed, along with Juxtaposition Arts’ Tactical Urbanism team paraded down West Broadway with art and puppets that celebrated African American labor and honored recently passed ancestors (above). The pavement at the Lincoln Park School Playground was painted in an effort led and organized by artist Melodee Strong, with assistance from Sarah Sampedro (below, middle). The opening of Freedom Square, the temporary plaza on West Broadway, drew a crowd of Northside neighbors (below, bottom). Photos by Kenzie O’Keefe and Mark Peterson

US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro visited the Northside during National Night Out on August 2. He joined Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges, MPS Superintendent Ed Graff, Congressman Keith Ellison (below right), County Commissioner Linda Higgins, and other local leaders at Pillsbury United Community’s Oak Park Center to raise awareness for lead safety. “Thank you Minneapolis for the great work you all are doing. We often talk about communities that got it, and you guys are one of them,” Castro told the crowd. Photos by Kenzie O’Keefe

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ON THE COVER: Redeemer Lutheran Church and Harrison Neighborhood Association held their 14th Annual Block Party on August 17 (photos above and right). The 700-800 attendees of the event enjoyed live music, a free meal that included pizza from the neighborhood outdoor bread oven, and a variety of activities for kids. Photos by Kenzie O’Keefe and courtesy of Redeemer Lutheran Church.

The 26th annual Festival for Fathers – a community sponsored event that seeks to strengthen the positive role and perception of men in their families and communities – was held at North Commons Park on August 13. Hundreds of people attended the celebration, enjoying food and activities, including free haircuts (above left). The main stage presented acts throughout the event, including dancers from the Hollywood Studio of Dance (left). Photos by Mark Peterson.

North High graduates David Levy ’52, Malin Greenberg ’53, and David Fishbaine ’74 reconnect at a party at Odell Wilson’s Northside home. See story on page 15. Photo by Mark Peterson.

The Camden Farmers Market takes place weekly July-early October in the parking lot in front of Goddess of Glass at 4400 Osseo Road. “The market managers make sure there is always something new, and they try their hardest to make us all successful here.” said vendor Megan Bignell (above, left). Photos by Amaya Pettis.
Opting out.

The number of high school students taking the MCAs reached a low point this year. Our own Northside school – Patrick Henry High School – had the second highest opt out percentages in the state.

North News investigates why. By Kenzie O’Keefe

During the 2014-2015 school year, 203 tenth graders at Patrick Henry High School (PHHS) took the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) reading test. This year, just 25 students (enrolled Oct. 1) took the test.

This year, just 25 Patrick Henry students took the reading test.

This steep drop in test takers affects far more than the individual students who choose to opt out – it can throw the entire data set for a school into question. For example, data for PHHS tells us that 58.8% of eleventh graders displayed proficiency in math this year. That 58.8% reflects the proficiency of just ten students, due to the fact that 251 of 268 potential test-takers (enrolled Oct. 1) opted out.

Patrick Henry is not alone. Four of the seven big Minneapolis public high schools, including PHHS, have damaged data this year due to opt outs, says Eric Moore, the Executive Director of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability at Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). According to the Star Tribune, just 19 eleventh graders opted out of the math MCA in 2013. This year, 2,227 opted out statewide.

A closer look at the data for the four other Northside high schools tells a similar story. At North High, just 28% of tenth graders took the reading test this year. Last year, nearly 60% of students took the test. At Minneapolis College Prep, the number of students taking the reading test has dropped from 34 in 2014 to just 14 this year. Plymouth Christian Youth Center Arts and Technology High School (PYC) was the only high school that saw an increase in the number of students taking the test. Executive Director Anne Long called the increase from 11 to 20 students taking the reading test a “coincidence.”

WHY IT’S HAPPENING

The opt-out movement appears to be student-led. Shaadia Munye, who is both a student at Patrick Henry and the Minneapolis School Board’s Student Representative, says that the increase in opt out numbers is “simply because more students know it’s an option.” She says that her school’s student council group has been “sheding some light on the MCA testing and reminding students that those aren’t measurements of our intelligence or future, they are just a bunch of numbers that turn students into statistics and compare them.”

Her skeptical attitude towards the test’s importance were echoed even louder by Kevin Byrne, Executive Director and Founder of the Minnesota Internship Center (MNIC). “The MCA has no benefit for students, and they know it,” he said.

Pillsbury United Communities Office of Public Charter Schools agrees with Byrne. They explained, “High school students have no buy-in to perform well on this assessment. The MCA Assessment does not play a factor in determining graduation, credit attainment, post-secondary enrollment, or career readiness.”

PHHS Principal Yusuf Abdullah explained that school leaders at his school “support our families’ rights to make educational decisions for their children.” He says that students and families led the “opt-out movement,” and that, “We gave students the freedom and space to express their views and we did not attempt to change the minds of our families on this issue.”

Moore says opting out has become “a statewide trend.” MCA tests are no longer a graduation requirement for high school students, and Moore says that is perhaps to blame for the higher opt out numbers. “Parents and students aren’t seeing the value,” he said. He noted that the district is not seeing major opt outs for other standardized tests, like the ACT, which he says has a clearly defined value as a college readiness assessment.

Kimberly Caprini, who is currently running for a Northside seat on the MPS Board, falls into the category of parents who “are not seeing the value for their high school students.” Testing is really strenuous and stressful... I completely understand and agree with the decision to opt out of MCA testing. My daughter opted out. We had a long talk about it. It didn’t scare me because I feel like the education she’s getting is a good one. She’s a focused student that enjoys going to class,” she said.

SHOULD WE BE WORRIED?

Munye does not believe that higher opt out rates have a harmful effect on students. “It’s their choice and they have a right to make it,” she said. She acknowledged that high opt out rates might be harmful to a school’s reputation, but only if they are striving for a particular reputation. “They could be the school that wants to be seen as the ‘most intelligent’, ‘most developed’ or they could be the school that simply doesn’t care about titles and focuses on the well-being of students,” she said.

“It’s their choice and they have a right to make it.”

Moore has a different take. He explained that PHHS lost its Reward status from the state due to lack of participation in MCAs beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. “Patrick Henry has done phenomenal work over the past decade,” he said. “The award is a public acknowledgment by the state that the school is one of excellence, as defined by state criteria.” He says parents look to this type of information when making decisions about where to send their children to school.

Moore articulated another point of concern – students who tent to opt out tend to be the students who would perform best on the test. Their lack of participation is likely to skew the data and may make achievement gaps appear smaller than they actually are.

MPS Board Director Don Samuels echoed this concern at the August 16 MPS board meeting. “When our best endowed residents are opting out to impact the assessment of our least endowed students, something is totally misunderstood or just totally wrong,” he said.

MOVING FORWARD

Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius told the Star Tribune that, “The record number of students opting out of tests this year reflects the growing sentiment by teachers, parents and students that one single test is not an effective measure of student knowledge. Even though the new Every Student Succeeds Act requires that we continue testing, I will be working with teachers and parents on their appropriate place in our new accountability system.”

Moore says that MPS will take a look at their communications efforts to ensure that parents “fully understand the value of taking the MCA.”

North News reached out to members of the MPS School Board asking if they planned to try and attract students back to MCA testing or if they would develop new mechanisms of measuring proficiency of state standards. They were unable to respond by press time.

MCA data can be viewed on the Minnesota Report Card at http://rc.education.state.mn.us.
How should we be measuring achievement at the high school level?

Although I don’t think standardized testing is a good way of measuring students’ achievement, I don’t know any other way to measure it. Maybe we could just stop measuring and testing students and help them build real world skills and have life be the real test.

**Shaadia Munye, MPS Board Student Representative**

We should be collectively talking to kids about how they want to be tested and come up with a format that speaks to what they’ve talked about. We don’t engage our youth the way we need to. Let’s talk to them about what they want. I think we need to start now. One of my goals as District 2 School Board Director for this area is to do engagement in that way, to literally meet students where they are.

**Kimberly Caprini, parent running for District 2 School Board seat**

I have taken and continue to take the MCAs starting from elementary school. I think it’s important to take standardized tests because it helps everyone know where a specific school is at in their academics. Some schools don’t really teach you much, so it’s good to see the overall class average in order to improve. Also, the MCA helps everyone know whether it’s the school as a whole that’s struggling or if it’s the student that’s struggling. While I think that the MCA is a necessary standardized test, it is not the best measure overall for student achievement because I don’t think a test can really measure how successful someone can be.

**Mohamad Jama, Al-Amal School**

The MCAs are not an effective learning measure for the contract alternative schools and they are not our primary measure for accountability. What we look at is the percentage of eligible seniors who graduate each year. In the last few years we’ve seen an increase from 60% to 70%, and this year we saw 83% of our eligible seniors graduate. We see these numbers as a measure of students coming to school, taking their classes, doing their class work, and gaining their proficiencies in those classes enough to pass the class.

**Anne Long, Executive Director, Plymouth Christian Youth Center**

Although I don’t think standardized testing is a good way of measuring students’ achievement, I don’t know any other way to measure it. Maybe we could just stop measuring and testing students and help them build real world skills and have life be the real test.

**Shaadia Munye, MPS Board Student Representative**

I’ve always been told the MCA was mandatory. I never really questioned it until I got to high school. I don’t think the MCA tests do a good job on measuring where I am academically. I’ve always gotten good grades but I remember struggling with the MCA tests because I felt like I was guesstimating, and as an advanced student they made me feel stupid. I’m also not a great test taker due to my anxiety, so that feeds into my ability to do my best. …I don’t really have an exact alternative plan in place to taking the MCA …But I think if we looked at the root of some of the problems and invested more time into students and how they learn, they could actually learn better, than trying to memorize facts.

**Margaret Campbell, Patrick Henry HS**

You want to look at multiple data points. I think a test score is one measure of how well a student is doing in school. You also want to look at whether or not they are participating in extracurricular activities and feeling connected to a caring adult. Are they in a school environment where they can enjoy learning? Grades are also a good indication of how well a student is engaged, if they’ve received the content, and are able to demonstrate what they know. Attendance is another one.

**Eric Moore, Executive Director of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability at MPS**

Yes, I do take the MCA, and I’ve taken it since fourth or fifth grade. I don’t like the MCA because they’re unnecessary. It’s just another standardized test! Instead of making students take the MCA, teachers should just look through our test scores and give us normal tests instead of standardized tests.

**Bre’Onna Campbell, Southwest HS**

[Another way we measure student achievement is by] scores on the NWEA tests that measure growth, by credit accumulation and by assignments. It is entirely fair that we provide some measure. But when I started MNIC test scores were not the criterion for measuring the school’s success. That has come from business interests that are promoting “high-end” charter schools that are similar to private schools.

**Kevin Byrne, Executive Director/Founder, MNIC Charter School**

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**Kevin Byrne, Executive Director/Founder, MNIC Charter School**
Study shows higher rates of cancer mortality near Lowry Bridge

By Alex Schlee for the Northeaster; Additional reporting by Kenzie O’Keefe

The scent of burning tar often wafts in the breeze across the Mississippi River near the Lowry Avenue Bridge. While the smell and complaints about it are nothing new, findings from a recent study funded and coordinated by the Bottineau Neighborhood Association (BNA) indicate a correlation between the area near the GAF Shingle Plant, located near the bridge at 50 Lowry Ave. N., and rates of deaths from cancer and asthma in the surrounding neighborhoods.

It’s terrible that we have to keep having studies that statistically show how much North Minneapolis is suffering due to environmental impacts... these cancer rates have to be accounted for.

– Janiece Watts
Environmental Justice Organizer, NOC

The BNA says they have been fielding complaints surrounding the plant for a long time, according to Association staffer Nancy Przymus.

“This is the kind of smoking gun we’ve been looking for,” she said in an interview shortly before the results of their tests were presented to the public at a press conference near the bridge on July 25.

The study’s census data was provided largely by the Minnesota Department of Health vital statistics. Death rates from cancers related to air pollution were examined going back as far as 19 years. Deaths under the age of 18 were not counted for the study, and only human subject data was examined. Of the census data they were provided, they sifted out which individuals were located at addresses in the areas in question surrounding the plant, namely the Marshall Terrace, McKinley, Hawthorne, and Bottineau neighborhoods. They designated a one-mile zone centered on Lowry Avenue at the river. The statistics from these zones were compared against the Minnesota population at-large, and the total U.S. population. Data from Mound was used as a control group, as the town has a similar population to the subject area, but does not have the same level of industry.

The Hawthorne neighborhood’s data came in the worst, with 325.31 per 100,000 deaths being from cancer. This is compared to the control group in Mound, where 68.40 per 100,000 deaths were due to cancer. In Minnesota overall, the number is 161, and in the U.S. overall, it is 171. Bottineau is listed as having 249.66 cancer deaths, and Lowry has 212.15. Marshall Terrace and McKinley measured in at 172.17 and 177.33 respectively. The 100,000 unit was chosen as a standard scale for comparison to the national population. Meteorological data from 32 tests was used to determine prevailing winds surrounding the GAF plant, according to Przymus. The Hawthorne and Bottineau neighborhoods are downwind from the plant.

Legally speaking, the emissions documented by the plant are not high enough to constitute a long-term threat to human health. The emission of 95 tons of volatile organic compounds (VOC’s) is allowed per year, as per the shingle plant’s permit, and this is allegedly safe for the surrounding area. Their permit does not require them to list the exact composition of their output though.

“Then why the [expletive] do we have these cancers?” asked Przymus. “We have an inordinate number of cancer deaths that cannot be justified.”

In a statement released by GAF on July 25, the company denies BNA’s “suggestion” that the study supports the conclusion that GAF has “contributed to any negative health effects on its neighbors.” They say they are committed to the safety of their employees and the community surrounding the plant, and they say they have recently made “significant capital investments and changes to [our] operations in order to help minimize non-toxic odors in the area.” These investments include the “Borne heater,” a 71-foot tall tower approved by the City Council in August 2015 and installed soon after. It allows GAF to tune the incinerator to burn more efficiently.

It should be noted that the study’s researchers have not stated that GAF is the cause of the negative health effects reported.

The study’s research coordinator Tonye Sylvanus says that causation is difficult to definitively prove, but the correlation found between proximity to the plant and rates of cancer deaths gives them a 95% confidence in their research. The study is now moving on to phase two, which will be researching records of living cancer patients in the same areas.

In light of their findings, the BNA says they will be advocating the cancellation of GAF’s lease, as well as requesting a government-funded study to corroborate their own findings. Given the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s (MPCA) current case against the Northern Metals recycling plant, the BNA may also seek a collaborative effort in cleaning up the alleged fall-out from these two facilities. Mariam Slayhi, president of the BNA, said they will be providing their data to the MPCA.

“We would like the MPCA to be part of this discussion,” said Slayhi. “We don’t know what kind of chemicals are coming out of that plant, but the dead do talk, and they tell the truth.” At the time of publication for this story, Sarah Kilgriff, manager of land and air compliance section at the MPCA, who has worked closely on the MPCA’s case against Northern Metals, said that she had heard of the BNA study but had not reviewed it.

Janiece Watts, environmental justice organizer at Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC), says she thinks it is “terrible that we have to keep having studies that statistically show how much North Minneapolis is suffering due to environmental impacts.” She says she is grateful to BNA for putting the study together and that she looks forward to “elevating this information in the larger campaign around air quality and a future cleaner environment.”

Does the paint in your windows look like this?

Prevent childhood lead poisoning by calling the Minneapolis Health Department.

612-673-2584
Ask for Fardowza Omar

HUD grant money is available to both owner occupied & rental units. Up to $10k per dwelling to repair identified lead hazards.
A Northsider reflects on his time at the Democratic National Convention

By Alexis Pennie | Contributor

This election cycle I had the honor, privilege, and opportunity to bring a Northside voice to the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Philadelphia as a delegate for presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders. I was one of two Northside delegates; the other was my friend, Will Moore, a community organizer with TakeAction Minnesota.

The Sanders presidential campaign meant a lot to me. I appreciated how he brought issues directly impacting labor, African Americans and Indigenous people to the forefront of his campaign, such as the Trans Pacific Partnership, economic, social, racial, and environmental justice, community and police relations, and a 15 dollar an hour minimum wage.

His message to delegates prior to the nomination of Secretary Hillary Clinton at the DNC was to focus our attention to down ballot races during this election cycle and to ensure we elected candidates that would address growing inequality in America and hold elected officials accountable. His candidacy encouraged young political newcomers who are now flexing their organizational muscle.

With our recent Primary elections here in the State of Minnesota, I think we are starting to see a shift where you have more young people taking on party stalwarts and successfully winning those spots. Take for example the State House races in which both long-time serving DFL-ers Phyllis Kahn and the Northside’s Joe Mullery were ousted.

I think a good portion of the American population is sick and tired of being sick and tired and would like to see more authentic candidates in office and want to push both Parties to take on big banks, corporate lobbyists, and monied interests. Currently, American voters have four candidates to choose from in this upcoming presidential election, which include the two major Parties’ candidates, the Libertarian Party, and Green Party candidates. Mainstream media has played into this theme of the lesser of two evils and has encouraged people to vote against their fears, rather than vote for their values. This election year voters must evaluate how they want to make their voices heard, and decide what type of world they want to live in now and going forward into the future.

What I really took away from the convention is that we must not take this election for granted. After the Democratic National Convention, Sanders delegates took to the streets to make their voices heard. It signified that this is not the end; it’s the beginning of something much bigger. And, it’s clear it begins with each one of us working to make our communities stronger and stable for all, especially the most vulnerable.

At a minimum, we need to get out, vote, and make our voices heard.

Alexis Pennie is a Co-founder of the North Minneapolis Bicycle Advocacy Council (NMBAC) and Co-founder of Northside Greenway Now! For the last several years, he has worked with neighbors to advocate for a new Greenway and various other infrastructure projects in North Minneapolis. Additionally, he recently Co-founded Twin Cities Black Bike Week and partnered with Major Taylor Bicycle Club of Minnesota to help coordinate the 2015 National Brotherhood of Cyclists (NBC) conference and kick-off the first ever Slow Roll Twin Cities. In addition to fighting for better biking and walking investments in under-served communities, he works as a consultant for local and regional active-living and transportation equity initiatives. Alexis graduated from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, with a BA in Communications Studies and is proud to live and work in Minneapolis because of its diversity and unique environment.
MN SNAP offers affordable pet services in new North Minneapolis headquarters

By Daija Triplett | High School Intern

Minnesota Spay Neuter Assistance Program (MN SNAP) opened their first ever headquarters in North Minneapolis on Tuesday, August 16. The office is located at 2822 Washington Ave N.

MN SNAP is a nonprofit organization committed to ending the suffering and death of Minnesota cats and dogs due to overpopulation. MN SNAP provides high quality and affordable, accessible spay and neuter services to those in need. They also provide animal welfare education in the communities they serve. Their services are not free, but they are deeply subsidized for people with demonstrated financial need, “thanks to our generous donors,” said Executive Director Anna Kucera.

Other services provided are sterilization surgeries, vaccinations and microchips for owned pets (dogs, cats, and rabbits) as well as shelter and rescue pets. They also work with community cats, also known as feral cats.

The 12,000 square-foot office brings MN SNAP office staff, veterinarians, veterinary technicians and volunteers together in one place for the first time.

Kucera says that the reason MN SNAP decided to open up their headquarters in North Minneapolis is because it is the “right place to be.” It’s where many of their clients live and where Minneapolis Animal Care and Control is located. Additionally, a number of MN SNAP staff live on the Northside.

MN SNAP says that the Northside community can help support them by “spreading the word about how important spaying and neutering is for pets’ health and for reducing the number of unwanted animals in our community.” Those interested in volunteering should visit http://mn-snap.org/how-to-help/volunteer.

Kara, her daughter Jaelyn, and their cat Sofiebelle were among the first patients to visit the new MN SNAP headquarters on the day it opened – August 16. “We’re so happy to be doing surgery today!” said Executive Director Anna Kucera that day.

Public kayak-share program comes to the Mississippi

By Serena Bady | High School Intern

A new pilot program allowing park users to rent kayaks for use on the Mississippi has come to North Minneapolis. For $30, the public can pick up a kayak in North Mississippi Regional Park and return it at Boom Island Park up to four hours later.

The program, which is anticipated to launch in late August, will be the first paddle share program on the Mississippi River and the first paddle share program in a National Park. It is a collaborative effort between the National Park Services (NPS), Mississippi Park Connection (MPC), Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), and Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO). Their goal is to get more people to enjoy their national park and the river while expanding paddle share locations along the entire Mississippi River.

The paddle share stations are similar to bike share stations like Nice Ride Minnesota, but kayaks are booked online in advance.

Once the program has been launched users will go online to www.paddleshare.org to reserve kayaks for a specific date and time, review safety precautions and pay for their reservation.

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**NORTHnotices**

**RESOURCES**

8/26, 9/2, 9/9, 9/16, 9/30 – **The West Broadway Farmers Market** (718 West Broadway Ave. N) is open from 3-7pm every Friday. More information: www.westbroadway.org. To find other Farmers Markets in Minneapolis, use the City’s interactive locating tool: www.minneapolismn.gov/farmersmarkets. Most of the 40 markets in Minneapolis accept EBT.

8/29 – **Truth Telling and Community Healing Ceremony** presented by the TRP Cultures, Family, and Learning Workgroup. 4:30-5pm dinner, 5-8pm ceremony. UROC, 2001 Plymouth Ave. N. More information: Beulah Momanyi, moman014@umn.edu

9/1 – **Dinner, 5-8pm ceremony. UROC, 2001 Plymouth Ave N.** More information: Beulah Momanyi, moman014@umn.edu

9/10 – **4th annual Battle of the Badges at North Commons Park. Free food, live music, and activities. 11am-4pm.**

9/11 – Volunteers needed to help tend a demonstration native prairie at Ole Olson Park from 6-8pm, part of Minneapo’s Above the Falls Regional Park. Working with the city and relying on local volunteer power over time, we look forward to transforming the park into an oasis of habitat and respite — returning willows to the shoreline, wildflowers to the slopes and majestic oaks to the terraces. More and/or sign up now with Amy at akgiloge@fmr.org or 651-222-2193 x31.

9/15 – Volunteers needed to help tend a demonstration native prairie at Ole Olson Park from 6-8pm, part of Minneapo’s Above the Falls Regional Park. Working with the city and relying on local volunteer power over time, we look forward to transforming the park into an oasis of habitat and respite — returning willows to the shoreline, wildflowers to the slopes and majestic oaks to the terraces. More and/or sign up now with Amy at akgiloge@fmr.org or 651-222-2193 x31.

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**EVENTS + ENTERTAINMENT**

8/26 – Minneapolis Public Schools will celebrate the start of the 2016-17 school year by bringing together students, staff and members of the community at the 2016 State of the Schools event. 9:30-11am. Orchestra Hall (111 Nicollet Mall). School starts 8/29 for students in grades 1-12 and 8/31 for PreK-K. For more back-to-school information, visit mpls.k12.mn.us/b2s.

9/10 – **The Minneapolis Police Activities League (PAL) presents the 4th annual Battle of the Badges at North Commons Park. Free food, live music, and activities. 11am-4pm.**

9/14 – Volunteers needed to help tend a demonstration native prairie at Ole Olson Park from 6-8pm, part of Minneapo’s Above the Falls Regional Park. Working with the city and relying on local volunteer power over time, we look forward to transforming the park into an oasis of habitat and respite — returning willows to the shoreline, wildflowers to the slopes and majestic oaks to the terraces. More and/or sign up now with Amy at akgiloge@fmr.org or 651-222-2193 x31.

9/15 – Senior Surf Day, Webber Park Library, 1-4 p.m. Learn computer basics, how to navigate and search the Internet and how to access websites of interest to seniors. Get hands-on computer experience with help from representatives of the Senior LinkAge Line®. Register online or call the Library at 612-543-KNOW.

9/15 – **The Science of Art: Binoc Walk and Nature Nugget Box.** Webber Park Community Building (4400 Dupont Ave. N). 4-5:30 p.m. Observe things closer than you ever have before! Go on an artist naturalist-guided outdoor scavenger hunt and create a nature journaling kit within a small tin box so you can collect, draw and write about the things you see. Materials provided. Grades 1-6.

9/15 – **Submissions due for the Mississippi Minute Film Festival.** You are invited to create a vision that tugs at heartstrings or makes people laugh and that showcases this mighty river and the National Park that winds through the metropolitan area. Most importantly, the festival wants your film to inform, energize and inspire citizens to action – all in 60 seconds or less. More information: http://www.minneapolisriverfront.org/riverfront-initiatives/mississippi-minute-film-festival/

9/22-24 – **Signifyin’ and Testifyin’ Storytelling Festival at UROC (2001 Plymouth Ave. N). 7pm nightly. More information: Nothando Zulu, nzulu@blackstorytellers.com.**

9/1 – **First Thursday Films @ the Capri presents Middle of Nowhere.** Discussion to film screening. 7-9pm. $5 tickets. 2027 W Broadway Ave. More information: www.thecapritheater.org, 612-343-3390.

9/2-9/21 – **Homewood Studios (2400 Plymouth Ave. N) presents Juan Parker’s “But for the Love of God.”** Parker, North High School Graduate, has been making art as a way of exploring and understanding his life’s path since

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**CLASSIFIEDS & WORSHIP DIRECTORY**

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Urban Workhoms**

Have a passion for Community Development or Affordable Housing? Urban Workhoms is hiring in: Construction, Real Estate, Housing. More info: http://urbanworkhoms.mytribehr.com/careers or call 612-724-9002.

**APARTMENTS FOR RENT**

Lg Studio,1&2 BR, 650-850, Quiet Bldg Lots o closets, Ht Pd, Lndry room, Lg Studio, 1&2 BR, 650-850, Quiet Bldg.

**LAWN, YARD, & SNOW**

Lawn cleanups, gutters, snow removal, garden tilling & hauling. No Contracts. Dandy Services 612-250-1533

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REPAIR, REBUILD: Resurface, Steps, Sidewalks & Foundations. No job too small. Call Mark 612-432-0396

**COUNSELING**


**ST. OLAF LUTHERAN CHURCH**

2901 Emerson Ave. N. 612-529-7726 Sunday School/Adult Class 9:30 am Worship 11 am – Nursery provided. Wednesday Evening Youth Group 6:30 pm

**RIVER OF LIFE LUTHERAN**

22nd & Fremont Ave. N., 612-521-7655 We are an empowered multicultural community of people of God serving and sharing God’s love in the North community.

Worship 10 a.m. Sunday Hospitality and Welcome to all.

**REDEEMER LUTHERAN (ELCA)**

Logan & Glenwood 612-374-4139 Adult Bible Study 9 am Sunday Prayer & Praise 10-10:30 am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Sunday After School Program Tuesday 4:30-6:30 pm.

**ST. FRANCIS BAYLOR LUTHERAN**

612-432-0396

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**RATES**

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Please inquire for pricing if you’d like a different size than the ones listed.

To book an ad, email: okeefek@puc-mn.org or call 651-245-2647

Want to get North News on your doorstep each month?

Home delivery will return soon. If you want the paper at your door NOW, subscribe for $30/ year by emailing okeefek@puc-mn.org. Anyone can support the paper by donating at www.puc-mn.org/donate. Funds support newspaper operation and youth training program.
grade school. Significant events, including serious medical issues, have given Juan pause and insight into the meanings of life. His artwork, drawing and painting, are his way of continuing to ask questions, continuing to remain open to what life serves up each day. Opening reception 9/9 from 5-9pm. Gallery talk 9/13 at 7pm.

Satrads – Family Storytime. Webber Park Library, 11am. For children of all ages and their parent or caregiver. Talk, sing, read, write and play together in a format appropriate for young children. Share books, stories, rhymes, music and movement.

EDUCATION
Harrison Education Center has a new Principal, Nathan Hampton, and Assistant Principal, Joe Groves.

BE AWARE
CenterPoint Energy and Rhino Infrastructure and Minnesota Common Ground Alliance remind homeowners and professional contractors alike to call 811 before digging to eliminate the risk of striking underground utility lines.

Hammocks are welcome in Minneapolis Parks. There are a few limitations and guidelines. Hammocks may only be used during regular park; they must be temporary and not damage property, vegetation, or trees. They cannot restrict the free use of the parks or create hazards.

If you’re planning to have an outdoor fire, follow these Minneapolis laws. Fires are permitted 9am-10pm. Fires must be kept less than 3ft in diameter and 2ft high. Postpone a fire when Minneapolis is under an air pollution advisory. Sign up for air quality alerts at http://mn.enviroflash.info. Burn only untreated, unpainted, dry wood. Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris, because the smoke can be toxic. Fire must be at least 25 feet away from a structure or combustible material and in a fire ring or pit with edges more than six inches high. Have a hose or fire extinguisher present. Postpone the fire when the wind exceeds 10 mph. Fire must be constantly attended by someone 18 years or older and completely out before being abandoned. Any illegal burning can result in a $200 fine.

CenterPoint Energy would like to remind the public of important natural gas safety tips when there is severe weather. Following a severe storm, be alert for leaking gas. If you smell, hear or see a natural gas leak, leave the area immediately on foot and tell others to do the same. Do not drive into or near a gas leak or vapor cloud. Once safely away from the area, call the CenterPoint Energy emergency gas leak hot line at 1-800-296-9815 and 911. If the pipeline operator is not known, call 911. If natural gas is leaking, do not operate anything that might cause a spark including a flashlight or generator.

BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT
8/27 – “How to Create Your Own Company” at the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON), 1007 W Broadway Ave. Learn how to create your own community financial institute (bank) or join one that is already running. Hosted by Sovereign Financial investing, LLC.

9/1 - Northside Economic Opportunity Network’s (NEON) Business Incubator, 1007 W Broadway Ave, hosts “Connect and Unwind” business networking events every first Thursday of the month. 4:30-6pm. Get to know other entrepreneurs and incubator members over wine and refreshments. For a full list of NEON events: www.neon-nn.org/events.

8/31 – Join the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) at a public meeting from 6-7pm at MPRB Headquarters (2117 West River Road) to discuss the next steps in the Scherer Bros Site Parcel “D” development. Development of this site is intended as an activator for the future Hall’s Island Park and a way of connecting local businesses and organizations to the park and riverfront. The Scherer Bros Site is located directly north of the Plymouth Avenue Bridge along the Northeast Minneapolis Riverfront. Parcel “D” runs along the north and east side of the property.

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development is seeking applications for the Minnesota Emerging Entrepreneur Program. The program provides funding to local nonprofit corporations that will use these funds to make loans to Minnesota businesses majority-owned and operated by minorities, low-income persons, women, veterans, and/or persons with disabilities. Proposals must be received by DEED no later than 4pm on 9/30. More information: https://mn.gov/deed/about/contracts/open-rip.jsp

The City of Minneapolis (City) and Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) are seeking qualified and creative real estate developers to be a part of the rebirth of the Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) site. UHT is a 48-acre, former multi-modal shipping terminal property located on the west bank of the river between 33rd Avenue N. and about 40th Avenue North in Minneapolis, MN just a few miles from the city’s thriving downtown. UHT is the largest City-owned redevelopment site in Minneapolis. The property includes almost a mile of riverfront along the mighty Mississippi River, offers excellent freeway access, and does not appear to eliminate the risk of striking underground utility lines.

PeopleForBikes in conjunction with the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) has given a $10,000 community grant to the Loppet Foundation for use at Theodore Wirth Park Mountain Biking Event Trails. It will be used to add 3.5 miles of trail, a dual slalom course, a skills training area and a pump track to the existing facilities. This project will support existing youth programs and provide a more accessible venue for the local high school mountain bike league.

ACTION
Join Hennepin County’s new Zero Waste Challenge to learn how to reduce waste and get hands-on help. Hennepin County Environment and Energy is looking for 50 households to take a year-long look at the goods they buy and the waste they create to uncover opportunities and challenges that increase recycling and reduce waste. With the assistance of staff and trained volunteers, participating households will identify low-waste lifestyle changes they would like to make and track and report the amount of recycling and trash generated in their homes weekly. The results and lessons learned will be used to develop future waste reduction programs. The program starts 9/15/2016 and ends 9/15/2017. For their efforts, participating households will receive a $350 stipend. Complete the online application by 9/26 at www.hennepin.us/zerowastechallenge. More information: email carolyn.collopy@hennepin.us or call 612-596-0993.

The City of Minneapolis has developed an action plan (http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@ncr/documents/webcontent/wcm-p-183899.pdf) to comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Anyone from the public can weigh in on the plan through Aug. 27 at 612-673-3737 or ncr@minneapolismn.gov.

EMERGE Community Development is seeking landlords willing to give a second chance to their clients with criminal backgrounds. All are in some stage of being employed or gaining employment and are dedicated to turning their lives around. EMERGE will maintain a constant relationship with tenant and landlord while tenant is renting. EMERGE will also pay for client’s first month’s rent and security deposit. If interested, email or call Katie Stever at steverk@emerge-mn.org, 612-788-3775.

Research Subjects Wanted

The University of Minnesota is looking for African American cigarette smokers who are interested in quitting smoking.

This study requires 12 visits. Participants will receive up to $390.

For more information, call 612-626-5981.

NORTHNOTICES

ACADEMIC ANNOUNCEMENTS
GRADUATIONS
Northwest Technical College
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Candi Shreve, certificate
Nou Thao, AS

DEAN’S LISTS
Champlain College
Kayla Canniff
University of New Hampshire
Claire Galvin

CHANCELLOR’S AWARDS
University of Wisconsin - Stout
Mason Couillard
Dylan Darst
Emily Gawronski
Augustine Metzdorff
Nico Rogers
Hannah Vogel
Exploring the shared history of Jewish and African American community

By Mark Peterson | Contributor

It would have been easy to mistake a recent afternoon yard party in North Minneapolis for a North High School reunion, but hosts Odell and Cynthia Wilson, and one of their guests, Larry McKenzie, had more than that in mind. In 2013, McKenzie was hired as the boys’ basketball coach at North Community High School, whose enrollment and test scores were then at all-time lows. The 120-year-old institution sits in the center of historically Jewish and African-American neighborhoods, which have gone through enormous changes.

McKenzie felt that, coming to an inner-city school which had narrowly avoided closing, with a basketball team that had finished dead last in the conference, he needed to shake things up. One of the things he did was take a class called “Discovery of Self,” part of a curriculum that helps tap internal resources for focusing, innovation, creativity and self-awareness.

He then asked the class instructor, Jane Barrash, executive director of the Continuum Center, and a human development coach, to bring her methods directly to his players, which she has now done for the past three seasons. At first she spent two hours a week with the team, concentrating on “vision and focus”; she now works with them before every game. McKenzie does not think it coincidental that the Polars were the Class A state champs for 2016. He also pointed out that 75% of his players are on the A or B honor roll. He likes to quote Nelson Mandela on the subject: “Sport has the power to change the world...It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair.”

Last winter, some of the yard party’s attendees, current and former Northsiders, had an informal meeting. The goal was to get people inside and outside the community to help rebuild ties and create new relationships for both the school, its alumni, and North Minneapolis as a whole, and use Polar athletics as a “portal.”

The July 31 gathering at the Wilson’s, who have a son playing center on the varsity team, was the result of casting a wider net. Barrash and Odell Wilson had been on the team bus together for away games, and they began talking about a movement to revive interest of North High alumni attendance at sports events.

In the shared history of Minneapolis’ near Northside ethnic immigration, the Jews came first, then African-Americans. Many Eastern European Jews from Romania and Russia, fleeing poverty and pogroms, came to the twin cities in the 1880s and 90s. In 1924, Congress passed the Johnson Act, which closed off most immigration to the US, effectively ending the influx of Jewish immigrants to the Northside. But by then a thriving community had been established. Plymouth Avenue became a center for Jewish-owned businesses. The street was lined with shops, rooming houses, theaters and delicatessens and Jewish congregations built synagogues and schools nearby. Eventually the community that had first settled around Washington and Sixth Avenue (Now Olson Memorial Highway) had 40,000 residents. While most Jews around the turn of the last century were first-generation immigrants, virtually all African-Americans came to the Midwest from the South. After World War I, the declining need for labor for farming and the textile industry, and Jim Crow segregation, sent many African-Americans searching for a better life, beginning what would come to be called The Great Migration. During and after WWII, the numbers increased. Ultimately, 6 million moved to the urban Northeast, the Midwest and West between 1915 and 1970, and from 1950 to 1970, the African-American population in North Minneapolis grew 400%.

African-Americans had a small presence in North Minneapolis in the 1920s. Rents were cheap and the area did not have housing restrictions like other parts of the city. Most Northsides Jews were involved in small businesses, while most of their African-American neighbors worked for the railroads or in service jobs. The inherent inequalities between two minorities living side-by-side became a fact of daily life. As more Northside Jews took advantage of postwar economic prosperity and moved to newer homes in the suburbs, the neighborhood culture shifted. African-Americans saw little of that prosperity come their way, and as local businesses and civic institutions moved on, the area became poorer and more neglected.

Two disturbances on Plymouth Ave., in 1966 and 1967, resulted in widespread looting and arson. While the incidents revealed the discontent felt among the area’s residents, it also hastened the flight of Jews and others from their old neighborhood. Today, the African-American population in North Minneapolis is about 40,000, while Jews number less than 3000.

Marshall Tanick, a Minneapolis attorney who now lives in Golden Valley, and traces his family’s roots in the Willard-Hay neighborhood back a hundred years, talked about the rich Jewish community life in the 1950s and 1960s: “The business district on Plymouth stretched almost two miles, from Washington to Penn. There were really three Jewish areas, mostly based on economic class. Lower middle-class Jews had homes in Willard-Hay and Homewood; the more affluent had big houses in Old Highland.” He said that the young people of all three neighborhoods went to school and played together, although the areas remained racially segregated. Tanick said that his family moved to St. Louis Park in 1967. That suburb, sometimes called “St. Jewish Park,” didn’t have the real estate restrictions against Jews and other minorities that Golden Valley (by law) and Edina (by “gentlemen’s agreement”) had.

Barrash said that it was important as well to reach out not only to Jews who were once Northside residents, but to everyone who wants to reconnect with the community and celebrate their shared histories.
Jovonta Patton topped the Billboard gospel charts in July with his album *Finally Living* – an impressive feat for an unsigned, 26-year old musician who sold most of his albums himself, via social media and after church performances.

This issue, North News spoke to Patton and his wife Symone Patton about their professional success, allegiance to the Northside where they were both raised, and being parents to their daughter Ella, 1, and baby number two, due in September.

How do you balance family life and music life, especially in light of your latest success? It has difficult moments. I don’t have the balance mastered, but I’ve learned just to include my family as much as possible. It’s always in my rider now – my family will be with me. You can see it on my album cover. My family is with me.

Symone: My biggest thing is that I believe in him. Everything that he says he wants to do; I believe that it will happen. I don’t discourage him from God given ideas. I believe in him and his dreams and his goals.

You are 26 years old. You’ve accomplished a lot in a short period of time. What’s next? I would love to get a Grammy. You can expect to see more community work from me. I want to keep serving young men and women in education, the arts, and their faith. Those things are really important to our family. Education was highly important in our home. For me it was really important individually because me being a songwriter, it helped me know how to write. I had to have the basics. Education helps start your communities.

What keeps you motivated? My family, my wife Ella and the new kid on the way. My community does too. People talk about what’s wrong with the Northside; I’m trying to be part of the solution without talking so much. I want to do the doing.

By Kenzie O’Keefe
Where business is born

Dennis Werneke and Marcus Owens run the Northside’s two business incubators – the North Minneapolis Business Center (NMBC) and the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON). Though they might be perceived as competitors, Owens says that they “complement each other well,” and Werneke, whose incubator is fully occupied, often refers prospective tenants to Owens, who has more vacancy.

Though their operations have some stark differences – NEON is a nonprofit, NMBC is for profit, and NMBC specializes in working with manufacturing businesses whereas NEON focuses on retail – they share a passion for watching businesses create jobs in the community.

They also share a passion for paying it forward. Werneke is a supportive board member for NEON, and Owens is working to build a third incubator on the Northside – for restaurants inside Kindred Kitchen. By Kenzie O’Keefe
Why operate an incubator on the Northside? I live in Uptown, but I like being a part of and giving back to the community here. I like to see something start from scratch and then develop and create jobs in the community. This building sat empty for four years. Now we have 20-30 people working here. That helps the community more than an empty building would. Also – I like to see businesses succeed. I have had a number of them start in here and outgrow the space – Atomic Recycling, Boom Island Brewery, the Minnesota African Women’s Association (MAWA). I’m also proud that American Chemical, my own business, has had a Step-Up intern every summer for the past nine years. This year’s intern is Dinanita Turner from Patrick Henry High School. I’d like to see more businesses in North Minneapolis step up to the plate and mentor local students.

How did you end up owning the North Minneapolis Business Center? I started American Chemical 29 years ago after getting laid off from Honeywell. I started my business out of my home because I had a very difficult time finding the space I needed for it – 500-2000 square feet. The opportunity became available to buy this building, and when I started my business here, I swore I’d help other business. I like this location because it is affordable and convenient for my customers.

Who is your ideal tenant? A small start-up manufacturing company because I’d like to see them make or manufacture something and distribute or sell it and hopefully that will snowball into more jobs.

Do you have any hopes and dreams for North Minneapolis as a business community? I’d like to see vacancies fill up in the commercial corridors. I’d like to see more vibrancy on Broadway, Lowry and Plymouth. I’d like to have clean streets and safe neighborhoods. I love the Above the Falls plan, and I’d like to see business parks up and down the river. I used to be on the Minneapolis City Chamber of Commerce board, and I’d love to see us have a Chamber on the Northside.

Do you have any concerns for your business? I’m concerned about the taxes and the minimum wage going up. It’s fine, but it’s going to scare away a lot of businesses and [some may replace workers with automated kiosks]. That I don’t like.

What are your long term goals? I’d love to do another incubator, however, there isn’t much industrial space available.

You’re on the board of the only other business incubator in North Minneapolis – NEON. It’s giving back to community. They have some good ideas and plans coming up. I’d like to be a part of that. If someone calls me up and I don’t have the space, I refer them to Marcus Owens, NEON’s President. Do I get anything out of it? No. But hopefully they fill a space on the Northside. I’d love to see Marcus be a clearing house for new enterprises in North Minneapolis.

What’s your favorite thing to do in North that isn’t inside your own building? I like to try different restaurants. I try to get out of the building at least once a day for lunch. I like Good Deal Market, the Hmong grocery store on Lowry. I go there quite a bit. I also like Breaking Bread Café. I’m glad to see the new development on West Broadway. It’s nice to drive by these places and see nice, good, positive change taking place. We need to tout our horn when positive things are going on, like NEON, UROC, FLOW, WBC, and THOR Construction coming in. The media likes to report negative stories about the Northside. I like to talk about the positive ones.

Learn more about NMBC at: http://www.northminneapolisbc.com

What are your hopes and dreams for North Minneapolis as a business community? My biggest hope is that we become a sustainable community in all aspects. I would love to be able to shop in all North Minneapolis businesses. Before I came into my role, I didn’t realize how much of my money went out of the community and how that contributed to an unsustainable community. It’s not much of a community when we live here but leave and support someone else’s community with our money. We have about $400 million dollars of buying power in North Minneapolis today. That’s a powerful number.

What are your long-term goals for NEON? I hope that we work ourselves out of work. If we’re still around 30 years from now, we will have evolved from building wealth foundations to a wealth expansion and growth organization. I also want to bring the youth into the fold, so they start to see entrepreneurship as a possibility for themselves early on. This is how we build the pipeline for the future and our community.

What is your favorite thing to do on the Northside that is not inside your own building? I love going into Avenue Eatery and talking to brother Sammy. I joke that I can’t go in there to work. It’s always a reunion; you always learn something or meet someone.

Learn more about NEON at: http://www.neon-mn.org

How would you describe the North Minneapolis Business Center, to someone who is not already aware of it? It’s a for-profit business incubator that currently has nine tenants. A couple of them are owned and operated by Northsiders and three are minority owned. We offer 500-2000 square foot spaces – that’s our sweet spot. There is so much demand for that and very little supply. We haven’t had a vacancy since 2013.

Who own businesses to get together, network and learn from each other.

You are a non-profit organization. Where does your funding come from? 60% of our funding comes through foundation support. 30% comes through government contracts. About 10% comes through earned income—through a co-working space and property maintenance company. We created a property maintenance business in June. The NEON Property Maintenance LLC was built from the ground up and is a resource to train others on how to start, own and operate a small business.

What made you want to be NEON’s president? NEON has been working to advance entrepreneurs for ten years. I’m coming up on my second anniversary with the organization. I’m a fourth generation Northsider. I wanted to find a way to be involved in my community and be a part of helping it succeed.

Prior to joining the team, I was on NEON’s Board of Directors. During my time on the board, the executive director position opened up as I was looking for as for a career that could positively help impact the lives others. I was thrilled at the opportunity to come here and drive change and build an organization that both can support entrepreneurship and also support the community and its need for assets.

Describe those assets. We have a need to change behaviors on how we spend money. Instead of going outside the community to spend our dollars, we need to support businesses in our own community. We also need to ensure that we have places to spend our money and that they are quality establishments. Through NEON’s asset building work, we’re helping to build a more sustainable community.

North Minneapolis is primed for something to happen—there is a huge opportunity to develop and reclaim our community. And we need to include the people who are here now to be part of that development. We don’t want them to be priced or forced out of this community. Getting in now at the ground level will allow people to build asset and wealth for themselves and their families. We have to educate the community, and then we have to move people from awareness to action.

Who is your ideal incubator tenant? The business owner who is looking for a community of entrepreneurs to connect, work and grow their business. We offer affordable office space for daily, weekly or monthly use. Benefits including office and meeting space, wi-fi, business advisement time, and invites to workshops and events.
Welcome back to school Northside students!

Our best wishes for the school year! Be positive. Find hope. Make art.

Care, when and where you need it at our Camden, Minneapolis clinic.

Congrats on a new school year from all of us at JXTA!

NAZ stands with the future college grads of North Minneapolis!

Be bold, innovate, and change your community!

The Harvest Network of Schools welcomes scholars across the community back to a year of amazing learning and growth.