NORTHBOUND TRAIN
North Minneapolis is the next stop for light rail extension. It brings both optimism and worry.

ALSO INSIDE
Child shootings outrage; traumatize the Northside
Page 6
Celebrating our Valedictorians
Page 14
Letter from the Editor Harry Colbert, Jr.

My intention was to use this space to talk about my decision to get my COVID-19 vaccine … a decision that did not come lightly … but sadly, the virus that has killed millions isn’t at the forefront of my mind.

Six-year-old Aniya Allen is.

The third child in North Minneapolis within a week to be shot, Aniya was the first to succumb to injuries … the other two are still fighting for their lives as of press time. As innocent of a victim as there comes, Aniya was riding in a car with her mother at the intersection of Penn and 36th Avenues North on the evening of May 17 when she was caught in a hail of bullets; one of which struck her in her head. Aniya held on for two days before she could hold on no more. She had taken as much as she could endure.

And we as a community have taken as much as we can endure.

While every victim of this senseless violence deserves our concern, with the shooting of the three children – one 10 years old, another 7 years old and playing on a trampoline at a birthday party and Aniya – the sense of urgency and outrage have merged in a call for action.

The call was heard loudest at the intersection of Penn and 36th. No voice calling out for justice and an end to the violence was louder than well-known peace activist KG Wilson (featured in the Sept. 25, 2020 edition of North News). And while it was normal to hear Wilson’s voice in the streets following a tragic killing, this time his voice had far more resonance. It had far more anger. It had far more pain.

That’s because Aniya wasn’t another tragic victim, Aniya was his granddaughter … she was his legacy.

But as Wilson put it, she was our legacy. She was the community’s legacy. Our future doctor, teacher, lawyer, mayor, governor, vice president … president. The possibilities were endless. Sadly, the possibilities will never be known.

There are multiple factors that are contributing to the spike in violent crime plaguing the city – particularly North Minneapolis – and in the next edition of North News and in the days and weeks to come in digital platforms, we’ll offer an in-depth analysis of the problem of community violence and present possible solutions.

But for now, we will offer our heartfelt condolences to the families directly affected by the violence in our community. As of press date, the shootings of Aniya and the two other children remain unsolved and the investigations are active. For anyone with information regarding these shootings, or other crimes, please call CrimeStoppers at (800) 222-TIPS (8477). Callers can remain anonymous.
St. Paul Chamber Orchestra to perform at the Plaza @ the Capri

The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra (SPCO) back for the first time since February of 2019 to celebrate the opening of its new outdoor plaza.

Music for small ensembles is featured on the June 3 program, including a special musical presentation of the children’s book “Ferdinand the Bull” with narration by Dennis Spears, Capri artistic associate. Commissioned and written during the pandemic, new pieces by Adolphus Hailstork and Viet Cuong will premiere in front of a live audience. Closing out the concert is Valerie Coleman's “Maombi Asante,” a trio for flute, violin and cello.

This 6 p.m. performance is free, family-friendly and open to the public. Tickets are not required for entry; however, space is limited, so concertgoers are encouraged to arrive early. Also, to ensure the safest possible environment for all audience members, the Capri will be following the Stay Safe Minnesota guidelines (www.staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp).

This is one of four outdoor concerts that The SPCO will perform this spring.

“Live audience for the first time in over a year, and to be able to bring music to all of these great outdoor settings throughout the Twin Cities,” said SPCO Artistic Director and Principal Violin Kyu-Young Kim. “We have been grateful for the ability to continue sharing music with our community during the pandemic with live broadcasts and encore presentations in our online Concert Library, but there is no real substitute for the communal experience of live music, and we are counting the days until these special concerts.”

In the event of adverse weather, the Capri concert will be rescheduled to Saturday, June 5 at 12:30 p.m.

North Minneapolis home to renewable energy fair

In what organizers say is an urgent call to action on climate justice, a fair is taking place to place North Minneapolis at the forefront in the first to combat climate change.

#Powerfest is an event centered on art, movement, relationship building and information to connect community members to an equitable transition to sustainable energy.

#Powerfest takes place Saturday, June 12 from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at North Commons Park, 1801 James Ave.

“Powerfest is an opportunity for neighbors to meet with organizations and businesses that provide resources to make the switch to renewable energy and to make better choices around soil and water conservation in their homes and yards,” said Kristel Porter, one of the fair’s organizers.

“We will be showcasing the renewable energy and conservation projects in progress happening around us, and you’ll get a chance to hear from people at the center of the Environmental Justice Movement."

The event will include the North High School community solar garden project, morning yoga and mindfulness practices, live music, food vendors, a kickball game and a storytelling workshop. Attendees can also learn how to get a free energy audit in their homes.

North Minneapolis at a glance

Sammy’s Avenue Eatery on West Broadway Avenue is one of six Twin Cities Black-owned small businesses who will be featured in season six of the television series “Small Business Revolution.” Deluxe Corp., a business technology company that champions small businesses and produces the series, chose Sammy’s and five other area small businesses from more than 100 nominations.

Each business will receive business, financial and marketing advice from a cast of Black, female chairs of Fortune 1000 companies, plus renovations from Deluxe crews.

The other businesses are Elsa’s House of Sleep in Frogtown, St. Paul, Gentlemen Cuts in East St. Paul, Lip Esteem on Lake Street, the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder newspaper, and Taste of Rondo in St. Paul.

The series is co-hosted by Amanda Brinkman, Deluxe's chief brand and content officer, and former NBA star Baron Davis, who makes his debut as host this season. The series airs on Hulu and Prime Video or at www.sbr.org.

Filming has already begun. The series will air sometime in October.

Proprietor of Sammy’s Avenue Eatery, Sammy McDowell.

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We care about getting you the help you need, when you need it most.

Apply today. Visit renthelpmn.org or call 211.
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.

**NOW**

**catch up with our**

**Council Members**

**WARD 4:**

**Phillipe Cunningham**

Speak up for Aniya, La’Davionne and Trinity

Over the past couple of weeks we have had three of our youth, shot in the head, victims of gun violence. The people committing these crimes are amongst us. Aniya, La’Davionne, and Trinity deserve more from us. Aniya died from her injuries ... she was murdered. La’Davionne and Trinity are still with us. We all know that there is still much work to do to remove the individuals who are committing community gun violence and murdering our youth. But let us not be silent, speak up and we can do the work too. If you or anyone you know has information on the senseless shootings of these beautiful children, please speak up. Here are the numbers to call: Crime Stoppers (800) 222-8477 or Minneapolis Police Department Violent Crimes at (612) 673-2941.

**Lowry & Logan**

In an effort to combat the violent activities happening at Lowry and Logan avenues I have pulled together a phenomenal group of boots-on-the-ground organizations that will help us take back that block. In concert with Turning Point, The Family Partnership, Breaking Free and the Folwell Neighborhood Association we are proud to announce Take Back Tuesday. This is an initiative that was done by Turning Point, where on Tuesdays resources were provided to community for helping people get out of the street life. On Lowry and Logan we have addiction, prostitution and all that comes with it. What we aim to do is show up on Tuesdays over the next few months and take back that block by being present with resources. This work will be happening while the 4th precinct is working in the area too. You’ll see them out in the area very soon.

**Camden Promise food shelf**

We now have a community food shelf at Gethsemane Lutheran Church (46th & Colfax avenues). This is a project that I have been championing and working with Pastor Jeff Nehrbaas and Commissioner Irene Fernando’s office on. Together we were able to secure the funding needed to make this resource a reality for our community. Learn more at www.glcmpls.org.

**Reflecting**

As we have come upon the one-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd I wanted to take this time to acknowledge that we all are living in these times of trauma. We all are feeling the effects of what is happening around us. A wise man once wrote “breathe.” While we wait for the trials of the other former officers involved in the death of George Floyd please take the time to breathe. Please take the time to take care of yourself.

In solidarity,

Councilmember Cunningham
ward4@minneapolismn.gov
(612) 673-2204
Keep up with the Ward 4 office on Facebook at www.facebook.com/minneapolisward4.

**WARD 5:**

**Jeremiah Ellison**

I want to take a moment to give my condolences to the family of Aniya Allen. I encourage each one of you to take a moment of silence for her, and for all of the people we’ve lost as this gun violence crisis continues. I want to take a moment to offer a thought and prayer for Ladavionne Garrett, Jr. and Trinity Otton-Smith as they battle their injuries and fight to live.

Every single one of us and our neighbors deserve to be safe. And as the City of Minneapolis pursues a safe community and an immediate end to the violence we are enduring, I want us to take time to remember our children, and remember to check in with each other. We are going to end this violence. The Northside will not be defined by our suffering, and we will have accountability for those responsible.

In the past few weeks, I’ve heard from and seen many of you during my time at the vigils and prayer circles at 35th & Penn avenues and North Memorial Hospital. I will continue to visit North Memorial for as long as the families of Ladavionne and Trinity want to continue to hold space there, and I hope all of you can find time to join them as you are able.

I will work diligently to ensure that a safety plan is prompt and keeps our children in our community, I want to offer you some resources to help aid you in our collective recovery from this trauma.

For adults experiencing an emotional crisis, Community Outreach for Psychiatric Emergencies (COPE) provides emergency intervention services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To access a COPE team, call (612) 596-1223. COPE professionals will go to the person in crisis, handle the immediate crisis, and provide a clinical assessment. COPE can arrange for inpatient psychiatric services if necessary or admission to a crisis shelter (during which they also provide case management for a few days).

For support in non-crisis situations, the Minnesota Warmline provides a peer-to-peer approach to mental health recovery, support, and wellness. Calls are answered by a team of professionally trained certified peer specialists, who have first-hand experience living with a mental health condition. Call 651-288-0400, text “Support” to 85511, or visit www.mentalhealthmn.org/support/minnesota-warmline.

As always, there are several ways to be in touch with me, so don’t hesitate to reach out. You can sign up for the Ward 5 newsletter, RSVP to my weekly virtual office hours (Saturdays at 10 a.m.-12 p.m.) or request a one-on-one meeting with me at www.minneapolismn.gov/ward5.
Child shootings outrage; traumatize the Northside

Community demands an end to the violence

By Harry Colbert, Jr., Editor-In-Chief
David Pierini, Staff Reporter

It was supposed to have been an innocent trip to McDonald’s; what it turned out to be was 6-year-old Aniya Allen being shot in the head ... another innocent victim to a rash of gun violence that has the community reeling.

Allen was the third of three young children within a span of a week to be struck by the gunfire in North Minneapolis. Ten-year-old Ladavionne Garrett, Jr. was shot while in the back seat of his parents’ car. Trinity Smith, 9, was playing on a trampoline at a birthday party when she was struck by a bullet. As of press time Garrett and Smith are in critical condition at North Memorial Hospital.

Allen was shot on May 17; she died two days later.

As of May 23, there were 32 homicides in the city; nine in North Minneapolis. Only the third precinct of South Minneapolis has more killings with 14. There have been five killings downtown, two in Northeast and two in Southwest. There have been 948 reported aggravated assaults – assaults involving a weapon – in the city thus far with 363 occurring on the Northside. That far outpaces other areas of Minneapolis where the next highest is South Minneapolis with 230.

But beyond the numbers are the real people affected.

KG Wilson is a longtime anti-violence activist, sprinting to the scenes of shootings, comforting victim’s families and organizing peace vigils. Countless times, Wilson has held a weeping mother or father in his arms after the shooting death of a child. Yet with an intimate familiarity with such pain, Wilson said he was not prepared for the anger and sorrow he felt when he learned his 6-year-old granddaughter, Allen, was shot in a crossfire and then died two days later.

“You talk about a heart being broken into a thousand pieces and tears that won’t stop,” said Wilson. “I try to sleep but I have to wake up because I don’t want to dream what I can see.”

Wilson returned to his job as a security guard at So-Low grocery store the day after Allen died. Throughout his shift, some of the very mothers he comforted over the years stopped by to hug Wilson and cry with him. By the end of his shift, his car was loaded with roses and other flowers given to him.

He said the support is like a buoy and reminds him of who he is and how he has to continue his peace work. It also gave him moments to share how proud he was to be “Aniya’s grandfather.”

“We were in love with each other,” Wilson said. “She adored me and I was her super-hero. I was the one person she could get everything from, even snacks her mother told her she wasn’t supposed to have, she could get me to give her whatever she wanted.”

Wilson vacillated between referring to his granddaughter in the present and past tense.

“She calls me papa,” said Wilson. “She

Peace activist KG Wilson (left) is comforted by friends at a May 19 vigil for his granddaughter, Aniya Allen, 6, killed by a stray bullet during a May 17 shooting at the corners of Penn and 36th Avenues North. Photo by Harry Colbert, Jr.

Continued on page 19
Brooklyn Center passes historic resolution to reform policing in the city

At a special meeting of the City Council of Brooklyn Center the council passed a resolution that creates a framework for advancing a series of reforms in policing and public safety in the city.

The vote was 4-1.

“Brooklyn Center did not look to be in the national spotlight on these issues, but here we are,” said Mayor Elliott. “And given the tragic incidents that occurred here, including those taking the lives of Daunte Wright and Kobe Dimock-Heisler, we must respond with a commitment to do better, and today’s vote is part of that response.”

The vote was in response to the Brooklyn Center police killing of unarmed 20-year-old Wright, killed during a low-level traffic stop for expired license plate tags and an air freshener hanging from his rearview mirror.

The resolution calls for the establishment of an implementation committee charged to begin assembling formal, specific recommended changes in numerous aspects of community policing, traffic stops and mental health service delivery.

“If this bill was passed prior to April 11 our son would still be alive,” said Katie Wright, the mother of Daunte Wright. “If it was passed a year ago Kobe Wright would still be alive.”

Dimock-Heisler, 21, was killed Aug. 31, 2019 by Brooklyn Center police responding to Dimock-Heisler being in mental crisis. The 21-year-old was autistic. During his fatal encounter resulted in him being shot six times – once in the head. Officers said Dimock-Heisler was reaching for a knife when he was shot. Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman declined to file charges in the shooting.

Amity Dimock, mother of Dimock-Heisler agreed that the resolution was too late to save her son, but could help prevent future such tragedies.

“After 12 minutes of complying with officers he got up and ran because he didn’t want to be in the situation and when he did he was tasered and shot six times including once in the head,” said Dimock. “If this resolution was passed years before, Daunte Wright would be alive and Kobe would be alive today.”

Dimock-Heisler’s father, Jason Heisler, pointed to startling statistics involving victims in police-involved shootings.

“One of every 13 people shot is shot by a police officer,” said Heisler. “One of three stranger killings ... 33 percent is by a police officer. This resolution is saying that the system is broken and we’re in agreement to fix it.”

He also spoke of the fact that police killings of civilians are disproportionately affecting Black people.

“We’re debating whether our police system is broken and we’re sitting here on Sheriff (Earle) Brown’s land and he held KKK meetings here, so that alone lets you know that this system is broken,” said Heisler.

The historic May 15 meeting in Brooklyn Center took place in the Earle Brown Center. Brown, the former Hennepin County Sheriff, was recorded directing the tasting of KKK meetings there.

Continued on page 19

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST 2021
An Invitation to Community Partners for the Redevelopment of Upper Harbor

BACKGROUND
The redevelopment of the Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a large-scale, community-building asset in North Minneapolis, grounded in a restorative approach towards racial justice that meets the needs, aspirations and priorities of the nearby residents.

PURPOSE
In this context, the Upper Harbor Development Team is seeking Expressions of Interest (EOI) beginning June 1st, 2021 from qualified community-based organizations to collectively and collaboratively ensure the project reflects the values of the Northside Community.

ELIGIBILITY AND SUBMISSION OF EOI
We invite any interested organization to learn more about this initiative and submit their Expression of Interest by August 1st, 2021.
America’s roads and railways begin with promises of a prosperous future for everyone.

But the path to prosperity often is lined with broken promises and broken lives, especially when the route runs through a poor urban neighborhood. Civic leaders are energized to shape a different, more equitable, outcome as transportation officials consider two proposed routes that would bring light rail trains through the heart of North Minneapolis.

Should the Blue Line extension travel down West Broadway Avenue or Lowry Avenue, light rail trains would connect transit-dependent residents to more jobs, education and health care. Light rail and its stations would spur rapid investment in a community long starved for the amenities enjoyed by wealthier, white neighborhoods.

Light rail could also, many fear, price people out of their homes and businesses, and abrade North’s rich cultural heritage.

There is excitement and wariness in a largely Black community that shares a highway with the Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul. Rondo, the once thriving Black neighborhood, was decimated by construction of Interstate 94 in the 1950s and ‘60s.

“Communities that look like ours have experienced transportation development in horrific ways,” said Felicia Perry, executive director of the West Broadway Business and Area Coalition. “And now, our community has an opportunity to experience this in another way. I’m not asking, I’m demanding that we experience transportation development in a different way. I want to ensure that this is a community approved (route), not just one that is chosen for us. The Blue Line creates amazing opportunities for economic development.”

The Blue Line extension would connect Brooklyn Park, Crystal and Robbinsdale with stops in North Minneapolis en route to Target Field. It is considered the most racially and ethnically diverse transportation corridors in the state. Leaders in the municipalities along the line want light rail to benefit everyone.

Light rail lessons

Residents in the Harrison neighborhood offer several cautionary tales about the impacts of a Blue Line extension.

In 2014, the Metropolitan Council, the body governing transportation, announced a route that would link Golden Valley, Crystal, Robbinsdale and Brooklyn Park to downtown Minneapolis. Met Council was negotiating with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway for right-of-way. The North Minneapolis leg of the track would run down the Olson Memorial Highway median.

Harrison residents attended meetings, public hearings and sat on committees as officials fleshed out plans. Residents expressed support for the light rail project and even established goals for development to benefit the neighborhood. There was hope the transit project would make Olson Memorial Highway safer for foot and bicycle traffic.

They also conveyed concern for what transit and new development could mean to poorer residents, many of whom were spending more than 50 percent of their income on rent.

“North Minneapolis deserves good transit, we deserve to have the invest-
ment,” said Nichole Buehler, executive director of the Harrison Neighborhood Association. “But it should be for the people that live here.”

There was reason to worry. Studies of areas where light rail was built out showed a rise in property taxes, spiking rents and changing demographics. This was especially true in the areas immediately around stations.

St. Paul residents living along Green Line saw rents rise 44 percent, which was double that of other areas across the Twin Cities. Immigrant communities and Black and Brown people living in Frogtown and Rondo, were particularly vulnerable to rent spikes. From 2014 to 2016, “there was a very stark difference in the people who were living in the houses and where they came from,” said Tia Williams of the Frogtown Neighborhood Association.

“There was a lot of community engagement. People did not want to be displaced,” Williams said. “This was written down in the Central Corridor Development Strategy document. But where the problem lies, there are no policies to back this up. There is knowledge of what happens when you put a well-funded transportation project in our neighborhood and it feels to me like (officials) don’t have me or my family or my community in mind whatsoever.”

While sounding their concerns about affordable living, Harrison residents were enthusiastic for light rail because of the improvements it could bring to the neighborhood, such as additional sidewalks, street lighting and making Olson Memorial Highway safer for pedestrians. It could have led to the building of a grocery store; Harrison is considered a food desert.

But long after Harrison residents learned of the Blue Line’s proposed path, investors started swooping in to buy property. Property owners saw tax increases, rents went up, tenants were ordered to vacate and once affordable homes were bulldozed to make way for premium apartment complexes (see related story about displacement in Harrison).

Late last year, Metropolitan Council

Continued on page 10

The train never came but that didn’t stop gentrification in Harrison

By David Pierini, Staff Reporter

Rare is the person struck by lightning twice.

Alan Morrison is starting to feel that unlucky as he considers losing two homes to one train.

He was ordered by new property owners in 2019 to vacate his duplex in the Harrison neighborhood as plans were underway for a light rail extension along nearby Olson Memorial Highway. Officials were forced to scrap those plans and now have eyes on two other routes in North Minneapolis, one that runs a few blocks from his new apartment.

“It could happen all over again,” said Morrison, 54, who now lives a few blocks of West Broadway, one of the new proposed routes. “Well, it’s the way of the land. This is gentrification. This is gentrification in your face.”

Morrison is one of countless numbers of Harrison residents who felt forced out by the Blue Line extension. It wasn’t the train itself, but the rapid investment that began to emerge in Harrison, especially in blocks identified for state buildouts.

Property taxes rose 60 percent over a two year period, according to the Harrison Neighborhood Association, and speculators began buying property once considered affordable in a community where the average median income is $35,000. Rents went up, leases were not renewed and in some cases, homes demolished to make way for luxury apartments.

The Rev. Babette Chatman said an “invasion of developers” began buying up properties after the Blue Line extension was announced.

“I’m all for development but development should benefit all,” said Chatman. “Harrison’s proximity to everything downtown, we should be able to champion and cherish and not let outsiders brand what Harrison is.”

In the eyes of speculators, Harrison was a can’t miss investment.

The property management company that bought Morrison’s duplex on Glenwood Avenue ordered the tenants to vacate so crews could go in and remodel the units, he said. Morrison says he now pays 70 percent of his handyman income to rent an apartment for himself and a disabled son.

The same company that took over Morrison’s duplex bought an apartment complex next door, one across the street and another nearby duplex. Some tenants were ordered out like Morrison, while others found themselves searching when they learned

Continued on page 11
Light Rail
Continued from page 8

scrapped the proposed route after failed negotiations with the railway and set their sights on West Broadway or Lowry.
“'We've already experienced the detriment of the project and now we're not going to receive the benefits,' Buehler said. "How are you going to make us whole? How do we make sure what happened in Harrison doesn’t happen elsewhere in North Minneapolis?”

Working for different outcomes

Perry has always viewed North Minneapolis as having the potential to be a “Black Wall Street” and understands how light rail could accelerate the investment in a part of the city long ignored.
With a thoughtfully planned light rail, transit-reliant residents will have greater access to jobs throughout the Twin Cities (more than 95 percent work in communities outside of North Minneapolis), education, healthcare and cultural opportunities.
The investment that follows could bring new jobs and more affordable and premium housing options for individuals and families. New gathering places, like shops, restaurants, clubs and recreation centers, would follow.

A new apartment complex looms over a Green Line station in St. Paul’s Frogtown neighborhood.

Should the Blue Line extension come down West Broadway, investment could transform existing spaces.
Harrison
Continued from page 9

they could not renew their lease.

One landlord with a cluster of rental homes in the 200 block of Humboldt Avenue North sold them to a developer who ordered tenants out last year so the homes could be bulldozed to make way for an apartment complex.

Tenants were unaware of the proposed project until they were notified by the Harrison Neighborhood Association. Residents were unsuccessful in stopping the city from rezoning the land. The neighborhood association was able to negotiate relocation money ($3,400) for the tenants.

“The place I was living in was the nicest place I ever lived and the rent was reasonable,” said Lisa Grant, who lived in one of the Humboldt Avenue homes. “I didn’t have a lot of choices. It was hard to find a place that would accept pets. Now I live in the Northeast and pay $500 more a month.”

Her neighbor on Humboldt, Jerrusha Siem, has moved three times since she and her then-husband left their rental home after 10 years.

Rent was $900 when they moved in and it only went up a couple of hundred dollars over her time there. It was spacious with three bedrooms, a garage and a fenced-in yard.

The landlord’s name was Dan and Siem and her neighborhoods affectionately referred to the block as “Danville.” Siem said her marriage broke up shortly after they moved into a tiny apartment that was $300 more per month.

“There was a lot of stress when we had to move out,” said Siem, now living in Peotone, Ill. “Because of COVID-19, a lot of buildings weren’t accepting new tenants and we had to leave during the unrest with George Floyd’s death. “We were very happy in that home and then it went away.”

Once affordable rental homes on Humboldt Avenue North were torn down to make away for a new apartment complex.

Construction on a new apartment complex nears completion on Humboldt and Second avenues.

She holds no ill will for Dan.

She said he worked hard to purchase and maintain the homes, even establishing a community garden there, and, she said, he deserved to cash out and retire.

Tennis returns to North High

No-cost program available for anyone looking to take up the sport

By Malachi Muhammad, Student, North High School

Tennis has traditionally been a predominantly white sport, but that is starting to change on the Northside.

This summer inner city children in Minneapolis are being given the opportunity to play and practice tennis through the Inner City Tennis Summer Program. Mason Bultje, who is the manager of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Inner City Tennis, was inspired to join the organization from his own personal experience.

“My upbringing and life experiences were very different from other kids I played tennis with,” said Bultje. “I fell in love with tennis when my mom and stepdad were together, but they divorced when I was about 12 years old. Not only did tennis help me get to college and receive a degree, but it also taught me many lessons and values I use every day such as mental resilience, perseverance, and leadership. Historically, inner-city youth have not had opportunities to play tennis and benefit from it the way I have, and I am passionate about changing that. I want more kids to have the opportunity to play a lifetime sport, stay physically active, and have something positive to put their time and energy into.”

For those looking for a fun, safe and new experience with a sport over the summer, Inner City Tennis Summer Program might be for them.

“I want people to know that at Inner City Tennis, we have programs for everyone and cost does not need to be a barrier. We have scholarships for everyone who is interested in playing tennis in our summer programs and at our tennis center, which is located adjacent to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. We are here to provide life-changing opportunities for youth in Minneapolis and we do everything we can to be as impactful as we can be on and off the court.”

After seven long years of not having a tennis program, North High is rebuilding its tennis program. Samuel Wilbur, journalism and English teacher and co-coach of the North High tennis team said, “Our main goal this year is to build interest in the sport, develop skills so our students can compete, and most importantly have fun playing tennis.”

After a long year stuck inside, many students are hungry for new activities to get to know new people and expend some energy.

“Everyday after school the team is practicing at North Commons tennis court and new people drop in out of curiosity to see what it’s all about. Once they get a racket in their hands the fun begins,” said Wilbur.

“My favorite part about the tennis team is building community with North High students in the sun,” said North High teacher, and tennis coach, Dane McLain. “Any students who want to start tennis, it is a skill they can develop for the rest of their life and it will allow them to reclaim the tennis courts in their community.”

Freshmen Jaylen Johnson, one of the breakout stars on the team, decided to pick up the sport for the first time.

“I enjoy doing something after school and working on getting better,” said Johnson.

For more information about inner city tennis visit this website www.innertcitytennis.org

Kyon Watkins-Jefferson prepares to backhand a ball on the courts of North Commons Park. Photo by Samuel Wilbur
The most transformative year
A year since the murder of George Floyd change abounds; much more needed

By Harry Colbert, Jr., Editor-In-Chief

The longest year seems to have flown by. May 25 marked one year since then Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin knelt on the neck of George Floyd for more than nine minutes – eight minutes and 46 seconds of it courageously captured on live video by then 17-year-old Darnella Frazier. Within that year the area endured a week of chaos that saw a death of a man shot in a pawn shop, the 3rd Precinct Police Station torched and much of West Broadway Avenue vandalized including the looting of the Cub Foods and US Bank. While Cub and US Bank were able to return from the devastation, other businesses have not shared the same fate. On the Northside, the O'Reilly Auto Parts on West Broadway is a hollowed-out shell. A Holiday Gas Station on Washington Avenue is no more. The gas station and convenience store at Penn and Dowling Avenues too is gone; only the pumps remain.

In April, Chauvin was convicted of the murder of Floyd and awaits sentencing. His lawyers have filed an appeal in the case. Officers J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao are awaiting trial for their roles in the murder of Floyd. Initially set for August, the three former officers’ trial has been pushed back to December due to the filing of federal charges against all four officers involved in the death of Floyd.

The death of George Floyd changed policing and the city forever. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey pointed to some of those changes.

“This year we overhauled our use of force policy; we’re pushing for mental health responders to respond to calls. We just passed a policy to end low-level reasons for traffic stops.”

While Chauvin was standing trial for the murder of Floyd, in Brooklyn Center 20-year-old Daunte Wright was shot and killed by a Brooklyn Center Police Officer following one such low-level traffic stop for the crime of expired license tabs and an air freshener hanging from his rearview mirror.

Frey said Minneapolis police are down one-third within the year since the murder of George Floyd. While some are seeking to keep the department at its current numbers or reduce it further, Frey said he is not in that camp. He said the city’s department needs to return to its prior levels, but he said the new hires should meet certain criteria.

“We want our police officers to have deep-seeded relationships in community,” said Frey, saying preference will be given to recruits who live within the city’s borders. “We want them to know the kid on the street, the businesses … somebody’s mom. Or if you go to church or a mosque or synagogue within the city, you have close ties.”

Frey said funds are also being directed to areas and businesses hit by the unrest following the murder of Floyd. He said federal Rescue Act dollars, along with state and city funds will help to rebuild areas such as West Broadway and others affected by the past summer’s chaos.

“We want to make sure the money goes to those who need it most, and in my mind that’s Black people who have been traditionally left out,” said Frey.

While federal dollars may help to rebuild areas of Minneapolis, Sen. Tina Smith is hoping another federal act will transform policing in Minneapolis and in America.

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Join the online conversation!

Join the North Minneapolis Community Conversation

Tuesday, June 15 from 5 to 7 p.m.
Access the virtual open house
Valedictorians say North High made her a ‘joyful person’

Rahma Yusuf says she is “very” indecisive.

But for the past four years, Yusuf was rather resolute about what she wanted to accomplish at North High School... graduate as valedictorian.

Yusuf checked the box with a 3.9 grade point average. When she shared the news with her parents, her mother cried. Her father rewarded her with a raise in her allowance.

“My dad loves to celebrate my academic successes with a higher allowance,” said Yusuf, the fourth oldest in a home with 10 kids. “I told them ‘I have the best news, better than when I told you that I got into college.’”

Yusuf is Somali and her parents are refugees who came to the U.S. in the 1990s. The_Growing__ student does not think would make it to valedictorian,” said Yusuf.

Yusuf was admitted to the University of Minnesota where she will study to be a dental hygienist and continue her studies to be a dentist while she works.

Grades slipping? Henry’s top student has a turn-around tale to tell

Sydney Lohse was near the end of her eighth-grade year with an academic record that was far from stellar.

With C’s and D’s on her report card, the parents had a talk with their only child. She was told to shape up.

On June 10, Lohse, 18, will stand before her senior classmates as Patrick Henry High School’s valedictorian.

“At no time in middle school did I think would make it to valedictorian,” said Lohse, who earned the title with a 3.96 grade point average. “I was just going to have fun and whatever. My parents told me in the last quarter (of middle school) I needed to shape up and get my work done. I worked really hard and got all A’s my last quarter. And then I told myself I’m going to do this in high school and use my time more wisely.”

Movies and television portray academic achievers as high-strung and obsessed over grades. Lohse has no such edge.

From that last middle school report card, Lohse learned to relax and believe in her abilities to get her work done. She said she didn’t worry about grades. She just puts in the work.

A member of the Patrick Henry softball team, she brings the same approach to the plate, even when there are runners in scoring position and the game is on the line.

“I’m not the kind of person who thinks, ‘I could win the game if I get this hit.’ I relax, go up the plate and just swing,” said Lohse.

At the end of her junior year her report card showed her ranked third in her class. Her second-quarter report card, which came out the first of this year, made her gasp: it showed her ranked first in her class.

“I started screaming and my dad started crying and stuff. My parents said keep working and so after that, I was like “Yep, I’m going to try really hard now.”

One theme of her valedictorian graduation speech will encourage her classmates to go forth with a relaxed, even-tempered approach to life’s challenges.

Lohse’s next challenge was inspired by a family vacation where she got the chance to swim with dolphins. She will attend Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla., to study marine biology.
Dear Seniors,

First, I want to say congratulations! This past year has seemed especially engineered to exhaust us all. With everything we’ve faced—a pandemic, state and community violence, civil unrest—it is completely understandable if there were times you felt you wouldn’t be able to make it through the school year. So I am proud of every senior graduating, but I am also proud of seniors who might not be graduating—it is just as much our responsibility as it is yours to get you through this time. This moment requires all of us; we share in your success, and we share in your struggle.

Thank you for everything you’ve given this community. We are proud of you, and we stand alongside you.

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CHANGE THE NARRATIVE
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Soul singer with North Minneapolis roots releases new project

Carlitta Durand’s voice was first heard in her childhood home at 48th and Emerson Avenues North; now it’s heard throughout the world.

The soul singer with North Minneapolis roots is best known for her collaborations with the popular hip-hop group Little Brother, the soul group, The Foreign Exchange (and group producer and member, Zol), and a feature with hip-hop icon, Mr. Cheeks. Now she’s back with the release of her second solo project, “Kismet Green.”

“Kismet Green” is a melodic vibe album that is 43 minutes and 47 seconds of calm and bliss. Songs such as “I Guess,” “My Business” and “Blackberry” feat. Phonte (of Little Brother and The Foreign Exchange) anchor the project. Released this past November, much of the project was written by Durand during the pandemic and following the killing of George Floyd, both of which inspired material for the album.

“With the pandemic I was on the internet a lot and I was seeing a lot of people in other people’s business and that’s just not me,” said Durand. “So that’s how I wrote ‘My Business.’ That’s the key to life, minding your business. And also, I wanted to give people props for their businesses so I shout out the business owners and graduates and people doing things positive.”

Durand said the song “Blackberry” was her love letter to the Black community following the killing of George Floyd.

“Blackberry” is about appreciating our Black men and Black women and showing love to one another,” said Durand.

While an often collaborator on one of Phonte’s projects, “Blackberry” was the first time the dual threat rapper and singer appeared on one of Durand’s projects. Durand said her relationship with Phonte was born out of deciding to answer her phone at work.

“I was going to NCCU (North Carolina Central University) and I was singing down there and one day I was at work and got a call and it was from Little Brother (Phonte, Big Pooh and 9th Wonder) said they were looking for a singer because someone else backed out. I told my manager (at work) ‘I’ve got to go, I’ve got this huge opportunity.’”

That opportunity was Little Brother’s “After the Party” from the 2010 album “Left Back.” Durand would later collaborate with Phonte on The Foreign Exchange’s “Dreams Are Made for Two” and “Disappear.” She’s also featured on Zol’s “Night’s Over Egypt,” “New in Town” and “Gonna be a Beautiful Night.” Her collaboration with Mr. Cheeks came from her work with 9th Wonder and a class at NCCU.

“9th Wonder was my professor for a class in hip-hop along with Play from Kid-n-Play. 9th had a song (“Early”) he produced for Mr. Cheeks (of “Lights, Camera, Action” and “Renee” fame) and he asked me to be a part of it,” said Durand. “That class was so valuable and I hate that NCCU doesn’t offer it anymore, but schools like Duke (University) are now offering these classes.”

“Kismet Green” is available on most streaming platforms and for direct purchase (which benefits the artist most) at www.carlitadurand.bandcamp.com.

By Harry Colbert, Jr., Editor-in-Chief
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A prom to remember

By Alexandria McNeil, Student Reporter, North High School

For North High School juniors and seniors prom was a year in the making. Not at a hotel or swanky private club, this year’s prom was at a perfect location ... North High.

Most are very excited about prom this year; for the obvious reasons. Last year’s graduation and in-person classes canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It was heartbreaking last year that we didn’t have a prom due to COVID-19,” said prom coordinator and math instructor Malcolm Lee. “Ms. (Jane) Steiner and I knew the Class of 2020 was disappointed and devastated when they heard the news. This is something that seniors really look forward to ... that one moment where they dress to the nines and treasure those memories with their peers. Sad is putting it lightly. This year, I’m thrilled that the Class of 2021 will have this opportunity, and I couldn’t be more excited for the event! It’ll be a blast.”

Jenelle Robinson said that she was excited to go to prom as a senior and that she is going to spend a lot of money on this prom. That could make up for the money not spent on last year’s canceled affair.

“My prom probably adds up to about $2,000 because of my dress, hotel room, hair/makeup and rental car,” said Robinson. Robinson said attending prom was a priority because she wanted to have the memory that would last a lifetime.

“I wanted to go to prom because I know if I didn’t go I would have been able to have my full high school experience and I would have regretted not going,” said Robinson.

Senior Princess Boswell had her dress custom made, with the pain of the Pandemic, North’s Tre’Nisha Jones proved she had the strength to endure and celebrated that strength during the school’s 2021 prom. Photo by Zelaun Black

With the pain of the Pandemic, North’s Tre’Nisha Jones proved she had the strength to endure and celebrated that strength during the school’s 2021 prom. Photo by Zelaun Black

Having an almost all virtual school year, this year’s in-person prom even more special

Continued on page 19

North Commons Park
1801 James Ave. N.
The Undefeated by Kwame Alexander

Wirth Lake Beach Area
200 Glenwood Ave.
Black is a Rainbow Color by Angela Joy

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park
4055 Nicollet Ave. S.
Juneteenth for Mazie by Floyd Cooper

Passed Presents
Monday, June 13, 6–6:30 p.m.
Dewbert Speaks on Juneteenth: Storytelling With Nothando Zulu

Sunday, June 13, 3–3:45 p.m.
Bloodline With Journey Productions

June 13–18, 5:30–5:50 p.m.
Juneteenth Stories With Auntie Beverly

Sunday, June 13, 6–6:30 p.m.
Passed Presents

Monday, June 14, 6–6:30 p.m.
Dewbert Speaks on Juneteenth: Storytelling With Nothando Zulu

Tuesday, June 15, 6–6:45 p.m.
The Unfinished With Black, Bold, and Brilliant Youth

Wednesday, June 16, 6–6:45 p.m.
The Beginning... With Wisdom Young

Thursday, June 17, 6–6:30 p.m.
Rites of Passage with WE WIN Institute

Friday, June 18, 6–8 p.m.
Black Flowers: How to Regrow Black Joy After 2020

Saturday, June 19, 2–4 p.m.
Reflection and Connection: Community Art Event With Million Artist Movement

Sunday, June 13–19
Juneteenth Meal With Mama Sheila

Friday, June 18, 6–8 p.m.
Black Flowers: How to Regrow Black Joy After 2020

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GRADUATIONS & OTHER ACADEMIC HONORS

Several local scholars were Spring semester graduates of Minnesota State University-Mankato. They are: Travis Bayer, BS, Biology; Brandon Hanson, BS, Marketing; Poua Lor, BS, Biology; Bee Thao, BS, Communication Studies, Cum Laude; Quentin Thomas, BS, Theatre Arts; Gausheng Vang, BS, Nursing; and Chong Xiong, BS, Psychology, Magna Cum Laude…Rafael Munoz-Echavarria, of Minneapolis, received a bachelor’s degree from the College of Letters at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

BE AWARE

Celebrating renewable energy: North Common Park will hold the first-ever PowerFest on June 12 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. PowerFest is a renewable energy fair where residents can learn from local businesses and organizations how to switch to renewable energy. Activists in the Environmental Justice Movement will be on hand to answer questions and the fest will feature local conservation projects, including North High School’s solar garden projects. Residents can sign up for a free energy audit for their homes. Fest goers can also enjoy food, music, yoga and games.

Now hiring: Hennepin County has announced virtual hiring events for the month of June. There are limited tickets available and job seekers must register online. On Wednesday, June 16 from 1-2 p.m. there will be a hiring event for jobs at the MSP Airport (https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-hiring-event-june-16-tickets-153818542401). On Wednesday, June 30 from 1-2 p.m. a virtual hiring event will feature an assortment of available jobs (https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtual-hiring-event-june-30-tickets-155704332851).

Juxtaposition Arts is offering a free summer camp in June, July and August to teach aspiring artists ages 8-21 the art of aerosol painting. All supplies will be provided, including a blank wall. The June session is full by there are spots available for July 13-29 and Aug. 10-26. For more information or to enroll visit https://juxtapositionarts.org/programs/free-wall-summer-camp/

Help with the rent: Hennepin County residents struggling to pay their rent and utility bills because of the pandemic may qualify for help through RentHelpMN. Qualified applicants could receive up to 15 months of assistance dating back to the start of the pandemic and up to three months of future expenses. Residents can apply today at renthelpmn.org or by calling 211 if you have questions.

Join the Panthers! The Minnesota Panthers want Northside kids who want to play football for the upcoming seasons. Kids ages 4-6 can learn the game by playing flag football and kids 7-13 can play tackle football. Parents interested in the program can contact Jay Brekke by texting him at 612-272-7745 or by email at mnpanthers612@gmail.com

Youth Green Team: The Northside Residents Redevelopment Council is forming a Youth Green Team pollinator garden project to work with professionals in the Willard-Hay and Near North neighborhoods. Eligible you can earn $17 per hour and gain landscape design experience. To learn more, contact the NRRC by email at contactus@nrrc.org or call 612-335-5924

Home improvement help: Rebuilding Together Twin Cities is accepting applications for home improvement projects for low income residents. If you are interest in no-cost home repairs and modifications, call 651-776-4273 or visit https://rebuildingtogether-twincities.org/

Appetite for Change: Enrollment is open for Community Cooks Meal Boxes. Sign up for a box of fresh and locally-sourced ingredients, recipes, and an opportunity to cook with family and friends delivered right to you on Mondays starting June 7. Spots are limited. Sign up today at: https://www.traforms.com/4904427 or visit afcmn.org/mealbox to learn more and try select recipes. The Appetite For Change Community Cooks Meal Box delivery program is a collaborative effort among members of the Metro Food Justice Network and Appetite For Change to increase food access in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Food distribution: The Camden Collective and the Sanneh Foundation sponsor a weekly free food pickup each Wednesday from 4-5:30 p.m. in the Salem Lutheran Church Parking Lot, 4150 Dupont Ave. N. Each box contains a meal kit that includes produce, proteins, spices and recipes. Walk-ups are welcome.

Radio updates in your language: Tune into Minneapolis’s cultural radio programs for COVID-19 updates. The city is broadcasting updates on KMOJ 89.9 FM (English), La Raza 95.7 FM (Spanish), KALY 101.7 FM (Somali) and WIXX AM 1590 (Hmong).

Shootings
Continued from page 6

had the biggest smile and she was so happy. I will never stop thinking about her. I was her superhero and I couldn’t save her.”

An activist for others, now he’s an activist for his own.

“Papa is going to get you justice,” said Wilson.

Wilson isn’t the only one calling for justice; calling for peace. Shiloh Temple’s Bishop Richard Howell said the violence must stop.

“I’m angry because this is not the way life is supposed to be,” said Howell. “A child should be able to have fun on a trampoline and not get shot down.”

Howell called on houses of worship to become more active in community and that call has been answered. Together with other faith and community leaders the Rev. Jerry McAffee of New Salem Missionary Baptist Church helped to organize 21 Days of Peace, a volunteer initiative to have citizens patrol area hotspots for crime. The chosen locations include the corners of Penn and 36th Avenues North – where Allen was shot – West Broadway Avenue and Lyndale Avenue, 36th and Lyndale and Logan and Lowry Avenues North. The common denominator with all the chosen locations is heavily trafficked convenience stories at those intersections.

To date, no arrests have been made in the shootings of the three pre-teens. Anyone with information on the shootings is encouraged to call Crime Stoppers at (800) 222-8477. A reward of $30,000 is being offered in the Allen killing.

Police Reform
Continued from page 7

sheriff, is reported to have had strong ties with the Ku Klux Klan.

“This (resolution) isn’t going to bring Kobe back … not going to bring Daunte back, but hopefully we will go miles ahead. We’re taking a bold step here, but we can do it. We’re going to do it;” said Brooklyn Center Mayor Mike Elliott.

The lone no vote was cast by Councilmember Kris Lawrence-Anderson, who cast her vote remotely from Oklahoma, where she and her family were vacationing.

Transformative Year
Continued from page 12

The House has passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and Smith is working with others to get it passed in the Senate. If passed, the act would lower the criminal intent standard from willful to knowing or reckless to convict a law enforcement officer for misconduct in a federal prosecution, limit qualified immunity as a defense to liability in a private civil action against a law enforcement officer and grant administrative subpoena power to the Department of Justice (DOJ) in pattern-or-practice investigations.

“The ideas within the George Floyd Act are quite reasonable,” said Smith. “It would end racial profiling and ban chokeholds.”

Smith said the killing of Floyd helped to deepen her understanding of the plight of Black American.

“I think intellectually I got it, but with the murder of George Floyd my understanding deepened,” said Smith. “My capacity to talk about it (systematic racism) has changed, especially with other white people. Now there’s a sense of urgency to work on this for long-term solutions.”

Prom
Continued from page 18

costing more than $700.

“We will probably get a Corvette, a Slingshot.”

And of course, hair, nails, shoes and more. Before prom, students had prom send offs where friends and family gathered to take pics. After prom was all about the hotels. The night didn’t stop with the dance. Several students hit downtown for late night hotel fun.

Some students decided not to go to prom. Cam Anderson, a senior at North high said he didn’t want to go because this year prom didn’t feel like prom.

“(I didn’t go) because of the location and the whole experience just feels off now due to COVID,” said Anderson.

Lee said despite the pandemic, this year’s prom will always be special for the students who attended.

“Prom is that one moment where you feel that you’re a celebrity in your own right,” said Lee. “You got the outfit, you have your peers, you have those moments that are truly memorable and will withstand the test of time.”
IT'S ON US to keep our community safe.

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