

# NORTH NEWS

April 29, 2022

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Alexandria O'Neill, left, and NiJionna Montjoy took in the news that every North High senior would receive a \$10,000 scholarship.  
Photo by David Pierini

## Surprise Scholarships

Each North High senior will graduate with \$10,000 for school.

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# Letter from the Editor David Pierini

As I was placing stories on pages for this edition, I realized there was a theme that inadvertently ties three stories together. Two of the stories, both on Page 11, celebrate the lives of two pioneering Northsiders, Richard Copeland, who died recently, and golfer Eddie Manderville, who passed two years ago.

Both men have great personal legacies. Copeland owned THOR Construction and was a champion for hiring Black and Brown contractors and developers. He knocked down walls so that other contractors and developers of color could get the jobs to build them.

Manderville played a leading role in integrating the all-white Men's Association at Theodore Wirth Golf Club and formed groups to introduce other Black and Brown people, especially women, to the game. Manderville has been gone for two years but there is a campaign underway to have his name over the very clubhouse he was initially denied access to in the 1950s because of his skin color.

The third piece is our cover story about a fundraising effort led by Pillsbury United Communities to give every graduating senior at North High School a \$10,000 scholarship for college or career training. Some 100 seniors are on track to graduate and during an assembly to announce the grants, a handful of North High alums who went on to successful careers that positively impact the Northside offered words of encouragement to work hard and follow their dreams.

Who among these seniors will be the next Copeland, Manderville or any number of accomplished Northsiders? Imagine what these two would say to the Class of 2022 as its members embark on a new journey.

A fourth story in this edition might be a great source of advice on how to manage the move forward. Poet and musician Joe Davis is our Neighbors feature (Page 20) this month and he has written a book of prayers and poems for graduating seniors. "We Rise Higher" reminds this generation to take good care of one's self and to also seek the care of community. Gratitude and intentional listening are just a couple of tools he recommends they carry into the future.

## EXPLORE

**Middle School Scholars:**  
Explore the art of storytelling through painting with illustrator and muralist Briauna Williams!  
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# North Minneapolis at a glance

## Nonprofits Launch Growth Fund for small businesses

Small businesses can now apply for low-interest financing of up to \$200,000 from the Minnesota Inclusive Growth Fund (MIGF).

The Fund is designed to increase access to flexible and affordable capital and small business support services for underbanked businesses across Minnesota that have suffered a direct economic disruption as a result of COVID-19 or civil unrest.

Created by a collection of support organizations collectively called the Catalyst Coalition, MIGF places an emphasis on long-term recovery, growth, and businesses in low-to-moderate income or underbanked communities. Among the support groups is the Northside Economic Opportunity Network (NEON).

The Fund offers two types of loans for small businesses that employ 20 or fewer employees or have less than \$3 million in revenue in 2019. One loan for businesses seeking working capital and another for growth-stage businesses seeking financing for capital expenditures.

Small business owners can apply at [www.mngrowthfund.com](http://www.mngrowthfund.com).



Adrianna Capers, right, portrayed Veronica, who wiped the face of Jesus, played by Cayden Stanley, during a re-enactment of the Stations of the Cross at Ascension Catholic Academy on April 14. Peggy White's fifth-grade class told the story of the day Jesus was crucified in observance of the Easter holiday. Praying at each of the 14 stations of the cross, depicted in carvings or pictures on the walls of the church, is a Good Friday tradition. Photo by David Pierini

## Peter Hayden wins award that will carry his name

Peter Hayden, CEO and president of Turning Point in North Minneapolis, received the inaugural Diversity, Inclusivity and Racial Equity Award from the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers.

The award will carry his name in the years ahead.

Turning Point, started as a halfway house in 1976 and evolved into a nationally recognized culturally specific substance use disorder treatment center.

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### 'Seeing a therapist will put me in the system. I don't want a diagnosis to follow me'



Dieudonne (Dee) Asambang is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor at Neighborhood HealthSource - Fremont Clinic. In this monthly column, he addresses mental health stigma and explains some common misconceptions about therapy and mental health.

By Dieudonne Asambang

Many people worry that seeing a therapist will result in a diagnosis that will "follow them," making life difficult. In reality, seeing a therapist is more likely to help you in your life than harm you. According to National Alliance of Mental Health, 25% of people arrested and in the criminal justice system have serious mental illnesses; more than 2 million people with serious mental illnesses are arrested annually; and over 550,000 people with serious mental illness are in jail on any given day. Therapy, rather than being something that will put you into the system, is actually a way to help you cope with life's challenges in healthier ways that could keep you out of the system. Your diagnosis and mental health information is protected under

privacy laws that protect medical information. If you're worried about how a diagnosis may affect your life, you can keep it private, or share it only with people you trust to be supportive. Working with a therapist or counselor in a therapeutic relationship gives you an opportunity to explore your thoughts, feelings, and patterns of behavior. It can also help you learn new coping skills and techniques to better manage daily stressors. If you are experiencing a negative mood, undergoing a significant change, having harmful thoughts, feeling isolated, using substances to cope with stressors, feel like you have lost control, or suspect that you have a mental health condition, our therapists and counselors at NHS are one call away to support you.

# West Broadway Avenue recommended for Blue Line extension



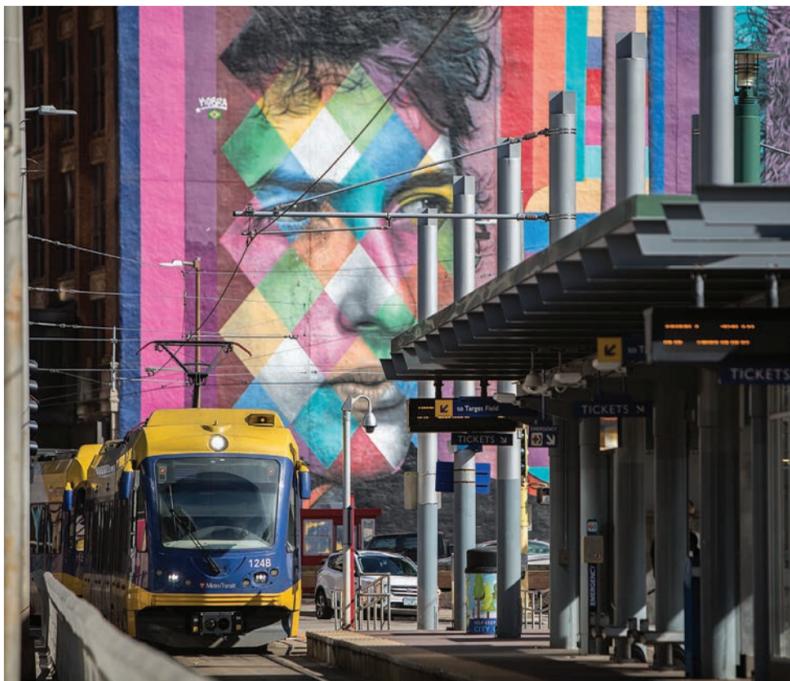
served by the proposed route are transit-reliant and racially diverse and have experienced historical disinvestment. The proposed route will connect students to education, workers to jobs, patients to healthcare, and families to resources, while connecting the corridor to the broader transit network. This project will ignite economic development for small businesses, result in more affordable housing options, increase access to educational opportunities, and build wealth for working families.”

While a boom in development has followed most light rail routes, affordable housing has not. Residents in some communities were displaced by raised rents and soaring property taxes once construction began.

To avoid negative impacts. The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs is leading an anti-displacement work group, which includes residents and business owners in the impacted areas.

“Too often the voices of community members who are directly impacted by these sorts of projects are drowned out by other interests,” said the Met Council’s Robert Lilligen, whose District 7 includes North Minneapolis. “We have an opportunity with the Blue Line Extension and this Anti-Displacement Work Group to come up with direct and actionable steps that can minimize the harm and address the concerns of the community, while ensuring this once-in-a-generation investment benefits all of the cities and people along the corridor.”

A final vote on the route will not happen anytime soon. The Met Council must first complete the Green Line extension and determine funding for the Blue Line extension, which could run \$1.5 billion. County officials say construction will take about three years and will not begin until 2025 at the earliest.



A light rail train pulls into a downtown station. North News file photo.

Proposed Blue Line extension. Met Council photo.

By David Pierini, Editor

West Broadway Avenue in North Minneapolis could be the future ground for zippy light rail trains under a recommendation released April 18 by the Metropolitan Council and Hennepin County.

The METRO Blue Line extension has been proposed to run from Target Field along West Broadway Avenue to County Road 81 in Crystal and Robbinsdale and along West Broadway Avenue in Brooklyn Park. The recommendation was made after two years of community input and technical analysis. A route using Lowry Avenue had been considered.

“The new proposed route... will bring transformational benefits to residents from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park,” Irene Fernando, Hennepin County District 2 commissioner and chair of the Regional Railroad Authority, said in a written statement. “The communities

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Ike Hill and his fellow seniors hold up their scholarship leaders to pose for a group photo.

## Every North High senior to receive a \$10,000 start on college, career training

Photos and story by David Pierini, Editor

North High seniors on April 15 knew something was up. Their giddy teachers could barely keep the secret that would be unveiled in the auditorium at the end of the day.

Weeks from graduating, the high school experience for the Class of 2022 at North was hardly typical or carefree. The face masks many were wearing, for one, were a reminder that the first pandemic in a century was not over.

The masks could not hold back the awestruck expressions or joyous shrieks when they learned each North senior will receive up to \$10,000 toward their post

secondary education or career training.

"I am so happy, I really can't believe it," said Khadija Ba, who received admission to the University of Minnesota and hopes to one day go to law school. "The teachers were geeking around all day that there was a surprise for us, but I didn't expect this, honestly. It just shows that someone's looking out for the Northside."

Leaders at Pillsbury United Communities, which owns and operates North News, raised \$1 million to go to the roughly 100 North High students on track to graduate in June. Funds came from the following foundations and corporations:

Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies Fund of the St. Paul and Minnesota Foundation, Cargill Foundation, General Mills, McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis Foundation, Minnesota Twins, Target and U.S. Bank.

Adair Mosley, the president and CEO of Pillsbury United, choked up as he made the announcement. Principal Mauri Friestleben stood to the side of the stage to get a private moment for her tears. Others, many who were North High alums, smiled and clapped and approached the seniors with fist bumps.

"I know dreams don't come true without some grit, determination and

perseverance," Mosley said. "But most importantly, it's standing in front of someone that believes in you. I hope that each and everyone one of you has someone that stands in front of you and believes that and it's up to you to put that grit and determination behind that dream to actually make that happen."

Pillsbury United will hold the funds and remit them directly to the college or career program of their choosing.

North seniors who have yet to decide a course can take up to one year to determine those plans. Pillsbury United will make college and career counselors available for the summer to guide the students.

**"You deserve every ounce of love that's coming your way. I want you to soak in this moment and I want you to enjoy it."**

Mauri Friestleben,  
North Principal

The road to graduation for this class was marked by extreme difficulties. Shutdowns when the pandemic arrived isolated students and forced them into virtual classrooms. There was the police murder of George Floyd, disproportionate experiences of violence in the community and mostly, recently a three-week teachers strike.

"You deserve every ounce of love that's coming your way," Friestleben said. "I want you to soak in this moment and I want you to enjoy it."

Polars basketball coach Larry McKenzie spoke and introduced North alums who have gone on to great achievement. They included Chanda Smith Baker, chief impact officer and senior vice president for the Minneapolis Foundation, Jamez Staples who founded Renewable Energy Partners and local entrepreneur, barber, and fashion designer Houston White.

At the conclusion of the assembly,

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Khadija Ba, left, thanked donors who were on hand for the announcement. To her left is Principal Mauri Friestleben.



Te'Ariana Jackson, left, and Ronaiya Bickham hug at the end of the assembly.

# The school strike aimed to protect BIPOC teachers. Instead, some feel ‘ostracized’

By David Pierini, Editor

A group of Henry High School teachers has filed a formal complaint against Minneapolis Federation of Teachers President Greta Callahan for what they call “racialized harm” during the recent teachers’ strike.

The complaint sent to the union’s executive board on April 21 also signals the group’s intent to initiate a recall campaign against Callahan.

The Henry teachers say they were ostracized by Callahan and other union members as they pressed union leaders on the status of contract language during negotiations that would protect young educators of color when layoffs loom.

This was a key demand when teachers voted to strike that was suddenly absent as the strike began, according to the Henry teachers. It was missing from signs printed by the union, left out of speeches at rallies and omitted from daily updates by the union.

As concerns grew, Henry teachers started a petition drive and said they were turned away by strike captains when they tried to gather signatures from colleagues at other picket sights to re-enforced the language as a key demand.

The grievance, a copy of which was obtained by North News, alleges Callahan “committed cruelties” towards Henry staff and BIPOC educators during the strike. The teachers say Callahan “deceived” members about how she negotiated for educators of color.

“Together we stand united in our calls for MFT59 membership to root out the practices of white supremacy plaguing these systems,” the complaint says. “White supremacy has and continues to anchor this union at the expense of educators of color and our beloved students of color.”

While the final agreement included unprecedented commitments to recruit and retain educators of color, the strike laid bare complicated racial dynamics and blind spots common when white allies lead equity causes.

“I guess it is a victory, but there was a lot of harm done,” said Henry guidance counselor Alex Leonard. “We felt like we were between two predominantly white institutions that didn’t see us. We were just kind of invisible.”

Callahan told North News the union “certainly learned some lessons in communications” and called the anger and frustration “righteous, justified” but “misplaced.”



Pickets signs on the first day of the Minneapolis teachers’ strike. Photo by David Pierini

She said union communications before and during the strike consistently reflected the demand for enforceable retention language in the contract and that it was part of many media interviews, though not always published.

Callahan issued a statement in response to the formal complaint.

“We negotiated nation-leading language that was written into the contract and will endure. Our students and staff deserve more, and this has caused righteous anger in many people,” Callahan said. “The anger of these educators is symptomatic of larger issues, and although I feel it is misdirected, every member needs to be heard.”

“My responsibility as president is to maintain the dignity of our members, even when mine is under attack. There are many efforts to divide our union, but it is imperative that we stay united in our efforts for safe and stable schools. I’m so proud of the leadership we built through our strike, and I welcome all good-faith conversations about how to make our union even stronger.”

### Rule hurts retention

In a district where a majority of the student body is BIPOC, educators of color make up about 1 percent of the teaching ranks. The district’s “last in, first out” seniority rule has made educators of color vulnerable to layoff.

Just before the strike, more than 50 teachers of color received notices they would be “excessed” as the district made

cuts to deal with a projected budget deficit of \$21 million for the next school year. “Excessed” teachers might be able to avoid layoff by applying for a vacancy in another school.

A memorandum of agreement (MOA) with a contractual commitment for exempting BIPOC teachers from layoff was drafted in late 2021 by union leaders as part of the list of demands. The MOA was an incentive to vote to strike, especially for teachers of color who had seen young colleagues be “excessed.”

**“We felt like we were between two predominantly white institutions that didn’t see us. We were just kind of invisible.”**

Alex Leonard,  
Henry High School guidance counselor

“We supported all of the demands, but part of the reason we voted to strike was for retaining teachers of color,” Leonard said.

On March 8, the first day of the strike, official union signs included messaging for ESP wages, mental health supports, and class-size caps, but no mention of the educators of color MOA, Leonard said. Henry’s teachers also said it was absent from the fiery speeches at rallies.

On the third day, a multi-racial group

of Henry educators met to discuss what seemed like the absence of this priority. On the next day, the group decided it would gather signatures for a petition urging union leaders to uphold the MOA as a bargaining priority.

Five days in, the MFT released a statement telling its members not to engage members showing up at other picket sites with petitions. The statement referred to the efforts as “shenanigans and distractions.”

Those carrying petitions, Leonard said, were blocked by strike captains. Henry teachers feared the MOA wasn’t even at the table and when they finally cornered Callahan and ESP president Shaun Laden, Leonard said Callahan said the MOA wasn’t negotiated at that point.

Caroline Long, an MPS teacher and one of four BIPOC members on the union negotiating team, said confidentiality agreements signed by both sides kept many details of the ongoing negotiations under wraps. They also wanted to be careful not to reveal negotiating strategies.

She said the contract language for retaining teachers of color was never dropped, though there were times when negotiators tried to include the language in a more sweeping anti-bias, anti-racist agreement that would address systemic racism.

“We weren’t supposed to be talking about these things,” Long said. “Greta tried to be as assuring as they possibly could without revealing too much. Us members of color on the negotiating team kind of felt like we were being erased by things that were happening outside of negotiations. I’m sitting here fighting this battle with my other colleagues of color but you don’t see what we’re doing.”

### ‘Living values on the line’

Henry English teacher Nafessah Muhammad said history is loaded with examples of unkept promises by white leadership. She said the union failed to appreciate how what was unsaid during the strike impacted BIPOC educators.

This was especially true when union officials called for pickets outside the homes of school board members. Henry teachers, concerned about Black members on the school board, said they tried to get union leaders to understand the optics of a group of white people gathered outside a Black residence. The pickets went on as called for.

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# Sojourner Truth Academy scholars were giddy in getting to mingle with Karl-Anthony Towns

Minnesota Timberwolves all-star Karl-Anthony Towns stopped by Sojourner Truth Academy on March 24 to help celebrate a refurbished and redesigned basketball court. Towns teamed with Mobil 1 and the 2K Foundation to bring the new floor to the Northside school. ST scholars mingled with Towns and danced and played games with Timberwolves mascot Crunch. Towns participated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony and posed for pictures with his young admirers. Photos by David Pierini

Sojourner Truth scholars freely mingled with Karl-Anthony Towns during his visit to the school.



Fifth-grader Terrell Griffin and his classmates were in awe of the antics of Timberwolves’ mascot Crunch.



Crunch had kids try to sink their shots with their backs to the basket.



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**NEWS**

**Construction king Richard Copeland dies from cancer**  
He was proudest of what he built in North Minneapolis

By David Pierini, Editor

Richard Copeland, who with one old pick-up truck and a shovel started a construction business that grew to be one of the largest Black-owned companies in the nation, passed away on March 20 from cancer.

Copeland's shovel under the name THOR Construction moved dirt to build three Twin Cities sports stadiums, a convention center on the Las Vegas strip, and parts of Haiti devastated by a hurricane.

There were high-profile jobs in several states, but Copeland was particularly proud of the intersection of Penn and Plymouth avenues, where a gleaming Regional Acceleration Center (FAC) he built as his headquarters overlooks two of his other projects, the Urban League and Estes Funeral Home.

More importantly, Copeland blazed trails for minority contractors, suppliers and was insistent on hiring people of color. THOR Construction grew to be the largest

Black-owned construction company in Minnesota, among the largest in the nation, at one point, generating more than \$350 million in revenue. Thanks to Copeland, other developers of colors rose with him.

"Richard has done a lot of stuff and it's the stuff we see, the buildings," said friend David McGee, who founded Build Wealth MN and is an anchor tenant at the RAC. "But Richard helped a lot of folks behind the scenes that you'll probably never know about."

Sadly, Copeland ran into financial setbacks, including costly lawsuits that forced him to close his company. The building, which Copeland saw as a beacon of hope for North Minneapolis, was headed toward receivership and possibly the hands of outside buyers. Copeland lived long enough to see the building get purchased late last year by McGee and another close friend, the Rev. Alfred Babington-Johnson of the StairStep Foundation.

McGee and Babington-Johnson also launched a fundraising drive to help



Richard Copeland outside the Regional Acceleration Center in 2018. Photo by David Pierini

Copeland pay for cancer treatments and in January, he told the North News, "Those treatments extended my life and gave me a chance to see something positive (with the RAC). I think the world of Babington and David."

Richard Allen Copland was born on Aug. 5, 1955 and grew up in the Sumner-Olson

housing projects just blocks away from the RAC. Copeland attended the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth and followed in the footsteps of his stepdad, who was a small business owner.

The one-truck-one-shovel origin story for THOR Construction sounds mythical. In a

**Continued on page 23**

**The golf club house that once denied Eddie Manderville may soon take his name**

By David Pierini, Editor

Eddie Manderville died in 2020, but friends say his spirit still walks the fairways of the Theodore Wirth Golf Club.

Those friends want Manderville's name to live on more tangibly as they campaign to have his name above the clubhouse that once denied him access because of the color of his skin.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board held the first public hearing on April 6 after a formal request was submitted to rename the Swiss chalet-style club house after the groundbreaking golfer who lived in North Minneapolis.

The renaming of a park property is a two-year process. A final hearing is scheduled for September 2023 and a final vote would take place by the end of that year.

To call Manderville a golfer doesn't adequately address his contributions to the game.

Manderville mastered several sports, from football and boxing to skiing and archery. But he did not hold a golf club until the age of 26 when he first set foot on the course at Theodore Wirth. He was

hooked after that first round.

He practiced for hours and hours on putting greens and the driving range. He was initially denied access to the clubhouse but as his game grew, Manderville was instrumental in desegregating the Men's Association at the club.

Over a 60-year career, he held several positions with the club and co-founded Black Women on Course (BWOC). As a recruiter and instructor, BWOC has more than 200 members, many who first learned the game from Manderville.

"Eddie was in hospice, on his deathbed and still coaching me, telling me (about competitors) and saying, 'I know you can beat this person,'" said Martha Arradondo, a BWOC co-founder who submitted the request to rename the clubhouse Eddie Manderville Chalet. "This is all about Eddie and what he's done."

Manderville won several golf tournaments and his license plate advertised his knack for hitting the rare hole in one. Manderville hit 11 of them over the course of his career, his last one when he was 85. In 2013, lightning struck twice for Manderville as he hit back-to-

back holes in one on Wirth's Par-3 course. The odds of hitting back-to-back holes in one are 17 million to 1, according to a national registry that tracks the fabled shot.

He was a first-class hustler who loved to play for money and, thus, earning him the nickname Fast Eddie.

"I remember losing lots of money to him on the putting green," Doug Jordal said at the hearing. "I got to know Eddie really well. He was a kind, wonderful person. After I played with him a lot, he said 'You can play with me anytime.' That meant a lot."

Arradondo and Jordan were among a handful of speakers at the hearing.

Pam Stoddard remembers walking with fellow BWOC members to begin play in the Upper Midwest Bronze Amateur tournament and hearing Manderville say, "There go my girls!"

"He's a person who leaves a footprint on your life and keeps you going forward in the journey, even though he's not here," Stoddard said. "I really would appreciate Eddie as a peoples' golfer being considered for that chalet."



Eddie Manderville in an undated photo. Provided photo.

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## Henry's outdoor sports fields may finally get bathrooms – in 2027

By Kennedy Rance, Henry High School

Henry High School has been in operation since 1937. However, many generations of athletes, coaches, and fans have not had access to a bathroom or drinking water at its outdoor athletic facilities.

Adjacent to the school on 43rd and Morgan Avenues lays Henry's outdoor facilities. This area includes two fields, and a multi-purpose track used by the football, soccer, cross country, baseball, and track and field teams.

There are seven main high schools within Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). All high school outdoor athletic facilities have access to permanent water fountains, restrooms, or both. All except Henry High School – partnered with FAIR High School – which lacks access to permanent water fountains and restrooms.

For nearly a decade, Thomas Johnson has served as a school psychologist at Henry High School. For six of those years, Johnson and Jeffery Byrd have led the track and field team. Johnson believes the lack of outdoor

drinking fountains and restroom facilities has directly impacted Henry Students.

"[The lack of access] sends a subtle, sometimes obvious message that our students aren't valued as much as student athletes from other MPS high schools" Johnson said. "Our students deserve to have at bare minimum, what other schools and a community, provide that for them."

Currently, Henry athletes and coaches provide their own water for home events and practices. Coaches are provided with gatorade jugs, but they must be filled and transported between the field and school building. Portable restrooms are available, but coaches and athletes say the portapotties are unsanitary due to frequent vandalism. As a result, student athletes, parents, and fans use the restroom before or after attending outdoor games.

Members of Henry's track and field team recall numerous instances of exhaustion in temperatures as high as 95 degrees. Without running water at the stadium, many resort to using a water spigot. Yasmin, a



Henry High School's outdoor athletic facility was built without bathrooms or drinking water. Photo by Brent Snyder

Henry track athlete says, "There should be a water bottle filler. Water isn't a privilege, it's a right."

Operations officials for the district agree renovations for Henry's athletic facilities are long overdue.

Renovations for the outdoor facilities are

scheduled for 2026, but more likely to begin in the summer of 2027, as a part of a turf field project.

Although outdoor restrooms and water fountains are not yet guaranteed, Karen

**Continued on page 23**



**SUMMIT ACADEMY OIC**

## Request for Proposals

In partnership with the City of Minneapolis, Summit Academy OIC is pleased to announce an RFP for our Summit Works program. Summit Works will directly address post-pandemic economic conditions by connecting Minneapolis residents from untapped social networks with living wage jobs.

Through this Request for Proposal (RFP), Summit Academy invites qualified providers in our community to consider participating in this new venture. Summit is seeking partners with experience in effectively engaging unemployed, or under-employed people in our community and placing them into stable, living wage jobs. The specific duties of qualified partners include:

1. Recruit, assess, and coach Minneapolis residents
2. Provide training, skills building, and job supports so people with little to no employment history can prosper and thrive as workers
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Up to \$275,000 is available to fund this service from June 1, 2022 through December 31, 2023.

Email [RFP@saoic.org](mailto:RFP@saoic.org) for full RFP with submission details.  
RFP submissions are due no later than 5pm on May 26th 2022.

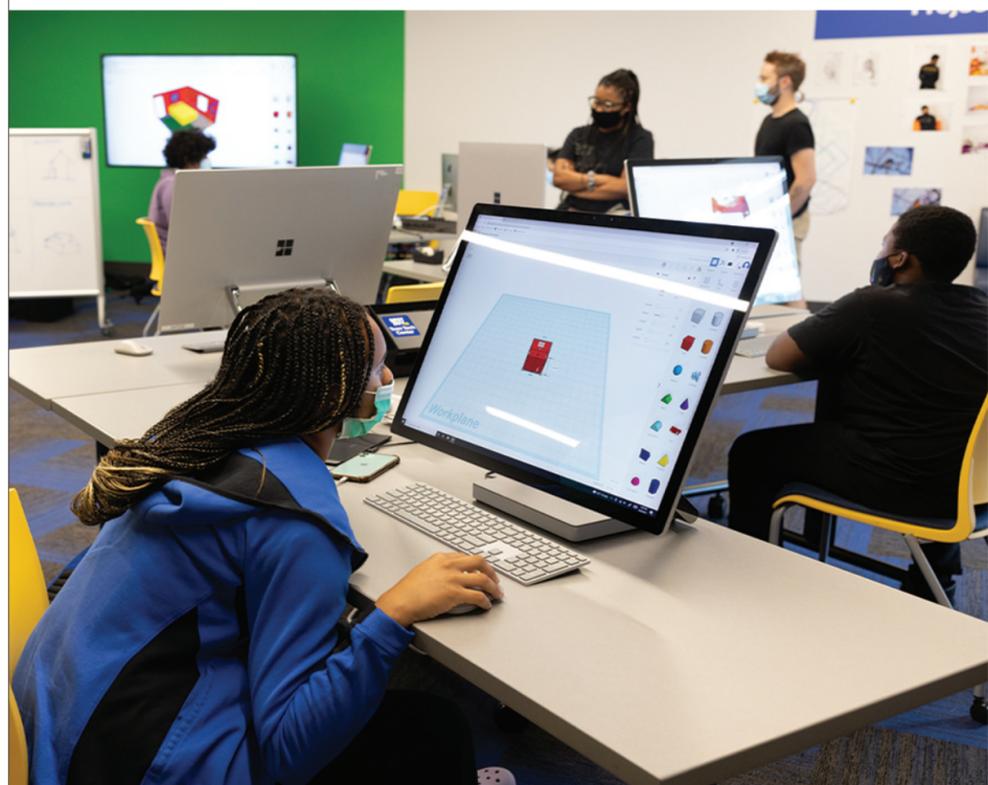
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NEWS

# Venture North Bike and Coffee peddles forward with new manager

By David Pierini, Editor

As a graduate of the Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge program, Kennis Littleton understands the power of a fresh start.

Littleton brings this appreciation to the Harrison neighborhood where he is the new manager of Venture North Bike and Coffee shop, which needs its own new beginning after being shuttered during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Already, Littleton has hired a new bike mechanic and opened the shop for tune-ups and bike sales. The coffeshop awaits a final city inspection before it can serve customers again. Yet, just a couple of days after a soft launch in early April, neighborhood residents were stopping by to express gratitude for its reopening.

Littleton had no java to sell, but was happy to offer free cups from his own pot of coffee.

"I have high hopes with the brand recognition and the sense of community the shop has built," said Littleton, 38. "I'm actively trying to make sure all the things people love about the shop stay in place. I can see how a few things can be done differently, but at the same time, we will stay true to its roots."

Redeemer Center for Life, a non-profit partner of Redeemer Lutheran Church, opened Venture North in 2011 to bring low-cost, rebuilt bikes to the neighborhood and create career pathways in the cycling industry for local youth.

Each year, the shop refurbishes, sells or donates hundreds of bikes, serves thousands of coffee drinks, and serves as a tune-up center for the neighborhood. It is BIPOC-owned and is the only bike shop on the Northside. The Redeemer Center for Life leadership team is especially proud of the shop's mechanic training program.

Littleton spent much of his youth on bikes. But his growing up in a broken home led him down a dark path of substance abuse. The birth of his daughter, Rina, in 2017 was an awakening for Littleton. Once he held her, he sought new roads from himself and his family.

"The Holy Spirit washed over me," he said. "I was sobbing. I was literally asking the Lord, why me? Why are you blessing me?"

Thirty days later, he sought recovery through Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge, a holistic treatment program. There, he was mentored by a pastor, Kevin Saunders, who recognized Littleton

possessed a natural business acumen. He was brimming with ideas.

After graduating from treatment, Littleton continued his recovery by living in a sober house. During this time, Littleton started his own hauling company and found a niche delivering appliances.

Saunders joined the executive team at Redeemer Center for Life in 2021 and when the organization began to ponder how to reopen the bike and coffee shop, he immediately thought of Littleton.

It seemed an ideal fit: A program with a track record of training neighborhood youth continuing on with a reliable leader and promising entrepreneur in Littleton.

"He's the perfect candidate," Saunders said. "He has an amazing business IQ. He has the drive and instincts. He has a genuine curiosity about the neighborhood and a personality that is authentic. He has a sincere interest in the uplift of this community."

Littleton has started a GoFundMe page to give the bike and coffee shop a quick

**Continued on page 23**



Kennis Littleton is the new operator of North Minneapolis' only bike shop. Photo by David Pierini

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Kameron Clay, who qualified for last year's state meet, ran the 200m at the first meet of the season on April 21. Photo by Ayanna Melander.

## Polar track team off to a running start

By Zelaun Black and Jaivon Hill, North High School

Fresh off a strong showing at last season's state track meet, North High is not only positioning itself for a return but with more Polars qualifying for the finals.

Five members of last year's boys team – Jory Peters, Kameron Clay, Jaren "JT" Sampson, Caylon Redd and Jaivon Hill – raced in the state meet.

Sprint coach Vonte Copeland believes the team is talented enough to qualify for several open events at state.

"Biggest goal this season is to stay consistent and have more people qualify in state for open events," Copeland said.

Through fundraising, the team was able to purchase \$60,000 in new equipment and the success of last year's team has attracted athletes from all grades.

Senior sprinter La'Quita Jamison-Travis is running the 4x100m relay and open 100. Jamison-Travis said of her goals, "I want to push myself and get faster, then make it to state in the process."

Junior Jayland Baker is in his second year with the team and hopes to return to the state meet. His running the open 100, two relay events. "I want to perfect my start, get faster and make it back to state," Bake said.

The Polars showed their hunger during the first of five

Continued on page 23

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# North students, alum angered by the CDD boundary changes

The Comprehensive District Design of Minneapolis Public Schools seeks to give every student in the city a quality education regardless of zip code, ethnicity or family income. Decades of policies and practices have led to racial disparities and one of the nation's worst achievement gaps.

The rollout of the plan has been controversial. To shift resources, administrators adjusted school boundaries and altered the pathways to city high schools.

By Asiah Bankhead and Ayanna Melander, North High School

Generations of Northsiders attended North High School and students today understand this legacy.

And that leaves people angry and frustrated about boundary changes that grew out of the district's Comprehensive District Design.

With students from the Southwest side

of Minneapolis projected to attend North, many are concerned these changes might affect the legacy and traditions that are a part of Polar Nation.

To make room for students with no family connection to North High, students who live north of Broadway, even if they live a few blocks from North, are now assigned to attend Henry, the rival high school.

The boundary changes started this year and some fear the new influx of students could contribute to gentrifying North High. This is happening at a time when the district is making long overdue renovations to our school.

Polar parents are also concerned about the new boundaries.

"I actually live North of Broadway. My daughter is a junior at North and there has been talk that she may not be able to attend North," said Polar PTA President Kelly Jackson. "How do I feel? Angry, tricked, but I will not just give in without a



North High students protested during a recent board meeting against the CDD boundary changes at the Davis Center. Photo by Taylor Butler

fight!

"That they never considered the impact that it would have on our life long Polars, who looked forward to attending North for high school. They have parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, brothers, sisters that are alumni and this has been

their dream. I'm fearful this will kill the Northside Pride. This is a place where our Black and Brown students can be themselves and embrace their culture unapologetically. They should allow every

Continued on page 23



Joe Davis offers prayers and poetry to guide graduating seniors in his new book *We Rise Higher*. Photo by David Pierini

## Joe Davis' poetry is the art of listening

By David Pierini, Editor

Joe Davis writes with his ears.

Davis listens deeply to the life that moves around and through him. He produces poetry and music that reminds us to love, to celebrate our authentic selves and to seek humanity to dissolve the polarization of our times.

"I feel like what I create is only as good as my ability to listen," Davis said. "Listen to my body, mind, spirit; listen to community; listen to my ancestors. How am I making enough space to listen. My art is a response to that question."

Davis, a Northside resident, has a well-tuned ear for new high school graduates in his first published book, *"We Rise Higher: Poems and Prayers for Graduates."*

At 35, Davis is well past this bridge, where youth takes a tentative first step toward adulthood, and has become a self-styled shaper of culture.

He is an educator, both as an artist-in-residence in local schools, and as the co-creator of JUSTmove, a racial justice education program that employs art. He is the frontman of the soul-funk group, The Poetic Diaspora, which he says will drop its first album soon. He is also the director of

a multimedia production program, The New Renaissance.

"We Rise Higher" couldn't come at a better time. The Class of 2022 did not enjoy a carefree four years. There was a pandemic that isolated youth from their peers for months at a time, the civil unrest that followed the police murder of George Floyd, and most recently in Minneapolis, classrooms shuttered for three weeks while teachers went on strike.

It's the type book he wishes he had as a high school senior.

"We're all trying to survive, right? We've been on the struggle bus," Davis said. "But

one of the things I would tell students is just take your time. Slow down. We're in a culture that oftentimes moves at this machine-like pace where we're just expected to go, go, go, move through work. It's all about the bottom line of what we're able to produce, instead of finding yourself, finding each other.

"That's what I do with poetry and music and that's what this book is about. In large part, it says, like who you are, as you are. All of who you are is beautiful and worthy of love."

"We Rise Higher" encourages self-care and what Davis calls communal-care. Each

poem or prayer is followed by a prompt he labeled "an Invitation." One simply encourages the reader to regularly set aside time to reflect, another suggests writing a letter to an important person to express gratitude for their influence. The pages nurture self-confidence, offer reasons for gratitude and help navigate heavy emotions.

The book ends appropriately with a "Dreamer's Manifesto" and a collective feeling that rising higher has begun.

So have book sales. Pre-orders sold out the first press run of the book and now more copies are available on Amazon or at [joedavispoetry.com](http://joedavispoetry.com).

The conversation below will not give away the contents of the book. But it does offer a glimpse of Davis' evolution as an artist. His wisdom should inspire the readers, especially a graduate-to-be, to pick up the book. The following is edited for brevity.

### The creative kid:

I always had a really big imagination. I wouldn't necessarily identify as an artist, but I was already creating like music and poetry. I was coming with my own stories. My sister would babysit me when my parents were at work. So we would just come up with these games or do arts and crafts.

So I had a lot of creativity in my life as a kid. But I never knew that this would be my career. I just did it because it was fun and that's what I loved to do.

When I was little, I got really sick with what was called atopic dermatitis. It is a severe skin condition and it was so bad that my skin could not protect me from outside infections. (Hospitalized for it), I reached for the nearest thing that could help me cope with what I was going through and that's when creating became this emotional outlet, and this way of expressing what was for me difficult to talk about. I could just pour my heart and soul into my notebook.

Even to this day I have stacks of notebooks full of drawing, poems, songs, I would make my own comic books... That was my way of working through my experiences. And I found a lot of healing in that. I found a lot of empowerment and sense of identity. I think that is what helped me become the artist I am today.

### Gentle molding:

Some of those early experiences were first posted by my family and were kind of catalyzed by just going through struggles. I had teachers and mentors who thought I was a strong writer and that I should share this with other people. People in my life pushed me gently and eventually, I started to blossom and open up.

I realized that it impacted other people, I was like, if I can just touch one person's life,

that's what I wanted. It was in a sense a calling for sure.

### Finding what is below the surface:

When I'm working with young folks, I'm just listening and being attentive. Even as a writer, I'm listening and asking myself what are the words that need to be spoken to the community at this moment in this time. So I lead with questions. I ask them about their favorite things to do. What do you love? What are you passionate about? What makes you come alive? All I'm doing is creating a space for them to get to know each other and build relationships. They discover parts of themselves that they had not yet known. So it's a lot of listening, a lot of affirming.

Some kids already know. You go into some classrooms and some students love theater, music, sports or whatever. Some students don't have any idea. They feel kind of lost and confused. And so I just let them know, Hey, it's ok. You've got time to figure it out. There's no rush. I don't have it all figured out. I let them know that. This fall about the journey.

### The power of gratitude:

For me, it can bring the temperature down that day. For me, gratitude is one of my self-care practices. When I feel overwhelmed or when I look out into the world, especially in today's day and age, there's so much bad news. We shouldn't even call it news. It should be called the worst things that are happening near you. We're inundated with all this negativity.

What I am able to do is create the space to pause and just breath and to be present and say, "Okay, what can I actually be grateful for with what is here, within me, around me, that I know is beautiful and is meant to give me life, give me health." That's when I have a deeper sense of roundedness and connectedness and centeredness.

### The power of art:

Music and poetry, in particular, has a way of taking the abstract and making it concrete and tangible. What I try to do through songs and through my poems is give examples of what's possible.

To me, poetry is participatory. It's not just about consuming the words. It's about tasking the words and how the words engage your senses. How do you embody the words and so I wanted to try and invite the reader into that in some way, shape or form through the book."

### Be with others:

All of who I am is because somebody loves me. I have people in my life reporting to me, my mom, my dad, my sister, even the larger community, teachers, mentors,

coaches who were consistent and kept showing up because they believed in me.

I want to remind and invite kids to connect and stay connected to each other. How do we practice community, the ways of being together? I think the world that we have now is because we haven't been intentional about all of our practices. The second we start to become conscious and aware and intentional in our practices, that's when we start to create more space for healing. What I would tell students is practice being you and being well and practice being in relationships. All of this work moves at the pace of relationships.

### Advice to survive a polarized world:

I have mentioned how important it is to listen. That, to me, really is a practice. It's a spiritual practice and a discipline. I invite people by saying, "how do we listen long enough to hear the humanity. How do we have the grace and the patience and the intentionality to listen to each other?" We're always going to have differences. When someone is dehumanizing you with their disagreements, that is the line that needs to be drawn, but aside from that, I think there's certainly ways to coexist. We have to figure out how to be a community or we're not going to survive.

How do you listen to someone and share in a way that makes sense to them? If you're not able to do that, you're not truly listening to them. You're just ready to respond. You're just speaking out of your ego. We get stuck in these spirals of emotional reactivity. Instead of pausing and reading and slowing down long enough to hear the humanity of another person, to hear the heart.

It's not easy. It's messy. It's complicated. It's uncomfortable. We're not always going to get it right. I think when we do, the fruit of it is really beautiful.

## Gather

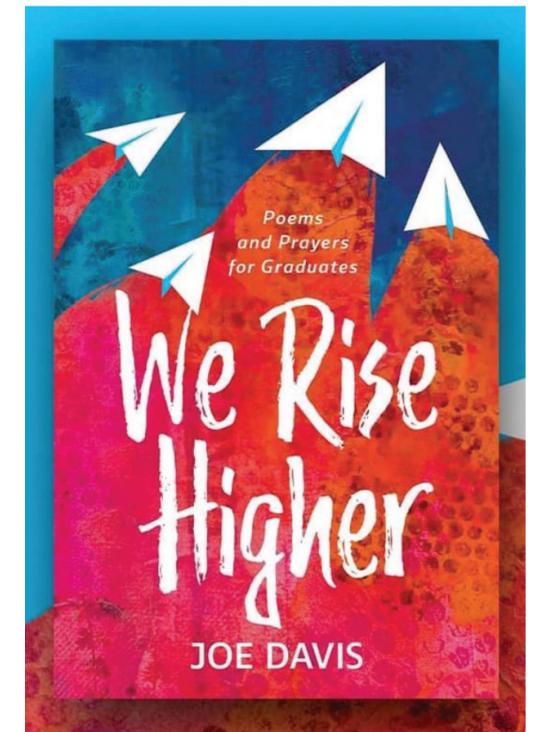
A poem you gather up what matters

Re-member to gather your selves,  
All the parts of you that have been forgotten and forsaken:  
Gather joy in your soul,  
gather wisdom in your spirit,  
gather peace in your mind,  
gather love in your heart,  
gather healing in your body.

Re-member to gather ourselves  
All the parts of us that have been forgotten and forsaken:

Gather your people,  
gather those who have been made invisible,  
gather those who have been made unheard,  
gather those who are weak and weary,  
gather those who are bound and broken.

Gather together,  
beyond want and need,  
hands stretched open, palms set free,  
to call and respond, to give and receive.



We Rise High is available on Amazon or at [joedavispoetry.com](http://joedavispoetry.com)

# North students protest extended school day

By Caleb Tietjen, Ayanna Melander and Asiah Bankhead, North High School

There is great inequity going on inside our school district.

There are two schools on the Northside that have been going to school 30 minutes longer every day than the other high schools in Minneapolis. Because of the strike, the district is making all schools go an extended 42 minutes each day to make up for time missed because of the strike.

Even though they do not need to make up anytime, North and Henry are still being forced to go to school longer than the Southside high schools.

More than 88 percent of the students at North High believe that they shouldn't be punished separately and differently than these schools. They believe they don't deserve to go all the way to 4:12 pm when other schools go to 3:42 pm. To North's students it is only fair they be on the same time table.

About 100 students responded to a

distributed survey.

Many people have been affected terribly by this time extension. Around 70 percent of the entirety of North High have confirmed that their mental health has taken a dive. People are feeling anxious, stressed, nervous, angry and aggravated like never before. People's mental health has been declining and students are feeling less and less inclined to go to school.

The students have some solutions. They propose a 3:42 pm dismissal like South, Southwest and Washburn high schools. This way, students will be more willing to go, as well as willing to learn. Just over 38 percent of North students are athletes whose practices and events have been delayed and rescheduled. Instead of track practice ending at its normal time of 5:15 pm, it now ends at 6:30 pm. This reduced the amount of time they spend on their studies, with family and friends and participating in extracurricular activities.

Roughly 39 percent of North's student body told us the extended schedule conflicted with after-school jobs. This isn't helpful

because now jobs are expected to take into consideration how their employees schedules have changed. This has caused issues and lost hours and income for students with jobs.

Many students from North and other high schools went to a recent school board meeting. As Ramiyah Jackson, North High student council president, and Alliyah Muhammad read a letter they sent the board, Director Jenny Arneson and Supt. Ed Graff were on their phones and didn't seem to be paying attention.

As the public comment period began, the audience was warned against making remarks to specific directors. Students did not speak up about what they perceived as a



North senior Khadija Ba speaking during a Davis Center protest. Photo by Ayanna Melander

lack of attention to avoid getting kicked out. The way we could solve all these problematic situations is if adults and those with people with more power in the school system would give students a voice in these matters. Give the students and the teachers a say. A lot of students expressed their concerns to the board but felt they were not heard.

## Polar Track Continued from page 4

regular-season meets on April 21 at Roosevelt High School. Highlights included first place finishes for the 4x100m relay team and Marcell Malone in the 400m run. A highlight from the meet was the boys 4x1 came in first and Marcello Malone came first in the 400m.

## Scholarships Continued from page 6

seniors took to their phones to call and text family, friends and take selfies with their letters explaining the scholarship.

The event has now forced Ike Hill to quickly rethink his post-graduation plans.

"My original plan was to take a gap year so that I wouldn't be far in debt," said Hill, who has narrowed his choice of colleges to three. "But now with this \$10,000, I have hope. This will definitely go toward books and everything I need to get situated."

## Richard Copeland Continued from page 11

2018 interview with North News, Copeland said, "I built the business organically. I drove the truck. I shoveled the dirt. I hammered the nail."

Life-long friend Bob Edmonson said the story is not far-fetched. "He found a ratty pickup, got some basic rakes and shovels and was going after these sod lane projects and other little weeny deals," Edmonson said. "It started to mushroom. He started buying a few more trucks, then a dump truck and so on."

Copeland was vigilant about growing his businesses especially when doors closed on him in a predominantly white field. He said he was even blacklisted and used to getting knocked down, but always getting up "to fight the good fight."

He even managed to have fun with the racial dynamics at play. The THOR name came about over beers with employees early on.

"I went to do an estimate and the people were surprised to see me coming through the door," Copeland said. "They thought they were going to see a Norwegian guy or a European guy. We were laughing and (they said), 'we should name the company THOR and surprise everybody when we show up.' The next morning, I got up and they had written THOR on the side of my pickup truck. It stuck. I guess I get the last laugh."

Copeland was a blend of spices: He was hard-nosed, brutally honest and prickly at times. He was also charismatic, funny, loyal and charitable, friends said. When pushed down, Copeland said getting back up was his best quality.

Edmonson said Copeland could have lived anywhere, but no place made him happier than North Minneapolis.

"He could've lived in a mansion on Lake Minnetonka, but he chose to stay with his people," Edmonson said. "His pride (in North Minneapolis) was almost immeasurable. It was taller than any of the buildings he built."

## Henry Fields Continued from page 13

DeVot, MPS' senior operations officer said, "It is our plan to bring forward projects for Henry during the (2026-2027) bond cycle."

Kennedy Rance, Henry High School junior, is a student representative on the Minneapolis Public Schools Board of Education. This is an advisory position with no voting privileges.

## Venture North Continued from page 15

restart with a goal of self-sustainability later this year.

He has what he calls a "mastermind group," five or six guys who coach him to tackle challenges, from spiritual to entrepreneurial.

"Before this journey that I'm on now, I never paid attention to birds chirping in the morning or the beauty of a sunrise," he said. "But when you slow down for a minute and take a step back, you realize there is something more going on here. So how can I play a part in it?"

## Blue Line extension Continued from page 16

The Met Council wants public input on the proposed route by May 18. File a comment at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RYMV3LT>

## CDD Boundary Changes Continued from page 18

student that lives in North Minneapolis to choose North if they so wish."

Lars Lindqvist, who taught 10-grade honors English at North, said he doesn't agree with the boundary changes.

"I'm not in support of that," he said. "I think the main reason is they are making a lot of changes to the school and were getting a lot of improvements that all of you deserved for so long. And it's unfair that by the time we get the improvements a lot of people who are like true Polars, (will not) get to enjoy that anymore."

Ninth-grader Tili Webster takes two buses from the south side to attend North High.

"I really like how it's just like a great community, and since the class sizes

are really small you get a lot of support from teachers and students, and I just feel welcome here," said Webster, who is one of 41 students who identify as white and travel a significant amount to come to North High.

While white students at North feel welcomed, not every white family is going to want their kids to attend school in North Minneapolis. A lot of the white folk who were supposed to come to North opted out. They reportedly left the district because they did not feel safe.

Senior Demetria Jones worries about North losing its community vibe.

"I don't think it would harm North to increase the enrollment but I don't think we should try to change the values of what our school stands for, which is community," Jones said. "Changing the boundaries for the people who go here isn't fair for peoples' brothers and sisters... Our schools name is North Community High School and it's the community of North Minneapolis."

"If you change the boundary lines and make other people not be able to go here that's from this community, that's not standing for what North is all about."

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