BICULTURAL bride

Mai Neng Moua navigates personal independence and the limits of love in her new memoir. Page 18

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Celebrating one year of ownership under Pillsbury United Communities!

Letter from the Editor + Owner

At this point in time last year, Pillsbury United Communities relaunched a redesigned and rebranded version of North News after having acquired the paper four months earlier. Our new paper strove to maintain the journalistic integrity and deep, enduring community relationships that previous owner Margo Ashmore had cultivated in her 25 years of ownership; but we also made the decision to do many things differently: we switched to a more visually accessible design (less text, more images, more graphics). We made a choice to cover the more difficult aspects of life in North Minneapolis but also more intentionally elevate stories about people in the community making positive contributions to it. The media narrative about North Minneapolis is often a negative one; we sought to balance that out with the stories that are so often overlooked here: the stories of all that makes this place vibrant, creative, connected, and full of possibility.

We also relaunched with a brand new devotion to training a future generation of journalists from North Minneapolis. We believe that their voices matter and that we will all be better by having their voices involved in newsrooms, companies, and organizations across the nation some day. In this first year we’ve published multiple stories by 18 different local high school students in our paper. They’ve spoken with the superintendent, the mayor, candidates for political offices, local leaders, and journalism industry professionals. We offered them an opportunity to have their voices heard in 10,000 papers each month, and they have risen to the challenge. Read North High freshman Dalvin Crocket’s reflection of his time working with North News this year on Page 10.

It feels fitting that this paper is publishing in the days following a second North High basketball championship win. The cover photo of our first paper depicted their first win last year. Like the Polars, our goal is to keep striving for the best.

Our desire to carry North News into the next period of its legacy stems from our feeling that North Minneapolis deserves to have its own voice in the Twin Cities media landscape. We’ve worked hard to earn your trust this year, and we promise to continue doing so. We’ve learned a lot in the process, and we’ve constantly sought to adjust our publication and its policies to better meet your needs and expectations. Our commitment to this community continues to expand and deepen.

Thank you for all of your support as we continue to grow our paper and programming. We couldn’t do it without you!

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The tastiest waffle in the Twin Cities!

Made by Kelley Skumautz at Serendipity Spot in North Minneapolis

Did you know that two of the tastiest waffles in the Twin Cities are made right here in North Minneapolis? Earlier this year, Eater Twin Cities ranked Serendipity Spot in the McKinley neighborhood and Victory 44 in Victory neighborhood numbers 1 and 5 respectively on its list of Minneapolis restaurants serving the best waffles.

While Victory 44 (2203 44th Ave N) is a well-known foodie haven, Serendipity Spot’s buzz is just beginning to grow. The Eater Twin Cities honor was an unexpected compliment for Serendipity Spot owner Kelley Skumautz, who opened her doors just six months ago.

“My suspicion is that it struck some kind of sensibility. [The writer] found an above average waffle in an unusual place, made with a whole lot of love. It was so nice for the little guy to win,” she said.

Skumautz has a waffle menu, but she is more than willing to become a creative cook if her customers are feeling experimental. Each waffle is made to order and the possibilities are limitless: savory, sweet, stacked to make a sandwich. Top quality toppings and batter ingredients, including homemade butter, make this waffle the success that it is. “It’s a humble waffle, an unassuming waffle, that does the Northside proud,” she said.

Like its waffles, Serendipity Spot is warm and welcoming. “It’s a place where I can be reminded to always assume the best,” said Skumautz.

The café is open every day but 3pm weekends.

Friday. 7am-4pm M-Th and 9am-3pm weekends.
North Minneapolis at a glance

Community fights for Friestleben
Beloved former Fourth Precinct Inspector Michael Friestleben, who was reassigned to be Lieutenant of Community Engagement last summer, has been reassigned by the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) yet again. Last month he was named Lieutenant of Crimes Against Children. The move, which many view as a demotion for Friestleben and a huge hit to community and police relations on the Northside, has drawn sharp criticism from community members who have mobilized to call for his reinstatement.

Around 500 people have signed an online petition asking for a meeting with Mayor Betsy Hodges and the City Council to “discuss the recent treatment and future
Continued on page 7

Candidates for mayor will come to the Northside
Community members have organized a forum for this year’s mayoral candidates to discuss their thoughts and plans for North Minneapolis. The event will take place at Shiloh Temple International Ministries at 1201 West Broadway on Saturday, April 8 from 4-6:30pm. “North Minneapolis deserves more than they have received over the years. The city owes them, and the time to pay that debt is now. I am thankful that the candidates agreed to come speak to this beautiful community of people,” said organizer Lisa Clemons.

It’s time to caucus!
Precinct Caucuses are coming up on April 4. Caucuses matter because they determine the delegates who will attend the April 22 convention where DFL endorsements for city council wards are decided. Register to participate at: http://www.mpls.dfl.org. You can also register in person on April 4.

NRRC plans new headquarters
The Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC), the neighborhood organization for Near North and Willard Hay, plans to redevelop a house on the corner of 13th Street and Girard Ave. N into their new headquarters. They are currently looking for a builder and hope to begin construction within the next month. Executive Director Martine Smaller says the space will model “healthy, urban living” and will likely include a commercial kitchen, backyard bee-keeping and chickens, and an outdoor meeting space.

Patrick Henry Herobotics wins big
The Patrick Henry High School Herobotics team was recognized at the March 14 school board meeting for their outstanding achievements this year. They recently won two major awards at the Robotics Regional in Duluth and the Chairman’s Award at the Iowa Regional.

Northern Metals will go
After decades of controversy, the Northern Metals Recycling facility will relocate to Becker, Minnesota by August 2019. Under the terms reached in a settlement between the facility and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), they will also pay 2.5 million dollars in costs and penalties, including $600,000 for community health projects in the neighborhoods nearby.

New charter school in North
The Board of Directors for the Academy of Personalized Excellence (APEX) has secured the building at 2620 Russell Ave. N to serve families in the North Minneapolis neighborhoods (and beyond) beginning in the fall of 2017. APEX will enroll K-2 grade students this fall with plans to add a grade each year until it is a K-5 school in 2020. More information is available at www.apexcharter.org

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Our new Spring menu is coming soon!
Controversy over Homewood historic designation awakens neighborhood

By Kenzie O’Keeffe | Editor

Despite objections from many residents, the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) has voted to recommend that the Minneapolis City Council designate the Homewood neighborhood in North Minneapolis as a historic district.

If the designation passes, homeowners in the affected area – 254 homes total – will be required to adhere to yet-to-be-determined locally generated design guidelines when augmenting the exteriors (not interiors) of their homes. Right now they are being held to federal historical designation guidelines under the interim provisions when augmenting the exteriors (not interiors) of their homes. Right now they are being held to federal historical designation guidelines under the interim provisions.

Those in favor of historic designation see it as an opportunity to commemorate Homewood’s history and preserve its physical character amidst upcoming business and transit development in the area, such as the Blue Line LRT expansion and the THOR, Estes Funeral Home, and NorthPoint development on the corner of Penn and Plymouth Avenues North.

Residents opposed to designation say it will inflict undue financial burden on them, potentially making home repairs more expensive and spurring gentrification which may displace current residents.

Former City Council President and Homewood resident Jackie Cherryhomes is among those who worry that designation will create economic disincentives for the type of people who have historically made Homewood a great place to live. “We acknowledge that the neighborhood is historic, but the historicity of our neighborhood is not necessarily about the structures. Those are important, but it’s about the people,” she said at the public hearing at City Hall prior to the HPC vote on March 2.

Some have also criticized the historical designation study process, which they say did not adequately engage residents in decision-making. “They can say they did community meetings, but not many people attended, and they were after the interim restrictions were implemented,” said Joe Fargione, a Homewood resident opposed to designation.

Martine Smaller, Executive Director of the Northside Residents’ Redevelopment Commission (NRRRC), the neighborhood organization for the area, agrees with Fargione. She says she was initially “all for” doing the historical study. That was until she was informed about the interim designation and the limitations it imposed. “Our property rights are lost,” she said. Exactly when the city council will vote on whether or not to approve Homewood’s designation is yet to be determined. City Council Member for Ward 5 (which includes Homewood) Blong Yang requested that the City Council be given additional time – up to 6 months – to review the study and explore potential financial incentives for homeowners before voting.

The HPC accommodated this request by voting to extend interim historical protection for the area until October 5 or until a vote has been taken – whichever happens first.

In the meantime, John Smoley, who led the study for the city, says he will continue working with residents to envision design guidelines for the area’s potential designation.

Though the process has created division in the tight-knit community, Smaller says it has also “inspired connections and awakened networks between people.” She says that if the city council ends up voting in favor of designation, NRRRC will help shape design guidelines.

Making Meaningful Change

How God’s love can change your life and the world

Millions of people are striving to make a change for the better— for themselves and even for the world. But HOW do we make sure that such change ACTUALLY happens? In this Christian Science lecture, speaker Mark McCurties explains how “…God’s loving and saving power is the greatest agent for change, and that through a right understanding of God, His power can be seen and felt right here and now, bringing health and peace to the world.” The ideas expressed in this talk are based on the teachings of Christ Jesus as recorded in the Bible and discussed in Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, the Christian Science textbook written by Mary Baker Eddy.

Free Public Talk

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Changes planned for Minneapolis impound lot

The city’s impound lot is one of the places Minneapolis residents least like to visit. A recent survey of its “customers” produced terms such as “old, dusty, dark, cramped, long lines and waits, and insufficient parking” to describe the experience of recovering their vehicles.

The city, the neighborhoods, and the folks at the impound lot know this, too, and an improved facility is not a matter of if, but how and when. Dedicated planning has been underway since last fall by Clever Architecture, which also conducted the phone and online survey that got over 600 responses and identified a number of problems that matched up with those brought up in recent public meetings.

CPED Senior Project Coordinator Beth Grosen said improvements to the lot have been considered during the entire 11 years she has been with the city, and current lot manager Ellen Dosdall says it goes back to at least 1999. The 26-acre property opened as a towing destination in 1987 on a former dumping and landfill site just south of Glenwood Ave. In the years since, due to both refinements in snowplowing and street-sweeping schedules and the increased density of cars on the streets, the lot’s inadequacies have become more apparent. Dosdall said “We’re happy to know that we will have new buildings and spaces for the public and for us.” She noted that while the new designs call for a parking area with much less storage, lot officials have plans for private contractors to handle the car auctions off-site, and for cars held for police cases to be stored under the I-394 bridge (MNDot permitting).

A March 1 meeting at the Harrison Community Center brought city planners and residents of the area together for a presentation by Marcia Stemwedel, lead architect for the project. Robert Friddle, the city’s Director, Facilities Design and Construction opened the meeting and said, “We are in the master planning stage; we’ve had a lot of meetings leading up to this, and gotten participation from a lot of people. We recognize that the facility is in poor shape, and we want a much better facility for people who get their cars towed and for the staff that has to work there."

On view were three site plans showing different configurations whose primary differences were the entry points (Van White Blvd. and Colfax Ave.) for tow trucks and customers. Some speakers were quite vocal in their complaints about current lot access, citing long lines of idling trucks and pedestrians making their way on snow-filled sidewalks.

The Department of Public Works will send a Facilities Space and Management (FSAM) report on the project to the City Council in Mid-April.
Mushrooms on the Mississippi River

By Kenzie O’Keefe | Editor

Tucked back behind the Upper Harbor Terminal’s graffiti-ed domes, on the bank of an especially industrial part of the Mississippi, sits an unexpectedly eco-friendly business: Mississippi Mushrooms, a certified organic fungus farm that grows several (legal) varieties of the edible morsels. The farm produces mushrooms year round in the southeast corner of an unheated 110,000 square foot warehouse. Company president Ian Silver-Ramp, a North Minneapolis native and Patrick Henry High School graduate who studied agriculture at the University of Minnesota, is passionate about his product. He says mushrooms have nutritional and medicinal benefits and make a good meat substitute. “We should have more of them in our diets,” he said.

Silver-Ramp describes his business as “essentially a recycling company.” He and his handful of employees take waste material from other local companies – like sawdust from Wood from the Hood – and use it as a base growing material. It is ground up and mixed with water, forming a grow material called “substrate” and then sterilized. Finally, it is inoculated with spawn. “It’s kind of like adding bread yeast to flour,” said Silver Ramp.

Bags of inoculated substrate are then put in incubation rooms. Each room houses different types of fungus at different stages in the growing cycle. The climate inside of them sharply contrasts the frigid winter conditions outside. Energy generated from growth inside the bags makes the air temperature a balmy 75 degrees. Mist from vents in the walls creates a hazy humidity.

Supporting the process of converting inedible biomass into edible mushrooms inside these rooms requires very specific growing conditions. Silver-Ramp and his team use a phone app to constantly monitor and adjust conditions inside the incubation rooms from any geographic location. They wrote the code for the app and built the physical rooms themselves. “The technology for doing this stuff is really starting to come together right now. A few years ago we wouldn’t have been able to do this to the extent that we do,” he said.

In just a few weeks, plastic bags filled with substrate have fully grown mushrooms sprouting from their sides. They’re harvested, and the substrate is composted behind the warehouse. Eventually Mississippi Mushrooms hopes to grow plants on site with it.

Silver-Ramp seems to enjoy the technical, meticulous process of farming his mushrooms. He says he got interested in it because it’s a more challenging form of gardening. “This definitely has more detail,” he said.

His work presents many challenges beyond a finicky growing process; plans for development at the Upper Harbor Terminal promise dramatic transformation of the site in the coming years. United Properties has been given approval from the city to execute a plan to turn the currently quiet, industrial area into a destination location on the river. Their plans promise an amphitheater, retail space, a business park, and housing developments. Silver-Ramp says he has spoken with United Properties and that they’ve seemed open to finding ways for Mississippi Mushrooms to continue growing their business on the site. He hopes to find other local partners to join him in the warehouse – possibly a brewery or a restaurant that could utilize his mushrooms and eventual produce. “I’m optimistic about it,” he said.

Despite his big picture thinking, Silver-Ramp never forgets what matters most: “It’s really all about how do we produce more mushrooms and get them out to people?” he said.

Currently, Mississippi Mushrooms distributes to restaurants and co-ops throughout the Twin Cities, and both big buyers and individuals can venture out to the farm on Saturdays and Sundays from 11am-2pm to buy mushrooms direct from the farm. Just don’t trust your GPS to get you there. Use the map below, which can also be found on the company’s website: mississippimushrooms.com.

Over the span of a few weeks, mushrooms grow out of holes in the substrate bags. After all the mushrooms are harvested, the used substrate is composted outside behind the warehouse. Photo by Kenzie O’Keefe

The farm’s compost pile is extremely active. Digging down inside the material and watching the steam float away reveals how hot it is – around 150 degrees. This summer, Silver-Ramp hopes to begin growing plants in the fully matured compost. Photo by Kenzie O’Keefe
Active shooter training at Willard School angers some in community

By Kenzie O’Keefe | Editor

The vacant Willard Elementary School building at 1615 Queen Ave N – which just a few years ago was planned to become an early childhood education center – is being used for active shooter training by the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). Training on the site has been underway for a number of years, said MPD spokesperson Scott Seroka.

Seroka says the space is used to train officers for complex, active shooting scenarios. “This type of training is invaluable if there was an incident to respond to within a school,” he said, noting that this training was “instrumental” in the MPD’s response to the shooting at Accent Signage in North Minneapolis in 2012.

Some community members have recently expressed concern about the training activities being held at this particular school. Seroka says that the activities pose no physical danger to the surrounding community; live ammunition is not being used. However, in an area that has experienced a tumultuous and in many cases traumatizing relationship with law enforcement, the training is viewed by some as deeply insensitive. Well known community residents and activists Phillip Murphy and Roxanne O’Brien expressed their anger about this during the public comment portion of the Minneapolis Public School (MPS) Board meeting on March 14. MPS operates the vacant building and leases it to the MPD.

Chief Communications Officer for MPS, Tonya Tennessen, says that MPS Superintendent Graff is mindful of both community sensitivities and the need to ensure officers responding to an active shooter incident are well trained and prepared to keep people safe. “He will carry both concerns forward in conversations about any future agreements,” she said.

MPD holds similar trainings throughout the city. Other locations include Target Field and the vacant Cooper School building on the southside, according to Seroka. Seroka said he “acknowledges that we can always do more to notify community members and residents about upcoming training,” but he added that MPD has received positive feedback from residents who have thanked officers for keeping their community safe.

Willard School closed to students in 2005. The early childhood education center proposed for the site in 2014 was anticipated to open in December 2015. Tennessen said that MPS intended to partner with the University of Minnesota on the project, but “plans did not materialize due to a lack of funding for capital project development and anticipated operating expenses.”

The fight for Friestleben continued from page 2

reinstatement” of Friestleben. Additionally, a crowd of about 70 people gathered at Zion Baptist Church on Sunday, March 26 to share stories and make a plan for forward movement. “Mike deserves our support. He has gone to battle for us. We need to go to battle for him,” said community member Lynne Crockett, an organizer of the event.

Friestleben’s vocal supporters include longtime Northside residents, local leaders, candidates for city elections this fall, and several community activists who, despite being well known critics of the MPD, have spoken up in favor of Friestleben’s approach to policing in North Minneapolis.

“He has really stepped out and shown me what change can look like,” said District 2 School Board Representative and community organizer KerryJo Felder.

“He was taken from me, and he was taken from the Northside,” said community peace activist KG Wilson.

“He crossed the divide in this city. There is no one race that has not had contact with that man. The chief should bring him back into this community because he was transferred from the community engagement team for no reason at all,” said Lisa Clemmons, community member and former MPD member.

MPD Spokesperson Scott Seroka declined to comment on the specifics of Friestleben’s transfer. “Generally speaking, the MPD reassigns personnel based on professional development and advancing the department’s overall goals and mission,” he told North News.

Friestleben spoke briefly at the Zion Church event, telling the crowd he appreciated them more than they knew. “I want to be here; I love it here,” he told the crowd.

Community efforts to reinstate Friestleben can be followed by joining the Facebook group “Bring Back Mike,” created by community member Mickey Cook.
Balancing both: students take on school and part-time jobs

By Ashley Powell | Junior

Many students at North High School balance high school with part and nearly full time jobs. Teenagers need money to buy supplies for their lives. They need their jobs to help their families and future. Some are helping their households with the rent and paying their personal cell phone bills. They are also saving for college and their own rent someday.

A teenager who goes straight to work right after school usually finishes at 9pm or 10pm. Many get home even later because they ride the bus. Furthermore, Metro Transit passes do not work after 10pm; as long as you swipe it before 10, you have up to two hours to get home using a transfer. When they get home, many have to do their homework. After a day that has already lasted up to 12 hours, many are too exhausted to focus. “I worked at least like 3 or 4 days out of the week and at least got 25 to 30 hours,” said Deanna King, a junior in high school who works at Walmart after school. Like many students in her situation, keeping her GPA up is a struggle.

The challenge in balancing school and work is picking and choosing which comes first. North High English teacher Ms. Hiatt says, “Students have a difficult time prioritizing which should come first. Both are demanding and important, but sometimes students choose to place work above academics, which hinders their choices in the future.” Some students may feel their balance is correct because their grade is good in the class and they want to leave school early to get to work. Others are worried about slipping grades, but they have to deal with more urgent problems, such as helping with the rent, and securing their futures.

“College is expensive, and I like money in my pockets,” says Ke’mondrez Sanders, a senior at North, works 30-32 hours a week at Cub Foods.

The struggle to balance school and work can seem to be out of a student’s control, because a teenager can not impact the cost of college, the amount a homework teachers assign, or a parent’s contribution to the cost of living. Ikiia Hall, a senior at North High, who works at Walmart says “My mom she don’t give me everything I want; I got to get it by myself.” Ikiia knows the difference between wants and needs. Some of her earnings go to, as she says, “like getting my hair done, getting my nails done.”

North senior Ke’mondrez Sanders works on schoolwork while wearing his work uniform. He is on the A honor roll, and he works 30-32 hours a week at Cub Foods. Photo by Tayven Smith

But for essentials such as saving for a college education and just getting a full night of sleep, learning to balance school and work is a student’s hardest assignment.

Tuition keeps talented, low income youth from seeing college as a possibility

By Luul Yusuf | Senior

Did you know that 30% of students who graduate from high school in Minnesota don’t go to college because of college tuition fees?

Kaliah, a senior from North High who asked that we not use her last name, is one example. She says that, “I’m going to take a break after graduation to save up because I’m not financially stable and my mom can’t help cause her job doesn’t pay her enough money to spare for me.” Kaliah would love to go to college but it’s not possible for her right now. “Even though I want to break the cycle, it’s going to be hard,” she says. She wants out but is missing an opportunity to do so. It’s like this world is made to keep the poor poor and the rich rich. Kids that aren’t that wealthy aren’t able to pay for college, so they have to find another way to make money and provide for themselves. Alternatively, they can go to college and rely on student loans and be in debt for most of their adult lives. Students who come from wealthy families definitely have the upper-hand because they have the financial support to pay for college and get high paying jobs with no loan debt.

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee has a solution. He announced at a press conference recently that, starting next fall, community college will be tuition-free for all San Francisco residents through the City College of San Francisco. Opportunities like this must exist for seniors in high school so they have motivation to finish the senior year off knowing there is a plan for their future. Yasmine Burns, also a senior at North High School, is planning on going to college at a two year college. Yasmine struggled with family problems her freshman and sophomore year in high school, but still found her way to be on track to graduate. Yasmine knows that college is expensive, but she still says she’s going to find a way to go. There are some great opportunities for Minneapolis Public School (MPS) graduates. One opportunity is that if you graduate from any MPS School you can go to Minneapolis Community Technical College for two years for free through the Power of You Scholarship. This is an opportunity that a lot of students at North take advantage of. Tylicia Chandler, a senior at North, says, “I won’t be paying any money for college because I’m a part of the Power of You program, but I still feel like there should be opportunities for everyone in Minnesota that wants to go to college.” Being a senior in high school can be a very bittersweet year. There are a lot of things to stress out. The process of applying to colleges can be overwhelming with all the information and fees they may require. On top of the application process, there are countless scholarships to apply for, and often require multiple essays and letters of recommendation, and there’s still no guarantee you will get anything for all your hard work. Luckily, programs like College Possible provide help throughout the process of getting into college and doing financial aid and scholarships. Many students also stress out about their ACT score. This is all on top of students’ regular homework.

There are many high school students who stress, and there are students who are like Nessa Harms. Harms is a senior at North and is planning on going to a 4 year college next year. “I’m planning on paying for college by scholarships and taking out loans, but it’s okay because I’m going to become a lawyer.” Even though college is expensive, Nessa is willing to go into debt knowing and having the confidence in herself that she is going to finish college and have a successful career. Even though there are a lot of financial risks, students feel like it’s important to invest in their future with higher education.

Even though I want to break the cycle, it’s going to be hard.”

Kaliah, North High Senior
Are we addicted?
By Lache Dietz | Senior

Cell phones are naturally addicting, like any drug. Cell phones have a negative effect on students in class and take away from the purpose of school: learning. Did you know that half of teens send 50 or more messages a day? Sadly many of these messages are being sent during school hours. Phone use in and even out of school has increased frequently over the years.

In the year 2017 almost everybody owns a phone. Phones are becoming more advanced and upgrade at least once every year from iPhones to Galaxies, or even HTC phones. In our journalism class we monitored our cell phone usage for a week what we found out was flabbergasting. On average, each student was using their phone 4-8 hours a day. I spent 54 hours a week using my phone. I couldn’t believe I used my phone more than a full-time job.

Due to obsessive phone use outside the classroom, use INSIDE the classroom has increased more than ever before. Special Education Assistant, Rebekah Dietz (my mom), said, “Cell phones and social media have become an issue for the younger generation, making them not be able to be social in person and causes them to live their lives behind a screen.” Students tend to be attracted to drama and other sorts of cyberbullying on social media and become addicted to the madness on their news feed. North High senior, Tylecia Chandler, said that, “We as a whole always check our phones in class; replying to conversations and not paying attention.” Even though most students know that their phone use in class has become a major issue, they still struggle with the habit of checking their phones.

Although phones have had more of a negative impact in schools, they are not all bad. In a survey of North High Students I conducted 9 out of 20 students said their phones impacted them positively. These students said their phones were used to play academic games and also to listen to music when they needed to focus. Even though statistics say that listening to music is not great for learning, students at North believe that sometimes music keeps them focused on the right things. Due to how expensive phones are these days trying to confiscate them puts teachers in an awkward position which makes it hard for teachers to control phone use in class. If you want to track how often you use your phone, download the app "MOMENT." I bet you will be very surprised how many hours you spend on your phone on a daily basis.

A shoe-head’s guide to getting the best sneakers
By John Dickerson | Junior

I always had the latest sneakers growing up, but it wasn’t until I was 12 that I fell in love with my first pair of shoes: The Taxi 12s, black and white, yellow and black carbon fiber sole. Almost every teen KNOWS that a sneaker is more than just a sneaker. Each of us remembers exactly where we were when we got our first pair and the strategy we used to get it. When you’re standing in line at a shoe store, your social status is determined by what shoes you have on. You could make friends or enemies and complete strangers could decide to show respect or humiliate you based on what shoes you have.

People go to extreme measures to get their kicks. In 2013, a man tried to trade his car for the Galaxy Foamposite (a new Nike release whose sole glowed in the dark). Last year at the Foot Locker in the Brooklyn Center Plaza, someone was shot over the Valentine’s Day 12s.

It’s important to have the “coolest” looking shoe because people around you give you out compliments, or judgements. In an instant someone is able to determine your value as a human being based on your shoes – heat, beaters, or knockoffs. Heat are top of the line sneakers. Beaters are dirty, old sneakers. Knockoffs are plain old FAKES. I am a shoe reseller and a veteran to the game. So, if you’re out looking to get the coolest shoe, I have some tips for you:

The first-come-first-serve: This is by far the easiest way you can get a shoe. Show up at the store on release day; ask for your size and pay retail. The raffle: This method is a bit more time consuming and frustrating, but it’s worth it. The week of the release date you go to your local shoe retailer, grab a ticket, put your name and number and if you win you show up to the store on release day with an ID. The Plug: This is one of the most difficult ways to get a shoe, and it only happens every once in a blue moon when a really popular pair of shoes comes out. All you have to do is know someone who has a connection with someone that works in a retailer to get your shoe. (This is also a way to get more than one pair because you aren’t buying from the store itself). The bot: Bots are the only way you can get your shoe if you plan to shop online due to high demand and very few pairs.
Celebrating our first anniversary!

North News was relaunched one year ago under new ownership by Pillsbury United Communities (PUC).

Read a letter from the Editor and the President and CEO of PUC on Page 2.
The impact of our youth programming

Dalvin Crockett began taking the North News journalism class at North High last fall. He is a freshman and has written six stories published by the paper.

Eight months ago I didn’t even know North News existed. Now I’ve had six stories published and read by the entire Northside. I’ve met Star Tribune editors at their downtown office and I met student journalists from all over the state at a conference at the University Of Minnesota.

North News has made a positive impact on the community and is giving students a new outlook on their community. For example, our story on house fires, which I helped write, helped inform people about the safety of their homes and how to prevent fires. We also published many stories about local businesses in North Minneapolis – such as Breaking Bread Cafe (which has the best grits in the state), Homewood Studios (which showcases art by and for the community), and Banana Blossom (a Southeast Asian restaurant).

Since North News has appeared, more organizations and people have been getting the recognition they deserve. Oftentimes the Northside is depicted in a negative way in the news, so it’s a privilege to shine a light on all the wonderful things that are happening in our community. It gives people a more positive outlook.

Samuel Wilbur who teaches the journalism class at North High with Editor Kenzie O’Keefe, has been interested in journalism since 8th grade. “North News offered to partner with North High, and I jumped at the opportunity, because I had a passion for it, and I majored in Journalism in college,” he said.

With one year down, North News is hoping to expand the journalism program at North High with more students and returning students taking on leadership roles. The program hopes to continue to highlight special moments and people in the community. This class has made me consider a future in journalism. I want to travel and write stories about politics, celebrities, and food. Especially because the perks seem great.

Remembering our great legacy

Margo Ashmore and her late husband launched and ran North News for the first quarter century of its existence. She remains connected to North News and North Minneapolis.

What has it been like to watch North News relaunch and grow in the past year? I anticipated the first issue being a real shock for me, and it was. I hope the paper gets back to free door to door distribution very soon. You’re living my dream working with the students. A newspaper in a community like North needs to be doing its part to bring up the youth. The partnership with North High, where KBEM is too, is a natural fit.

Do you miss running the paper? Not at all. We were pretty low on money when I was running North News. I couldn’t justify continuing to subsidize it with the Northeaster. I had been slowly wearing down. I’m happy running the Northeaster newspaper for Northeast Minneapolis and working on the Minneapolis & Saint Paul Home Tour these days.

Are you still connected to North? I deliberately didn’t go to a lot of stuff at first after I had sold the paper just to get a rest. But in the last year I’ve gone to things at the Capri and UROC, lunched at Banana Blossom. I still shop occasionally at So Low. Last summer I helped my friend work on her garden in Old Highland. There are several North Minneapolis homes on the Home Tour, that brings me back.

What advice do you have for us as we continue to carry North News forward? In journalistic terms you’re doing great. As you continue to get more familiar, you’ll get more of the nuances. People appreciate good writing. My husband and I came up in the era where activism and journalism were supposed to be separate. Now I’m more interested in exploring Solutions Journalism, which supports and connects journalists all over the country and world helping each other in “reporting on responses to social problems without fluff, advocacy, or PR.” It’s so appealing to me because of the way it takes a broader view. You get to every corner of your coverage area and you start to see patterns repeating. You have such power to bring intellectual resources in that don’t require money. It’s a shift in mindset. That would be the ultimate role, key to really making North News crucial to the neighborhood.

Our year in numbers

120,000 papers delivered

18 youth served through our summer internship program and classroom partnership at North High School

2,075 Facebook page followers

38,700 reach on our most popular Facebook post (Symone Patton speaking out about resiliency amidst community violence)
The first-ever guide & directory of every Minneapolis school

Have you found your school yet?

MinneapolisSchoolFinder.org

Have Questions? Contact us at: info@minneapolisschoolfinder.org | Visit our Facebook page
RESOURCES

Beginning Tuesday, April 7, The Twin Cities Mobile Market, an affordable, convenient and fresh grocery store on wheels is coming to North Minneapolis. Every Tuesday from 10-11am the Mobile Market will bring affordable and healthy food directly to Camden Neighborhood Center at 1210 37th Avenue North. A wide variety of fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy product and staples like rice and dried beans will all be available at below-market prices. Cash, all major credit cards, debit cards, SNAP/EBT, and Market Bucks are accepted! Get on board! Questions? Call us at 612-529-8054

The Salvation Army at 2024 N. Lyndale Ave. is partnering with Loaves and Fishes to offer a free produce giveaway every Monday from 12-1pm. This will continue at our location through the colder months, then it will move outside in the summer time (date and location to be announced).

Minn Comeback and Great MN Schools – sister organizations building a community of great schools has launched Minneapolis School Finder. This resource guide for parents provides objective, relevant information on schools across Minneapolis so parents can find schools that are the best fit for their kids.

Do you live in Near North or Willard/Hay? Then your block could be eligible for a mini block club grant through the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, NRRC. Funds are available for a project or event you want to create. Call (612) 335-5924 or email contactus@nrrc.org.

Interested in upgrading your storefront? The West Broadway Business and Area Coalition has two matching grant programs that can provide up to $22,500 in matching grants per storefront. More information: http://westbroadway.org/facade/ or email carla@westbroadway.org or call 612-353-5178.

The City of Minneapolis is offering free home visits from energy-saving experts to qualified households with an income less than $48,100 for one person, $54,950 for two people, $61,850 for three people, or up to $90,650 for eight people. If the Home Energy Squad recommends insulation or air sealing, income-qualified residents also have special access to zero percent financing to complete that work. Call 612-335-5874 or visit mncee.org/homes-mpls.

EVENTS + ENTERTAINMENT

4/2 – Diabetes Alert Days: Cub Foods pharmacists will provide screenings, free blood glucose tests and information about their My Diabetes Coach Program, which includes four one-to-one consultations with a pharmacist, a one-time class and a grocery store tour. Cub Foods, 701 W. Broadway Ave, 11am-2pm, free.

4/1 – The Best Plants for 15 Tough Sites will be hosted by the Victory Neighborhood Association (VNA) and neighbors can learn about various plants and methods that work well in a city landscape taught by master gardener Amy Chapman. 4400 Webber Parkway N., 10-1:30pm, free.

4/3 – Freedom of Xpression Open Mic with hosts Desdamona and Joe Adams. Doors open at 5:30 for registration and on-stage rehearsal. Capri Theater, 2027 West Broadway Ave N, 6pm, free.

4/3 – Union and Job Resource Fair. Employers will be hiring for union positions in such fields as Construction, Manufacturing, Government, School Building Custodial and Food Service Work, Healthcare, Hospitality and Retail. Union representatives will be on hand to discuss “earn-while-you-learn” high-quality paid vocational training opportunities and answer questions. Information will be available on the advantages of union membership, neighborhood and national union history, and record expungement. The event is designed not only for ready-to-hire job seekers, but for young people exploring how to build their career paths in the future and even people wondering: “What is a union? What do they do?” People who speak many languages will be available to greet and interpret at the event. Positively EVERYONE is welcome to attend. East Side Freedom Library, 1105 Greenbrier Street, St. Paul, 3-6pm, free.

4/6 – Camden Neighborhood Center invites you to join AARP for an informative discussion about protecting yourself and loved ones from fraud, scams and identity theft. This presentation is based on analysis of undercover FBI recordings of con artists in action. This event is a special invite to older adults (55+) and caregivers. Space is limited. Call to RSVP for lunch 612-787-3718. Camden Neighborhood Center, 1210 37th Avenue North, 11am-12pm, free.

4/8 – Introduction to Screenwriting. Learn about dialogue, scene, raising action, script styles, craft elements, and jumpstarting your script in this beginner’s scriptwriting class. Register online or call 612-543-6875. Sumner Library, 611 Van White Memorial Blvd, 10:30am -12pm, free.

4/10 – Children’s Storytime: stories, songs, and literacy tips for the kids in your life ages 0-5. Serendipity Spot, 3300 Lyndale Ave N, 10:30am, free.

4/15 – Camp Capri/Third Saturdays: students in Grade 5 – 8 explore the arts with teaching artist, Dennis Spears. Capri Theater, 2027 West Broadway Ave, 10am -2pm, free, lunch included.

4/20 – Hawthorne Neighborhood Council Health and Wellbeing Celebration. Preview our Elder and Youth video as well as our Remedia book featuring our neighbors. A light lunch will be provided. 1315 Lowry Ave North, 11-2pm.


4/22 – Saturday Night Live at Serendipity Spot. John Smell the Tenth (60s & 70s style acoustic) and Zombabies (rockabilly) to perform. Space for open mic performances, plus art and sounds by Coima Chronicles. Serendipity Spot, 3300 Lyndale Ave N, 6-9pm, No cover - musician tips gladly accepted.

4/28 – Turning Point’s 4th annual, Ain’t no stopping us now gala, will honor Sharon Sayles Belton, Woodrow Jefferson and Timothy James. International Market Square, 275 Market St, Minneapolis 6:30-8:00pm.

4/30 – You won’t walk away hungry from the Northeast Kiwanis Club’s 63rd annual all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast, which will include all-you-can-eat pancakes served with your choice of two toppings, whipping cream and the famous Sentyrz sausage links, hot coffee, cold milk, juice and blueberry muffins. Sunday, April 30 from 7am-1pm at the Northeast Armory and Community Center, 1025 Broadway Avenue NE, Minneapolis. Adults: $9 in advance, or $10 at the door. Children: $4. For tickets, call Walt at 612-781-3484.

4/30 – Music for Flute & Harp, Mount Olive Music and Fine Arts presents Linda Chatterton and Rachel Brandwein in a concert of music for flute and harp, including the Minneapolis premiere of a new work written for them by Hong Kong composer Wendy Lee, American works by Vincent Persichetti, Chen Yi, Alan Hovhaness, Charles Rochester Young, and French composer Eugene Bozza. Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 3045 Chicago Avenue S., 4:00pm, free.

Community Coffee & Conversation, every Thursday hang out with neighbors and on first Thursdays meet officers of the Fourth Precinct in a casual and friendly setting at Serendipity Spot 3300 Lyndale Ave N, from 11:00 - Noon.

Tai Chi classes, every Saturday at Homewood Studios, 2400 Plymouth Ave N, 9-10:30 am.

Asian Media Access has added more FREE classes for area youth at AMA’s Multimedia Arts Complex. Classes such as Kpop Dance and a youth ensemble vocal class are offered. Contact chou.xiong@amamedia.org for more info.

Mondays – Mahjong game play at Serendipity Spot, 3300 Lyndale Ave N, 1:00-3:30 pm. Free and open to all levels, Mahjong uses tiles and is similar to rummy. Game hosts available to teach beginners.

Mondays - Vinyasa Flow yoga at Serendipity Spot, 3300 Lyndale Ave N, 6:00-7:00 pm Suggested donation of $5.

4/28 – Queen Lewis Sewing School is now at Camden Neighborhood Center (1210

March 30, 2017 • North News • 13

Hennepin County Tax-Forfeited Real Estate Auction

Hennepin County
Tax-Forfeited
Real Estate
Auction

Public auction of land and buildings.

Friday, April 21, 2017
Registration 8:15 a.m.
Auction 9 a.m.
Hennepin County
Government Center
Court Tower - 24th Floor
Jury Room C2490
300 6th Street South
Minneapolis, MN 55487
www.hennepin.us/tflauctions
612-348-3734

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 kenzioe@pillsburyunited.org.

Anyone can support the paper by donating at www.puc-mn.org/donate. Funds support newspaper operation and youth training program.

Hennepin County
Real Estate
Auction
EDUCATION

Hennepin County Library’s Teen Tech Squad is hiring teens to research, design and lead interactive workshops for and with youth. Teen leaders will work with adult mentors to create innovative programming for school-aged participants in programs held afternoons and on weekends. Teen Tech Squad employees work approximately 25 hours per month on nights and weekends, and earn $15/hour. Teens ages 16 to 18 can apply online at www.hclib.org/about/jobs. The library system will accept applications March 17 to April 7.

Rediscover the joys of reading by volunteering with PPL’s afterschool youth programs. We strive to empower students from low-income communities to achieve success in school and in life through academic support and hands-on enrichment opportunities. Volunteer Tutor-Mentors work with youth on literacy skills, relationship-building, and enrichment activities. One-on-one support makes all the difference in helping students achieve their goals! Tutoring takes place on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday from 4-6pm at 4046 Lyndale Avenue N. For more information, contact Caitlin (caitlin.dougherty@ppl-inc.org or 612.455.5108).

Homework Help is held Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 3:30pm-7pm at North Regional Library during the Minneapolis Public School Year. Homework Help is for all students, K-12, at no cost and with no advance sign-up needed. Volunteers must be at least 16 years old, have some experience with school age children and be available 2 hours a week for one semester. Training is provided; a criminal background check is required. Applications may be submitted online at hclib.org or contact Barb McKenzie at 612-543-8579 or at bamckenzie@hclib.org.

Asian Media Access is looking to collaborate with area Hmong American families to pilot the Bicultural Parenting Curriculum developed by Dr. Blong Xiong, along with the University of Minnesota Extension. We welcome parents to contact AMA at 612-376-7715 or email Tie.Oei@amamedia.org

Teen Tech workshop is held every other Thursday, North Regional Library, 5-7 p.m. Get creative and make music, videos, animation and other projects using high- and low-tech tools, everything from iPads and 3D printers to synthesizers and sewing machines. Led by the library’s Teen Tech Squad. More information at http://www.hclib.org/about/locations/north-regional

BE AWARE

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) passed a resolution approving a new Tobacco Policy at its March 8, 2017 MPRB Board of Commissioners meeting. This new policy bans all tobacco products on Minneapolis park properties and owned and/or operated facilities as of May 8.

BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT

The City of Minneapolis launched a new program Jan. 1, 2017 expanding opportunities for small businesses to compete for City contracts. As part of the Target Market Program, qualified small businesses will have the ability to bid for City contracts up to $100,000 alongside other similarly situated small businesses instead of larger, more established companies. Key goals of the program include increasing competition for contracts, expanding opportunities for historically underutilized small business and stimulating the local economy. For more information about the Target Market Program, visit www.minneapolismn.gov/finance/procurement/TargetMarketProgram.

ACTION

The City Assessor recently sent out 2017 Property Value Notices. Minneapolis property owners who do not agree with the estimated market value of their home have a few options available to appeal the assessment. On the front and back page of the notice, there are sections entitled “Appealing the Value or Classification of Your Property” that include the phone number of the assessor assigned to their property. The first step to appealing the assessment is to call that number to discuss concerns and explain why the owner believes their property value is less than what is indicated on the statement.

In November 2016, the City of Minneapolis, through its department of Community Planning and Economic Development, issued a request for redevelopment proposals (RFP) for two adjacent buildings located at 4140 - 4146 Fremont Ave N in the Webber-Camden neighborhood. The City will host an open house on Wednesday, April 12, from 6:00pm at Webber Community Center, 4400 Dupont Ave N to give community members an opportunity to view proposals and provide input to City staff as the evaluation process continues.

A number of board and commission positions are open for City Council and mayor appointments this spring. Board and commission members in the City of Minneapolis provide valuable insights, help shape key policy decisions and provide community-based input into administration of services. The City is seeking applicants with a diversity of backgrounds and experiences to strengthen the work of the City.

ADVERTISING IN NORTH NEWS

RATES

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

RIVER OF LIFE LUTHERAN
22nd & Fremont Ave. N.,
612-521-7655

We are an empowered multicultural people of God serving and sharing God’s love in our community.

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

REDEEMER LUTHERAN (ELCA)
Logan & Glenwood
612-374-4139

Adult Bible Study 9am Sunday
Prayer & Praise 10-10:30 am Sunday
Worship 10:30 am Sunday
After School Program Tuesday 4:30-6:30pm.
Pastor Kelly Chatman

ST. OLAF LUTHERAN CHURCH
2901 Emerson Ave. N.
612-529-7726

Sunday School/Adult Bible Study
at 9am
Worship at 10:30am
Nursery provided
Pastor Dale Hulme
www.stolaflutheran.org
and on Facebook

We are LGBT affirming.
Diversity thrives here!

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How did you get into rap? Art has been a constant in my life; drawing was my first form. It isolated me, so when I got to middle school I wanted to be more socially involved and connect with my peers. I wasn’t the pretty boy, the sports player or best dressed, so battle rap became my identity. By high school we started a culture behind it inside the lunchroom at Patrick Henry. At times it felt like half the school was surrounding us as we used words and metaphor to battle it out. We were hungry to share and express ourselves. When I was 15, I entered a freestyle tournament at Digital City, which used to be on West Broadway. I ended up winning for four weeks in a row. People outside of my social circle started to see me. One of the vendors at Digital City mentored me, kept me off the streets and put me in the studio.

What happened after high school? Rap became trendier; everyone was pursuing it to the point of oversaturation. I grew ashamed to tell people I rapped because of the new context. A mix of relying on others to put out projects, home issues and no longer believing in what rap represented made me move on. It seemed impractical to pursue “being a rapper” and my parents kept telling me to go to school. I stopped and started school to be a dentist.

You’re 26 now and not a dentist. How did you get back into art? While studying at Augsburg College, I landed a job at Bedlam Theatre developing their open mic program in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood. The opportunity filled my artistic void. My role evolved many times, but eventually they gave me a position doing documentation and telling people’s stories. Bedlam was very intersectional due to its partnerships and collaborations within the community; I was exposed to a lot of subcultures as a result. I was doing photography for Queertopia at Intermedia Arts; theater and open mics with East African immigrants; making plays with feminists; hanging out with puppeteers; throwing beer cans with and at punks during ROMPs. I developed a program called the Black Identity series.

Did those experiences change your perception of yourself and the city? It made me realize how many different worlds there are. It made me question my identity and a lot of things I thought I believed in. Once I started to look outside of myself and the constructs/conditioning given to me, I realized how limited I had been. I realized that Minneapolis is a special place. A melting pot small enough for worlds to intersect.

How has your style as an artist shifted? When my stage name was AZ Tek, most of my rhymes were vain, homophobic, violent, or misogynistic. There was a lot of support for negativity when I was growing up; hyper-masculinity was real. When you’re a teenager going through an identity crisis some of that is bound to leave an impression. My style’s shifted because I’m finally telling my own story and letting my songs be a potent expression of everything I think is cool and valuable. I know who I am and what I represent.

How does your latest EP reflect that? I’m talking about things that maybe two years ago I would have felt was rap suicide to admit. There’s this line in one of my songs: “Kickin’ it with gay femmes; don’t forget your they/thems.” I’m at this point where I’m being fully myself so I don’t care what anyone thinks. My EP is a short journey into the worlds and realities I’ve seen walking through this subculture Mecca we call Minneapolis.

Is your music different than other rap and hip-hop out there? Everything I rap about aligns with my values or my story in some way. Every line in every song is intentional which makes it very personal for me. Every project is like a ritual. I process life through my verses. I’m creating artifacts that can exist outside of me; only then can I move on and free myself.

Your name is Farr Well. Explain. Farr Well is really just short for my name – Farrington Llewellyn. It’s about saying farewell to parts of yourself over and over again – this process of continuously unraveling the layers of societal influence and conditioning. You’re getting closer to who you are and what you really care about each time. I said farewell to AZ Tek to become something new.

What about the title of the EP – Chameleon Lifestyles? I’ve been exposed to so much that I believe in everything and nothing at the same time. The Chameleon is the only thing that can be free in a zealous world. People feel really strongly about their opinions; they fall into binaries on the far ends of the spectrum. I try not to take myself that serious, it’s limiting. My EP is an analysis on how fake/made up most of reality is. We’ve created a way of life that doesn’t have to be true. We just attach meaning and labels to the chaos – we’re playing reality games. Life is performance; life is theater; we wake up and pretend everyday.

How have people responded to the EP? The most support I’ve ever had. Which sends a message: be yourself and live by your own taste level and standard.

Where can people find it? You can download it for free – FarrWell.com.
Please visit our new location! 3120 Washburn Avenue North

You do not have to leave your neighborhood to find good art.

April Show
2nd Annual MCAD Foundation Drawing Exhibition
April 4th - 26th
Opening Reception
Thursday, April 6th from 6:30pm to 8:30pm

Mention this ad and be entered in a drawing for a free art piece by one of the Homewood Studios resident artists.

A one-of-a-kind midwifery practice serving families in the northwest metro area of Minneapolis.

Comprehensive Prenatal Care
Natural birth in our beautiful birth suites
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VBAC
Unparalleled post birth care in your home

www.rootsbirthcenter.com
1901 44th Ave N,
Minneapolis, MN 55412
612-338-2784

Legends @ the Capri Theater
Judy Garland and Bette Midler Classics
Featuring Erin Schwab and Her Band
April 22, 23
www.thecapritheater.org
TicketWorks: 612-326-1813

JXTA
Juxtaposition Arts

JXTA
Juxtaposition Arts

July 5th-Aug 24th 2017
= = =
Apply Now for Free Summer Art Classes

Complete free visual arts literacy training (VALT) and you become eligible for a job at JXTA!

Contact: enroll@juxtaposition.org
612-588-1148 | juxtaposition.org
2007 Emerson Ave N. Mpls. 55411

Ask our Healthy Homes Team about ways to make your home energy efficient and SAVE money on your energy bills.

Call today! 612.522.0942
Check out upcoming events on Facebook.com/NeighborhoodHub

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Spring Wine Tasting
Thursday, April 13th
5-8pm
Free samplings of Spring & Easter wines.
2220 W Broadway Ave, Minneapolis | 612-522-4384

612 MEDIA CREW
STARTS MARCH 20TH
MONDAYS, 4:30 - 6:30
OAK PARK CENTER
PHOTOGRAPHY
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TELLING YOUR STORY
Want to learn to shoot professional photos? Make your own videos? 612 Media Crew will give you access to professional equipment and teach you to shoot your own professional photos, edit your films, and show the world who you are!
To sign up Contact Francisco Guzman 612-787-3723 or franciscog@pillsburyunited.org

GROCERY NEIGHBORHOOD WELLNESS
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When Mai Neng Moua got married, she asked her family not to collect a “bride price.”

Twelve years, two children, and one enduring marriage later, Moua has finished her first book about the experience – a memoir that explores the devastating consequences she faced when she refused to take part in the Hmong marriage tradition where the family of the groom pays a negotiated price to the parents of the bride in exchange for their daughter.

Moua explains how her marriage to Blong Yang, the current Ward 5 City Council Member, became a battleground for bicultural values – the place where Hmong traditions and tight-knit community conflicted with Western concepts of feminism and individuality. She must repair a deeply broken relationship with her mother and make decisions on how to raise her own daughters in its shadow.

Though the book was initially birthed out of Moua’s anger, sadness, and frustration, it now has a much more public purpose. She hopes it will serve as a catalyst for conversation between young Hmong people and their parents.

“Our parents are not shy about telling us what a Hmong girl or boy should do, but they’re not always good at explaining the reasons behind it,” she said recently to a crowd of mostly Hmong Patrick Henry High School students. 300 students at the school received a copy of her book, and Moua hopes to get grant funding to distribute many more to students at other schools.

By Kenzie O’Keefe

All photos (including cover) by David Pierini
In your book you write, “There are many ways to be Hmong. My way is one way.” What is your way of being Hmong? That question gets at the heart of the book. Hmong parents often give the aura that there is only one way to be Hmong, and that if you vary from that you are a bad person. I’m Christian, not anistm. I speak and read Hmong. I have a Hmong husband. I went to college. I work a 9-5 job. I have two kids, even though Hmong people often have more. I live in America. I’m adjusting to survive and fit in. This is what being Hmong means to me. I’m Hmong even though I didn’t do certain things right and even though I don’t know certain things. Hmong people have adjusted throughout history. That’s how we adapt and survive. The way I’m Hmong is different than my mom, but there are many ways to be Hmong, and the ways that I am Hmong are still Hmong.

Your husband – City Council member Blong Yang – is a key character in your book. You’ve both chosen professional paths of leadership that often come paired with isolation and criticism from your communities. How do you navigate that together?

I think we were both odd ducks growing up. Blong being the oldest in his family, a guy, and being raised by both of his parents had a different status than me – a girl raised by a widow. I didn’t think I would marry Hmong. I thought I was too feminist, too western, and not Hmong enough for Hmong men. When I met Blong, he felt very familiar to me. I couldn’t have done all the stuff I did without him being such a strong backbone for me. He has made me make my own decisions. I wanted a strong Hmong man who, when push comes to shove, is always on my side, not his parents. I got that. I’m really blessed. We try to live that bicultural life, but we are not traditional people. I want our kids to know that when you do things that are against your culture and parents, there are consequences.

You have experienced many consequences for your non-traditional decisions. Were these prices worth paying? Blong was always so proud of me for taking a stand about the bride price, but I was not calm. There were years where I just cried. I felt so lost. Hmong people are supposed to have all this family around. We didn’t here in North Minneapolis. We needed to find, build, and create who we wanted in our circle. I’ve been lucky to have friends both Hmong and non-Hmong who have supported and encouraged me through this soul-searching journey.

What keeps your family living here in North Minneapolis? When we had our two girls, all of the sudden I was aware that I am five feet tall and 100 pounds. It takes a certain toughness to live in North Minneapolis. At one point in time we had to make a decision whether to stay or go. What keeps us here is that we believe we can make a difference. How did this book come to be? What motivated you to reveal your personal struggles and cultural tension so publicly and fearlessly? It took a long, long time to write this book because I was afraid. My relationship with my mom is very important. I didn’t want to disappoint her. I wanted to honor Hmong people and tradition and still be true to myself. Ultimately the struggles I went through, and the issues I dealt with were relevant to Hmong kids today in America, and I want all of us to have a conversation about that.

Explain that conversation. I want young people to use my book as an excuse to have conversations with their parents. It’s important to who we are as Hmong people to be in the know and to ask basic questions. Too often things are swept under the rug – “it’s tradition, that’s what we do; just do it.” I know I’m not the only one struggling with this bi-cultural life.

You write that many American values are not Hmong values: personal independence, unconditional love, direct speech, and agreeing to disagree. How do you navigate that constant balancing act of conflicting cultural values? Most Hmong kids deal with that every day. Their parents are very traditional, but they have to go to school and compete with non-Hmong kids. At home they’re told that a good Hmong kid is quiet, listens, and doesn’t question authority. In the school system, you are asked to lead discussions. You have to speak up and out. It doesn’t work for Hmong kids – we’re told those are bad behaviors! We have to be critical thinkers, and we have to know how to ask questions and stand up and advocate for ourselves. That’s the culture of America. As a Hmong woman, I have to remember where I am at sometimes. When I’m with my husband in a traditional setting, I have to be a good wife and a good daughter. I need to show people I can do those things. I play that role. It’s a hard shift.

In your book you write, “There are many years where I just cried. I felt so lost. Hmong people are supposed to have
“I don’t believe the lie the tobacco companies try to sell me.”

The truth is: 44 percent of Minnesota high school students who smoke use menthol.

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