OWNING THE FUTURE
THE BLACK WOMEN’S WEALTH ALLIANCE INSPIRES BLACK WOMEN TO CULTIVATE FINANCIAL POWER

Kenya McKnight, the founder and president of the Black Women’s Wealth Alliance, is passionate about teaching money management, home ownership, and business development skills to other black women.

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Letter from the Editor

Bravo! Welcome to the February edition of North News. The far-below-freezing temperatures haven’t kept us from being out and about in the community during this first month of the new year. Major stories (like “Wirth Co-op will not reopen” Page 4 and “North High reels from shots fired” Page 3) kept us grabbing our coats and hitting the streets.

Back in the office, we’ve been planning for the year ahead, discussing who and what we want to focus our reporting hours on this year. Though our aim is to be reactive reporters, responding to community events and other coverage needs as they happen, we’re also committed to coverage that keeps a close eye on the bigger picture of certain realities that impact our readers. Last year at this time, we produced a series of stories on housing. This year, we plan to invest similar reporting power in the idea of economic justice: how is the community responding to decades of disinvestment and trauma? How are North Minneapolis populations setting themselves up for financial health for generations to come? To kickoff this series, we bring you our cover story about Kenya McKnight and the Black Women’s Wealth Alliance, a public-benefit corporation working to ensure black women have the tools they need to build wealth (Page 22).

This month we also spent two days at the Minnesota Newspaper Association’s annual conference in Bloomington. We attended as “exhibitors,” advertising a different conference we’re helping organize: Truth and Transformation: Changing Racial Narratives in Media, a two-day, free experience aimed at helping news professionals uncover their own biases and assumptions, and amplifying community solutions to narrative change. We’re putting on the conference with a coalition of other media and academic organizations, including MPR, KMOJ, and ThreeSixty Journalism. It will take place at Hamline University on March 19-20. Learn more about the conference and the research we’re doing in preparation for it at www.narrativechange.news.

We also wrapped up our first semesters of the school year at both North High, where we’ve taught for two and a half school years now, and Patrick Henry High, where we just started teaching this year. In Aug. 2018, Henry launched its new Community Connected Program, a project-based learning project. As part of the program curriculum, North News reporter Cirien Saadeh was invited to work with a small team of Henry students to produce a school newspaper, called Area 44 (the first edition of which can be found on our website). Easily locate student work throughout this issue by looking for the blue pencil and ruler circle logos that introduce their stories.

Teaching at Henry has been a special experience for our education and small business staff reporter, Cirien Saadeh. She says, “Teaching is not easy work. I’m at Henry a couple hours a day, a couple times a week. I’m so impressed with the diligence of our educators in doing the work every day and in my students too. They come prepared, they come with questions, they’re taking full opportunity of every bit of the course they can and they’re looking forward to seeing their names in the newspaper next to the words “Student Reporter.” Starting the week this paper delivers, our partnership with Henry will shift from in-class teaching to student internships with North News mentorship. Our hope is to one day be at Henry year-round, but right now we’re thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to build our vision for a community journalism school, expand the presence of students in North News, and build deeper relationships with Henry High.

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North News is produced in partnership with Pillsbury United Communities and by the Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota.

In Fall 2018, North News’ reporter Cirien Saadeh (pictured far left) began teaching a journalism class at North High School, taught in partnership with Pillsbury United Communities, and the Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation. The paper produces news student newspaper, on Jan. 8. On Jan. 10, our newest star reporters, Datelle Straub and Danae Lawson (center) visited the State Capitol for a behind-the-scenes tour, a meeting with Cearah Hamilton (pictured far right), legislative assistant for Senator Bobby Joe Champion; and a visit with John Croman from KARE 11.

In August 2018, North News’ reporter Cirien Saadeh (center) visited the State Capitol for a behind-the-scenes tour, a meeting with Cearah Hamilton (far right), legislative assistant for Senator Bobby Joe Champion; and a visit with John Croman from KARE 11.

North News launches Henry High program

In Fall 2018, North News’ reporter Cirien Saadeh (pictured far left) began teaching a journalism class at North High School, taught in partnership with Pillsbury United Communities, and the Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation. The paper produces news student newspaper, on Jan. 8. On Jan. 10, our newest star reporters, Datelle Straub and Danae Lawson (center) visited the State Capitol for a behind-the-scenes tour, a meeting with Cearah Hamilton (far right), legislative assistant for Senator Bobby Joe Champion; and a visit with John Croman from KARE 11.

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INSIDE OUR “O”

Thanks to the City of Minneapolis’ Art in Public Places Program, there are three new pieces of public art on the Northside, including Esther Osayande’s homage to Prince, a “Purple Raindrop” in Farview Park. The others are a “Big Book” by Christopher Aaron Deanes at Nellie Stone Johnson Community School and an archway “Aqurbane” by Christopher Harrison on Theodore Wirth Parkway. By Daija Triplett

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Henry High to host 100 Black Men Strong

100 Black Men Strong, hosted by Patrick Henry High School, connects community mentors and black male students for a daylong event at the State Capitol and the high school. This year it will take place on Feb. 8 from 9am-2pm. 100 Black Men Strong is organized by Henry family liaison and public relations coordinator Quinton Bonds. “With the current state of politics in the United States, it is important for young people to see their role in society and how politics impacts them; so our young black men of PHHS along with the black male staff at PHHS invite black men in the community to stand in solidarity,” reads the event’s Facebook page. The event is now in its sixth year.

Emily’s F&M Cafe is still for sale

Despite discussions of a maybe-sale in Nov. 2018, Emily’s F&M Cafe is still for sale and still open for business. In November, Stories Foundation expressed interest in the property, but Executive Director Stephanie Page has said that the non-profit was unable to raise the needed money and has stepped back, though they are still interested in the property.

North High reels from shots fired and a student’s death

Two shots were fired through the front door of North High School on Jan 16. No one was hurt or injured and no arrests have been made in connection with the incident. After the shots were fired, the school was locked down, but classes resumed as normal after the incident, and school opened as usual the next day. A number of students indicate that the shots were intended as a threat to a group of students in the building. In response to that incident and the death of a beloved student, Keimonte White, the weekend before, a community prayer circle made up of local leaders, parents, coaches, and other trusted adults formed outside North High School the next day to “put a cover over students as they exited the building, said Polars basketball coach Larry Mackenzie. “We need more opportunities for our kids. Our students are facing too many tragedies and walking past murder scenes on a daily basis,” said event organizer and parent Sharon El-Amin.

Riverfront land on Plymouth is becoming luxury apartments

The Opus Group has started construction for River Loop, a six story, 218 unit, market rate, multi-family, luxury apartment building located on the intersection of West River Parkway and Plymouth Ave. N. The building will be “situated on 2.5 acres adjacent to the Mississippi River, one of the area’s last remaining open spaces on the nation’s longest river,” according to their website. The complex is expected to be finished by spring 2020.

North Minneapolis rec center to receive Final Four funds

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has chosen North Minneapolis’ North Commons Park for their 2019 Final Four Legacy Project. The Final Four tournament will be held at US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis this year. According to the NCAA, the full project at North Commons “will provide the community center new backboards, rims, safety straps and wall padding, a new wireless PA system, LED light system, custom paint job, refurbished basketball court and a youth inspired mural.” The updates will be unveiled in early April.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is moving to North Minneapolis

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities is moving its headquarters to North Minneapolis in 2020. Their new offices will be near the Washington Ave. and Lowry Ave. intersection.

Northside business owner teaches others how to open their own food businesses

Sammy McDowell, owner of Sammy’s Avenue Eatery (1101 W Broadway Ave.), is offering two classes for aspiring food business owners on Feb. 2 and March 7. The classes are being hosted in collaboration with Minneapolis Public Schools. McDowell will teach practical strategies and other ideas to consider before opening up your own food business. Topics include: creating a food business concept, researching competitors, pricing, community engagement, and goal setting. The classes will be offered at Sammy’s Avenue Eatery.

City purchases two properties at 44th and Penn Avenues N

The City of Minneapolis recently purchased two properties at the Penn and 44th Avenues N intersection. Victory Neighborhood Association (ViNA) leaders and community members met on Jan. 23 to discuss the future of those properties.

Food goes from freight container to fork at Oak Park Center

Bianca Hott (front) gets ready to harvest lettuce that has been growing in the Freight Farm, a vertical growing system inside a converted freight car, at the Oak Park Community Center. Pillsbury United Communities received a grant for the farm last year, and staff have just begun harvesting the first crops of lettuce, herbs and other greens for meals served at Oak Park’s Community Cafe. Photo by David Pierini
Wirth Co-op will not reopen
By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

After ten months of “temporary” closure, leaders close to Wirth Co-op have confirmed that the store will not reopen.

“The co-op has permanently closed,” said Pat Paulson, who has been a co-op board member since shortly before the store opened in Oct. 2017. According to Paulson, co-op staff had put together a plan in partnership with the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON) to reopen after its temporary closure. In Nov. 2018, Devean George, the co-op’s landlord, abruptly decided to break the lease.

“NEON was going to put up the money to buy the produce and help the co-op get off of its feet when it reopened,” said D’Wayne Morris, who does business advising for NEON and worked closely on the partnership with Wirth. “The landlord decided to go in a different direction and cut the lease with Wirth Co-op.”

Despite numerous attempts, Devean George could not be reached for comment. The former co-op space now has a new tenant. According to a Dec. 6 Board Action Request from the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, there is a lease between NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Hennepin County, and the Commons at Penn, the mixed-use complex where the co-op was located. NorthPoint will temporarily relocate its food shelf to the co-op’s former home for an estimated two years, said Stella Whitney-West, NorthPoint’s CEO. According to Whitney-West, NorthPoint’s Hennepin County real estate team had brought forth the option of moving into the space.

“We wanted to make sure that we weren’t taking the place of the co-op, because it’s our hope that the co-op would be able to come back and operate at that location,” said Whitney-West. “We do believe that it is important that, if they are able to do that, that they are able to do so. But, in the meantime, it seemed to work out since we needed to relocate the food shelf and the space was available.”

NEON was brought in as a consultant to support Wirth Co-op in April 2018. At the time it had hired an independent financial advisor who produced real financials and accurate numbers for the co-op. Prior to the co-op’s hiatus, the co-op’s finances were a mess. The business suffered from poor management, off base sales projections, and criticism from community members who felt that the co-op’s merchandise did not accurately reflect the community’s needs due to the cost of co-op products, the available options, and the mixture of both healthy products and junk food.

Paulson says the community supported the co-op, but it just didn’t make enough money. To be sustainable, Wirth needed to bring in $90,000 each month; instead it brought in an average of $30,000 a month.

“We don’t blame the community. The support was there. We could have done more research, we could have anticipated differently, maybe we could have planned for different products,” said Paulson. He said the co-op’s small size and location were also challenging.

“The grocery business was very competitive. There was a lot of high hopes for a healthy food store in North Minneapolis, but we lacked revenue. My opinion is we were not quite big enough to buy wholesale products at a good rate that would then allow us to sell those products at an affordable rate. There was also not enough population density and not enough of a population with disposable income,” said Paulson.

Those were not the only challenges Wirth faced. According to former Board President Roya Damsaz, who left the board in May of 2017, the co-op lacked parking and did not have the community partnerships it needed to sustain itself. She cites North Market, which opened in Camden in Dec. 2017, as a model that Wirth Co-op could have looked to, in terms of the grocery store’s community relationships, mixed use community spaces, and wellness clinic in partnership with North Memorial Health.

North Market is owned by Pillsbury United Communities which also owns North News.

Damsaz also holds the community partially responsible for the co-op’s failure. “The community did not seem to need or even want the co-op. Most people did not understand the concept of a co-op,” she said. According to Damsaz, many of the co-op’s supporters were from outside of the community; individuals who invested in Wirth Co-op because of their personal commitment to cooperatives.

The size of the co-op may have contributed to its issues as well. “We were not selling enough merchandise to be able to break even,” said Paulson, who notes that the co-op’s merchandising line was just too small, and that the co-op did not have the opportunity to lower its prices for buyers, because it could not buy the affordable wholesale goods that it needed because of its small size. That, alongside the other challenges the store and its leadership faced, led to the co-op’s failure.

“The challenges were beyond the normal start-up. I don’t think that within the board we had enough experience to handle that. Our general manager did not have the experience; we did not have the experience. The situation was extremely complicated,” said Paulson.

Morris and Paulson say that every effort was made to save the co-op, which they saw as a resource for Northside residents and as a community-centered wealth-building opportunity.

“We took a few feedback recommendations to the board. First, we recommended that they hire a general manager with grocery experience. We recommended a GM with ten years experience. Second, we gave them direction on merchandising, products the community actually wanted instead of what we thought were good products. We advised on hiring a new accountant, along with board training,” said Morris. “We would share the recommendations with the board, but it was a volunteer board who lacked time and capacity to implement the recommendations.”

Members have not received any form of official communication from the board about the store’s closure and none of the leaders who spoke with North News knew of official plans to do so. Several of the board members listed on the co-op’s website

Continued on Page 17
Catch up with Our Council Members

**WARD 4:** Phillipe Cunningham

Neighbors, The Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) site is a barge that closed operations in 2015. It is 48 acres of industrial land currently owned by the City of Minneapolis, which is close to one mile of riverfront access. The area in its current condition disconnects our community from the river and does not serve our community’s unique wants or needs.

The City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and United Properties entered into an “exclusive rights agreement,” which gave the MPRB and United Properties rights to the land. United Properties then brought on First Ave Productions, Thor, Juxtaposition Arts, and Coen & Partners for a collaboration. Largely led by Juxta youth, the development team worked together to do 18 months of community engagement.

A Concept Plan is an unusual step in the traditional redevelopment process; most go directly from signing the contract to presenting the finalized plan. This is meant to the check-in for an update, provide feedback on the direction, and give the developers enough of a framework to begin securing financing and funding.

Once we have clarity around the development team structure, I support the Phase 1 Concept Plan moving forward because the benefits that are already on the table far outweigh the cost of delaying or starting over.

Community benefits in Phase 1 include:
- The first floor of every building will be owned by the community through a trust, nonprofit, or another mechanism to leverage the space for Northside entrepreneurs to open businesses.
- The lawn of the CPAC will remain in public ownership leased to First Ave Productions and will be open to the public around 300 days a year.
- A 100,000 square feet community hub that will have a focus on urban agriculture and possibly an integrated utility hub that produces low-cost renewable energy to the nearby community.
- Almost 20 acres of new riverfront park and parkway with land the City gave to the Parks for free.
- Whereas, denying, delaying, or stopping the process could cost us $15M in state bonding dollars for the public infrastructure and the potential for future redevelopment of this industrial barrier to our riverfront.
- There is also now a UHT Community Advisory Committee to address the lack of systemic infrastructure for impacted community members to have the power to make choices in such a large development that will impact our community. This committee will be tasked with delving into the project details and making informed choices based on trade-offs and community preferences. They will also lead strategies for deeper community participation and agency that is reflected in the project development process. This committee is to ensure directly impacted community members have a seat and direct voice in the process beyond just me. I will share more information about how to apply for this committee on our Ward 4 Facebook page: www.facebook.com/CMCunninghamWard4.

**WARD 5:** Jeremiah Ellison

Fannie Lou Hamer—an indomitable force in the civil rights movement—once said, “You can pray until you faint, but unless you get up and try to do something, God is not going to put it in your lap.” Those words weigh heavy on my mind lately, as I consider the Northside, our history, and the challenges we face moving forward.

In this past year, I’ve been asked to address the problems of the neighborhood in ways that betray core beliefs of mine. And I refuse to believe that the solutions on the table are the only solutions available. I will not address violence by criminalizing our youth; I will not spur development by selling the Northside for cheap. I will not displace vulnerable tenants just to stick it to an irresponsible landlord. But I’m also not content letting those injustices just be either. So, what are the remedies?

Entering Black History Month—a month typically reserved for celebrating the past—I’m reflecting on the future. And while North Minneapolis is not only a black neighborhood, its history as a place that black people in Minneapolis have repeatedly called home is undeniable.

North Minneapolis has long been a place where the city has parked its “undesirable” populations. At the height of American anti-Semitism, Jewish people called North Minneapolis home. Today, along with black people, immigrant groups, including Hmong, Somalis, and Latinos, are referring to the Northside as home. But now, “the market”—the nickname that refers to the ways in which rich people spend their money—also wants to call the Northside home. And that wouldn’t really be a problem, but, as I’ve come to learn, once the market sets its sights on your space, it doesn’t really like to share.

The future for many black communities has taken the form of gentrification—a term that describes the literal and cultural displacement of the people and character of a neighborhood. The market has certainly picked the Northside as its new frontier, but we have not yet seen the type of displacement that has taken place in Seattle, Portland, Oakland, Brooklyn, Austin, and the list could go on. What I’m saying is, we’re still in a position to “solve” gentrification.

The thinking goes: if you want to be able to afford your neighborhood, it has to be rundown or lack amenities. Or, you can have the amenities, but then you’ll be priced out of your neighborhood and new, wealthier people will come to replace you. But what kind of choice is that? Not one I’ll accept.

The new year has brought some challenges to the Northside—gentrification is just one. Bullets hit the exterior of North High—thank God no one was hurt. Wirh Co-op struggled to succeed and ultimately closed its doors. Thor has fallen on hardship. The remedies to our challenges are not obvious, but I’ve always been a big believer that more heads are better than one—it is not and never will be my intention to govern without your help.

I will continue to have open office hours every Saturday at Sammy’s from 10 a.m.—noon. I will continue to put out regular newsletters. But I want to double down on my collaboration with you. If you, your group, mosque or church, your organization or business want me to attend your gathering or meeting, please reach out—I assure you, no group is too small for me to come spend time with. I won’t always have the perfect remedy, but I also know that God is not going to put it in our lap either.

In the meantime, I hope to see everyone at our next Peoples’ Assembly on Tuesday, February 5th, at UROC from 5–7:45 p.m.

Thank you, and as always, I look forward to seeing you out in the community! Call my office at 612-673-2205 or email me at wards5@minneapolismn.gov.
An unclear future

Northside neighborhood associations worry about how the City’s plan for community engagement after 2020 will impact them.

By Kenzie O’Keefe Editor

The city’s funding source for neighborhood associations (NAs) to do community engagement work will dry up come Jan. 1, 2021. NA leaders in North Minneapolis fear that the process to determine how the city does engagement after that time may significantly weaken their ability to serve their communities.

Minneapolis’ 70 NAs are independent nonprofits, primarily, and often entirely, funded through two city sources: the Community Participation Program (CPP) and The Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP).

CPP, the sunsetting source of community engagement funding, is supported by property taxes gathered through a tax-increment financing district that will expire at the end of 2019. “Come Jan. 1, 2021 there is no longer an ongoing funding stream for neighborhood organizations in the City. That’s the date we need to have everything in place to be able to continue with our place-based neighborhood system in the city,” said David Rubedor, director of the City’s Neighborhood and Community Relations Department (NCR), which serves as a liaison between NAs and the city.

City leaders appear committed to funding community engagement efforts out of the the city’s general fund in the future, but exactly how NAs factor into the engagement strategy and the level of funding they will receive is up for discussion.

NAs have been criticized by NCR and community members for lacking diversity and being inaccessible to their residents. Some Northside NAs, like Folwell and Webber Camden, have undergone significant leadership overhauls in recent years in response to that criticism. NCR has been implicated in the dysfunction, accused by several NA leaders of providing inadequate support and financial oversight.

“NCR has been tasked with overseeing our work. They have failed miserably,” said Cleveland NA Executive Director Kirstel Porter.

Rubedor says it’s more complicated: “When neighborhoods experience significant conflict, which is often the case with major leadership changes, NCR’s role is to make sure the NA follows the CPP program guidelines, adheres to its own governance, such as bylaws, and offer conflict resolution support if and when possible. We don’t advocate for one particular side of the conflict. This can leave some residents frustrated.”

A collective of Northside NA leaders, including Porter, meet monthly in a group called the Northside Neighborhood Council (NNC). Together they have been advocating for city support that empowers them to implement supports and services specific to the unique needs of their neighbors.

“What we want is a more minimal structure that could support the work while allowing each NA its autonomy,” said Dani Tietjen, chair of the NNC and staff member at Folwell NA.

As the city evaluates its community engagement strategy, Rubedor says there is a desire to take a more “comprehensive” approach by bringing together the city’s “place-based” and “people-based” strategies. Right now, NAs are critical to place-based engagement strategies and cultural groups and organizations have been vital to “people-based” engagement.

NAs received over eight million dollars in city funding in 2018. “People-based” funding received around $257K, according to Rubedor. Some leaders from Northside NAs worry that the city’s effort to bring together these strategies will lead to money being siphoned away from their budgets.

“We are fighting to be valued at the city level as necessary agents of place-based organizing. While our history is complicated, major work has happened in turning these institutions into vibrant, reflective, agents of change,” said Tietjen.

Rubedor is sympathetic to that fear. “I can easily see where neighborhood organizations may feel it adds more competition to the pot in essence; that we’re spreading it thinner. That’s not really the intent here,” he said.

Porter says NAs offer more than just place-based engagement. “People-based’ engagement is what we do every day. We are intentional about understanding the needs of our white, black, Hmong, Native American, Latino, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, LGBT, disabled communities, etc.” she said.

“As we move forward, when we move from a framework and actually into the program, making sure that we don’t adversely affect it to result in one against the other but to be really a symbiotic relationship where they’re supporting each other,” Rubedor said.

Additionally, Rubedor says the city hopes to make its community engagement processes more simple; they want to see representation in NA leadership diversified, and they want to implement better service from NCR staff. “We know we can do better,” he said, promising that NCR would “shift” moving forward.

THE FUTURE PLANNING PROCESS

To have a plan in place for the future of city-supported community engagement work by the time CPP funds are gone, NCR initiated a project called Neighborhoods 2020. Neighborhoods 2020 began in 2017 when city staff held five open community meetings across the city to gather community input from over 700 attendees. “That was really the beginning of this conversation on what should we be doing with our neighborhood organizations and also why they are important,” said Rubedor.

In May of 2018, NCR brought findings to the City Council, which established three workgroups comprised of neighborhood association and community-based organization representatives and city government appointees. They were charged with coming up with recommendations for: 1) programs, funding and implementation, 2) governance structure and 3) a citywide community engagement framework.

According to NCR, those workgroups met 28 times be-
Community concern and THOR's financial woes complicate UHT planning

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

The future of the Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) redevelopment has hit a bumpy road. The project’s subdeveloper, THOR Companies, a North Minneapolis-based business, announced financial restructuring and massive layoffs after a Star Tribune story revealed that they have been unable to pay back $7 million in loans used to build their brand new property on Penn Ave. and Plymouth. They will soon be controlled by a court-appointed receivership. At the same time, Northside community leaders have been increasingly loud in their dissatisfaction with the UHT concept plan. Leaders like Roxanne O’Brien want to see the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board take six more months minimum to further engage the Northside community, which they say have not had a chance to provide adequate input.

“I would say give it at least six months to do more engagement with people around development concerns. They’ve done engagement around things like what people want as far as amenities in the parks. But what kind of ideas people want after the concept plan has already been stamped through. I think that the problem is, first of all, North Minneapolis doesn’t need a large hotel on the side of the river. We need housing. And for people to be concerned about other people’s entertainment first before helping out a community that’s been exploited for decades, that’s not right,” said O’Brien, an environmental justice leader who works as a Green Zone Organizer and lives in the community.

THOR Companies has spent the last two years working alongside First Ave. Productions and United Properties, the primary developer on the project’s concept plan. The announcement of their financial woes led Councilmember Phillipe Cunningham (Ward 4) to ask to postpone a crucial vote on the redevelopment’s concept plan from a Jan. 22 meeting of the City Council’s Economic Development and Regulatory Services Committee to the Feb. 5 meeting.

“I feel very positively about the Phase One Concept Plan. The elements and aspects within it, I think, really speak to a lot of the issues, and wants and needs that have been expressed by the community. And I think it’s also really flexible, that there’s still room for a lot of community voice, and choices and decisions to be made moving forward,” said Cunningham. “But, I will say that my confidence has been shaken in the fact that one of the sub-developers, THOR, is having financial troubles.”

According to a Star Tribune article published on Jan. 16, THOR has had difficulty paying back almost $7 million in loans to its lender Sunrise Banks, which has led Sunrise Banks to raise a $3 million lawsuit against them. Target Corp. has been paying off THOR’s loans and up until recently the Metro-politan Economic Development Agency had been helping THOR companies renegotiate its loans, but, according to a separate Star Tribune article, they no longer have a role because of the lawsuit. THOR has also had massive layoffs and CEO Ravi Norman, who took over as the project lead of the UHT re-development project after the former project lead D’Angelos Svenkson left, has also resigned. Svenkson is now the Chairman and CEO of NEOO Partners Inc, according to his LinkedIn profile. According to his LinkedIn profile, Norman is now listed as the CEO of Norman Global Enterprises.

The impact of THOR’s financial difficulties and massive layoffs on the UHT redevelopment project is still unknown. THOR is a project subdeveloper, but it has also taken the lead on community engagement efforts in North Minneapolis and, specifically, across the 4th Ward. That community engagement effort has also been the subject of much community ire with dozens of Northside environmental justice activists like O’Brien arguing that project partners failed to truly hear North Minneapolis residents’ concerns and issues.

“It just feels like disingenuous of the city to not demand better quality community engagement, engagement that is actually relevant to the people who are out here, the businesses that are already out here, and the families,” said O’Brien. “It’s just a slap in the face that here’s this once in a lifetime opportunity to have a development that really speaks to the people. They’re checking off the box of, well, we talked to this many people, but they didn’t talk to people about the possibilities of people’s rate increasing or the possibilities of them taking up all their space along the river that could be designated for low-income housing. Northside doesn’t want to just keep having developments built in our name. We want to build them. We want to design them. We want to lead on these concepts, but we’re not asked and we’re not given the resources that have been promised to do so.”

In a response to community concerns regarding UHT engagement, Cunningham has formed a UHT Community Advisory Committee, made up of Northside residents and development partners. The committee’s work will be focused on ensuring that there is equitable and inclusive engagement in the UHT redevelopment process.

According to Kate Lamers, project lead with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, the Feb. 5 vote should not significantly delay the redevelopment planning process. “From the Park Board’s perspective, we still are moving ahead with trying to provide a park. But I’m not positive how [THOR’s difficulties] will impact the city’s plans,” said Lamers.

According to Senator Bobby Joe Champion, who represents North Minneapolis in the Minnesota State Senate, North Minneapolis’ elected officials will be sitting down with THOR Companies in the next week to get a better understanding of the situation and figure out next steps.

To learn more about the UHT redevelopment, visit upperharbormpls.com.
One semester done

By Azhae’la Hanson Contributor

My first semester of college is over and after some much needed time back in the beautiful North, I have had time to reflect on my experience. I currently attend Xavier University of Louisiana, an HBCU in the heart of New Orleans, LA. Living in this beautiful city comes with many perks: new adventures every weekend and constantly discovering the city’s long and complex history. My university and the city of NOLA has a community that radiates warm heartedness and hospitality much like North Minneapolis.

I was very anxious starting college as every first year student is. Prior to attending Xavier, I had no friends, family, or a familiar place to call home in Louisiana. My most important takeaway from my first semester is that your mental health is the most important part of college, and you have to be in the right mind to complete anything. There are insecurities beyond the classroom that you will face. Being in a university that is dominated by science majors, influenced me to start comparing my intellect with others’ and devaluing my purpose on campus. I had to learn that having mental strength and a strong sense of self awareness will help you succeed. I am in college to fulfill my purpose and my expectations of myself, not someone else’s.

Being at an HBCU has definitely been a life changing experience. North High is a predominately black school, so the transition to Xavier, which is also predominantly black, has been amazing. I am being educated around people like myself now at the collegiate level. It gives me hope and proves my wholehearted belief that young people of color can achieve our goals in academia. While living in a space where black excellence is the norm, I miss North Minneapolis often.

For so long people of color have been put in this system of mental oppressional captivity; it is perpetuated to keep communities of color in America from blossoming to their full potential. Unfortunately, many public school systems such as MPS fail to help our black students, especially those from low income areas like North Minneapolis. MPS has failed me and countless students by teaching us to “just deal with it.” That attitude is deeply rooted in how communities of color are expected to behave towards our disparities and circumstances.

I went through an interesting journey to attend Xavier and oddly enough, ended up right where I needed to be. I have grown so much at my HBCU and there are so many opportunities for me to take charge on campus and in NOLA. Slowly but surely, I will make the community a better place. My advice? The day you settle is the day they win. Be a champion.
The school board report
Our education reporter brings you the latest news from MPS

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

Newly elected and re-elected MPS members were sworn in on Jan. 15. Kimberly Caprini, a Northsider and new at-large Board Member, was also voted in as the Board’s Vice Chair. Alongside Caprini, Josh Pauly was elected to his first term in office and Siad Ali, Nelson Inz, and Jenny Arneson were re-elected.

In Dec. 2018, MPS’ independent auditor Bergen-KDV presented the results of his audit of the district’s finances through June 2018. According to the auditor, MPS has been able to control its spending and raise revenue. According to Bergen-KDV, the district’s deficit has also been cut, though its Fund Balance remains short.

During the Jan. 15 board meeting, the board passed a resolution which instructs Superintendent Ed Graff to begin negotiating his new contract.

The board also passed a resolution instructing Graff to begin negotiating a new contract beginning in Aug. 2020 between MPS and Minneapolis Police Department regarding School Resource Officers. Caprini abstained from the vote and Kerry Jo Felder (District 2) voted against it.

2017-2019 contract agreements with the principals and adult-education teachers unions were agreed upon. They had previously expired in June 2017.

Enrollment for the 2019-2020 school year is now open. Visit schoolrequest.mpls.k12.mn.us for more information. School requests are due Feb. 8.

Feb. 9 is the the district’s first, all-girls, citywide chess tournament at Folwell Performing Arts Magnet (3611 20th Ave S). The tournament is free and open to all female K-12 students. The tournament includes a lunch, as well as breakfast and goes from 8:30am-4pm. The day will end with an awards ceremony for individuals and teams. For more information, visit: alc.mpls.k12.mn.us/chess_2

The next MPS Business Meeting will be held on Feb. 12, beginning at 5:30pm. The next Committee of the Whole will be held on March 1, beginning at 6pm. Both will be located at the MPS Davis Center (1250 W Broadway Ave.).

Educator spotlight Quinton Bonds

Quinton Bonds is a longtime staff member at Patrick Henry High School. Photo by Cirien Saadeh

By Danae Lawson and Datelle Straub
Patrick Henry Student Reporters Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

Quinton Bonds has been at Patrick Henry High School since 2010. As Public Relations Coordinator, Mr. Bonds liaises with family and the larger Northside community. But he’s also the advisor to LINK Leaders (Henry’s student ambassadors), the Senior Committee, the school’s new student council, and its step team. He’s also the school’s graduation coordinator. Mr. Bonds holds a Master's Degree in marriage and family therapy, but after receiving his undergraduate degree he began working in the Admissions Office at the University of Minnesota. His work at the U introduced him to Henry, and he says that he visited the school often and felt at home there. It was there that he met Henry’s Principal, Yusuf Abdullah, back when Principal Abdullah was working with Achieve MPLS. When Principal Abdullah left Achieve MPLS to join the Henry community as a dean, Mr. Bonds moved into his role at Achieve MPLS and then joined the Patrick Henry community in 2010. Mr. Bonds was recommended to North News as our next Educator Spotlight, because of his commitment to the Henry community, which students say he calls a “Phamily.” Mr. Bonds is also looking to go into school administration with the hopes of one day becoming a school principal.

Why do you think it’s important to develop student leadership? Well I always operate under the assumption that I can’t assume that I know what’s best for person A, B, C, D. I can’t make that assumption. I have to be at the table to have that conversation, especially with students and I need to be able to ask “What do you need?” I’m not gonna assume that you need this, I’m not gonna assume that you want this. It’s really important for students to be able to inform us, as educators, as to what they need. And so part of being able to articulate that need is developing a leader. I think it’s really important for student voices to be heard, because I think our students are what drive the schools.

What is your dream for Henry students? My dream for Henry students is that they go and be productive citizens in our country. My hope is that it looks like something that’s fulfilling for each of them. Whether it is a career, or a job right after here, or college, going to a college-university, I just want all of our students to have a plan and be confident in that plan.

Do you consider yourself a natural caretaker? You know, I’m naturally empathetic and so I do have a natural sense to empathize with people. I don’t know, I guess I never thought of myself as a caretaker, but maybe, wow. I never thought of myself that way. I just care about people. I just care about humanity and it’s one of the things that I’m really passionate about.

What are your hobbies or things you do outside of school? I’m active in my church. I actually coach the step team at my church, I do like to travel when I can. I really enjoyed London. I liked the chocolate, I know that sounds really weird, but it’s super good. I like movies a lot. Netflix is my deal, and On Demand. Redbox is my friend. I like movies and I like to hang out with my friends, but I’m more of a relaxed guy. When I can, I go home to my family in Milwaukee. I’m more of a homebody, but I’m okay with that.

Have you considered going into traditional teaching? You know what? I like where I am. I like being where I’m at because it does allow me to be flexible and to wear multiple hats. I think, in my role, I have been given opportunities to teach, not necessarily with the traditional lesson plan and all the other good stuff, but I had opportunities to teach many life lessons. I’m more of that guy, the one teaching the soft skills and all the other good stuff. I do feel, even though I’m not in the classroom, that when I do have interactions with students learning is definitely taking place.

What was your favorite class in high school? My favorite class went back and forth between English and then history. I loved history a lot. I still like history a lot.

What is your five-year plan? I plan to stick around here at Henry for quite some time, actually, as a part of my plan, but I’m actually in the beginning stages of planning a transition into administration. I plan to begin work on my principal licensure.

North News launched this column to highlight the work of Northside educators doing innovative and socially just work in our North Minneapolis classrooms. If you have any recommendations for our upcoming spotlights, email North News at cirien@pillsburyunited.org. Please provide contact information for the person you recommend.
Lost without them

Students report on the presence of smartphones in their lives

By Amaea Brown, Eddie Beamon, Xavius Tran, Andrianna Bynum, Don'tayeh Hill, Taiyana Richmond, Timya Carlisle, Frank Blount, Alanna Smith, Imari Vaughn, and Deshawn Davis
North High Student Reporters

Many teens spend almost every hour of every school day on their phones. In our North High journalism class, 15 students submitted their screen time data for a week. The class average was six hours and 36 mins per day. Many students spent over nine hours on their phones per day. One spent eleven hours and 45 minutes.

“Teens are way too addicted to their phones,” said freshmen Rayvon Hicks.

“I be feeling naked without my phone. ...I just like knowing it’s there,” said freshmen Joy Cunningham.

Snapchat is the app that teens report using most. “Mainly when people are talking to each other they are on their phones doing Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat,” said freshmen Kenneth Van Mieghem.

“Nowadays everything revolves around our phones. Now I know that some kids do go outside and play basketball, but the first thing they do when they get done is go to their phones,” said Hicks.

THE EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

A newsletter sent to North High parents in January says the school enforces the district’s phone policy. The policy is that cell phone use is limited to before and after school, during lunch, during passing time, during class only when the teacher permits it for educational purposes, and only during the school day for personal purposes by permission from the school permission or the principal’s designee. “The short answer is it’s supposed to be for educational purposes. If it’s not for educational purposes, then it has no place in school,” said Assistant Principal Steve White.

But White says that North High does not “follow that policy entirely at the moment.” He says almost every teacher has a slightly different approach to handling phone use in their classrooms.

AP US History Teacher Tom Lachermeier gets creative. Instead of telling students to get off their phones, he throws paper balls at them if they have their phones out.

“Students get irritated with ‘put your phone away, put your phone away, put your phone away.’ Most of them think it’s funny and put their phones away,” he said. He also gives extra credit to students who turn in their phones at the beginning of class. “They’re more focused in class and not on their phones.”

“If the phone is completely away, you won’t have temptations,” he said. When phones are out, students miss things in class. “Students will ask a question and all the other people will be like ‘we just went over that.’” said Lachermeier.

Lachermeier says he tries not to take it personally when students are on their phones during his lessons. “I don’t think anyone is trying to personally disrespect me,” he said. “It is frustrating when you teach something and students are asking questions about something you literally just went over.”

“In an ideal world, students make good choices with their phones. Anytime you force someone to do something, it’s difficult. In general, making more rules does not help. But the flip side is that sometimes people don’t always make good choices for themselves,” said Lachermeier.

North High student Mohamad Mohamad says his daily screen time average is just under nine hours per day. “I use it a lot throughout the day, but I can use it responsibly. During class I mainly listen to music with it. I don’t use anything else because it can be distracting and stop me from learning and lose participation points during class. I feel like I use it more responsibly compared to other students,” he said.

White is concerned about the impact phones have on learning at the high school. “This is the single biggest wrecker of learning in the school,” he said. “Other Minneapolis schools have gone from where we are to full implementation of [the district’s policy]. It’s been a little bouncy at first but they come through it. They come through it and everybody is better for it.”

Despite his frustration, Lachermeier is empathetic: “I know there are times when I should be paying attention at home or at church and I have my phone out.”

Others say that being on their phone during school is helpful to their education. “Listening to music. It helps me get my work done,” said Cunningham.

Student teacher Felicia Kelly sees phone use in school as helpful and harmful. “It depends on the application. ...If you use it for Kahoot or if you do research or you need to do something, it can help. But it can also be

"This is the single biggest wrecker of learning in the school."
Find support filing your taxes here in the community

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

Filing taxes in Minnesota is expected to be more difficult than usual this year because of the new differences between the state and federal tax systems. Luckily, there are many trustworthy, low cost, and even free resources in the community that are available to ease the burden of tax preparation this season.

When preparing to file your taxes, bring a photo ID, social security cards for yourself and your dependents, tax documents (like W2s and 1099s) from employers, pensions, banks, and documents pertinent to rental properties and home ownership.

Prepare & Prosper

P+P is a VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)-certified, 48-year-old financial wellness organization. P+P provides tax and financial services paired with money mentorship. Tax services are provided FREE for individuals who make less than $35,000 annually and families making $55,000 or less, though there are other requirements, as well.

"Free is free," said Katy Schultz, tax and financial services director for P+P. "Tax season is a money moment, an easy actionable time to get ahead."

During tax season, from Jan. 26 through April 15, P+P provides services at nine locations including the Minneapolis Urban League (2100 Plymouth Ave. N.), by appointment only, and the East Side Neighborhood Services (1700 NE 2nd St.), for walk-in appointments. The rest of the year they work out of their St. Paul offices off of University Ave. They provide services for individuals, families, and some small businesses, but are unable to serve members of the military. For more information visit prepareandprosper.org/free-tax-preparation/ or call 651-287-0187.

Adam’s Tax Service

Adam’s is a locally owned tax service and accounting firm located at 3354 Sheridan Ave N. The business, named for owner and accountant Christopher Adams, is rated one of the top ten places to get your taxes done in Minneapolis by Prime Buyer’s Report. Services are provided for individuals, families, and small businesses.

Adam's recommends that tax filers unsure of how to prepare for their appointment call him. "I'd rather spend 30 minutes on the phone talking you through how to prepare for your appointment, than you not have what you need to get your taxes done," he said.

Tax service costs start at $75 for a 1040EZ, $100 for a 1040A, and $120 for 1040 – these are the forms you receive after filing your taxes. There are additional charges for self-employment and rental property taxes. Refunds are offered via direct deposit or mailed as a check. Call 612-529-5356 or email adamstaxservicemn@gmail.com.

AARP

The AARP, in partnership with the IRS and Minnesota Department of Revenue, provides FREE, personal income tax, rent credit, property tax refunds and other tax issue support for senior citizens and low-income individuals. Services are offered at Pillsbury United Communities’ Oak Park Center and the Hennepin County North Regional Library.

The Oak Park Community Center is located at 1701 Oak Park Ave. Tax services begin on Feb. 4 and continue on Mondays and Tuesdays through April 15, 2019, from 10am to 1pm. Clients are served on a first-comes-first basis.

Hennepin County North Regional Library is located at 1315 Lowry Ave. N. Tax services begin Saturday Feb. 2. from 10am - 1pm, and continue every Wednesday and Saturdays through April 13, 2019. Clients are served on a first come first basis.

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Local men bring mentorship to Northside youth through the Rashad Vaughn Foundation

By Jessica Enwesi Contributor

Chris Davis has always been passionate about giving back to his community. That’s why when his cousin and professional basketball player, Rashad Vaughn, who previously played for the Milwaukee Bucks, contemplated using his recently earned salary to start a foundation, both men agreed that Davis was the perfect person to stand at its helm.

Within a few days, the Rashad Vaughn Foundation, or RVF, was created. The organization is arranged with Davis as its CEO, Vaughn as its president, and both men’s brothers, Nick and Troy, respectively, coordinating its core youth program, Only Us. The Rashad Vaughn Foundation’s mission is to positively impact youth through education, athleticism and leadership development. Through food and gift donations, academic scholarships and a strong belief in youth empowerment, the RVF’s long-term plan is to become and stay a staple on the Northside.

“Chris Davis presents a new game console to a nine year old who had recently broken his leg in a car accident during one of the Rashad Vaughn Foundation’s gift drives. Photo courtesy of Chris Davis

Davis believes that due to him and the program’s twelve male mentees being close in age, he and his co-organizers can structure the program’s curriculum to better understand and address their experiences and the type of development they will need.

“A lot of our mentors and idols are older so they don’t really know how to connect with the youth,” Davis said. “But that’s an advantage that we have so we can relate to them. We look just like them. Some of them have dads and uncles but we’re trying to be their other dad, uncle or big brother.”

In trying to connect with the Northside neighborhood, RVF has spent the last few months visiting families, sponsoring holiday dinners, hosting back-to-school supply drives and personally delivering food packages to those in need.

Davis knows that building the RVF depends on the very participants they aim to serve. He believes that as young men, his mentees will need help forging their academic and career paths as they try to overcome systematic obstacles.

However, he maintains that he will be there for them every step of the way and he will provide the one thing he knows black students in Minneapolis may have difficulty finding.

“Hope. I think that’s the biggest thing we can give the kids right now,” Davis said. “It’s the hope that it’s going to get better. Even if they don’t have the same advantages, they have the same dreams and that should inspire them to aim to higher.”

Learn more at rashadvaughnfoundation.org.

Contact us to learn how we can support you! Email: Jonathanb@publicallies.org Phone: 612-302-3506

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School nurse pilots holistic health program for adults in the community

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

Latasha Lee (center) is a school nurse and the founder of Healthy Helpful Insights, a locally owned business which promotes holistic and community-centered health. Photo by Farrington Llewellyn

In January, gyms fills up with resolutioners, those wanting to use the beginning of the new year as motivation to get healthy. Latasha Lee, a registered nurse and the founder and CEO of Healthy Helpful Insights (HHI), hopes that commitment can become lifelong.

Lee founded her business, which promotes a holistic and community-focused approach to healthy living, in Aug. 2018, in memory of her sister Sabrina who passed away from complications due to lupus in 2009.

“My desire to participate in health and wellness came about at an early age. I had an aunt who died of Lupus when I was younger, not knowing that twenty years later I would lose my sister to lupus. Growing up as young girls, we both had desires to be nurses, because we had lost a family member. She was never able to finish nursing school, but I was, so I am fulfilling our dream in her absence,” said Lee. “I was also born with a heart defect, so I was not allowed to be active as a young child. It was not until high school that I became more active and that is when I began realizing how important being active is.”

In Aug. 2018, Lee launched HHI’s first pilot program. Nine women joined the program and went through a guided six-week series focused on meal prep, fitness introducions, and communal meals. Lee also asked each participant to track their daily activities in a journal and reflect on any questions or challenges that came up for them. Each participant was also given a resource binder.

Clients were asked to pay a $10 recommended donation for each week of the program. For Lee, the purpose of the pilots is to test the program and figure out what works and what does not as she expands the organization and the work that she does.

“I need people to be able to afford what I am offering and not think as much about the dollar amount,” Lee. Lee brings in revenue and offsets program costs by selling merchandise, including t-shirts and aprons, that help keep the program affordable for participants.

Lee hopes that HHI is a resource for encouraging, educating, teaching, and training North Minneapolis and other communities, where she hopes to expand to, about healthy living and the importance of being healthy.

According to Sandra Bakare, who participated in the first pilot, the best part of the program was Lee’s focus on holistic health. She is also looking forward to participating in the ten-week pilot program launching in January.

“The participants did not want to end the first pilot. Some of us still meet up at the gym. I was able to get control of my blood pressure without medication. I lost some weight and learned some different recipes,” said Bakare. “Lee asked me to come back as an ambassador for the program. I am looking forward to learning more stick-and-stay, learning more about getting healthy.”

Outside of her work with HHI, Lee is a school nurse with the St. Paul Public Schools who moved to Minnesota in Aug. 2016.

Learn more about the organization at hhi-mn.com. The next pilot program launches in Feb. 2019.

HHI’s Tips for Healthy Living

1. Health is not just about food and fitness, it’s also about your brain. Take care of it!
2. Eat your more calorically dense meals earlier in the day, so you have time in the day to burn off the calories.
3. Eat your last big meal before 7pm. After 7pm drink water and snack on fruits and vegetables if you must.
4. Set small goals for yourself and adjust once you’ve met those goals. Losing 100 pounds is a lot harder than losing 5 pounds a bunch of times.
5. Don’t deprive yourself. If you usually eat two cookies, then eat one. If you usually eat one cookie, eat half.
6. Don’t wait to start getting healthy!
7. It takes 21 days to create a habit and change your life! Practicing one goal for 21 days will transform your life.

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Following the completion of the first Healthy Helpful Insights trial, Lee and participants, as well as family and friends, gathered to celebrate participant accomplishments. The next trial begins in Feb. 2019.

Photo by Farrington Llewellyn
In December, for the third time in less than a year, a car crashed into Tori 44, the ramen restaurant in Victory neighborhood that opened in April 2018.

That intersection, at Penn and 44th, has seen a slew of incidents over the past few years with The Goddess of Glass, Tom’s Barbershop, and several others all hit by passing cars.

While nobody has been hurt in any of these incidents, Victory Neighborhood Association (ViNA) Board Chair Brandon Knez worries that the worst is yet to come. He lives in Victory neighborhood and has a lot of experience at that intersection. His barber, the VIWA office, and The Warren, where neighborhood meetings are held, are all there.

“There isn’t much signage. There isn’t much in the way of barriers. There is just a really, fairly good curve, right there before the 44th and Penn stoplight,” said Knez.

“In the old days, before the reconstruction a few years back, there was a stoplight you could see from Victory, and that would slow you down,” he said.

Community members, and elected officials like Council Member Phillippe Cunningham, contend that the intersection needs to be fixed by the county.

“Both Penn and 44th are county roads, which means I don’t have direct jurisdiction over either of those roads. My office has been reaching out, asking questions, trying to figure out what our options are,” said Cunningham. “Unfortunately we have not made a whole lot of progress in that area, but we hope for more with the incoming commissioner. I hope that they will understand this is a racial and geographic equity issue, and the reason why is because we deserve the fundamental safety of being able to stand on a sidewalk or patronize a business, without being afraid of a car harming or killing us. We deserve that basic level of safety,” he said.

Cunningham and ViNA, as well as other community members and local business owners are asking for additional enforcement and barriers to protect sidewalks and local businesses. Their hope is to protect both pedestrians and small businesses who struggle to survive because of the vehicular accidents.

“Safety would be putting up the stop light again, placing ballasts or large blocks as barricades to keep our businesses safe,” said Jason Dorweiler, owner of Tori 44 and recent transplant to the Victory neighborhood.

According to a Jan. 24 update from the Office of County Commissioner Irene Fernando (District 2), the County is currently engaging with community members, local businesses, and ViNA in response to this situation. According to the statement, work is being planned for the intersection to make it safer. These updated include a turn sign at the curve on Osseo Road and a temporary “curve ahead” sign with plans for a permanent sign.

Just a few days following the incident at Tori 44, another incident occurred when a vehicle, involved in a two-car chase, crashed into a home near Penn and 42nd Ave N. The accident caused a significant amount of structural damage to the home and has displaced the family for a month or more.

According to Connie Beckers, owner of The Goddess of Glass, incidents like the one that occurred at her shop in April 2017 make it very difficult for businesses to survive in the neighborhood. While Beckers’ shop was not hit directly by a car, a light pole outside her shop was hit by a car, which caused her to lose power and meant she had to turn away three classes worth of paying customers for the day.

“They definitely weren’t happy,” said Beckers.

This is echoed by Dorweiler who says the extent of the damages to Tori 44, for just the last incident, is tens of thousands of dollars or more, plus the loss of business and hours for employees, many of whom live in the neighborhood.

They also had to comp all the meals sold during their brunch service, when the incident occurred, and toss out their entire line of food.

Dorweiler says that despite the accidents, he has no plans to abandon Victory neighborhood.

“We want to build up this area and get some new businesses out here to support and enhance what’s already here,” said Dorweiler.
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Dear valued customer, starting February 10th our NEW Business hours for Breaking Bread are:

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Polars put on a good show so far

By Timya Carlisle North High
Student Reporter

Photo by Azhoe’la Hanson
Contributor

As of January 25, the North High School boys basketball team has had 10 wins, five losses, and is undefeated in its conference.

On and off the court, the players, like Nasir El-Amin (pictured here) are using their communication skills effectively including expertly calling plays during games. They traveled to Chicago on Jan. 21 and won that game with a score of 69-52. Their next game is: North vs Patrick Henry High School on Friday, Feb. 1.

Neighborhoods 2020 cont. from Page 4

Between August and December of 2018. After that, five community meetings were held to “open up a dialogue” around the group’s recommendations, according to Rubedor.

The workgroups then incorporated feedback from those meetings into final recommendations. They handed them off to NCR, which then released its own recommendations on Jan. 28. “We’re substantially building off what the work groups came up with...I don’t see a major deviation from what the workgroups came up with,” Rubedor said in early January before the recommendations were released.

The recommendations can be found at www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/2020. A public comment period for them runs now through March 31. To ensure ample feedback, NCR leaders have scheduled several public meetings throughout the city to discuss the recommendations and will have a large presence at the Community Connections Conference on Feb. 2.
InnerCity Tennis hopes to expand in North Minneapolis

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

At the Martin Luther King Jr. park in South Minneapolis, tennis is big. Literally. Two huge domes, blown up like beach volleyballs, stand several stories high. Inside the domes there are a dozen tennis courts and dozens of tennis players of all ages.

The courts are a project of InnerCity Tennis, who hope to soon bring tennis courts, training, and teachers to North Minneapolis permanently. While organizational leaders do not have a location in mind, they are prospecting and reaching out to Northsiders. Their hope is to use the sport as youth development and as a community-builder.

“Sport is really just that vehicle by which we drive kids in and teach them to stand in line and manners, to say please and thank you and whatever else,” said Steve Faber, a real estate developer who has worked with InnerCity Tennis since he helped them move into current location in 2000.

InnerCity Tennis was founded in 1952, though at the time it was known as Northwest Tennis Patrons and then, in the 1980s, Minneapolis Urban Tennis. InnerCity Tennis offers tennis lessons in 23 Minneapolis parks, including North Commons, but they are looking to have a more permanent space in North Minneapolis. According to John Wheaton, InnerCity Tennis’ Executive Director, the non-profit’s plan to expand to North Minneapolis goes all the way back to its 2009-2010 strategic plan. The organization has already begun to gather Northside neighbors.

“We’re already [in the Northside] a lot and we’d like to be there more and we really want to follow the direction of the people in the community, that know the community well. And we’re not just about tennis too, we’re about athletic development,” said Wheaton.

It began to expand by launching programs with Hospitality House and Prodeo Academy. At Prodeo Academy, for example, it teaches tennis year-round to all 1-5 students, four days a week. It began its tennis program there during the 2017-2018 school year.

“It’s exposing the kids to a sport that they may-be would have been exposed to before. It’s a great partnership,” said John Busch, the 5-5 Fitness and PE Teacher and Athletic Coordinator at Prodeo Academy. “There is less access to tennis courts around. I think it’s awesome to see my students pick up a tennis racket, and see some of them pick up a racket and realize they are pretty good. It’s really cool to see them learn the rules.”

To learn more about InnerCity Tennis, visit www.innercitytennis.org.

For competitive tennis players, InnerCity Tennis offers more than just courts and coaches. The South Minneapolis facility also has a fitness center and director, as well as community-centered events year-round.

Lost without them cont. from Page 10

hard if [students] just listen to music or watch videos. When they’re distracted they’re only taking in about 10% of what’s going on in front of the class. It’s harmful,” she said.

THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Teens say anything can happen on social media: good days are ruined by people posting negative things and cyberbullying. Here at North High School, school social media is an amplifier for conflict. People have been killed because of negative things people say on social media. Students feel the obligation to comment, like, or share on their friends’ posts or photos. Students get upset when people don’t “heart” their photos. If someone likes a post instead of “hearting” it, drama may occur. Some students feel like to be a good friend they have to heart, comment, or share their friends post. This requires students to spend a lot of time on their phones during school.

Having a cellphone can have a good and bad effect on people. “You can get on social media and see things that make you feel better; kids get compliments on their pictures and it makes them feel like they are all that,” said North High Behavior Dean Lamar Wright.

However, social media can have positive impacts too. It connects people. Music and funny videos cheer students up and keep them focused. “Snapchat distracts me from everybody else, like it calms me, cause you can watch videos and the memes on there keep you calm to relieve stress,” said junior Deja Milton.

Social media can distract a person from focusing on what they want to do and what they need to get done. Sometimes students use social media to hide their inner emotions.
The City of Minneapolis offers free energy efficiency home visits and 0% financing on recommended energy-saving upgrades while funding lasts to qualified households with a family income less than $94,300. Homeowners and renters can call 651-328-6220 or visit mncee.org/homes to schedule a visit.

Pillsbury United Communities’ Oak Park Center (1701 Oak Park Ave N) hosts free community dinners on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 5pm-7pm.

**EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT**

Ongoing Thursdays – Community Coffee & Conversation, 11am-1pm. Get to know neighbors and enjoy complimentary beverages. All are welcome at Serendipity Spot (3300 Lyndale Ave N).

Mondays – Sign up for a weekly 30-minute session to practice reading and do literacy activities with a teen mentor. 2pm - 5pm. Visit or call the Webber Park Library to register. 612-543-6751 Sponsored by the Webber Park Friends. For kids entering grades K-3.

Fridays – Family Storytime. 10-11am. Webber Park Library. 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.

Tuesdays – Boot Camp at The Trailhead: Tammie’s most popular class - Boot Camp is a multifaceted and high-energy class that combines elements of strength and cardio to create the perfect morning workout. As you work your way through the various stations, you’ll find this session challenging you in varied ways as each targets a different muscle group. Boot Camp is a great way to get in a well-balanced and challenging workout before you start your day. Theodore Wirth Parkway Trailhead, 6:15am-7:15am.

Feb. 7 – The Film Society of Minneapolis St. Paul, in collaboration with the Capri Theater and the Minnesota Historical Society, presents the documentary, Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami, at 7 pm on Feb. 7 at the Capri Theater (2027 West Broadway Ave). The post-film conversation will be led by Minneapolis choreographer Ashley Selmer. Tickets to First Thursday Films are $5 and can be purchased in advance at www.mspfilm.org or at the door the night of the show. The First Thursdays series continues in March with Black Panther on March 7, and the 2019 Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival, with several screenings at the Capri during its April 4-20 run. More information can be found at www.the-capriitheater.org, www.mspfilm.org.

Feb. 9 – Camp Capri will be held. 10am-2pm. Free. Lunch is served. To register or for more information, visit: http://www.thecapritheater.org/ or call 612-643-2058. Enrollment is limited to the first 25 registered students.

Feb. 9 – Family Movie Sing-a-Long 2:30pm-4:30pm. Webber Park Library. Here's your chance to burst into song in the library! Learn songs from Moana and then watch the movie and sing along together! Sponsor: Friends of the Webber Park Library. Collaborator: Hopewell Music Cooperative North.

Feb. 13 – Senior Surf Day. 10am-12pm. Webber Park Library. 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. Registration required. Register online or at 612-543-KNOW.

Feb. 16 – Teen Geekery Club 12:30pm-2pm. Webber Park Library. Are you an anime and manga fan? A cosplayer? A fan of Doctor Who, Steven Universe, Voltron, Gravity Falls, Homestuck, Supernatural or other fictional works? If yes to any of these, Teen Geekery Club is for you! Watch anime, create and share your artwork, and discuss your favorite fandoms. All fandoms welcome! Sponsors: Friends of the Hennepin County Library, Anime Twin Cities. Grades 6-12.

Feb. 16 – The People’s University. 2:30pm-4pm. Webber Park Library. The People’s University uses open-access syllabuses as tools to help us learn together through reading, multi-media viewing, and discussion about the historic contexts for the world we find ourselves in today. In this series, the University of Minnesota Immigration Syllabus will help us better understand U.S. immigration history, xenophobia, deportation policy, and border policing. Guest lecturer: Vichet Chhoun from the University of Minnesota will discuss Asian American immigration, Southeast Asian communities, and more recent immigration justice concerns that impact Minnesota communities.

Feb. 18 – Neighborhood Night is a wonderful way to hear about what is going on in Folwell Neighborhood over a meal with your neighbors! If you would like to learn more about Neighborhood Night, visit Folwell.org or contact Dani at danielle@folwell.org.

Feb. 20 – On Screen: Going in Style. 1pm-3pm. Webber Park Library. Morgan Freeman, Michael Caine and Alan Arkin team up as lifelong buddies Willie, Joe and Al, who decide to buck retirement and step off the straight-and-narrow for the first time in their lives when their pension fund becomes a corporate casualty. Desperate to pay the bills and come through for their loved ones, the three risk it all by embarking on a daring bid to knock off the very bank that absconded with their money. Funded by Minnesota’s Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

EDUCATION

Feb. 12 – the next Minneapolis Public School Board Business Meeting will be held on Feb. 12, beginning at 5:30pm at the Davis Center at 1250 West Broadway Ave.

March 1 – The next Minneapolis Public School Board Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on March 1, beginning at 6pm at the Davis Center at 1250 West Broadway Ave.

What's Up 612! is an online resource for children and youth, ages 5-21, where city-wide after school activities can be found. More information can be found at: http://www.whatsup612.com

Mondays – Sign up for a weekly 30-minute session to practice reading and do literacy activities with a teen mentor. 2pm - 5pm. Visit or call the Webber Park Library to register. 612-543-6751 Sponsored by the Webber Park Friends. For kids entering grades K-3.

Project for Pride in Living (PPL) seeks volunteers interested in mentoring and tutoring youth in grades K-5th grade who are living in supportive housing in Camden. Volunteers are matched 1:1 with a youth to build a strong relationship, tutor in literacy concepts, and engage in enrichment activities like arts & crafts, games, creative play, etc. To apply, visit www.ppl-inc.org/volunteer or contact Volunteer Coordinator Caitlin Dougherty at caitlin.dougherty@ppl-inc.org / 612-455-5108.

Teen Tech workshop is held every other Thursday. North Regional Library, 5pm-7pm. 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.

MN Comeback and Great MN Schools launched Minnesota School Finder. This resource guide for parents provides objective, relevant information on schools across Minnesota so parents can find schools that are the best fit for their kids.

BE AWARE

Carbon monoxide (CO) exposure incidents increase during the winter months and CO is often called the silent killer. It is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that when inhaled enters the bloodstream preventing proper absorption of oxygen, leading to illness and even death. Treatment for CO exposure is fresh air or oxygen. Severe exposure requires medical attention. Do not return to your home or building until the source of the problem is discovered and corrected. For more information about natural gas safety, visit CenterPointEnergy.com/BeSafe or call 612-372-4727 or 1-800-245-2377.

Just like eating greasy food can clog people’s arteries, grease and fat can build up in drainpipes in homes and restaurants and out under the streets. Clogs in the pipes can cause sewage backups into basements and call for expensive repairs. The City is hoping to raise awareness about the impacts that grease can have on plumbing at individual properties and in the City’s sewer system. A new rule has passed that allows the City to charge property owners for cleaning, repairing or replacing City pipes clogged with grease. The grease rule sets up a framework to mitigate risks and decrease the costs to rate payers. Problem spots in one-tenth of the sewer system have cost the City close to $1 million since 2012 to keep pipes flowing. The clogs divert money and time from other critical sewer system needs as crews are inspecting pipes and cleaning out grease every two weeks. The costs of these services in a small number of locations are borne by sanitary sewer owners across Minneapolis. Find more information here: http://www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/sewers/fats-oils-grease

The City Council passed a measure on Nov. 2 reforming the way the City works with landlords and renters when complaints are made about disruptive criminal and nuisance conduct to provide more protections for tenants and resources for landlords to resolve problems. Highlights of the amendments to the City’s Conduct on Licensed Premises ordinance include: 1) A violation of the ordinance cannot stem from 911 calls reporting domestic violence, domestic abuse, a health-related emergency or any other similar tenant assistance response. 2) When a Minneapolis Police Department crime prevention specialist determines that an incident at a rental property requires City intervention after reviewing a police report, a letter is sent to both the landlord and the tenant about what needs to be done to resolve the problem issues.

3) A new interdisciplinary panel convened by the City’s Regulatory Services Department will review the issues and help determine a community-centered approach that encourages landlords and tenants to resolve problems with a goal of discouraging unnecessary tenant displacement.

Sidewalks are a critical part of Minneapolis’ transportation system and they should be open for everyone. With the snow season upon us, here’s a refresher on the City’s rules. Minneapolis ordinance requires property owners of houses and duplexes to clear sidewalks within 24 hours after a snowfall and all other property owners must clear their sidewalks within four daytime hours. In addition to relying on complaints reported to 311, this season City inspectors will also be out in neighborhoods actively looking for sidewalks that aren’t shoveled. Failure to shovel and maintain your sidewalk could result in a warning letter and, if left uncleared, a bill for the City to remove snow from your sidewalk. An average bill is approximately $150. People should call 311 to learn more about resources available to people who may need help clearing their sidewalks. Several nonprofit organizations are ready to provide for-hire services or provide help when the snow falls. Find more information at www.minneapolismn.gov/snow/shovel.

Snow season is here. The City of Minneapolis sent out about 177,000 Snow Emergency brochures, one to each household in the city explaining the rules. The brochure has graphics and text showing where to park during the three phases of a Snow Emergency. The brochures contain the Snow Emergency parking rules and lists ways people can find out when to move their cars for a Snow Emergency. Snow Emergencies are declared whenever there’s enough snowfall to warrant a complete plowing of our streets. To get that done, people need to follow the parking rules and move their vehicles so crews can plow the full width of the street. When the snow flies, City Public Works crews have enormous jobs to do, with more than 1,400 miles of streets, parkways and alleys that need to be cleared. It’s important for drivers to follow the Snow Emergency parking rules so plows can do the best job possible clearing snow. Vehicles parked on the street in violation of Snow Emergency rules can be ticketed or towed. For more information, visit: http://www.minneapolismn.gov/snow

People must be at least 21 to buy tobacco products in Minneapolis as of 10/1. Minneapolis raised the age from 18 to help protect younger generations from lifelong nicotine addiction, tobacco-related illnesses, and the tobacco-related health disparities between white populations and people of color. Research shows raising the age to buy tobacco will keep
The City of Minneapolis can help renters who want smoke-free housing, and it can help property owners make their buildings smoke-free. For smoke-free rental housing help, renters and property owners and managers can call 311 or visit www.minneapolismn.gov/smoke-free.

People must be at least 21 to buy tobacco products in Minneapolis as of Oct. 1, 2018. Minneapolis raised the age from 18 to help protect younger generations from lifelong nicotine addiction, tobacco-related illnesses, and the tobacco-related health disparities between white populations and people of color. Research shows raising the age to buy tobacco will keep an estimated 30,000 young people from starting to smoke over a 15-year period in Minnesota.

Minneapolis has joined a statewide program to help reduce homelessness among veterans. Since the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs launched the Minnesota Homeless Veteran Registry in 2014, it has housed 1,218 homeless veterans – 613 in Hennepin County. Minneapolis and Hennepin County have the highest concentration of homeless veterans in the state. Anyone who served in the U.S. armed forces, Army Reserve or National Guard can join the registry regardless of the type of discharge. Homeless veterans or their representatives are encouraged to call 1-888-LinkVet (1-888-546-5838) or complete the application online at the website for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Veteran Registry.

The City’s Municipal Minimum Wage Ordinance took effect 1/1/2018. There will be a tiered phase-in period for small and large businesses. Large businesses that employ more than 100 workers will be required to pay employees a minimum of $10 an hour beginning 1/1/2018. Small businesses with 10 or fewer employees will be required to pay workers at least $10.25 beginning 7/1/2018. Large businesses have until 7/1/2024 to reach a minimum wage of $15 an hour and small businesses have until 7/1/2024 to reach $15 an hour.

Through its 311 service, the City of Minneapolis has opened a new hotline for reporting hate crimes. Which are harassing behaviors motivated by prejudice. The hotline number is 311 for anyone calling from within the city of 612-673-3000 statewide. The 311 hotline will be answered 7am-7pm weekdays and 8am - 4:30pm weekends. Those with a report to make can also call the Department of Justice at 612-664-5600. As always, in the case of immediate physical violence, property damage, or threats, people should call 911.

The City Council received the City’s first-ever State of Data report: a document that outlines the current way data is managed by the City and provides a roadmap to improve transparency, accountability and accessibility. The report is a point-in-time summary of where the City of Minneapolis stands with respect to data governance and management, including the way data now informs policy decisions by City leaders and how accessible and understandable that data is. The report also presents a roadmap to making the City more data-driven in operations and services, and looks at how data use is evolving into the future. The 2018 State of Data Report is available on the City’s website.

To help keep families together this holiday season, Minneapolis Police along with Crystal, Golden Valley, New Hope, Robbinsdale, and the University of Minnesota Police Departments will be participating with law enforcement statewide in an extra DWI enforcement campaign running on weekends starting Nov. 21 through Dec. 29. The enhanced DWI enforcement campaign is a component of the state’s Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) program.

Following Minneapolis fire laws will help keep our neighborhoods safe and livable: outdoor fires are permitted 9am-10pm, fires must be less than three feet in diameter and two feet high, and a fire must be completely out before being abandoned. Illegal open burning or recreational fires could result in fines that start at $200. For more information on recreational fires or to register a complaint about a recreational fire, call 311 or email Minneapolis 311@minneapolismn.gov, or to register a complaint about a recreational fire outside 311 hours, call 911. The Fire and Police departments are authorized to extinguish a fire immediately if it is hazardous.

The Minneapolis City Council has passed an ordinance prohibiting discrimination against Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher holders. Under the ordinance, landlords will only be obligated to consider to renting to voucher holders. That means a landlord cannot refuse to rent, impose unique standards, or otherwise treat HCV holders differently from tenants without vouchers. Landlords retain their ability to screen the voucher holders like other tenants using legal criteria.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The Minneapolis Business Portal is a new online platform designed to connect entrepreneurs and small business owners to the information and resources needed to plan, launch and grow a business. The online portal, available at business.minneapolismn.gov, features roadmaps, checklists, tools and resources to help both new and existing businesses.

Northside Economic Opportunity Network is now accepting applications for their brand new private office spaces that feature windows, open workspaces and more. There are several office space and pricing plans available, ranging from a drop-in guest pass ($10/day) to a platinum plan ($500/month with private office). For more information visit https://www.neon-mn.org/spaces.

Every month the West Broadway Business and Area Coalition meets for lunch on the third Thursday of the month from 11:30am-1pm at 1101 West Broadway Ave. The next lunches will be held on Jan. 17, Feb. 1, and March 21.

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 the North community.
Worship 10 a.m. Sunday Hospitality and Welcome to all.

ST. OLAF LUTHERAN CHURCH
2001 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!

To place your notice:
Email kenzieo@pillsburyunited.org or call 612.302.3424
Henry leader is the school board's new student rep

By Danae Lawson and Datelle Straub
Patrick Henry student reporters

In Dec. 2018, Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) announced that Janaan Ahmed, a junior at Patrick Henry High School, would be the newest student representative on the Board of Directors. Ahmed is a respected leader among her peers and teachers and says she has dreamed of being the board’s student representative since her freshman year. Just hours before she officially joined the MPS Board for her year-long term, Ahmed sat down with two of Henry’s student reporters to discuss her new position, her priorities, and her thoughts on student leadership.

“What do you do as a student representative?” Generally speaking, the position means you sit on the Minneapolis Public Schools Board, representing all students of Minneapolis Public Schools. It’s not like you are assuming everybody’s experiences or that I am going to be speaking for all students. It’s just so that you are bringing a student perspective to the table every single time that one is needed. That is the main purpose of the position. In my application, I talked about how I am going to amplify the voices of students in the district, because I feel like a lot of decisions are made about us, without us. That is something I am pushing for this term, to really amplify the voices of students. I don’t want to speak for anybody else, but I also want to make sure that everybody’s voice is heard.

“How do you want MPS students to engage with the district and how will you get them to engage with what you are trying to do?” We don’t really have a lot of awareness about the decisions being made, even the decisions impacting students the most, in our community. For example, students were only talking about district decisions last year around budget cut time. My intention this term is to get students more aware of the decisions being made in the district, in the community, where is money being spent and cut, change the name, teachers of color. I want us to have more awareness. I want to use my office hours and invite people to speak with me, and I want to visit the schools and invite people to engage with the process.

“How are you going to get people to listen to you?” I’m not a voting member of the Board. I’m just there. All I get to do is say “hold on, before you do that, the students think this and that.” so when I come to schools, and even in my own school, it’s more of a “this is what is happening in my district, how do you feel about this?” It’s less of me telling people things and more of me listening to people and then reporting back what I hear to the district. I don’t want it to be “what does Janaan have to say now?” I want it to be “what do I have to say to Janaan?”

“What does it feel like to get nominated to be the student representative?” Funny story. It was a Friday, like three weeks before winter break. And I was at school, about to eat my breakfast, and my phone started ringing. And I was wondering who was calling me at 8:05am in the morning. I thought it was telemarketers trying to call me early. And so I answered my phone and said hello and on the other end it was “Hi this is Ed Graff.” When I got this phone call I had a hand on my phone and a hand on my heart because it was beating so fast, cereal untouched. He was telling me that he had spoken with my mom the night before, and she thought that he should be the one to tell me, and I was just waiting for him to tell me and he congratulated me being the next student rep. I’m the third student representative from Henry, so when I told Principal Abdullah at the beginning of the year I was going to apply, he believed in me, but he did not know that they would want a third representative from Henry, so I kept that into consideration. I’ve wanted to be the student representative since freshman year and when I finally got it, I was like yes!

“How can other students step into leadership positions?” I think students seeing themselves in higher positions like this will inspire them to ask why student voices aren’t being heard. Our generation, especially with Parkland and the gun control movement, is the start of a greater change and shift in how higher organizations and utilize student voices.

“You helped lead the #ChangeTheName movement. What happened with that and what happens next?” So many people ask me this, because by the end of the year, I was sort of the last student standing at the end. I don’t want to say I put in all the work last year, because that is not the case, but by the end I was the only student attending meetings. The thing that happened with the name change is that students were not involved and, you know, the district is going to look at this movement and wonder if people really want the name change if they can’t even get students within the school to get together and get it done. So, a lot of people were saying we could not get the community on board and I wanted to say that I could not even get peers on board and the students are a direct reflection of the community. My view of the name change is that students were not involved and they should have been. I met with Ben, the last student rep, and he told me to get Change the Name started again. When you’re on the Board, you don’t bring it up. Instead what you do is strategize to make it happen, you get students from Patrick Henry and Olson all the way down to Southwest and everywhere else and you get all of those students to come to Board meetings and speak up during the public comment period over and over again, until they’re sick of hearing about it and have to take action.
Kenya McKnight is the founder and president of the Black Women’s Wealth Alliance (BWWA), a public-benefit corporation based in North Minneapolis, driven by its desire to support black women as they make, save, and invest their money for long term financial prosperity.

Since 2014, BWWA has served over 1500 black women, most recently in its Fall 2018 Wealth Academy which sought to teach practical wealth building skills and address financial trauma in a group of over 50 women.

As far as McKnight knows, BWWA is the only company of its kind in the country. Historically, black women like Ella Baker, Ida B. Wells, and Fannie Lou Hamer were at the forefront of the movement for economic justice for Black women, but “in this modern time, we are it for now;” she said.

This month, McKnight talked with North News about her fear of gentrification and why supporting the financial health of black women is critical to creating equity in society.

Kenya McKnight is helping black women cultivate generational wealth

By Daija Triplett Intern | Photos by David Pierini Contributor

Taquisha Jallah has a successful IT career, in addition to owning and operating her own business selling high quality hair extensions, and as a state certified and licensed cosmetic tattooist (microblader). She joined BWWA’s Wealth Academy after seeing an ad on Facebook. Through the academy, Taquisha says she has been introduced to a surplus of resources; including her financial adviser she and her husband have continued to meet with regularly. “A lot of time in the black community, we don’t have that generational wealth. We don’t have any generational wealth to pass on to our children and our children’s children. That’s the cycle we need to break,” she said. She says McKnight has created an incredible platform specifically for black women in Minnesota. “Many times we don’t get the same resources that exist in some of the bigger cities like Atlanta and Chicago. [Kenya] heard the cry and did something about it.” Jallah joined the academy hoping to make connections with other black businesswomen. The experience far exceeded her expectations. “I wasn’t expecting nearly 100 black women from different walks of life in Minnesota to come together in love and unity, but that was exactly what happened. There was no confusion, no strife, no hating. People think that when black women come together there will be problems, but to my delight there wasn’t. We supported each other and rooted to see each other excel,” she said.
Why is it important for black women to have an advocate like you? What stands between black women and an equitable share of wealth in our society? Nationally, the net worth of a single black woman is $100. It’s virtually zero for black women with children. The stability of a black woman is important for the overall stability of the black community. Because children are normally concentrated with their mothers, it’s very important that they have stability financially so that the children are more stable. In our community here in MN, nearly 80% of black women are the primary breadwinners in their household despite marital status. Yet 35% of the jobs we hold are concentrated in low wage occupations which indicates that we have tremendous financial responsibility yet are not making enough money to sustain ourselves nor build long term wealth. We’re seeing how that’s impacting our communities. We’re an untapped and undervalued asset. We’re America’s entrepreneurs, leading new business start ups, but despite that we are not driving business success. We receive the least loans from lending companies, banks, and nonprofits. We have one of the lowest home ownership rates in the state and currently are being evicted from rental properties in Minneapolis at a higher rate than all groups according to an eviction study done by CURA, a research branch of the University of Minnesota. As many equity efforts that are out here, as much money that has been put out here, it still somehow has not reached our community in a profound way to really move the dime for Black Women. I’d argue that it’s because there isn’t a clear pathway specific to our economic progression.

What are some of the pathways black women can take to build wealth? Although we don’t individually have enough income to really build wealth that we personally need, in the larger scheme of things, we are the financial influencers in our communities and possess the power collectively to have a significant economic impact in building wealth. Nationally, black people have more than a trillion dollars in buying power which is primarily controlled by black women. When you understand what wealth is and the different tools you can use to build it, then you can find your path to it. For black women who work jobs, it can be about looking at your employee benefit package to ensure it supports your vision to build wealth. Black women entrepreneurs, it can be building business credit and IRA accounts. It starts with a vision, financial planners can be helpful, building skills, budgets and the discipline and commitment to invest in your future. We also have to address our financial trauma which we incorporate in our framework and strategies at BWWA. There is a long history of financial trauma that resulted in financial dysfunction in our community. A larger part of it is tied to white violence toward black economics and black economic progression which impacts how we, at times, operate today.

Was there a lightbulb moment that led you here? For the last eight years of my life, I have worked in transportation planning, finance, policy and community engagement. I was the first black person to serve as a [Met Council] appointee to the transportation [advisory] board which allocates millions of dollars across the region for transportation projects. It’s a lot of money; they’re making big decisions. It’s long range work and the plans are 30-50 years out. In that work is where I discovered one of my greatest fears. Gentrification is clearly happening. I can see how unprepared my community is, and it’s scary. The system will invest in its plans to see it through. You have white businesses that are aligned with these plans to get these resources. Our community is stuck in a crisis mode, unaware that these plans even exist and often come into the community input stages. I decided to return to my roots to further ground myself in helping to better prepare my community for the long range by focusing on wealth building.

Why is BWWA a for profit organization and not non-profit? It will help you with your mission-based work? This community seems to be the capital of nonprofits in Minnesota, which at times impede on the self-sufficiency and prosperity of our community of individuals. When everywhere around you is free and people do everything for you, it doesn’t really foster self-sufficiency. The leadership, the decision making, the framework, the narrative about who we are and what our priorities are and how we operate comes from a nonprofit paradigm which greatly serves poverty opposed to prosperity, this is very unique in some ways to us, which I think is actually wrong. Our people need a little space to breathe and be self-sufficient. White communities operate differently and have greater prosperity. There has to be a balance: BWWA seeks to serve prosperity in the black community from an asset paradigm while recognizing the economic challenges. We are black female entrepreneurs from the very community we work in. Our community needs more entrepreneurial leadership, shaping the narrative, leading, teaching and building.

What’s one hope you have for the future of North Minneapolis? I want to see us diversify our development investments and be proactive in our thinking around that. Instead of just fighting for low income housing as a strategy to secure housing for black people, we should be advocating for quality housing for black people. We are not all low income. I want to see an environment that supports lower middle class black people. My greatest hope is North Minneapolis coming together to build a collective vision for the future of the Northside. It has to come from and be led by the people who are here.

We have ideas and know a lot about what we need. I’d love to see us come together in a lot of different sessions to build out and execute our future. Not just participating in the City’s comp plan, Met Council’s plan, the County or State plan, but our own Northside plan.

Topé Daniel is an entrepreneur who runs a home healthcare company and is launching an entertainment and production company called IMURTAL. She participated in the BWWA’s Wealth Academy in 2018. She says she had grown increasingly frustrated by being seen as “doing too much” in her push for people to listen, to see, and to address the disparities in generational wealth and how the black community was being left behind. BWWA created an atmosphere where Daniel was able to comfortably grow more into her own power, while being surrounded by other ambitious and supportive black women. She says being around women who shared her professional motivation and were “aware of the need for financial education, health and wellness,” through BWWA was validating. She says that, coupled with the educational resources and tools that BWWA provided them access to, was “priceless.” Daniel gained key insight into ways to successfully grow her current company and carry out her newest business venture. She is now better equipped to pass along valuable knowledge. “Information is so key to success and building wealth. When we don’t have that, we suffer,” she said.

Jamiela Taylor is an athletic coach, educator and mentor on the Northside who currently works at TRI-Construction. As a co-tenant in the same building with BWWA Headquarters, “Coach Jam” sparked a conversation with McKnight. The impact was immediate and within 48 hours, Taylor was attending one of BWWA’s home ownership classes. Upon completion of the class, the Coach Jam joined the Wealth Academy. “Women are caretakers; sometimes we get lost due to multitasking and day-to-day responsibilities,” she said. Financial acumen is “a matter of survival.” Generational wealth and long-term planning are concepts that BWWA teaches. Taylor is also instilling that concept to her daughter and other community youth.

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