The Year in Photos

Also Inside

Councilman Phillipe Cunningham’s farewell column  Page 6

Legendary DJ, Brother Jules remembered  Page 8

Tequila Laramee named Education Support Professional of the Year by Education Minnesota  Page 17

Bill Cottman 1944-2021

Page 8
this is my final North News “Letter from the Editor.”

In January I will transition to my new role as CEO of Pillsbury United Communities – the parent organization of North News – for ensuring the direction of North News. How do you envision the next evolution of the news as an important community resource. Moving forward, it will be your voice that helps determine the direction of North News. How do you think that would should have been the defining event of the past 18 months, but sadly, not. Two weeks into the job I was faced with the time of my typing this one, more than 30 minutes have elapsed. Writer’s block strikes me. I have put it off to the last possible moment. This one is hard.

When I think of the back on all the stories we covered, one of my favorites was the June 24, 2021 story on youth flag football. These photo essay story than tradition features. Some we recognized for their efforts to help their fellow human. I think of the basic all of the stories we covered, of unbridled joy and youthful exuberance. The photo of Jaylen Ruffin running with the biggest snaggletooth smile is the most heartwarming photo I’ve seen.

This is how I started the last possible minute and from the time I wrote the first sentence to the time I wrote the last, more than 30 minutes have expired. Writer’s block strikes me.

But this isn’t as much of a block as it is accepting the finality of the words I type. It is who you make it. Either you do or you don’t. For me, it is who you make it. I will focus on what really matters. We’ll get there together.

Thank you Thomas Toley for your wonderful design work and for your patience with my many late changes and extended deadlines. Most important, thank you, the reader, for trusting me to tell our community’s stories. Thank you to David Tanks for making my job so much easier than it should have been.

I can’t express how impressed I am with the youth at North and Henry high schools. I get to know these students … getting to see them have meaningful interactions with each other and with us, that has been by far my greatest accomplishment.

Again, I made the call to cover another police killing of an unarmed Black man just outside our geographic zone. This time the killing of 20-year-old Daunte Wright, killed by Brooklyn Center police officer Kim Potter. The killing of George Floyd. I’m proud to say North News was a leader in coverage, informing our audience in real time of the events of the hour. Our reporting was shared throughout the nation, with outlets including the New York Times, Washington Post and others citing our work.

For the killing. Again, North News’ coverage would think that would have been the defining event of the past 18 months, but sadly, not. Two weeks into the job I was faced with the time of my typing this one, more than 30 minutes have elapsed. Writer’s block strikes me. I have put it off to the last possible moment. This one is hard.

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Phyllis Wheatley selected as NBA Foundation grant recipient

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is launching a scholarship program for high school seniors in the MPRB district. The new Scholarship Fund, which is called, is for entrants more Minneapolis residents to participate in parks and recreation programs.

"We have never turned a child away from the recreation centers because of an inability to pay," said MPRB Superintendent Al Bangoura. "This new fund simply offers another avenue for more Minneapolis residents to participate in the variety of recreation and parks programs and other initiatives.

Scholarship Fund will provide digital literacy, tech skills, work-force and certification training, inclusive of job placement support to underserved and low-income youth. The Fund will also provide payment support for college preparatory support, such as SAT and ACT.

Scholarship Fund will work alongside the existing recreation fee waiver program.

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Dear neighbors and friends,

Thank you for the tremendous honor of serving as your Ward 4 City Councilmember these past four years.

Four years ago, I ran on a platform of building community, serving through civic engagement, fighting poverty and violence. That is long-term work, but we could not do a solid foundation to get us moving towards our shared vision as a community.

We have improved opportunities for mental health crises. Work had unfolded in neighborhood health centers and innovative justice, abolishing childhood lead poisoning, commercial sexual exploitation interventions, and community trauma response. We answered calls from the Hmong community and invested in a Southeast Asian Navigator to help our community navigate public safety and criminal justice systems. The city has strategically funded community-based violence prevention groups through the Blueprint Model and Violence Prevention Fund for the first time.

Despite all of the challenges we have faced, we got a lot of work done together in four short years. We have come a long way, but there is still a long way to go.

With Ward 4 City Councilmember Jeremie Ellison taking the helm, I wish the city an even brighter future.

Phillipe M. Cunningham
Ward 4
Phillipe Cunningham

To everyone who participated in the budget public hearing, thank you. Thank you for showing up, thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences and thank you for continuing to be involved and caring for our community.

The Minneapolis City Council has adopted a $1.6 billion spending plan. The budget includes new investments in affordable housing, public safety, economic inclusion initiatives, safety and civil rights, and employee capacity to ensure delivery of core city services. It also includes a gradual $2.6 million increase for youth programming through the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and ongoing funding for the Office of Violence Prevention. It also features $120 million in federal relief funding over three years to help with recovery and safeguard against major property tax increases in 2022 and beyond.

Visit the city’s website to learn more about the budget, key dates in the approval process, FAQs and more. You can also watch a series of videos on the city’s budget process.

Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot Program

Applications are now open for the pilot Guaranteed Basic Income program.

The program aims to provide an income boost of $500 monthly to 200 Minneapolis households who need it most. The monthly payments will run for 24 months from spring 2022 through fall 2024.

Eligible applicants must be 18 years or older, a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident, and household income at or below 50 percent of the area median income. Some Minnesota households pay as much as 30 percent of their income just on their heating bill. Many Minnesota households are facing as much as 30 percent of their income just on their heating bill.

The Energy Assistance Program helps people who own or rent their homes pay for current and past due bills for electricity, gas, oil, biodiesel and propane, emergency fuel delivery, and repair or replacement of homeowners’ broken heating systems. The Energy Assistance Program can also cover water and sewer bills.

Request an Energy Assistance Program application on the State website or call (800) 657-5710 and press 1.

And as always, there are several ways to be in touch with us, so don’t hesitate to reach out. My full contact information is in the Ward 5 newsletter. RSVP to my weekly virtual office hours (Tuesday 1-2 p.m.) or request a one-on-one meeting via my website (www.minneapolismn.gov/ward5).

Phillipe M Cunningham Minneapolis City Councilmember (Ward 4 2018-2022)

Minneapolis City Council members Phillip 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.

The application is available in six languages online. Email us to request a hard copy. Apply by Dec. 31.

For more information, visit the Guaranteed Basic Income program on the city website (www.minneapolismn.gov).
Twin Cities mourns loss of legendary DJ, Brother Jules

By Harry Colbert, Jr., editor-in-chief

A lot after midnight on Dec. 4, Brother Jules was replanning a message on his Facebook page. — a message of praise for a reggae mix that aired on 89.9 KMC (The People's Station).

The next activity on his page, just a few hours later, was a Road of messages of condolences and disbelief. Brother Jules was gone.

Jules, a product of North Minneapolis and world-renowned DJ who was the personal DJ to Prince, is being remembered as both a pioneering DJ and as a friend. “He was one of the coolest dudes I know,” said friend and MCMA personality Walter “Q-Dot” Barton, Jr. “He was one of the most humble dudes I know. He was an amazing friend and brother.”

Barton said early from his high school days, he and Jules were special. “He was a cheif of a DJ,” said Barton, still speaking of Jules in the present. “He’s one of the coolest DJ on the planet. He was a master mixologist. For him, it wasn’t just pouring a drink; he knew how to mix music in ways like no other.”

It was said for mixing that led him to begin DJing for Prince. Jules was just a teenager at the time.

“While I didn’t really know who Prince was before I got a call from Sinque John (Prince’s personal DJ) to open for the regular DJ. After I did my thing, two guys, Joey and Danroy—Prince’s bodyguards—came up to me and said, ‘the boss wants you out at Paisley Park,’” recalled Jules in a June 2019 interview in Insight News. “I didn’t really know who he (Prince) was, he just said, ‘you’re coming with us.’”

2020 interview with St. Paul Pioneer Press. Other interviews would follow and it wasn’t long before Jules was known throughout the world as a long career as an engineer for Honeywell.

In 1989, Cottman took an exhibition photography class at the St. Paul Arts & Sciences Center. Other photography classes followed and it wasn’t long before he was known throughout the world as a successful photographer.

One of his classmates, Mark Hannaford, said: “He’s one of the coolest dudes I know. He was an amazing friend and brother.”

Jules was honored several times for his contributions to music, including receiving a Lifetime Achievement honor from the Black Music America Awards. Services for Julian “Brother Jules” Jules were held for Dec. 19 from 3 p.m. – 10 p.m. at Reign Nightclub, 2901 Hennepin Ave.

By Harry Colbert, Jr., editorial-ray

A lot of people, not necessarily photographers, would create works and post them, saying they were inspired by Bill Cottman.

McComb said she and Cottman regularly talked about visual poetry and self-portraits, which Cottman made sure to start with. “He was just one of those people. He supported everything I did. He and Beverly come to all my openings. A lot of people, not necessarily photographers, would create works and post them, saying they were inspired by Bill Cottman.

Author note: I’m the co-founder of Juxtaposition Arts. “Art is not an activity but a way the Juxtaposition family is transformed,” said a Jade.

The family is seven at the hip, visual artist Niki McComb said. Beverly Cottman was a regular DJ. After I did my thing two guys, Joey and Dwayne—Prince’s bodyguards—came up to me and said, ‘the boss wants you out at Paisley Park,’” recalled Jules in a June 2019 interview in Insight News. “I didn’t really know who he (Prince) was, he just said, ‘you’re coming with us.’”

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1. Ascension Catholic Church managed to celebrate Ash Wednesday safely while in the middle of a pandemic. Father Dale Korogi used swabs to apply ashes to parishioners, like Mike Connor, who drove up.

2. Jakori Walton, 9, grimaced as he received COVID-19 shot at a clinic held in November at Cityview Community School. Just days before, the Federal Drug Administration ruled the vaccine safe for kids ages 5 to 11.

3. Kira Drescher thinks through a homework problem behind a plastic shield at the Camden Collective Learning Center.

Text and photos by David Pierini, Staff Reporter
Clockwise from top:
1. A crowd outside the Hennepin County Government Center erupted with joy and relief after former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of killing George Floyd.

2. “Daddy’s going to change the world,” said seven-year-old Gianna Floyd, whose father George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer. Gianna was with family at the trial for George Floyd’s killer.

3. Young mourners, wearing masks that honor victims of police violence, filed into the Shiloh Temple International Ministries for the funeral of Daunte Wright.

The family of London Bean, a 12-year-old boy fatally shot during a neighborhood argument in September, was joined by several Northside families for children’s marches to end gun violence.

Amber McKenzie, center, and Mercedes Thomas, right, helped put up flyers at a gas station at the corner of Lowry and Logan. The flier advertised reward money for information leading up to the arrests of the shooters responsible for the deaths of two girls Anya Allen, 6, and Trinity Chosen-Smith, 9. Both were killed by gang crossfire in separate shootings.
Clockwise from top:
1. A wide-open field at Bethune Park was put to use to fly homemade Juneteenth kites. Here, Tommie Gilkey helps his daughter, Myybelle.
2. Avisia Rhame, left, and Amear Webster strike the right notes and moves during a performance to cap off a summer camp to expose kids to show-style marching like bands at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
3. The Kid Zone included an inflatable slide that had a constant rotation of kids who attended the 31st-annual Family Day sponsored by Urban League Twin Cities.

Clockwise from top left:
1. Nadine Graves shows her two sons, Noah, left, and Nicholas, that she still has the ups and timing for jump rope during Open Streets West Broadway in September.
2. Bella Dillard, 3, left, and her sister, KyKay Dillard, 2, had party goers seeing Minnie Mouse in stereo during a Halloween celebration at the Capri Theater plaza in October.
3. Jaylen Ruffin smiles as he gets close to the end zone during a practice of the Minnesota Panthers flag football team at Shingle Creek Park.
4. At a signing ceremony in February, North High football standout Davon Townley revealed his choice of colleges to continue his football career. He chose Penn State over more than 20 other offers.
State award goes to Bethune educator with her ‘soul invested’ in students

Tequila Laramee named Education Support Professional of the Year by Education Minnesota

By David Pierini  Staff Reporter

As a little girl, Tequila Laramee knew she wanted to be a caretaker to provide a sense of stability to others that she herself lacked growing up in a troubled home in North Minneapolis.

Working today as an associate educator in a kindergarten classroom at Bethune Community School, Laramee assists the licensed teacher by leading small groups in math and literacy lessons. She also brings love, support and an empathetic sense for when poverty or violence manifests itself in a child’s sudden drift in attention or behavior.

One colleague describes her as a goddess. Another says she is glue, holding together exhausted staff members or a child coming undone from stress and confusion.

It was this type of testimony that moved Education Minnesota to recently name Laramee, 36, the Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year. The award comes with a new iPad and $1,200, and puts her in the running for the National ESP of the Year.

Laramee started with the Minneapolis Public Schools 10 years ago working in after-school programs. She is in her seventh year as an ESP at Bethune.

An ESP provides more than an extra set of hands to certified teachers. They are often from the communities in which they work and they have experienced similar barriers in their own education that have in them better knowledge of the learning environment.

But as valued as they are by teachers, they are among the lowest paid staff in schools. The salary range is between $19,000 and $29,000 in Minneapolis Public Schools and many ESP’s work other jobs to help support their families.

“We’ve been hemorrhaging ESPs this year because they aren’t making enough money to survive,” said Greta Callahan, president of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers. “An ESP makes sure that first, a child is OK, safe, that they’re fed and not experiencing trauma. With- out someone like Tequila, you can’t meet those needs.”

Laramee describes her childhood as a blur. She remembers when her home was raided by police and a drug addict would sound up in custody. She lived for a time in foster care and always seemed to enroll in a different elementary school each year. She took special care in the small group lessons because she did not have someone in her home who read to her or helped with her school work.

She set her sights on a teaching career “to be that person for someone else.”

Laramee graduated from Patrick Henry High School and was the first person in her family to attend college. But debt and other events forced her to drop out. She is seven classes shy of graduating from Metro State University and still working on her bachelor’s degree.

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Laramee is grateful for the award and the love, empathy and high expectations she received from her former kindergarten teacher Kari Ehlers, who said she feels “blessed” to have her in the classroom.

“She is a goddess,” said Callahan, who nominated Laramee for the award. “She just cares so much and is the hardest worker. She turns up every single day for our kids. Every ounce of her energy is invested in doing right for them. There’s no one like her in the school system.”

Laramee is in her second year as the ESP for kindergarten teacher Eric Ekahs, who said she feels “blessed” to have her in the classroom.

“She has a ton of pride in Bethune and is an incredible role model for our young girls,” Ehlers said. “She’s a caretaker who has high expectations. We need her to be heading her own classroom.”

Laramee is thankful for the award and the kind words that have followed. She feels like others she works with are just as deserving. Laramee says she is just doing her job.

“I don’t know how else to be,” she said. “If I care about you, I will do all I can for you. That’s the love I feel.”

Laramee led kindergartners in a Bingo game designed to help them learn the letters of the alphabet. Photo by David Pierini

Do you need help paying bills or rental assistance?

Call 612-234-1701 for help applying.

If you are experiencing a financial hardship because of the pandemic, RentHelpMN may just be your answer.

COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance is available to all Minnesotans who qualify. We care about getting you the help you need, when you need it most.

You could receive up to 15 months total assistance for:

- Rent payments
- Utility payments (gas, electric, water/sewer, garbage & recycling and other utilities as approved)

It is the policy of Minnesota Housing to affirmatively further fair housing in all its programs so that individuals of similar income levels have equal access to Minnesota Housing programs, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, familial status, gender identity or sexual orientation.
Mental health issues impact area teens during the pandemic

By Asiah Bankhead, Sophomore, North Community High School

Discussing mental health is still taboo for today’s youth. For the past two years kids have been at home feeling stuck because of the pandemic. Adolescents haven’t had the opportunity to socialize in person and participate in school activities. Because of this, they spend their time on social media, phones, and computers which is not proven to be beneficial for mental health.

Lindsey Lindberg is North’s 10th grade English teacher who also experiences anxiety. Because of this, he connects with his students on a personal level to identify when his students are having a hard time. Lindberg has noticed a trend with more kids recognizing and accepting when they are struggling with mental health issues.

Olayomide Alawoja is one of North Community High School seniors who gets a lot from the students on their mental health.

By Matthew Harris-Berry, Sophomore, North Community High School

Senior WiBe Wilson had some insight on his experience and struggle with the pandemic as well. “I didn’t get to finish playing basketball, my sophomore year was fully online experience my junior year,” said Wilson. Reflecting on the spring of 2020 and last school year when school was abruptly cut short due to COVID-19 pandemic, Wilson saw how his close friends helped him and his schoolmates.

Mental health issues impact area teens during the pandemic

By Asiah Bankhead, Sophomore, North Community High School

The stigma of mental health comes from misperception,” said Oluyomide. She also noted trends around heavy trauma and unresolved stress, especially following the murder of George Floyd. A big problem is kids knowing how or where to get help. As a source in school setting, Oluyomide believes it’s important for parents to know what their kids need and also what’s available to them.

“I believe we can alleviate from increased variability of various support services, whether it is offering or asking for time, space, and help to deal with what ever is in need of address,” said Oluyomide. Many students have found that one of the best mental health resources is each other. North High students have made it a practice to check in with one another, advocate for each other to do better, and listen when others need to be heard.

It is estimated students at North Community High School are spending a lot of time on social media, phones, and computers which is not proven to be beneficial for mental health.

In her mind, mental health is being able to take care of your mind and body and being responsible. “The stigma of mental health comes from misperception,” said Oluyomide. She also noted trends around heavy trauma and unresolved stress, especially following the murder of George Floyd. A big problem is kids knowing how or where to get help. As a source in school setting, Oluyomide believes it’s important for parents to know what their kids need and also what’s available to them.

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By Javon Hill, Sophomore, North Community High School

As the year 2021 is wrapping up, let’s reflect on our mental health and the social media impact on our daily lives. People often think of social media as fun and entertaining but is it really? Many students have found that one of the best mental health resources is each other. North High students have made it a practice to check in with one another, advocate for each other to do better, and listen when others need to be heard.

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Lady Polars building a bright future with a young team!

By Avlon Sager, junior, North Community High School

Polar basketball for boys and girls is full in swing at North High School with the boys basketball first game on Dec. 11, and the girls kicked their season off with a first game loss against Dover on Nov. 27. The boys made it to the semifinals of the section this past year but ended up losing to Clearlake. The year before there was no boys basketball state tournament due to COVID-19.

This year the Polars are hungrier than ever to win the state championship last year, but ended up against Dover on Nov. 27. They kicked their season off with a first game loss against Minnehaha Academy, Rush City, Providence Academy who will ranked very high, like Minnehaha Academy, Rush City, Providence Academy. ‘’ Working together is going to be a big part of our schedule this year. Our schedule is full of teams that are very competitive. The Lady Polars get ready for battle during their pregame ritual. Photo by Lethan Williams.

‘’Our schedule is full of teams that are very competitive. The Lady Polars get ready for battle during their pregame ritual. Photo by Lethan Williams.

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**New Year New Savings**

### Minneapolis Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot Program

Aims to help 200 low-income families become more financially secure by providing them with monthly payments of $500 over a period of 24 months, beginning in Spring 2022.

**Application closes:** December 31, 2021

To be eligible, you must:
- Live in one of the following Minneapolis ZIP Codes: 55403, 55404, 55405, 55407, 55411, 55412, 55413, 55414, 55415
- Meet an annual income requirement
- Have experienced negative economic impact due to the Covid-19 pandemic
- Be the age 18+ years by January 1, 2022

Learn how to apply at: [https://www.minneapolismn.gov/gbi](https://www.minneapolismn.gov/gbi)

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