Gentle Light
Sammy McDowell
1976-2024

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North Minneapolis
Keeping families together
Ten Northside lawmakers authored milestone legislation that passed during the final weekend of session to protect families from being separated by the foster care system.

The African American Family Preservation Act is a first-of-its-kind bill that Gov. Tim Walz is expected to sign into law.

The bill establishes a new social service agency and court requirements for African Americans and other disproportionately represented children in the child protection system. If enacted, the bill would promote family stability and require minimum permanency outcomes.


The legislation seeks to promote family stability by establishing minimum standards to prevent the arbitrary removal of children from their families and improve permanency outcomes, including family reunification.

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The law would be implemented in Hennepin and Ramsey counties first to gather feedback before expanding it nationwide.

With bells on

Polar team among esports elite

Janny Xiong, Elizabeth Her and David Nguyen, members of the North High Esports team, placed in the top 12 recently at the Minnesota Varsity League State Tournament at St. Cloud University.

The threesome won one round in three of Super Smash Brothers Ultimate to place.

Local rep makes history

Rep. Esther Agbaje, whose district includes North Minneapolis, made state history during the recent legislative session.

Agbaje and Sen. Dayten Mohamud are the first Black women to chair a legislative conference committee meeting.

The DFIP lawmakers co-chaired a legislative conference committee convened to discuss the Tenancy Rights Bill. "It’s a tremendous honor to co-lead this committee with Senator Mohamed. Together, we’re breaking ceilings and shattering the status quo of leadership in the Minnesota Legislature," Agbaje said.

"We stand on the shoulders of giants – phenomenal Black women who paved the way."
The new Minneapolis Public Schools superintendent hire did not present herself as a cool, disconnected administrator. Instead, Dr. Lisa Sayles-Adams worked the room like a teacher, her ears forward as she slowly orbited tables full of people engaged in discussion.

Interested Northsiders got a chance to meet Sayles-Adams on May 6 at Bethune Community School, one of seven sessions for her to hear out parents, students, teachers and local organizations held over a few weeks.

Sayles-Adams took over a school district in crisis on Feb. 6. She said she would spend her first 100 days listening. Indeed, her ears have worked overtime.

Northsiders gather at Oak Park center to celebrate Foster Green Day

By Azhae’la Hanson, Reporter

Garden gurus and community members took to the dirt to celebrate the City of Minneapolis’s declaration of May 18 as Foster Green Day.

The day was commemorated in the backyard of the Oak Park Community Center and the headquarters of Project Sweetie Pie, the local grassroots urban farm organization led by Michael Chaney. Those who stopped by were greeted to a resource fair, tree planting, and a meal. Grow bags were given to residents to take home and start gardens in partnership with The Big Green Bus, a non-profit traveling the country to visit community organizations using food to champion healthier and more sustainable living.

Chaney took the stage to accept the honor of the day and discussed crucial figures in Project Sweetie Pie’s work. Youth, city officials, and PSP members were on the stage. Chaney introduced Divine Islam to show how gardening goes beyond the physical roots. The natural fruits of their labor come from the seeds themselves and the seeds planted in youth and their neighbors.

Divine was among the first youth cohort members of Project Sweetie Pie in 2011. At 13, she began with Project Sweetie Pie as her first job. After the tornado devastated North Minneapolis in 2010, she realized how devastating it was not to know how to grow her food. She said she was inspired to restore the greenery to the Northside, and it later inspired her career.

“IT clicked for me, the importance of growing your own food,” she said. “We have to eat.”

Last year, she was the school gardener for Minneapolis Public Schools and assisted over 40 school gardens.

“Shaniya Dixon and her father King October help shovel dirt into wheelbarrows to plant trees. October said he told his daughter that they were taking the soil and healing the Earth.” Photo by Azhae’la Hanson

Overheard at Bethune Community School

Here are some of the topics Bethune participants wanted Supt. Dr. Lisa Sayles-Adams to know to inform how she leads Minneapolis Public Schools. Feedback likely differed from site to site.

On the plus side:
• Good, dedicated teachers and ESPs who go the extra mile.
• The newest contracts make teachers and support staff feel valued.
• Schools creating a sense of belonging for everyone through literacy and multilingual programs.
• Student resilience in the face of constant changes.
• Improved transportation.

Needed improvements:
• An inequity of resources. Some schools have more programs than others.
• Problems retaining teachers of color.
• Families leaving for other districts.
• Stable funding

Continued on page 19
NORTH NEWS
May 31, 2024

Happy Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Month, Northsiders! I hope you have the chance to celebrate the brilliant, creative, and local. He was genuine, kind, and community member and friend, Sammy was bittersweet moments.

It’s with a heavy heart that we lost a true community member and friend, Sammy McCallon. Our office met with Matthew Hubsch, Supervising Attorney, and Patty Waltin, Community Legal Worker with Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid to discuss the new in-person legal aid clinic in the Hamline Neighborhood and their work helping people to access legal services. This clinic is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM at 3501 Cleveland Ave South.

Minneapolis City Council members LaTrisha Vetaw (Ward 4) and Jeremiah Ellison (Ward 5) were inaugurated in January 2022 and January 2018, respectively. We have invited them to keep in touch with the community through this monthly column in our newspaper.

Mitigation Project – The Surface Water and Stormwater Division plans to allow the buses to use Victory Memorial Drive instead of Shingle Creek Rd. Buses from the Metro Transit Park and Ride at 1501 Glenwood Ave., Suite 1, Willard (612) 673-2205. Our community is not only paying the salaries of the police but also making money off of the ongoing issues at 35th Ave North Flood.
A community picnic and a joyous church service allowed hundreds of mourners to bid goodbye to Sammy McDowell. He was celebrated with spoken tributes, soaring sermons, a sky full of balloons and gospel music. These were precisely the types of Northside events for which McDowell, the owner of Sammy’s Avenue Eatery on West Broadway Avenue, would be called on to serve food.

Friends and family said he was always feeding his community in some way, whether it be food for an empty stomach or with love and spiritual guidance to satiate the hunger of the soul. McDowell died on April 21 after collapsing during Sunday worship at Shiloh Temple International Ministries. He was 48.

At his funeral service on May 3, accents of yellow popped from the church finery, from boutonnieres on men’s lapels to flowy organza church hats on women. The yellow was chosen to honor McDowell’s abundant light, which will continue to glow long after his passing.

“Sammy was a light,” said Pastor Andre Dukes. “Yellow is bright; it is like the sun and gives life. Are you letting your light shine today?”

McDowell opened his sandwich and coffee shop in 2012, and it quickly became a spot where the community could gather. He was also a popular choice to cater community events. He mentor ed other young entrepreneurs and was known to feed people who could not pay and employ those who needed work.

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McDowell was working on plans to franchise the eatery, giving each person crucial to the operation of his restaurant the opportunity to run one of their own.

“The thing about Uncle Sammy is that everybody ate,” his nephew, Joseph Bard said, the picnic and balloon launch a few days after he passed. “Uncle Sammy represents the heart of the Northside. He wasn’t selfish with his knowledge. I like the sun and the life it gives ‘Sammy was a light’

Mourners embrace as they pay respects to Sammy McDowell before the start of his funeral service. Photo by David Pierini

Bishop Richard Howell leads a process of family and friends. Behind him: Gov. Tim Walz. Photo by David Pierini

Continue on next page...
Richard Howell said.

Shawnee Johnson said she met McDowell nine years ago as a patron and became a close friend. He noticed how she connected with other patrons and referred to her as Queen and joked that the patrons were her Queendom.

“But there was always a lesson in the way Sammy spoke,” she said. “He believed in me to do it anyway, but I was doing it anyway, but I never planned on doing it without him,” she said. “My only mission is to keep his legacy alive. That’s what I plan to do.”

McDowell’s restaurant manager, Eureka Johnson, took over the operation of the eatery. The shop reopened the next day after locking the eatery doors for the May 3 funeral.

McDowell’s sister, Shaawn-Dai McDowell, and restaurant manager Eureka Johnson accepted a bouquet of flowers on Tuesday afternoon while at Sammy’s Avenue Eatery. Community members and organizations stopped by the shop Tuesday to deliver condolences.

A mourner stopped by Sammy’s Avenue Eatery with a plant to remember McDowell. Photo by Ashia’e Hanson

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PILLSBURY UNITED COMMUNITIES
Your bus will arrive shortly.

Enjoy the art while you wait

By David Pierini, Editor

Art often originates from the creator’s playful whimes. However, Cameron Patricia Downey, a multidisciplinary artist from North Minneapolis, does not consider that enough.

For Downey, art is a public service, a value imprinted on them early on by mentors at Juxtaposition Arts.

Downey, 25, is having a full-circle moment. They are a JXTA faculty member, helping youth find and refine their artistic vision. Some of Downey’s art: photoraphic portraits of Northsiders, now hung in four Metro Transit bus shelters.

Their inspiration to serve was not necessarily taught in school. So, I feel really good to see people get excited about knowledge to students,” Downey said. “It’s a milestone in a distinct way,” Downey said. “Because of my time at JXTA as a mentor at JXTA graphics lab.

They recently residency at Walker Art Center allowed them to curate part of its film collection and work with youth. Downey also recently styled and co-directed a music video for Brooklyn hip-hop artist THANANH and had work exhibited at London’s Royal Academy of Arts, Kunsthalle Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin (2021); Engage Projects, Chicago (2022) and as part of Mishawaka Contemporary’s Off Site program (2022).

Last year, Downey led JXTA students in a found-object art project exhibited in the gallery in the art’s new building.

Students created sculptures from discarded objects found while walking up and down West Broadway Avenue.

“arresting works of art to reach her collage, according to the artist’s bio, they move freely between photography, film, and sculpture, which allows them to “mediate the concepts and bounds of world-building and survival artistry through Black, fantastical, and precarious spaces and forms.”

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Students created sculptures from discarded objects found while walking up and down West Broadway Avenue.

“I wouldn’t say I’m the best teacher; I’m still pretty new, but I love passing on knowledge to students,” Downey said. “It feels really good to see people get excited about art. That’s not something that is necessarily taught in school. So, I feel really proud of this ticket to expand peoples’ education.”

The halls in which the work hangs serve as the walking track at the center, allowing viewers to develop strong impressions with each passing. Through the center is a perfectly placed picture of the mother as they considered the concepts and bounds of world-building and survival artistry through Black, fantastical, and precarious spaces and forms.

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“The exhibit covers a spectrum of mediums and interpretations on women artists,” Broich is the oldest of the artists and, as the walking track at the center, allowing viewers to develop strong impressions with each passing. Through the center is a perfectly placed picture of the mother as they considered the concepts and bounds of world-building and survival artistry through Black, fantastical, and precarious spaces and forms.

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It would be impossible to count the number of North Minneapolis residents who are Chicago transplants or have strong enough ties to make the Windy City feel like a second home.

So, when a new restaurant offers tastes of Sweet Home Chicago on its menu, they best be served with certain bonafides.

Minne’s, 1825 Glenwood Ave., had an official grand opening May 4, inviting residents to “Come Slide with Us.” Chicago native Cordell Richardson wanted to play off the name of his newish state of residence and to the size of the tasty top-hat sliders served with fries or tots.

But two other menu items will pique the interest of those who boast Big Shoulders. Minne’s offers Maxwell Street Polishes (short for Polish sausage) and Chicago Hot Dogs (step away from the ketchup!).

“So, did Richardson get the Chicago classics right?”

“He got it right,” said Ray Walker, a Chicago native. “The onions are right; the snap of the Polish is right. Peppers, mustard, no ketchup. Simple. I’m used to the original Maxwell on Roosevelt Avenue, so having a Maxwell Polish outside of that area...This is it.”

Minne’s, which started as a food truck and is located in a part of the city lacking sit-down restaurants, is the second Northside food truck to open a brick-and-mortar location this year. In April, the owners of the Food Bank opened an eatery on Lyndale Avenue.

Richardson had a dream but no specific plan to open a restaurant. His career in food was going well with the food truck and a 15-year career in food services for Hy-Vee.

Living nearb y on Morgan Avenue, Richardson routinely drove by the vacant spot, once the home of Wendy’s House of Soul. But one day, he took notice and got in touch with the building owner. With a full kitchen, he discovered it was pretty much turn-key ready.

Richardson was knighted brave when he began working for Hy-Vee making pizzas. The food court director gave him in Richardson.”

Richardson was knighted brave when he began working for Hy-Vee making pizzas. The food court director gave him a go-to order. She quickly corrected him.

“Taste it,” she said.

The menu is small though Richardson likes to add a special. He像个 customers recently. Customers worried about gluten can order bowls, which consists of meat sans bun on top of fries or tots.

Richardson, true to his Hy-Vee training, has his kitchen set up so that everything is close. He insists every item takes seven minutes to prepare and in the days before opening, he timed his cooks and adjusted grill settings to achieve this. He still works at Hy-Vee but is at the restaurant most evenings to close.

There is a pay-it-forward board near the cash register on which receipts are tacked. Customers purchase extra items so that someone hungry and without a way to pay can grab one of the receipts, present it, and eat.

“We want to make sure everybody has the same luxuries. We turn no one away. That’s just how I was brought up.”

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Northside foundation puts youth in charge

By Kiya Darden, North High School

A leading foundation in North Minneapolis is turning over some of its funding decisions to a group of teens. The Jay & Rose Phillips Foundation started the Northside Youth Funders Group (NYFG) in 2023, which just finished its second round of applications. NYFG is a hybrid grant that targets organizations that bring social, economic, and educational opportunities to youth in North Minneapolis.

Over the course of two days, the group of students went through seventy proposals from community organizations and divided out a sum of $170,000 to twelve groups. Putting the decision into the hands of youth was an intentional design from NYFG’s vision to redistribute wealth, decentralize power and put economic control into the hands of the Northside.

“The best people to know what young people, especially Northside young people, would be interested in are their peers,” said Joel Luedtke, the youth board’s program director.

Rabya Hassen, a group facilitator, said the youth board could be used to eliminate opportunity gaps for students of color that the community sees year after year. “Youth on the board is an essential part of the Northside. More and more adults say their youth are future leaders, but I believe that you all are our leaders right now,” Hassen said to the group of students.

Advising from the opportunities and benefits provided by the programs that the grant funds, the Northside youth serving on the board gain valuable experience.

“The last time I did this was right around the time we were writing our final essays for English, and I realized that I was proofreading the exact same way they told us to here,” said youth board member and North High student Sawyer Erstad.

Diani Reynolds, also a North student and youth board member, said this experience inspires him to want more for his community.

“Every school and career choices are a little different from this, but I think this is something I can carry on with me my entire life. I like the idea of constantly wanting to improve my community and create opportunities for other people because that’s an important thing,” Reynolds said.

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