North Minneapolis is home to a federally designated Promise Zone, a Green Zone, and five Opportunity Zones. All are intended to help the area track towards future prosperity. We explore the intentions and implications. Page 10
Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the May edition of North News. Spring feels fully upon us here in the newsroom, especially because we’re growing! Our team is in the process of hiring a part time reporter. Thanks to a generous grant from the Minneapolis Foundation, we are able to have another storyteller join our team. Staff Reporter Cirien Saadeh will now focus most of her efforts on education reporting and entrepreneurship. If you’re interested or know someone who would be right for the job, please reach out. No prior journalism experience is necessary, but we will ask you for work samples that show your storytelling abilities. Our priority is to hire a Northside community member.

We had goodbye this month to our student intern Daija Triplett. After six months as an intern with North News, made possible by the TEGNA Foundation, Triplett (who is a full time student at Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC)) has moved on to an even bigger role, working with the communications team at Pillsbury United Communities. Triplett has been connected to North News since summer 2016, when she was part of the our first cohort of student interns. We wish her the best of luck as she continues to progress in her career, and we hope her byline will still be found on our pages from time to time when there’s a particular story she wants to write.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t thank all those who made our fundraiser this month so successful. North News and KRSM radio (the two parts of Pillsbury United Communities’ Community Media Initiative) are in the running for a grant from the Gannett Foundation for $100,000. It would allow us to transform our youth program by codifying the curriculum we’ve developed over the past three years, purchasing new equipment, offering more paid work opportunities for students, and doing more community journalism trainings. We made it past the first round, and for the second, we were required to raise $6,000 from our community to prove that there is real desire to see our mission come to fruition. We had three weeks to raise the money, and we did it. We raised $6,500 thanks to so many of you:

Chris Huset, Michael Brombach, Jeffrey Steine, Rachel Wilensky, Heloise Schollmeier, Karen Kraco, Gary Schollmeier, Theresa Klooz, Meghan Muffett, Gail Mason, Katy Rosenberg, Valerie and Mike O’Keefe, Margo Ashmore, Alyssa Costopoulos, Eileen Roberts, Jessie Garretson, Beth and Bill Brombach, Mary Ellen O’Keefe, Nicole Matter, Carla Bender and Kim Garretson, Bill Cottman, Hannah Rank, John Wilkinson, Tom Nelson, Barb Sitton and Kim Club, Joan and Scott Wilensky, Kelley Skumautz, Sarah and Adam Shukovsky, the Cavelier Family, Kelly Walters, Katy Rosenberg, Jose Martinez and Laura Riparbelli, Mary Hammes, David Pierini, Joel Luedtke, the Pepper Family, and our several anonymous donors.

This month, four of our students interviewed community leader Lynne Crockett. She unrelentingly stressed the power and talent of our community’s youth, and this month’s paper is such a reflection of that. There are twelve youth-created stories in this paper: 11 from North High students and one from our student team at Patrick Henry High School. It’s an honor to help our youth explore their own voices, and we hope you’ll be as impressed and inspired as we are.

We have one last ask of you. Prom and graduation season is upon us, and if you are the parent of a Northside high school student who is graduating and does not attend school on the Northside, please email us their name and school so we can include them in our list of graduates from the community in our June paper. Also, every year we run a page of prom photos sourced from community parents. Email us your photos for consideration!

Kenzie O’Keefe
Editor/Publisher, North News
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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Christine Stark’s article “Nonprofit that sought to buy local cafe raises community concern” in the 3/28 edition of North News is a classic example of reverse bigotry.

As I read her article about Emily’s Café, I expected to hear an honest and open debate on the organization looking to purchase the restaurant. However, what I read was more of an unfair political attack.

As a pastor in North Minneapolis, I respect others’ beliefs and faith even if they differ from mine. We should not shame someone else because they hold a different opinion than our own.

Let’s remember, it’s ok to love someone even if we don’t agree with their lifestyle.

This article tries to shame Stories Foundation for their connections with churches that hold the view that marriage is between one man and one woman. Calling them “homophobic churches, anti-gay, hate groups.” This kind of language is what cable news outlets use to divide us as a community.

We must choose not to endorse or pander to this type of language. Let us be a community that respects and cherishes every single person no matter what. If we must disagree, let us do so with patience, seeking to understand the other.

Victor Martinez, Pastor Soy NG Church

North News welcomes letters to the editor. Please send to kenzieo@pillsburyunited.org or to North News, 125 W Broadway Suite 130, Minneapolis, MN 55411. They must be signed, under 300 words, and relevant to life in North Minneapolis.
New Fourth Precinct Inspector named after exhaustive search

Minneapolis Police Department Lieutenant Kelvin Pulphus of the procedural justice unit was named the next inspector of the Fourth Precinct on Thursday, April 11. His rank change took place on Sunday, April 14, according to John Elder, director of public information for MPD. MPD Chief Medaria Arradondo interviewed all of the department’s lieutenants, commanders and inspectors in an effort to identify the best candidate for the job.

People of Color Career Fair addresses disparities and longterm labor shortage

Minnesota is headed for an anticipated labor shortage of over 160,000 people. The state is also grappling with an unemployment disparity: people of color are three to four times more likely to be unemployed than white people. Sharon Smith-Akinsanya, CEO of Northside-based Rae Mackenzie Group, has a solution. For the sixth time in three years, Smith-Akinsanya will put on the one-day-long People of Color Career Fair on Tuesday, April 30. The hiring event, held at the Minneapolis Convention Center from 10am-3pm, focuses on people of color with degrees who are unemployed or underemployed. More than 500 are expected to turnout. Register and learn more at www.poccareerfair.com.

City Pages gives two “best of” awards to local businesses

In late April, the City Pages released their annual “best of” edition. Two Northside businesses won “best of” awards in the food and drink category. The Best Dessert went to Thirsty Whale Bakery (4149 Freedom Ave N) and the Best Neighborhood Grocery went to North Market (4414 Humboldt Ave N). “Have you ever seen a cake that’s better looking than most people? Step into Thirsty Whale, and you’ll feast your eyes on dozens of them,” read the explanation for Thirsty Whale’s win. By Andrianna Bynum

Third annual seed distribution gets local gardeners going

North Minneapolis gardeners itching to start planting have had to wait thanks to an April snowstorm. But on Saturday, April 13 they found some satisfaction in Northside Fresh’s third-annual seed distribution at Lucy Craft Laney Community School. Attendees filed through dozens of seed packets for flowers, fruit and vegetables and took part in seminars on garden planning, pollinators and growing container gardens. Northside Fresh has a plant distribution event scheduled for May 18 at Sanctuary Covenant Church.

New pump track coming to North

McKinley neighborhood will eventually be home to the city’s first pump track, “a rolling course for bicycles, skateboards, and scooters,” according to a Star Tribune story which says construction will begin next year. The track, which will be located in Perkins Hill Park, is a project of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB).

Emily’s Cafe has been sold

After several months on the market, Emily’s F&M Cafe has been sold. The cafe’s new owners are Anna Donato-Ghani, niece to Emily and Elliot Benincasa who used to own Emily’s, and her husband Gabby Ghani. According to Donato-Ghani, the next year is a trial period for the cafe as they figure out if they can sustain the restaurant and their catering company which they plan on housing out of Emily’s. Cafe hours are Wednesday-Sunday, 8am-2pm. They are closed Mondays and Tuesdays.
Northside cemetery owner upset about property tax assessment

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

Crystal Lake Cemetery is fighting against the City of Minneapolis’ efforts to assess higher property taxes on the business to pay for nearby street improvements. The City is also asking residents and other local business to pay up.

The cemetery’s co-owner, Bill McReavy, recently spoke at a March 19 meeting of the City of Minneapolis Transportation and Public Works Committee. This is his second time speaking at the committee regarding the cemetery’s property tax assessment.

“We were here two years ago and mentioned to [the Transportation and Public Works Committee] at that time, that the assessment to us was too difficult to do, because Crystal Lake Cemetery has not made a profit now, for three consecutive years,” said Bill McReavy, who owns and operates the cemetery alongside his family. “We’re fortunate that we have other properties that are profitable,” he said, acknowledging that the family’s other operations subsidize Crystal Lake. “And what it boils down to is this: a couple of years ago when we met here, I offered to you to give the City of Minneapolis, free of charge, the cemetery. Or, if it’s advantageous to you, to sell it to you for $1. We’d be happy to do that, it happens throughout the US,” said McReavy.

According to McReavy, there are several attributes that make Crystal Lake unique. It is located in North Minneapolis, it is a 140-acre cemetery, and it has a history that stretches back to 1890. It is one of the largest and oldest cemeteries in the State of Minnesota.

“We will give it to you free of charge with all documentation or we will sell it to you for $1, whichever you would like,” said McReavy. “It is a very difficult thing to pay assessments like this when you’re going backwards financially and, quite frankly, we feel like we’re doing our part.”

McReavy argues that media reporting on his testimony out of context. He notes that his testimony was more about seeking a partnership.

Continued on Page 16

Crystal Lake Cemetery has been owned by the McReavy family since 2005. At a recent Minneapolis City Council meeting, Bill McReavy offered to give it to the City to avoid paying the property taxes that have been assessed on it this year. Photo by David Pierini
Happy May, Neighbors!

As the Islamic Holy month Ramadan begins on or around May 15th this year, I wanted to take some time to recognize our Muslim neighbors this month! Since the Islamic calendar is based on lunar cycles, Ramadan’s timing can change from year to year. Ramadan is the 9th month on the Islamic calendar and is a month of observed fasting—or going without food and drink—which is one of the five pillars of Islam. During the month of Ramadan, fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset. There is a great deal of power and solidarity in learning about the amazing diverse holidays, experiences and ways of life. Therefore, I wanted to highlight the observance of Ramadan this month.

This can be particularly difficult during periods such as now, when Ramadan falls during the summer months, as this also means longer days. Since the Islamic calendar follows lunar cycles, this is not always the case. Those who are fasting will wake before the sun rises, to eat suhoor, a pre-dawn meal, and will not eat again until the sun sets and they break their fast with dates and water for iftar. During these day-time hours in the month of Ramadan, the act of fasting is a practice in self-control, and is coupled with prayer to strengthen faith.

Ramadan is a time for reflection, focus and prayer. We are currently in a time of increased Islamophobia causing many of our Muslim neighbors to have to live and worship in fear. As a Northside community, I would love for us to start a conversation about how we can support and stand with our Muslim neighbors during this challenging time by acknowledging and being mindful of observance. Below are some ways you can show solidarity:

1. If someone shares with you that they are observing Ramadan, a common greeting is to say “Ramadan Mubarak” which means “Blessed Ramadan.”
2. If they turn down food or water, honoring this request on the first decline is another act of mindful observance. As Minnesotans who prioritize courtesy, we have the habit of asking multiple times!
3. You may notice that those who are fasting may be tired or low energy. Offering a place to sit or rest may be a welcome respite, as the body is a bit more lethargic during these times.
4. Some people participate in a day of fasting during Ramadan to stand in solidarity with our Muslim neighbors during Ramadan. I think this is an incredible action and love the conversation and experiences it fosters.
5. Overall, I want to encourage everyone to look to learning and expanding in ways outside of our understanding. This month, find a way to consider how to take action and be in solidarity with our Muslim neighbors. There is a wealth of experience that happens just past our areas of comfort!
6. To all that are observing, I wish you a fulfilled and prosperous Ramadan!

Minneapolis City Council members Phillipe Cunningham (Ward 4) and Jeremiah Ellison (Ward 5) were inaugurated in January 2018. We have invited them to keep in touch with the community through this monthly column in our newspaper.
New documentary profiles Lucy Laney school and its leader

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

Love Them First, a KARE11 documentary, premiered at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Film Festival (MSPiFF) on April 13. The documentary has since become the highest-grossing film that the festival has ever seen.

The documentary profiles the work happening at Lucy Laney at Cleveland Park Community School (3333 Penn Ave N), to move the school off the “failing school list” through the eyes of its Principal, Mauri Friestleben, and other school community members.

The film was directed and reported by Ben Garvin and Lindsey Seavert. Garvin is a photo-journalist at KARE11 who co-directed the documentary alongside Seavert, a reporter and storyteller at KARE11. They chose to work on the project after having had separate interactions with Friestleben and the Lucy Laney community while reporting on other stories.

“Through my daily work as a journalist at KARE11, I met Mauri on an assignment when there was a shooting in North Minneapolis near the school. She got on the intercom and just said to the children, ‘this was scary and this was real and I am sorry and my heart is broken.’ She was absolutely unflinching and honest with the children in a way that blew me away. I thought she had such a powerful voice, that she was honest and raw, and I wanted to be around that and I want to learn more about her. That was part of the reason we started the work,” said Garvin.

Filming of what would eventually become the documentary began during the 2017-2018 school year, and according to Garvin and Seavert, it required a lot of trust-building with the Lucy Laney community and the Northside.

“The media has a history of not really doing good work in North Minneapolis. It reduces a really important part of our work to storylines about crime or whatnot. And we knew that had that history behind us when we walked into that building...”

Ben Garvin, KARE11

“Give us some time, let us do a couple of stories and then tell us what you think,” said Garvin. “And we also recognize that Lindsay and I are both white journalists. We live a privileged life, and we’re doing a story about a mostly Black population and we had to be conscious of that going in.”

Garvin and Seavert’s initial plan was not to make a documentary. They planned to embed at Lucy Laney for a year in order to create 15-20 news stories. The documentary was a result of that reporting.

“When we came to [Friestleben] with this idea, she had every reservation, and she had every right to those reservations, but I think we proceeded with caution, and we gained trust story by story. I think through showcasing our willingness to be uncomfortable, to listen, to understand, and to be authentic and through time we sort of became entrenched and immersed in the school culture for a year.

And we became part of it, so much so that they stopped noticing Ben’s cameras and they would willingly sit down for our cameras,” said Seavert.

According to Friestleben, allowing KARE11 into the building was initially disconcerting, as school administrators worried about both the stories that would be told and audience reactions.

“I know we had a good understanding, as a staff and families, that we could say this is enough. I’m very protective of my community and I did not want my school or community to be exploited. I did not want it to be about this deprived and deprived Minneapolis school. We were up front about that, but that point never came,” said Friestleben. “With every story, with every interaction, [Garvin and Seavert] approached it with humility and compassion and a desire to understand. There were times when I thought: I don’t know how that is going to be received, but it is what it is.”

Intentional decisions were made in the filmmaking to make sure that students were comfortable with the presence of the cameras and student voices were highlighted throughout the documentary as they discussed their school, their neighborhood, and their community.

“Students loved the cameras and microphones. They loved it. They were so funny. Even to this day they believe they are celebrities. Ben would say, ‘let them touch the camera,’ and he gave the older kids little cameras and taught them about lighting and good audio. We told the kids what an honor it was to have people who want to show us in our true environment and our true selves. The kids love seeing themselves on TV,” said Friestleben.

Additionally, Seavert made the decision not to narrate to the documentary, which is atypical of both journalism and documentary filmmaking. Instead she says she sought to make sure that Northside voices were prioritized in the film-making. At times, Friestleben interviews her own students; at other points, students and faculty speak directly to a camera.

Much of the documentary comes across as biographical, with community members, like Friestleben and the school’s former Student Council President Sophia seeing themselves through the Lucy Laney community and vice versa. Garvin and Seavert also work to deconstruct a lot of the typical Northside stereotypes, by providing space for Northsiders to speak up about stereotypes and narratives, as well as their own school.

“You can always find light in the darkest places. Like in Pandora’s Box, you may have released the evil around you, but there is always that little spark of hope, your bright light, your beacon,” said Sophia, a Lucy Laney graduate and former Student Council President, in the documentary. Sophia’s last name has not been included as she has an open adoption case.

There will be a seven day run of the film at the St. Anthony Main Theatre from May 17-May 23 at 7:15pm each night. Half of all proceeds will go to Lucy Laney school. The documentary will also air in the fall on KARE11. More information can be found on the documentary’s Facebook page.
After three years in the community, Serendripity Spot is set to close

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

McKinley neighborhood received a surprise announcement in March. One of the community's cornerstone gathering places, Serendripity Spot, decided not to renew its business license with the city. The future of the coffee shop, owned by Kelley Skumautz, remains unclear.

Serendripity Spot was founded three years ago after Skumautz said she approached McKinley Community (MC), the area’s neighborhood association, about leasing MC’s unoccupied space for a coffee shop.

“Established a relationship with the board of directors and proposed a lease option for a coffee shop. That lease has two parts. One is a straight agreement that is tenant-landlord. Another is a partnership agreement that has some intentionality about combining food and people programs, marketed to build community. That was started and signed between May and June of 2016,” said Skumautz.

In late-March 2019, a Serendripity Spot newsletter noted that the coffee shop would no longer be open for regular business, beginning April 1. The newsletter said the shop would continue serving drinks, sporadically, on a donation-basis. Skumautz made the decision in part after she was informed by MC, in Jan. 2019, that the neighborhood association no longer wanted her to conduct community engagement work, which she had been doing formally in partnership with them since Jan. 2018, and before that informally, as has been the plan when she launched Serendripity Spot.

"Being in a place 'I don't know,' feels really right. It feels really good and that new things are possible." Kelley Skumautz

"On Jan. 21st, I received verbal notification that the McKinley community no longer wanted to work together to conduct neighborhood engagement (this is after having several active partnerships and work agreements with one extending six months out from 12/26/18)," said Skumautz in a text message to North News. "At that time, I asked for a meeting to discuss lease terms. I met again with two reps of the board on 1/28 at which time they did not have an answer about extending lease terms to me or to a new entity should I wish to sell the business.

According to Skumautz, because of the lack of communication from MC, she made the decision to discontinue her business license, as it is costly for a small business to renew their license. That license expired at the end of March.

"Given the $500+ expense to do that and no indication from McKinley that they wanted to combine resources by the time the renewal was due, I discontinued my license," she said.

MC leadership saw this as a sign that Skumautz did not plan to continue her lease.

“She decided not to renew her business license which is what made us realize she did not intend to continue the lease,” said MC Board Chair Lane Cunningham. At that time, according Cunningham, MC began discussing the future of the building.

A third party mediator was brought in on March 29. At that meeting, MC told Skumautz they were not continuing her lease and that a dissolution letter confirming the details of it would follow.

“To date, I have not received anything about dissolution in writing. Together we reviewed the terms at the outset of the lease plus partnership precedent that has occurred since and I am told I will have a response from them by the end of this week (4/12) with an offer re: dissolution. Just this past Sunday, I sent the new board president documentation verifying the work I had done on McKinley’s behalf,” Skumautz told North News on April 10. According to Skumautz, who spoke to North News on April 22, she has yet to receive a dissolution letter. Instead she has received a letter, from MC, detailing two options she could take: she could either vacate in 14 days or she could complete her lease, through the end of June, when her lease is up, at a reduced rent.

According to Skumautz, a lack of communication by MC with the coffee shop has been an ongoing challenge, as has been a lack of transparency since it began a relatively recent revitalization.

“Overall, there was diminishing communication from the Board since August 2016. After that, they started losing board members and just a few people had time to do very little, so neighbors and residents started to do stuff together [here] anyway because the corner was open and active and able to harness new energy,” said Skumautz. “The McKinley Community’s resurgence seemed behind the scenes, exclusive, and lacked transparency. When MC ended the community engagement work together, I recommended a review of assets and obligations to inform decision making.”

Many community members have responded to the coffee shop’s announcement with disappointment.

“I used to go there when I was a kid and it was Jerry’s flower shop. I appreciated that it is a community gathering spot. I would meet there every Thursday with neighbors with coffee,” said Charmaine Wahlstrom, a Northsider and business owner. “I was at a meeting of Northside seniors recently and people were wondering about what they could do. Some offered to buy drinks or donate baked goods, because it’s important to us.”

Gabe Christensen, another Northsider and a McKinley resident who lives just a few blocks away from Serendripity, agrees. “I liked that it is a community gathering space, I appreciated that Kelley always worked to know people. I am sad to see the business coming to a close.”

Over its time Serendripity Spot has offered space for a number of community programs including Community Get Together and Coffee with [ward 4 City Councilmember] Cunningham, both held on Thursdays.

Coffee with Cunningham has since moved to Mykonos Coffee & Grill on Lyndale Ave. N. “I’m not entirely sure what’s going to happen in the future with Serendripity Spot, so I just figured it would be more predictable,” said Councilmember Cunningham, who is married to the MC Board Chair.

Community Get Together will still be occurring on Thursdays at Serendripity. Skumautz plans on being open sporadically through June, as she continues to understand dissolution details with MC.

“With everything going on, feelings come and go. I’m in the middle. Absolutely, in the place of midpoint. There’s a little tension holding both ways. Being in a place of ‘I don’t know,’ feels really right. It feels really good and that new things are possible,” said Skumautz.

MC Board Chair Cunningham says the neighborhood organization, particularly new Executive Director Markella Smith, is working to keep the space open as a gathering place. “We are sad to see Serendripity go, but we look at this as an opportunity for McKinley Community to expand and deepen our roots and make a bigger impact,” he said.
The school board report
Our education reporter brings you the latest news from MPS

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

Here’s what up with the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS):

The Minnesota Legislature has passed a “snow day” bill that would pardon public schools if they fall below the legally required days. This means that districts like the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) will not need to add days on to the end of the school year to make up for the record number of snow days. The bill also requires that hourly employees still be paid for missed days of work.

As part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Twin Cities move to North Minneapolis, the nonprofit will be taking over the “Graduation Coaches” program used to be a project of AchieveMPLS. The program launched in 2012 and provides volunteer coaches to mentor MPS high school students.

During the April 16 Business Meeting, the MPS Board of Directors honored North High coach Larry McKenzie, who was recognized during the NCAA Final Four activities with the 2019 Guardians of the Game Pillar Award for Education from the National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC). The Guardians of the Game Pillar Awards are presented annually for advocacy, education, leadership and service.

Spring/summer classes for Minneapolis Community Education remain open for enrollment. You can learn more about what classes are offered and how to register at: https://commed.mpls.k12.mn.us/home

MPS will be rolling out a new school bus safety curriculum in fall 2019. The Future Boys Future Girls of Franklin Middle School prepared a video on school bus safety that teachers will use as part of their teaching next year.

On April 24, after school, North High celebrated the ribbon-cutting on its new Library and Media Center. The renovations included a new floor plan and shelving and a donation of nearly 2000 books from a community member.

On April 16, students from North High School and FAIR School Downtown visits Paisley Park. The Paisley Park-MPS partnership seeks to provide students with free tours and a “unique music experience.”

The next MPS Business Meeting will be held May 14 at 5:30pm. The next MPS Committee of the Whole will be held May 28 at 6pm. Both meetings will be held at the Davis Center (1250 West Broadway Ave).

Educator spotlight Patrice Howard

Patrice Howard is the new Executive Director for Minneapolis Public Schools’ Department of Community Education. Photo by Cirien Saadeh

By Cirien Saadeh Staff Reporter

Patrice Howard is the Executive Director of Community Education for Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). Howard joined MPS in Nov. 2018 from the Brooklyn Center Public School District where she was the Director of Community Education and the Director of Community Schools for seven years. Howard has worked in youth development for the last twenty years. She attended North Star, Webster, Roosevelt, North High, and then graduated from South High.

What is it like being at MPS? This is where I’ve always wanted to be. As a teen, I volunteered for after-school programs and summer programs throughout Minneapolis and specifically in the Minneapolis Public Schools. About seven years ago, when I was in Brooklyn Center and just really learning the work of community schools and community education, I said I want to work in the community where I was raised, where I really learned from a number of different adult mentors and, and where I received my education. I’m an alumna of Minneapolis Public Schools and I wanted to be back here, I just didn’t think it was going to come this soon. And so when that opportunity came, I jumped at it.

Can you discuss your support for full-service community schools? I have been really supporting the work, advocating for community schools since 2012 or so. That means working with community organizing groups, local grassroots efforts, really launching what this work is. It’s not new in Minnesota, however it’s newer as far as receiving support from Education Minnesota, the teacher’s union. I think that support came in 2012 when I worked with a number of colleagues to testify on behalf of first-time funding for full-service community schools. Also we have been receiving support from the Coalition for Community Schools, which is our national partner. We advocated for funding every two years and supported colleagues in the area of advocacy work around community schools, identifying who those champions were in the community school’s arena. When I say community schools, it’s interchangeably full-service community school. Just last week I went out to the State Capitol and testified again for support around advocacy around full-service community schools.

What is your education philosophy? And do you consider yourself a teacher or an educator? Educator. I don’t think I have much patience for teaching. My education philosophy is embedded in community and I’m really relying on families as a foundation of a community. I believe in that if we all work together, we all thrive: strong families and stronger schools. I look at the community as a ecosystem and really responding to the needs of the whole child. And that’s the work of full-service community schools, once you support that, that child, that family, that community is strong and that school is strong. So that’s where my philosophy is, really.

What was your favorite class in high school? Chemistry. I’m not sure if I am any good at it now, but I liked it then. I had a great teacher, Ms. Rasmussen, who formerly taught at North High.

Do you have an educator that you look up to? I really admire the work of scholar Lisa Delpit. I very much appreciate her transparency and unapologetic view of education in society. As far as locally, I’ve always admired Principal Abdullah [at Patrick Henry High School]. I’ve always appreciated his work.

What about your work in community education? Aside from full-service community schools, I want to North Minneapolis to know that community education is a department and a program for all people from all ages, from birth to adulthood, lifelong learning if you will. Community education is embedded in this idea that opportunities should be available for community, accessible, and engaging opportunities for all. So I want North Minneapolis to know that what we provide should be for them. If there is something of interest that they would like to see in their community, please reach out. We would love to work with community. I, personally, am not interested in wasting resources and I’m not interested in putting things out that aren’t accessible and aren’t appropriate for community. We are always seeking new ways to engage with community and as a Northside native, I am excited to have the opportunity to share this work with my community.

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, you can email North News at ciriens@pillsburyunited.org. If possible, please include contact information for the person you are recommending.
M.J. Omar recently opened a new store “5 Corner Market” on 26th and Sheridan Ave. N. Omar has been working on opening this store for a few years. He opened this store because he knew that CVS on 26th and Broadway was shutting down. He saw an opportunity to open a new business.

Omar has not just opened the store, but he is also opening a new chicken place connected to the store that’s opening up May 1.

Omar opened his business on the Northside because: “The people. It’s like a family over here. Everyone knows everyone. It’s a close community. There is a lot of youth that need guidance and direction. If I can open a store and help guide the youth, I’d be happy to do that,” he said.

Omar’s least favorite thing about working on the Northside is “stealing. Not everyone is stealing but it is the main issue,” he said. Omar is a nice guy but he has limits when it comes to people asking him for free items. “A lot of people come in here asking for free stuff, and if it was up to me, I would give everything free. But if I do that I won’t have money to pay rent and I’ll be the one asking people for stuff.”

Community members think that this a great new addition. The store is close to many people’s homes.

Angela Docken lives down the street from 5 Corner Market. “It is the only store that is within walking distance. Well the closest one,” she said. Docken believes that there will be struggles having the store in the neighborhood. “I think the neighborhood will be a struggle, but I can tell he is motivated and determined to make it work.” Docken would also love to open her own store herself. “I would love to, I would like to open a photo studio! Which is slowly in the making.”

Inside the store everything is clean and organized. Omar is still working on few things in the store to make it even better than other stores on the Northside.

The Minneapolis North Polars baseball team has had a rough history, but they’re looking to change all of that this baseball season.

With a good head coach returning and team leaders such as Eli O’Neal, Jacob Butler and Corshon Davis, they are in good shape to win some games. The Polars next game coming up is on Friday, April 26 vs. Edison High School at home (North High baseball field).

This year all of the players expect to have a much better season than last year. Corshon Davis expects to “win some games, play ball and just do good,” and John Collins expects to have “more wins than last year.”

They have a lot of good baseball players returning for their senior years and even more underclassman to fill the roles that need filling. Many players on the team believe Eli O’Neal is a good leader on the team. They said he is one of the better players on the team and “helps the team out a lot.”

Outside of baseball, O’Neal also plays football for the Polars. Lots of these North High baseball players wouldn’t say that baseball is their primary sport. For example, Kehyan Porter is the Polars starting running back for the football team, and he also wrestles varsity for North High. A lot of the players on the team use baseball to stay in shape for their next sport which could be far away. Now that it’s finally getting nice outside, come out to one of the Polars baseball games in the near future at their beautiful home field.
North Minneapolis is home to three government-designated zones, designed to bring attention and resources to chronically marginalized places. All three attempt to right economic and environmental wrongdoing, like redlining and lead pollution. Right now they are works in progress. Together, they have the potential to bring major dollars and transformative development to the community; but as with all change envisioned for the Northside, they trigger worry about the displacement that is typical of gentrification. **By Kenzie O’Keefe and Cirien Saadeh**

Most of North Minneapolis south of Webber Parkway was named one of 22 federally designated “Promise Zones” (PZs) in April 2015. PZs are “high poverty” areas where “Federal Government agencies partner with local organizations and leaders to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, and leverage private investment,” according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

PZ designations last for ten years. Four years in, the North Minneapolis Promise Zone (NMPZ) has led to about $19 million in federal funding (which had preference for PZ applicants) flowing into the Northside, says the Minneapolis PZ’s Director, Julianne Leerssen. She says the Minneapolis Health Department and Pillsbury United Communities (which owns North News) have been among the recipients.

According to the City’s website, the NMPZ has three goals “approached through a racial equity lens”: 1) building a more inclusive economy and spurring business growth through capital investments, 2) improving the health and safety of residents by improving community-police relations and 3) increasing access to healthy food, and encouraging stable housing.

Appetite for Change (AFC) Founder Princess Titus says her organization had high hopes for the designation when it was announced in 2015. She says “some good partnerships” have come out of it, and AFC has received grant dollars that used the PZ preference point process. But, she says conversations about it seem to have stagnated. “It’s not that alive. I don’t see it. West Broadway is not different,” she said.

Leerssen says there have been some challenges in the NMPZ’s first four years: the slow pace of change, “keeping people’s attention on the Northside,” and that most of her staff, who are AmeriCorps VISTAs, turn over every year.

But she says there have been successes too: dollars raised, “getting groups of people together...to talk about economic development and actually work on some of those issues” and “pushing the envelope” around more investment on the Northside and policing.

With six years of designation left, Leerssen says her dream is for “a big redevelopment project” to get started and be near completion. She imagines several blocks of vacant buildings being transformed by public and private partnerships that involve opportunities for some community ownership and prevents displacement due to gentrification.

She also wants community members to know that NMPZ staff are “here to support organizations getting to the next level on their grantmaking for their programs in North Minneapolis,” she said, noting that applying for federal grants can feel intimidating and that NMPZ staff are equipped to help.
Opportunity Zones
By Kenzie O’Keefe | Editor

128 low-income census tracts in Minnesota were designated “Opportunity Zones” (OZ) by former Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton in 2018. Five of them are in North Minneapolis. OZs are federally recognized areas where private sector investments in local development projects are encouraged through capital gain tax incentives. The OZ program has three phases: zone designation, fund creation, and investor attraction. Shauen Pearce, Mayor Jacob Frey’s Economic Development and Inclusion Policy Director, says the timeline for designation was rapid and much has been decided as details at the federal level were still being worked out. Funds are slowly being created across the country and interested investors are awaiting further development of rules and regulations from treasury, said Pearce. “There are several incentives to the investors, at least one of which has some people racing to invest by December 2019,” she said.

Pearce says the City intentionally designated areas that are publicly owned in order to support “inclusive” projects that forefront the community, especially people currently on the Northside: “We are focused on ensuring that the people who have invested in North Minneapolis for generations can start or grow their business, build wealth in the community, and benefit from the investments they have made as residents and business owners,” she said.

But, incentivized private investment brings concern about gentrification. The OZ program is no exception to this fear: “It’s highly risky because the program itself doesn’t come with any rules or guidelines around that,” said John Bueche, Executive Director of the West Broadway Coalition (WBC). “People are still figuring out what the rules are going to be.”

Northside resident Ian Alexander, who is currently contracted by the Minneapolis Promise Zone to look at OZ opportunities in North Minneapolis, says the OZ program is unlikely to “change things exceptionally” in the community. He says the average investor wants larger returns than Northside development projects tend to supply. “You have to find a very specific developer who wants to do something charitable,” he said.

Pearce doesn’t see that as a problem: “Minneapolis is a great city for social impact investments and people who are looking to invest in new technologies, resiliency, and more. Communities within OZs are well-positioned for investments and have a host of projects that may qualify and ultimately facilitate inclusive growth.”

The Mayor’s office, LISC Twin Cities, and the McKnight Foundation have helped lead local conversations about OZ opportunities. Pearce says community members can keep in touch with the process by reaching out to Mayor Frey’s office directly regarding process and to the City’s Business Development team for project related interests.

Northern Green Zone
By Cirien Saadeh | Staff Reporter

The Northern Green Zone is the City of Minneapolis’ effort to draw attention to environmental injustices faced by the city’s under-resourced communities. The designation was introduced in the City’s 2012 Climate Action Plan, and, according to the City of Minneapolis Sustainability Program Coordinator Kelly Muellman, community members have played a huge role in making the work happen.

“We’ve had a lot of community involvement over the last three to four years. Community members have driven and generated all of the recommendations and content for the Green Zones. We just act as facilitators, essentially,” said Muellman.

North Minneapolis’ Green Zone organizer is Roxanne O’Brien, a community organizer contracted through the Environmental Justice Coordinating Committee. The Northern Green Zone Task Force, which O’Brien serves on, has met four times now. Their role is to work with city staff to identify activities and priorities, which is different for each Minneapolis Green Zone. In the Northside, organizers have focused on air pollution, lead in the water, asthma, and other issues.

“The Green Zone has been about drawing attention to the environmental justice issues in Minneapolis and has been focused on collecting and organizing data in order for people to see the ways in which environmental issues happen and impact the Northside,” said O’Brien. According to O’Brien, the Northern Green Zone Task Force is also currently working on legislation in concert with Rep. Fue Lee (59A) including HF2778, the cumulative pollution analysis and HF 2739, the headwaters community food and water economic resiliency program.

“My hope is that North Minneapolis sets a precedent for what is possible in overburdened communities and what is possible for our environment if political will and resources are given to exploited communities,” said O’Brien.

O’Brien and members of the Northern Green Zone Task Force are planning a celebration on April 30, beginning around 7pm, to celebrate organizing work and wins related to Northern Metals. The location is Christ English Church, 3210 Oliver Ave. N. RSVP to O’Brien at 612-434-8868.
Best movie theaters in the metro area

By Amira Ahmed, Timya Carlisle North High

The majority of teenagers look forward to the next big movie to go see in theaters with their friends or family. There are a lot of movie theaters in the metro area but only one on the Northside. The Capri Theater shows some newer movies but tends to show older films.

North High students have their favorite theaters. Azari Jackson says AMC Maple Grove is the best because “of how clean and respectful it is and how they brand themselves.”

Another student, Kyree Wilson, says AMC Rosedale is the best because “of what it offers in it experience.”

There are a wide variety of movie theaters in the Metro area. They offer a variety of prices, snacks and comfort. In these movie theaters, a variety of movies are shown: new releases and older options. Depending on the movie you go to and the movie theaters, a variety of movies are shown: new releases and older options. For example, the new Avengers movie comes out on April 26 and a quick online search shows that you can see it for as little as $6 with a school ID. Without one it’s $8 at St. Anthony Main Theater.

Students take on the school board

By Alanna Smith North High

Students for Education Reform Minnesota (SFER) is a group that is working towards improving the school system to achieve educational justice for every child. I recently joined the group, and I was interviewed about my life and experiences in Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) in five categories: the diversity in advanced classes, equal course selections, facilities, third grade reading and teachers believing. The school board has a window open where there can be changes and ideas applied to the school district.

SFER is taking these five ideas and asking students, alumni and staff about them and what they think is good for the district. The person I met with, Kenneth Eban, the senior director of organizing said “this work is so important to me because I want to ensure no family ever has to make the same sacrifices my family made in order to get a great education.”

Throughout MPS there is a lot of inconsistency and a lack of balanced resources for each school. There are some schools and students who are put above others, and from these five categories you can see the difference. Sadly based on the community and area determines how much the school gets and how good the education is.

SFER is having a press conference with a undetermined date to say all these things officially.

The Marvel movie of the year is here

By Jenelle Robinson North High

Have you ever wanted a super power? You ever wondered what it was like to be really strong and be the son of lightning like Thor, or run really fast like The Flash? Well here’s a story about a group of superheros that you may have heard of before. Avengers Endgame is opening April 26, 2019 and is expected to be one of the best and emotional Avengers movies ever made. North High senior Eddie Beammon said he relates most to Spiderman because, “His everyday life and everyday struggles with school and money...he’s just a down to Earth person.”

Chris Hemsworth (Thor) told Esquire, “If you were shocked by Infinity War, I think the second one is even more shocking, for other reasons entirely. That’s what kind of blew me away the first time read both scripts, is how they managed to orchestrate so many different characters but give them each their own separate shot and moments.”

Chris Evans (Captain America) said on Twitter: “Officially wrapped on Avengers 4. It was an emotional day to say the least. Playing this role over the last 8 years has been an honor.”

Currently, there’s no movie theater where you can watch The Avengers in North Minneapolis. Some people have to go out of their way to see movies in theaters like Southdale Mall, Maple Grove, or even the Mall of America in Bloomington. Students in North High school would like to have a movie theater in North Minneapolis that plays new movies and has state of the art screening, seating, and snacks.

Polars try to finish strong

By Joy Cunningham, Kati Padilla North High

The end of the school year is the hardest time for most students. Many North High freshman found third quarter to be the most challenging because they are all burnt out. There’s a lot more work, and they are drained from past quarters. The seniors are more focused on graduating with high GPAs and finishing strong so they won’t have to attend summer school.

Toward the end of school year, people tend to slack and fall off task. North High freshman Demetria Jones says “probably because I got so comfortable with being a student, I started slacking and doing too much.” Another freshman, Iyonna, said third quarter was the most challenging for her because she “wasn’t really focused and it was more work.”

Senior Chris Jennings said the thing that keeps him going through negative situations “is knowing that things could always be worse. You’re always in a better situation then you could be in, even if its a bad one.” Senior Marlon Helmer says that the most challenging thing happening to him this quarter is trying to maintain focus because there is a lot of distractions in North High. They both agree on the fact that they are focused on staying on task to finish their last year out strong.
Make the most of your spring in North Minneapolis

North High students offer up some of their favorite fair-weather Northside activities.

By Taylor Tidwell-Bennett, Zachary Yeager, Jenelle Sanner-Robinson, Deshawn Davis, Alanna Smith

1 Picnic at Farview Park
You can sit on top of the hill at Farview Park (621 29th Ave. N) to have a picnic and enjoy one of the best views in the community. You will also have access to a playground. Just a little down the road you can find North Market on 44th and Humboldt Ave. N or Cub Foods on W Broadway Ave. to get your goodies from.

2 Play basketball at a recreation center
Harrison Recreation Center (501 Irving Ave. N) is one of the best spots to play basketball. You can play on the outside court which has two rims. If you don’t have a basketball or even a football, the rec center can provide you with one. Get a group of friends together on a nice day and go to the court for a nice pick-up game.

3 Play football or BBQ at North Commons
Get a group together and go enjoy the weather outside with a pickup game of football at North Commons. There is a large football field with plenty of space for lots of people. North Commons is the best field in the North Minneapolis area and can be used at any time of the day.

4 Enjoy Cajun cooking at Theodore Wirth
Enjoy some Louisiana seafood gumbo or crawfish by the pound (1221 Theodore Wirth Pkwy) at the local Cajun Twist Restaurant. They are located at The Trailhead, in North Minneapolis, a facility in Theodore Wirth Regional Park. It’s a relatively new place and the food is good.

5 Go rock climbing
The Minneapolis Bouldering Project is a local rock climbing and gym off of Plymouth near the river. You can take classes with a coach or even have a session. The prices range from $16 day passes to a $68 monthly option. Student discounts are offered. Learn more at minneapolisboulderingproject.com.

6 Go paintballing
Splatball is a paintball place located in North Minneapolis (2921 N 2nd St) near the Lowry Bridge where you and your family can get affordable, challenging, competitive and an enjoyable experience. Prices start at $24.95. Learn more at www.splatball.com.

7 Go to Young Life
Young Life is a Christian group where you learn about Jesus and play games and eat and it doesn’t cost money to go. Bring your family and friends to hangout and play games with each other, also make friends or get to know people that are in your community. Young Life takes field trips to many places and during fall and summer time we go to camp. Camp does cost money and the Young Life leaders help kids to do fundraisers to raise money to pay for camp. Camp is a week long with NO cell phones. Young Life meets every Monday at North Commons Park, 6pm-8:30/9pm. (1801 N Irving Ave.)

8 Have breakfast at the Lowry Cafe
It’s a good place to eat. They have breakfast and lunch. The hours are 8am-3pm. The prices aren’t too high or too low. On Google their ratings are 4.4/5. While you’re there you should try their waffles, their burgers, and malts. The lunch there is really good. We suggest that you go there for a meal rather than breakfast because the portions are bigger.

9 Grab a bite to eat on West Broadway
Sammy’s Avenue Eatery and Wendy’s House Of Soul (1101 W Broadway Ave. 1021 W Broadway Ave.) are close by each other. Get a drink at Sammy’s followed by a SOULROLL from Wendy’s.

10 Watch a North High softball game
Go enjoy North’s very own Lady Polars at the North Commons softball field and enjoy the fast competition. Check out the local rivalry between North High and Henry coming up on May 14.

NorthPoint’s Community Food Shelf, MNsure and Snap Enrollment have Moved to

1835 Penn Ave. North (at the corner of Golden Valley Rd. and Penn Avenue)

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Limited parking in rear lot, street parking available.

For additional information Call 612-767-9500 or go to: www.northpointhealth.org
The Northside is home to The state’s only African American museum

By Talina Hill North High

The Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery, located in the Regional Acceleration Center (RAC) at Penn and Plymouth Ave. on the Northside is the only museum of its kind in the state. It shows the Northside black community as a whole going all the way back to events from the early 1800s.

There are many things to do in the building because it’s not just home to a museum. There are also many businesses in the building: Thor Construction, Me & I Fitness, and MEDA among others.

The museum is black owned, meaning there are two black women that are the leaders of the museum. Their names are Coventry Royster Cowens and Tina Burnside. They both are co-founders and they both have done many important things in and for the community.

Royster Cowens worked with multicultural programs and Burnside is a civil rights attorney in Minneapolis. She is also a writer who has written articles for the Minnesota Historical Society. The whole point of the museum is to celebrate the toughness and courage of African Americans in Minnesota, according to Cowens and Burnside.

The Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery was opened in September 2018. The most challenging part of the process was getting it started, said Burnside. In the past, there were museum ideas that just crumbled, weren’t dedicated to African Americans, and just weren’t sustainable.

In Minnesota, there aren’t any museums that are dedicated to just black people. “So it was a hard time trying to get out to the public about this new museum or even believe that it was going to be built, so we got lots of volunteers and community members to spread the word and reassure people that it was going to happen and disregarding those obstacles,” said Burnside.

“The museum is focused both on Minnesota African American history and community art,” said Burnside. The museum is for people in the community that would like a platform for their work. It also showcases community achievements and talents, which are hard to express for black people in general in a white supremacist society.

It was designed to be close to public transportation, so it’s accessible. “We wanted to be a part of the community, so we asked Thor while they were in the process of building, and they had space for the museum, so we wanted to take that opportunity,” said Burnside.

The money for the museum to operate comes from private donations from dedicated community members. The funding goes to exhibits and programs. Everybody is welcomed to donate.

In addition to exhibits, the museum also hosts performances and events. “We have open mic nights, spoken word, and local authors and people around the community comes in and does children reading programs on Saturday morning,” said Burnside.

Exhibits currently on display in the museum are "Unbreakable: celebrating the resilience of African Americans in Minnesota," "Black Twin Cities: The 1940s photographs of John F. Glanton," and "History Harvest." The events and exhibits rotate so you’ll see new and fresh things inside. What will be happening is lectures from professors and discussions about African American history and culture. The best part of the museum in Burnside’s opinion is having a museum where “African Americans can see themselves reflected and their history because African American history is America’s history. Also, people of other races can learn about the history, struggles and celebrations. Because of stereotypes people fear what they don't know, but by learning about others’ history, this creates a greater understanding,” she said.
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with the City, rather than giving up the family-owned cemetery to the city.

“It’s just plain inaccurate. We’re not trying to exit the cemetery. We’re trying to not have to be responsible for a huge assessment,” said McReavy.

Despite his own statements, however, McReavy spoke on public record, at the committee meeting, about his offer to either give or sell the cemetery to the city.

According to the Public Works Director Robin Hutchenson speaking at that same committee meeting, “Property transitions are complex transactions for the city. I would be happy to speak with a few colleagues if there is interest from property services; it would not be solely a public works decision to take on such a property, but I appreciate hearing your testimony and it is helpful to have the background.”

The McReavy family has owned the cemetery since 2005. At that time, they purchased three cemeteries and three funeral chapels. They also own Hillside Cemetery in Northeast Minneapolis, which they purchased in 2001. The McReavy family has a long history in the funeral business. Before owning cemeteries, they made caskets.

“162 years ago or so, we started out as a furniture manufacturer. And who better to make a casket than a furniture manufacturer, so we started doing that. The next thing you know if you’re no longer doing furniture manufactur-

According to McReavy, it costs about $1.3 million annually to operate the 140-acre cemetery which sits between Penn Ave. and Humboldt Ave., and 42nd Ave. and Dowling Ave. It is the final resting place of many prominent Northsiders, including Jamar Clark and boxer Lee Savold, according to the Star Tribune.

According to McReavy, the city has sent a letter with a property tax assessment to the cemetery. That $80,000 assessment includes repair work and resurfacing that needs to be done on city streets. That assessment has been split between residents and business owners along the Dowling Ave. corridor.

“We did not go to the city. They came to us with an assessment. They sent us a letter and said, if you don’t agree with paying this assessment, you’ll have to come down to City Hall and object to it,” said McReavy. “I went down there. And two years ago I did the same thing, and the media had no interest whatsoever, which I didn’t know if they should or shouldn’t. But this year all of a sudden, there’s the Star Tribune, there’s KARE11, there’s [North News].”

McReavy argues that the cemetery is not making a profit. He says that it’s losing money and it’s taking a hit on the business’ “perpetual care fund,” which is a mandated fund set up, from income and with interest, to ensure that cemeteries and grave sites are maintained. This includes, for example, repairs to the fence.

“The fence always has to be repaired, because of cars running into it and police chases and so forth,” said McReavy.

According to news reports, the City of Minneapolis has so far turned down McReavy’s offer, and news agencies did not respond to McReavy’s claims that reporting was inaccurate.

Crystal Lake Cemetery was established approximately 130 years ago and is the second largest cemetery in Minneapolis. Photo by David Pierini
Spring cleaning for West Broadway

One week after an April snow storm, signs of spring appeared on W Broadway Ave. Neon and purple-vested men spread across the avenue for the annual spring planting and cleanup, sponsored by North MPLS and the West Broadway Business & Area Coalition. A crew from Better Futures Minnesota swept leaves, picked up trash and planted flowers in sidewalk planters.

Photos by David Pierini

Giving credit where it’s due: public schools and private schools

By Datelle Straub, Danae Lawson

Patrick Henry High

Since 1953 and the case of Brown vs Board of Education, the US Supreme Court has declared that separation of students of different races was an unlawful act. Since then public schools have welcomed everybody, despite their background or origin. But public schools do not always get the recognition they need for the community building and leadership development that they have been doing for their neighborhood and community. Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) teachers and administrators do not always get the credit they deserve for the work they do to help students succeed.

“All the students that come to us, we try to educate them as best we can no matter what there life circumstances are,” said Dr. Bjorn Lundgren, an Assistant Principal at Patrick Henry High School (PHHS).

MPS schools have programs for students that are meant to meet different student needs, where they are at as learners and what they need from their classes. These programs include The International Baccalaureate (IB) program that works to build students with ten different attributes. The IB Program wants students that are inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective. This program is meant to help students work on writing, speaking, and presentation skills. Other programs include the Community Connected Academy at PHHS.

Area 44, the PHHS student newsletter, is a product of a Community Connected Academy (CCA), a new program that is basically a school inside of a school. It is meant to be a chance for students to learn their true identity and what are their true skills are without sitting and listening to a teacher all day. It is a hands on program in its first year, taught by Arielle Rocca, Alex Leonard, and Angela Johnson. The program also sets up internships for the students and introduces them to police officers, firefighters, school board members, reporters, a mushroom farmer, and even attorneys. All the class work done in the CCA is project-based, which is meant to help engage more of the students.

Oftentimes, however, public schools are critiqued for their work, because they lack the resources of their private school counterparts. At the Academy of Holy Angels (AHA), the student learning experience is a lot different than at Henry, but so is the student body. The private school’s tuition for the 2018-2019 school year is over $15,000 dollars per year, paid in increments over ten months.

At Holy Angels, students begin planning for college before they begin their first days of high school. “At Holy Angels, we start in ninth grade and start talking about college planning. We do one-on-one planning with every ninth grader in the fall and it’s about a 30-minute meeting during a class period or before and after school. They use Navience to learn about their favorite classes, least favorite classes, dream career, dream college, and in the meeting we go over the quiz and discuss it and create a four-year plan. We would talk about the requirements academically and what the students need to do. It’s a conversation so, when you’re a junior, you’re not surprised that it matters. They also get to know their college counselor, goes over Holy Angels requirements to graduate, and gets you into a requirement,” said Ann Kjorstad, the College and Career Counselor at Holy Angels. That same process continues through 12th grade and includes practice ACT/SAT classes and tests, college fairs, and class meetings, and even a practice college portfolio.

At PHHS, students also have access to a College and Career Center, but the school’s focus is definitely different. “Beginning very new to the building and this brand new role, one of the visions is to be able to start in ninth grade and focus on [student’s] hopes and dreams and help students put the pieces into place, so they can make that happen for themselves, once they leave the building,” said Nneka Abdullah, the Career Readiness Coordinator at PHHS. Part of Abdullah’s work is to provide career exposure activities and site visits, and to teach students interview skills and provide networking opportunities, as well as financial aid and paying for college. “We collaborate with teachers and other important staff with access to students.”

But public schools do more than just prep students for college or careers, they also build a family that stays with students. “We want students to be college, career, and life ready,” said Henry Principal Yusuf Abdullah.

Quinton Bonds, Patrick Henry’s family and community liaison, coined the term “P-family,” as a way to connect with staff and students. “I works to prepare students for that transition from high school to college,” said Mr. Bonds. Mr. Bonds has also brought back the Student Council and coordinated the 100 Black Men Strong event that took place on Feb. 8. He said “I want students to be aware of the opportunities that await them,” so he works hard to create lots of opportunities to help the high schoolers see that vision.

There are a lot of differences between public schools and private schools. Private schools offer benefits to students whose families often pay a lot of money, but at public schools, all students get access to programs that are right for them. Private schools focus on getting kids into college, but public schools focus on college (and its challenges), careers, and just living. This means that public schools must try and do a better job reaching more students where they are at, because every student is different and what they do after high school is unique to each student.
Legal Aid to connect residents of Near North and Willard Hay with free attorneys. If you are having legal troubles that relate to your home or business and live in the Near North or Willard Hay neighborhood visit their clinic at the NRRC office Mondays and Tuesdays from 10am-3pm or set up an appointment by calling 612-335-5925.

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/hes-mpls to schedule.

Pillsbury United Communities’ Oak Park Center (1701 Oak Park Ave N) hosts free community dinners on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 5pm-7pm. The American Organizing Project is accepting applications for its 2019 Youth Organizing Fellowship. Applications are due May 12. More information can be found at https://www.facebook.com/events/619685061821908/. These are paid fellowships that begin June 24 and run through May 19.

EVENTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ongoing Thursdays – Community Coffee & Conversation. 11am-1pm. Get to know neighbors and enjoy complimentary beverages. All are welcome at Mykonos Coffee & Grill (4171 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.

4/26 – Join the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) for an entertaining evening in appreciation of trees at the 2019 Minneapolis Arbor Day Celebration at Theodore Wirth Regional Park, 4pm-8pm. The award-winning festival is full of tree-themed activities and educational opportunities, music, food, beer and, of course, new trees! Anyone can help MPRB Arborists plant 200 new trees. The event will be held in the area of the park between Wirth Lake Beach and JD Rivers’ Children’s Garden, near the intersection of Glenwood Avenue and Xerxes Avenue. Share this event with anyone who may be interested using the easy-to-remember web address, www.minneapolislakesparks.org/arborday.

5/2 – Community Office Hours with Ward 4 City Councilmember Phillippe Cunningham at Mykonos Coffee & Grill (4171 Lyndale Ave N). 12pm.

5/5 – Community Cooks Family Night at Appetite for Change (1200 West Broadway Ave). Community Cooks workshops bring community members together to cook, eat, learn and discuss social change. Bring your friends, neighbors, and family & have a FREE meal with your community! Learn more: appetiteforchange.mn/events.

5/5 – Tearra Oso, an Afro-Caribbean electronic pop singer, dancer and drummer, will perform a set of live music in the North Regional Library meeting room. Tearra, also of Mexican descent, will remind us what happened on Cinco De Mayo in Mexico at the Battle of Puebla. Sample Tearra’s music at soundcloud.com/tearraoso. The performance will take place from 3pm-4pm. Other performers will perform on June 2, July 7, and Aug. 4.

5/7 – Crime and Safety Committee Meeting at Cleveland Neighborhood Association (3333 Penn Ave N). 6:30-8:30pm. Come join your neighbors while we gather in a safe space with officers from the 4th precinct. We can speak to them directly about safety issues or concerns you may have in your neighborhood.

5/2 – Community Office Hours with Ward 4 City Councilmember Phillippe Cunningham at Corner Coffee (4155 Thomas Ave N). 4-6pm.

5/7-29 – PEYTON SCOTT RUSSELL: Alphabetic Graphology 2 at Homewood Studios. A whole new body of graffiti-inspired work looking at the powers of letters. Opening Reception is Saturday, 5/11, from 5pm to 8pm. Gallery Talk is Saturday 5/25, from 3pm-5pm.

5/9 – Northside writers group meets at Homewood Studios. 7pm. Writers of all genres and ability levels welcome.

5/7-12 – In celebration of its rich history and bright future on Minneapolis’ Northside, the Capri Theater presents six days of performances just before doors close and construction begins on the theater’s 20,000 square foot expansion and renovation. All events take place at the Capri. Admission information for each event can be found at thecapiteather.org.

5/8 – 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.

5/9 – Healing Circle: Promoting Happiness. 6pm-7:30pm. Webber Park Library. During this community self-care workshop, we will provide tips to boost your well-being and promote happiness in your life. This community-healing circle led by The Zen Bin will be a safe space for discussion, support and resources, as well as provide self-healing tools that can be personally applied to your life right away! Bad days don’t last; come learn how you can find contentment in your life consistently!

5/11 – 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 worlds? 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.

5/18-19 – Doors Open Minneapolis. Home- wood Studios Gallery and Artists’ Studios open 10am to 5pm each day.


5/29 – Immigration, migration, and the impending “silver tsunami” of retirees is set to change the demographic face of Minnesota over the next 50 years. This special UROC
**NOTICES**

Critical Conversation will examine the challenges these forces pose to the healthcare, employment, housing, and transportation needs of Minnesotans living in urban centers, small towns, and rural settings. Details and registration will be released soon. Visit https://uroc.umn.edu/criticalconversations for more information.


**EDUCATION**

May 14 – the next Minneapolis Public School Board Business Meeting will be held on May 14, beginning at 5:30pm at the Davis Center, 1250 West Broadway Ave.

May 28 – The next Minneapolis Public School Board Committee of the Whole meeting will be held on May 28, beginning at 6pm at the Davis Center at 1250 W Broadway Ave.

What’s Up 612! is an online resource for children and youth, ages 5-21, where citywide 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 caitin.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 provide objective, relevant information on schools across Minneapolis so parents can find schools that are the best fit for their kids.

**HOUSING**

Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity has developed a new program to help first-time homebuyers who have faced barriers to buying a home through traditional mortgage lenders. Under the program, homebuyers can buy on the open market using Habitat’s affordable, fixed-rate mortgage. They can even work with the Realtor of their choice, complete Habitat’s homeownership education and buy a home in their preferred neighborhood or city. The new program reaches a broader income range, including those who may think their income is too high to qualify. Households earning $40,000-$80,000 have successfully bought a home in Habitat’s redesigned homeownership program. The program revolves around an “unbeatable mortgage,” a 30-year fixed-rate with monthly payments set to no more than 30 percent of income. Down payment assistance may be available. The mortgage program was made possible by an innovative partnership with Bremer Bank. It is the largest program of its kind among Habitat affiliates in the country and serves as a national model. Minnesota’s racial gap in homeownership is among the worst in the nation. Seventy-six percent of white households own homes compared with 22 percent of black households. Forty percent of all households of color own homes. Interested residents can find more information on the mortgage program at: www.BuyWithHabitat.org or by calling 612-540-5660.

Starting over the next few years, homebuy Northpoint Health and Wellness has announced an eviction prevention pilot program. This program is open to anyone who lives in Hennepin County, lives in a rental unit, and is concerned about being evicted or being unable to pay rent. Mediation services, legal help, and housing case management is available for renters; services are also available for landlords interesting in assisting their tenants. To enroll in the pilot contact NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center at 612-767-9195 or visit 1315 Penn Ave N.

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. 

ers and renters will be able to learn energy information about a Minneapolis home or apartment before they sign on the dotted line. In February, the Minneapolis City Council approved three policies that combined touch all housing types in the city: residential energy Benchmarking, time of rent energy disclosure, and time of sale energy disclosure. The goals of these policies are to reduce overall housing costs, ensure homeowners and renters have reliable information about their energy costs when deciding where to live, and reduce carbon emissions. These policies are recommended in Minneapolis’ Climate Action Plan and will help the City make progress toward its community-wide greenhouse gas reduction goals. Minneapolis joins nearly 20 other cities in adopting residential energy benchmarking for large buildings.

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.

The City Council approved a Renter-First Housing Policy, a framework that affirms the City’s commitment to advancing renter protections and developing new tools to support affordability and stability in rental housing. The implementation of the Renter-First Housing Policy will include both early intervention and safety-net strategies. Highlights include strengthening enforcement measures to ensure repair issues are addressed quickly while minimizing negative impacts on the renter; targeting inspections efforts toward properties in disrepair or with a high volume of renter complaints; and creating financial opportunities for property owners to maintain housing conditions and affordable housing without increasing rents.

Starting over the next few years, homebuyers and renters will be able to learn energy information about a Minneapolis home or apartment before they sign on the dotted line. Today the Minneapolis City Council approved three policies that combined touch all housing types in the city: residential energy Benchmarking, time of rent energy disclosure, and time of sale energy disclosure. The goals of these policies are to reduce overall housing costs, ensure homeowners and renters have reliable information about their energy costs when deciding where to live, and reduce carbon emissions. These policies are recommended in Minneapolis’ Climate Action Plan and will help the City make progress toward its community-wide greenhouse gas reduction goals. Minneapolis joins nearly 20 other cities in adopting residential energy benchmarking for large buildings.

City of Minneapolis Solid Waste & Recycling customers should watch their mailboxes for service guides arriving soon. The guides include information on all services provided by Solid Waste & Recycling, a list of accepted materials, and a collection schedule for the year. The guide also highlights two changes to the accepted recycling materials and new programs to prevent and clean up litter. These materials are no longer accepted in recycling carts: No. 6 plastics and any black plastic. Changes in the international, national and local recycling markets have made it more important than ever to place only the accepted items in recycling carts. The guide includes information on why some of the items commonly found in recycling carts are not accepted, such as: paper coffee cups, plates and takeout containers, plastic bags, bubble wrap and plastic film; large plastic items; metal pots, pans and scrap; and Paper egg cartons, napkins and paper towels.

**BE AWARE**

The Upper Harbor Terminal Concept Plan (approved March 1, 2019) will serve as the starting point for the next phase of planning: creating the more detailed Coordinated Plan. The City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) staff and the Master development team are now preparing to launch this next phase of planning. To ensure an inclusive planning process that includes input from a diverse set of community stakeholders, the City and MPRB are establishing community committees that will be actively involved in the next phase of planning. In addition to seeking applicants, staff is preparing
Minneapolis’ appointed boards and commissions are becoming more inclusive with a steady increase in residents of color serving. A new study shows that the City has met its race diversity benchmark with board and commission members within 80 percent of the city’s demographics. Thirty-three percent of the City’s board and commission members are people of color, whereas the population of Minneapolis is 36 percent people of color. For more information check out: http://www.minneapolismn.gov/webcontent/wcmsp-217451.pdf

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 rate payers across Minneapolis. Find more information here: http://www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/sewers/fats-oils-grease

People must be at least 21 to buy tobacco products in Minneapolis as of 10/1. Minneapolis raised the age from 18 to 21 to 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 21 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 100 or fewer employees will be required to pay workers at least $10.25 beginning 7/1/2018. Large businesses have until 7/1/2022 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, harassing behaviors motivated by prejudice. The hotline number is 311 for anyone calling from within the city of 612-673-3000 statewide. 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.

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

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 lunch will be held on March 21.

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.minneapolisman.gov, features roadmaps, checklists, tools and resources to help both new and existing businesses.

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. 21, and March 21.

4/27 – Learn about business models from LLCs to 501(c)(3)s, including information on how to prepare, and benefits and risks of each. Space is limited. You can register here: https://hclib.bibliocommons.com/events/5c545a5d57eb423f0005d93b. The event will be held from 9:30am-11:30am at the Sumner Library (611 Van White Memorial Blvd).

5/4 – Coffee with Cunningham: Ward 4 Business Summit at North Market (4414 Humboldt Ave. N). Join Ward 4 City Councilmember Phillip Cunningham and community members for a discussion about resources and partnerships pertaining to small businesses. 11am-12:30pm.

To place your notice: Email kenzieo@pillsburyunited.org or call 612.302.3424
'Grandma Lynne' wants students to 'stand out, not fit in'

Lynne Crockett has lived on the Northside for all her life except two years. She grew up on 6th and Olson where “everybody knew everybody” and “everybody got along.” The Northside is her favorite part of Minneapolis. She graduated from North High in 1962, and she has had eight grandchildren graduate from North since 2001. Her great granddaughter graduated last year and was the valedictorian. Right now she has two enrolled at North and a granddaughter working there. “It’s a family affair,” she said.

Outside of the school, she is a leader to the community, sitting on several boards and committees. This month, she spoke with North High journalism students about how she supports kids, how she feels about the Northside, and what she worries about.

By Aryy Taylor, Frank Blount, Kevon Johnson, Mohamed Mohamed North High

Do you feel like the Northside could be better? Yes. I think our kids could act better. I think they could represent us better, I think our kids are outside acting like who they really aren’t and that forms people’s opinions. Mostly I’d like you kids to be more respectful, don’t swear, stop play fighting; they can’t tell you’re playing.

How has the Northside changed over the years? When I grew up on the Northside, everybody knew everybody. We all walked to school. Everybody on the block knew your family. If you messed up, it would get home before you did. When you walked in the door, your parents would be like “I heard you were at the park today. What were you doing at the park when you were supposed to be at school?”

Would you say the Northside changed in a bad way? How would you put it? I'm arguing with people about this every day. When they see us on the news, it’s not our good side. They’re not showing you on the honor roll or you playing ball. Fighting gets the good side. They’re not showing you what we actually do.

What’s keeping you in North Minneapolis? I don’t want to live nowhere else... I can tell when I’m in the Northside. There’s a sweetness in the air. The Northside took care of me. It nurtured me. I grew up in Sumner Field, at Phyllis Wheatley. At Lincoln. I can’t help but give back because people looked out for me. I will fight for you. If you have issues, I will help you.

What’s your favorite thing to do in North Minneapolis? Lay in my backyard and tan. It charges my battery. The other thing is going to the park and seeing all the kids playing. Any place you go, you learn something.

What was your favorite thing about North High? I got pregnant in my junior year... I was determined not to let that get in my way. I came back before the school year was over. Back then you didn’t get pregnant and you definitely didn’t stay in school. The staff made me feel comfortable and made me feel like I wasn’t the worst person in the world. North High has meant so much to me. It was home to me and now it’s home again.

What’s your least favorite thing about the Northside? Shots fired. I listen to the scanner all the time. I’m worried one of those shots is going to hit you. One of the reasons I listen is so I can call and ask who, I worry about it a lot. I have kids, grandkids and great grandkids. I never know where they’re going to be. It’s 24/7. There’s no time you are safe... I’m an adult and when a squad gets behind me, I get nervous. I can’t imagine what it’s like being you. I think you need to let people know what you want. Find your voice and don’t silence it.

I’m a transfer here and my mom didn’t want to transfer me here because of what she heard about the school. I had to beg her. How do we change that? We just got to get you in the door. Once you’re here, we can get past what they say. You always shape the next generation is wiser, smarter, more beautiful. I’m a Polar. I’m a warrior. There’s nothing I like more than a good fight, and I fight for kids every day.

What are you passionate about? I am passionate about justice. In high school, I wanted to become a lawyer. When I see a wrong or disservice done to someone in my family, community or anywhere, I feel compelled to address it. I spent too much time trying to be agreeable and get along with people who were working against us. Calling it out when you see it, freedom to express your truth, belongs to all of us. Too often we are marginalized or discounted, for the value of our experience. Finding my voice in advocating for others and holding myself responsible for my choices in life, has been very liberating. I love what I do. Advocating for others is like practicing law, seeking justice and helping others seek justice was always my goal.

What is your greatest accomplishment? In my eyes, my greatest accomplishment is having built credibility and trusting relationships throughout the generations. I am often humbled by the respect and love my community shows me. I don’t do it for recognition or pay; it is being able to give back to the community that nurtured me.
An indigenous approach to regional governance

Robert Lilligren brings decades of experience as a community organizer, nonprofit leader, and Minneapolis City Council Member to his new role as the Northside’s Metropolitan Council representative.

Robert Lilligren is a self-described “scream-y activist” from the Phillips neighborhood who found his way into local politics. He served three terms on the City Council, representing Ward 8 and then Ward 6, from 2001-2013. Currently, he is President and CEO of the City’s Native American Community Development Institute.

In April, he was appointed to the Metropolitan Council, replacing MEDA CEO Gary Cunningham in the District 7 seat, which represents North and South Central Minneapolis, along with Robbinsdale. He is the first tribal citizen (White Earth Band of Ojibwe) to occupy a Met Council seat.

This month he spoke to North News about equity, access, and his commitment to regional problem-solving.
**NEIGHBORS**

Explain the Metropolitan Council and your new role as a representative of it. The Metropolitan Council is the regional governance body for the seven-county metro area. It’s made up of 16 representatives who are appointed by the governor and represent geographic areas. The chair, Nora Slawik, is the 17th member. The Council has four key policy areas: regional waste water management, regional parks, regional housing authority, and planning. The Met Council also owns and operates the Metro Transit System. It’s a fairly obscure unit of government. A lot of people aren’t even aware of it.

You’ve held many community leadership positions. Why, did you want to be a Met Council representative? When the [gubernatorial] administration changed and it became pretty clear there would be a shift in the Met Council, since the governor appoints the Met council members, I saw an opportunity to bring my experience within the public sector and my experience at the very grassroots level in the community and everything in between to the Met Council. I have been doing all this regional work. In its fifty year history, no tribal citizen has ever served on the Met Council. With my experience and knowing what that level of visibility in leadership roles means to the community, I thought, "I'll do it. I'm going to go for this."

The recently appointed Met Council has been called “the most diverse” in its history. What are the “diverse” identities you see yourself bringing to it? There’s certainly a Native identity I bring but also a Native approach. The strong Native perspective is that we’re planning for seven generations. As we become more and more aware of the damage we’re doing to our planet, to our air, to our water, to our people, to our food systems, it has become apparent to me that indigenous approaches are a valuable response—indigenous writ large. How do we bring those values forward in regional policy? In regional investment? I think that, for me it’s an indigenous approach, but I think that approach resonates with a lot of different people in the sort of equity group that’s forming in the council.

What other “diverse” perspectives do you bring? I understand how to manipulate the levers of a large public institution. I did it for twelve years [as a city council member]. I lived in Phillips for 36 years. Also, I am openly gay, or Two Spirit as we say in the Native Community. I have been very open about being gay throughout my activist, political, and professional lives.

It seems like the bulk of your community work has happened on the Southside, but your Met Council district is mostly Northside. Tell us about your connection to North Minneapolis. The further you get from the Southside, that’s where I need to focus more energy on familiarizing myself with the issues. But a lot of those Southside issues that I worked on in my activism and political life are similar to issues on the Northside: lack of investment, disinvestment, blight. A lot of it was created in similar ways: wrong decisions of public investment, where freeways go, things like that that really were to protect downtown and the central business district, to buffer it from any blight to the near Northside and near Southside, and with racist decisions made about investment. And that’s always been apparent to me. I have a family connection to the Northside. My relatives were displaced by 94 construction. During my time on the city council, I learned to navigate the Northside.

Earlier, you listed the Met Council’s responsibilities. These are huge topic areas. What are your priorities? I worked to be appointed to the chair of the Met Council’s community development committee. I felt like if there was a committee where the concept of equity and equity work would land, it would be that one. The Met Council does equity things all across the operation, but as I learned from my time on city council, if you want to make any progress on equity you need to define it to focus. I feel like the community development committee is the place that that can happen.

How do you define equity today? Equity means engaging and hearing from the communities who aren’t experiencing equity in our region. As a policymaker, how do we capture that community voice? How do we engage that community voice? How do we engage in a way that has meaningful impact in the work that we do and on the outcomes that the work produces. It’s co-defining.

Do you have any formal plans in place for how you’ll do that co-defining in leadership and responsibility for a community, and I think that’s really something. The other person I thought of is Lucille, of Lucille’s kitchen [which used to be on Plymouth Avenue]. What a place that was, you know?

What does the Met Council need to do to ensure the long-term prosperity of North Minneapolis during your time on the council? Transit investment. The C line, the D line, the Blue Line extension. These are transformational investments in what has historically been community underserved and actually damaged by transit investment. Here’s an opportunity to repair what was interrupted and to really bring a community level prosperity.

What haven’t we asked you about that you think the community should know? I moved to Phillips when I was 20, and I bought my first home, and I very much felt a part of the Phillips community. We worked very hard at the grassroots level to make it clear that we knew what was best for ourselves. Then I got elected to city council, and I was in the power structure that I had been fighting against for twenty years.

As soon as that happened some people who were my allies began to mistrust me and my motives because I was part of the system. I had to learn that people have reasons to distrust government. I distrust government at times too. How do I work within this construct? My White Earth sister, Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, speaks about this very well and openly and passionately and emotionally to native audiences: “I am appointed access for you, be my ally. If you’re critical of me, great. I expect you to be. Then come and let’s be critical of me, and let’s figure out how we move forward together.” It’s trying to find that balance where yes, I’m a representative of the government system. Government may have caused you pain,

"I had to learn that people have reasons to distrust government. I distrust government at times too. How do I work within this construct?"

Robert Lilligren
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