Rubber duckies will race to the finish

By Francesco Marraffa, Board Chair

The big day is getting close — the 1st Annual Minnehaha Creek Duck Race on April 24! The race begins near the Bunny statue at Portland and the Parkway, and hopefully the ducks obey the rules and head downstream. There will be free snacks and beverages for kids at the start, a FRNNG booth for any last-minute duck entries, as well as stands and activities throughout the route, which ends near Cedar Ave. Please find the latest information at frnng.org.

One thousand ducks are currently being “hatched” and will arrive soon at the Minnehaha Creek Duck Training Camp. The training for said ducklings will be extreme. At times, the effort will feel like they’re swimming up a creek without a paddle, but it will be explained that they

Project studies our wild neighbors

By Patricio Miller, Communications Committee

Last spring, when the pandemic had us confined to our homes and neighborhoods, the appearance of several fox families and their cubs raised our spirits, piqued our curiosity and gave parents a made-to-order science class for their kids.

We’re not the only ones interested in our wild neighbors. The University of Minnesota’s Twin Cities Coyote and Fox Project (TCCFP) has been observing them, as well. The project is mapping habitat, assessing diet and measuring the prevalence of disease for foxes and coyotes across the Twin Cities metro area. It’s funded by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

“There haven’t been any published studies since the 1970s,” says Nick McCann, project manager. “Studying foxes and coyotes will help us understand how they use urban settings, provide new information to wildlife managers and demystify them for area residents.”

To gather information, Nick’s team of James Forester, Meg Crafi, Geoff Miller and Katie Worsley-Tonks rely on sightings by neighbors to help locate fox families. They then set out live traps, with lures of favorite fox foods and stinky bait, in the hopes of capturing a fox so they can check the individual’s health and fit it with a GPS locator collar.

“Our goal is to learn about them, not bother them,” McCann says, “We go to great lengths to ensure everything we do is safe for the animals, we follow U of M veterinary protocols and are permitted by the state.”

After hanging around our neighborhoods throughout the spring and summer, the foxes seemed to disappear. But, McCann says, just because we don’t see them, doesn’t mean they aren’t here, going about their lives and keeping the rabbit and mouse population under control, usually at night. In early January, NextDoor lit up once again with fox sightings. So keep your eyes peeled, and maybe you’ll be lucky enough to spot one of our wild neighbors in its gorgeous rusty-red winter coat.

For more information, visit the TCCFP website, tccfp.umn.edu. If you sight a fox, you can share information and photos on iNaturalist, inaturalist.org/projects/tccfp. To stay abreast of the
Fun fox facts

- **Weight:** 10 to 12 pounds, about the same as a medium-sized dog.
- **Territory:** One to two square miles.
- **Home:** Den dug in the ground to provide a safe place to have their pups and a cool area to sleep and store food. A den can be up to 40 feet long.
- **Family:** Litters of two to 10 pups, which become fully independent at seven months. Foxes like to hang out with family members; in a group, they’re called a mesh or skulk.
- **Agility:** Can sprint up to 30 miles per hour and leap 15 feet in a single bound – farther than a kangaroo.
- **Eyesight:** As good as a cat’s.
- **Favorite foods:** Small animals, such as lizards, voles, rats, mice, chipmunks, rabbits, birds, fruits, bugs and seeds. What they don’t eat, they bury and come back later to snack on.

FRNNG $1.00 Campaign is a success!

By Stearline Rucker, staff

Six years ago, the City of Minneapolis (NCR Department), announced at a FRNNG board of directors meeting that the city was developing a plan for all neighborhood associations to fund programs. Beginning in 2015, neighborhood associations would not be able to cover certain program costs including events, food and beverages that are outside the scope of restricted services and be reimbursed by the city. The $1.00 Campaign was developed by FRNNG in November 2015 to cover these costs.

The goal for the 2020 $1.00 Campaign was $2,500, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. FRNNG is pleased to announce that residents and businesses raised over $7,037!

We’d like to thank all our residents and businesses who gave so generously. If you didn’t have an opportunity to mail in your donations, we are still accepting. Please mail to FRNNG, 1620 East 46th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55407.

Rubber duckies will race to the finish, cont’d. from page 1

just need to work hard and go with the flow on the big day!

The training camp isn’t free, so we’re looking for duckling sponsorship! Sponsoring a duck costs as little as $2.50 (If you prefer your duck to receive supplemental training or purely organic food, you can donate more). Each duck is a clone with only a numeric difference printed on its bum. If your duck somehow wins or comes in one of the leading positions, there will be prizes. There are also prize packages for local schools for the leading School-Sponsored Collegiate athlete ducks. Local businesses will be taking part — watch for promotional posters or mock ducks in their windows for more details on how to sponsor an entry through an online system or in the store.

We’re still confirming the booths and local business involvements; please reach out if you would like to help or be involved. Thank you to the Minneapolis Fire Department for confirming they’ll be on hand to catch any over-zealous ducks trying to escape to freedom. Be assured no ducks will be harmed in the creation of this day.

Please join us at this fun event for the whole family!
President’s letter

Welcome to President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris! As an immigrant, the American election process is still new to me. It was fascinating to be a part of this election and to witness this memorable inauguration day. The recent months highlighted that we live in times of constant change, with information rapidly changing hands and many mediums to distract us.

Distraction is something I will dwell on for this article, unless of course I get sidetracked! Getting through a conversation without looking at a cell phone is hard at times — but how did we get to this place? It’s important to be reminded that nothing is more important than being present in the moment. Mindful interactions with friends, family or neighbors are far more meaningful than mindless scrolling on devices that are designed to distract and addict us. Have a conversation with your loved ones about making small changes to set boundaries with your devices. By removing electronic distractions, I have been able to read books (They’re like e-books but with pages!); check out Breath by James Nestor — fascinating!

As we embark on a new year with a new government, think about what small changes we can make that will ripple out and make great differences around us with our families, friends, neighbors and communities. Change is good — it takes time to get used to, but most of the time change is implemented with improvement in mind.

¡Bienvenido Presidente Joe Biden y Vice Presidente Kamala Harris! Como inmigrante, el proceso electoral de los Estados Unidos es todavía un tema nuevo para mí. Ha sido fascinante ser parte de las elecciones y ser testigo de ese día tan memorable en la inauguración. Los últimos meses nos han demostrado que vivimos en tiempos de transiciones con cambios constantes de liderazgo y con mucha tecnología que nos mantienen distraídos de la realidad.

Esta distracción es algo en lo que me detendré a discutir en este artículo, ¡a menos que, por supuesto, me desvíe del tema! A veces es difícil mantener una conversación sin mirar el teléfono celular, pero ¿cómo hemos llegado a este lugar? Es crucial recordar en ocasiones que nada es más importante que estar presente en el momento. Las interacciones consientes con amigos, familiares o vecinos y aquellas mucho más significativas que el presionar la pantalla del celular sin pensar la cual están diseñados para distraernos y convertirnos en adictos. Habla con tus seres queridos sobre cómo hacer pequeños cambios para establecer límites con sus dispositivos. Al eliminar la distracción electrónica, he podido leer libros (son como libros electrónicos, pero con páginas). Mi libro Breath de James Nestor, ¡fascinante!

Mientras nos embarcamos en un nuevo año con un nuevo gobierno, me gusta pensar en los pequeños cambios que podemos hacer que propaguen y hagan grandes diferencias a nuestro alrededor con nuestras familias, amigos, vecinos y comunidades. El cambio es bueno, a veces nos lleva tiempo acostumbrarnos, pero la mayoría de las veces el cambio se implementa mentalizándonos en mejorar.
11th-Ward update

Jeremy Schroeder, Council Member

Greetings, Field Regina Northrop neighbors!

A new year is upon us. While we still face tremendous uncertainty about the many challenges we’re enduring together, I remain heartened by the way the folks in our community continue to show up for each other. It’s still important that we protect our families and each other by wearing masks when we go out and washing our hands often. It’s still important that we get takeout and buy gift cards to local businesses as we’re able to do so. And, it’s still important that we find creative ways to stay connected to one another and our community at large — even if we can’t physically come together quite yet.

Due to publication deadlines, I’m writing this note to you more than a month before you’ll read it. If we’ve learned anything over the past year, we’ve learned just how hard it can be to predict what’ll happen from one week to the next, much less one month to the next. I remain hopeful that new leadership at the federal level will better support our efforts locally to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, provide support to businesses and families, and provide the City of Minneapolis a strong platform to realize our community’s shared values.

While it may seem like our city is far removed from the federal government, we depend on the president and Congress for financial resources and critical programs that serve Minneapolis residents. We also depend on them not to stand in the way of the work we’re leading on locally — like taking climate action, providing homes for everyone, supporting immigrant and refugee neighbors, reviving our economy, and tackling systemic racism. We have a lot of work yet to do on these fronts, but we’re better positioned now to make real progress and build a Minneapolis that works for everyone.

COVID-19 vaccines continue to be on our minds, and it’s great to see them become more widely available all the time. Here at the city, we’re working closely with partners at the state to ensure everyone in our community can get the doses they need. Our health department’s timelines for vaccinating the public are based on vaccine availability, which at the time of this writing, is far outmatched by demand for the vaccines. While you wait for your vaccine doses, free COVID-19 testing continues to be available — no insurance required. You can visit one of many community testing sites for a free saliva test or request an at-home test kit, which is also free and available to all Minnesotans. To find the latest information from the Minnesota Department of Health, including free testing options and opportunities to get the vaccine, visit health.state.mn.us.

Another key issue in our community is public safety. The City Council unanimously passed a resolution last year, which was also signed by the mayor, committing us to improve our public safety system. In our 2021 budget, the City Council approved investments in violence prevention, recognizing the importance of addressing the root causes of crime and avoiding harm before it happens. In addition, we scaled up funding for specialized responses to mental health and non-emergency calls. By shifting non-emergency and mental health responses to other qualified responders, we’ll ensure better outcomes and free up Minneapolis Police Department officers to respond to the most urgent calls and violent crime. It’s important that we unburden police from responding to certain calls that can be appropriately addressed by other trained professionals.

As part of our commitment to create a more equitable and just public safety system, the City Council agreed to welcome input from any community member who wishes to participate. The city has already begun to host public meetings and offer resources for folks to host their own conversations about the future of public safety in Minneapolis and will continue to provide opportunities for community members to engage on this issue throughout the spring and summer. To catch up on the work we’ve done so far and see ways you can get involved, visit minneapolismn.gov/community-safety.

This is just a snapshot of the work I’m doing to carry forward our shared values in your city government. To get regular

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David K. Porter
More than 30 years experience
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Greetings, Field Regina Northrop Neighbors!

By Steffanie Musich, Commissioner 5th District, Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Board

Greetings Field Regina Northrop neighbors!

Changes to park operations related to the coronavirus are ongoing as knowledge about the virus and how it is spread continues to evolve. The park board’s pandemic response team works closely with the Minneapolis Health Department, Minneapolis Office of Emergency Management and the Minnesota Department of Health, which is leading the statewide response. Visit minneapolisparks.org/coronavirus for details about the park’s response to the virus and where you can also subscribe to updates to be made aware of changes as they occur.

Park program offerings are expanding as Spring nears. You can search for park programs near you via an interactive map or by activity type by visiting minneapolisparks.org/activities_events/ and selecting Browse All Activities.

The Minnehaha Creek Master Plan was approved by the board of commissioners in 2020, and $1.2 million dollars is available to begin implementing the plan in 2021, with guidance from the community being sought on where those investments should be made. Planning continues for Hiawatha Golf Course, and a new playground opened this fall at Phelps Park, with construction continuing this year on the new wading pool and athletic field enhancements. Learn more about these projects on their project page at minneapolisparks.org/current_projects/. You can also subscribe to updates.

My newsletter, the 5th District Dispatch is a great resource for more frequent updates about the parks that I send out once or twice a month to help keep my constituents informed. You can subscribe at http://cepur.com/QZ_9.

Bergstrom Tax: Taking ‘taxing’ out of filing taxes for more than 35 years

By Patricia Miller, Communications Committee

Most people consider preparing and filing their taxes a taxing annual chore. But for more than 35 years, they’ve been able to turn that chore over to Bergstrom Tax Service. Launched by Margie Bergstrom in 1984, this local business still operates by her philosophy: “Do tax preparation right, so clients pay all they should by law — and not a dime more.”

Margie wasn’t just a tax preparer, she was an Enrolled Agent, which requires a high level of tax-law knowledge and allowed her to represent clients with the IRS through the appeal process. In 1991, Margie’s tax preparation business outgrew the Bergstrom home on 10th just south of Minnehaha Creek and moved into its current location at 1529 East 46th Street.

This thriving practice serves a diverse clientele in Field Regina Northrop, across the metro area and out of state. Clients’ income ranges from low to seven figures and everything in between. From the beginning, Bergstrom Tax also specializes in people who are self-employed, whether full time or with a small business on the side, as well as those with rental property clients’ questions and helping find answers to their tax issues.

“As the practice grew, so did the Bergstrom team. After leaving the pharmaceutical sales world, Margie’s husband, Bill, studied to become a tax preparer and started seeing clients in the mid-90s. Shortly after, nephew, Brian, came on board. And seven years ago, son, David, joined the team. Jim, Tes and Dave have been with the business a number of years, and more recently, Ryan, Mark, Sharon and Kathleen became Bergstrom employees.

In 2015, the firm was rocked by Margie’s unexpected death. Despite this devastating loss, they’ve continued to provide highly personalized service, gladly answering "We still follow Margie’s lead and refer back to the way she did things," says Bill. “Despite efforts to simplify our tax system, it’s still complex. If you have one W-2, it’s pretty easy to do your own taxes, but as soon as you have a family, buy a home, start a business or send your kids to college, it becomes increasingly difficult.”

Bergstrom Tax Service still takes on new clients, and their on-one personalized service has been adapted to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions. But just as they’ve done for more than 35 years, the Bergstrom team helps make the tax season less taxing. Find out more at bergstromtax.com.
Outside exercise is enjoyable, connects us to our community

By Unny Nambudripad, Regina neighbor

All year round, I casually train for triathlons and enjoy the outdoors in our neighborhood. I often run with friends or swim and chat with neighbors at Lakes Nokomis and Harriet. I appreciate feeling alive, full of vigor, breathing the fresh air and feeling the rain, sun, snow, wind and stillness. I’m grateful to have the physical abilities to enjoy these experiences. I recognize that as a cis man I feel safer than many women and nonbinary folks, since they are more likely to be harassed or assaulted than I am.

I’ve completed two triathlons in my life, in 2015 and 2019. In my first triathlon, a kid spectator held up their hand for a high five, and I gave it. Later that day, I thought, “This is not something I would have done when I competed as a runner when I was a teenager!” In those years, I thought little of fitness, the spiritual or psychological benefits (although I did gain much in that regard) and focused entirely on getting faster and competing.

Most of my bicycle “training” is done while commuting. I ride to friends’ homes, to work in the old pre-pandemic days or when doing errands. I’m glad to minimize my negative impact on air quality, noise pollution, climate change and harming animals — I’m less likely to injure or kill an animal while biking than by driving a car. But the best part is the occasional smile I get when somebody appreciates my singing (I ignore the scowls at my loud singing out of tune!).

Now I do the triathlon primarily as a celebration of life, not to compete and have the fastest time. But I also want to do my best, and I train so I can go faster. It’s a balance. During my 2019 triathlon, I gave high fives with enthusiasm, I also cheered on fellow athletes, especially during the run, where I felt most confident. But I also raced as fast as I could, and I was happy to have improved significantly.

I appreciate running as a way to de-stress, meditate and center myself, and swimming in the lakes as a way to enjoy and connect with nature. Despite the loud planes overhead in Lake Nokomis (more so in the old days), I feel a sense of serenity as though I am far from civilization. Sometimes I run with a friend, and we’re able to have a long conversation and not notice we’re running. I marched and protested against racism in the uprising last year, and organized my fellow South Asians. Running provided an opportunity to cope and reflect through these tumultuous times.

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Salvation Army opens shelter for homeless women at St. Joe’s

By Steve Date, Communications Committee

The Twin Cities Salvation Army opened an emergency housing shelter for women in the St. Joseph’s facility in late December. It offers up to 30 beds and is staffed by Salvation Army employees.

This shelter is an extension of the Salvation Army’s Harbor Light Center, which houses both men and women. They chose to open a women-only facility when they needed to expand. “Many women have expressed they didn’t want to be in a shelter where they’re co-located with men,” said Trish Thacker, director of the Harbor Light Center. Until a permanent home is found, the St. Joe’s space allows them “to help women in an environment that provides a high level of safety, solitude and service.”

Catholic Charities was glad to help the Salvation Army, says Wendy Underwood, vice president, Catholic Charities. Hennepin County had shifted to a family- and home-based model of caring for children by 2020, so St. Joseph’s Home for Children was phased out of the facility last July. “We had this space,” and Hennepin County reached out for support for a temporary location,” said Wendy. “It’s very good that we’re in a spot to help these women in need and help this program find its footing. It’s good to see the lights on again in those rooms.”

Catholic Charities is also still operating its Hope Street program onsite, which provides emergency shelter and transitional housing for up to 28 older youths, 18 to 22 years of age. The organization is in the process of deciding the long-term future of the St. Joseph’s site, under the leadership of new CEO Michael Goar, whose resume includes interim superintendent of the Minneapolis Public Schools.

“We own the building and the property,” says Wendy. “We’re working internally through our next steps, and we’re looking forward to connecting with the neighborhood and having that community conversation. We’re very grateful for our deep history and partnership with the neighborhood.”

Women in need of shelter should contact Hennepin County Adult Shelter Connect at 612-248-2350 for more information. Find out more about Catholic Charities programs at 612-204-8500.
Masks 101: 7 tips for helping your kids adapt

With kids returning to sports and the classroom, they’re required to wear masks. If your child is mask hesitant, here are seven tips for helping them adapt.

1. Explain why. Use positive, easy-to-understand language such as, “Many people are sick right now and wearing a mask will protect you from germs.”

2. Let’s pretend. Integrate wearing masks into play, such as dressing up as a doctor, nurse or veterinarian.

3. Start with familiar clothing or favorite characters. Turn a scarf or bandana that your child already wears into a mask. Choose purchased masks featuring characters like superheroes, cartoons or animals.

4. Get creative. Let your child decorate their mask with crayons or markers. If you’re making a cloth mask, have them pick the fabric, color or pattern.

5. Stuffed animals and dolls need masks, too. Put a mask on your child’s favorite stuffed animal or doll as a reminder that we’re all in this together.

6. Practice makes perfect. Have your child practice these simple steps: Hold the mask, put it against your face (covering nose and mouth), secure the elastic.

7. Take a picture. Ask friends and family members to take selfies of themselves in masks and send them to your child. Or arrange a virtual get together so everyone can show off their best masks.

These tips are from Behavioral Interventions and Solutions, Inc. Visit their website biasbehavioral.com to download them as a pdf in English or Spanish.

Outside exercise is enjoyable, cont’d. from page 6

These activities have been well-suited for the pandemic. It is relatively low risk to spend time outside, alone or with one or two other people. Being outside and exercising also helps boost my immune system. I am glad to see so many more people outside this year in our neighborhood!

Unny Nambudiripad is a 14-year resident of the Regina neighborhood and enjoys triathlon training, advocating for nonhuman animals and singing while he bikes.

Fun Kids Zone!! Zona de Niños Divertidos

Welcome to our newest addition to the FRNNG newsletter! This space is dedicated to our kids and their creative minds. We hope to fill this space with imagination and fun, including activities such as art contests, scavenger hunts, and word searches in our future additions. In order to make this the best it can be, we’d love to have a someone such as a bilingual parent or youth representative from our community help manage this corner and fill it with fun, flare, and opportunities. Please reach out to FRNNG@FRNNG.org if you’d like to help.

Bienvenidos a las noticias de FRNNG. Este espacio está dedicado a los chicos y sus mentes creativas. Esperamos llenar este espacio con imaginación y diversión, incluyendo actividades tales como concursos, cacería de objetos, y búsqueda de palabras en futuras ediciones. Para que esta iniciativa sea la mejor, nos encantaría tener a alguien como un padre bilingüe o un representante joven de nuestra comunidad para ayudar a manejar esta esquina y llenarla de diversión, chispa y oportunidades. Por favor, contáctese con FRNNG@FRNNG.org si desea ayudar.
Everyday racism: Overcoming bias and microaggressions

By Patricia Miller, Communications Committee

Racism can be overt, like hanging a noose outside a Black-owned business or it can be unintentional, like asking a person of color, “Where are you really from?”

Unintentional or everyday racism stem from bias, privilege and microaggressions.

• Bias is the opinions or judgments we hold about a person or group of people without any evidence to confirm or contradict that idea. Biases can paint someone in a positive or negative light — and we all have them. They come from a natural inclination to organize people into groups with common traits. They’re often formed and supported by the millions of images we consume and become the norm. Failure to see and correct our own biases can cause a lot of harm.

• Privilege is the unearned social, political, economic and psychological benefits of groups with institutional or structural power. Examples of these groups are males, whites, heterosexuals, Christians, the able-bodied, middle class or English speakers.

• Microaggressions are the result of bias. They’re the verbal and nonverbal slights and insults that remind marginalized people that they’re “outsiders” living in the dominant culture. Whether intentional or not, the accumulation of daily microaggressions can have a lasting impact. Especially for people of color, these are everyday reminders that stereotypes are more important than the individual.

Some examples of microaggressions include:

• Making comments like, “You speak good English.” “When I look at you, I don’t see color.” “Everyone can succeed in this country if they work hard enough.”

• Mistaking a person of color for a service worker or ignoring them at a store counter while serving the white person in line behind them.

To overcome our own biases and privilege, we have to start by recognizing and questioning them. Seeking diverse media sources, whether books, podcasts, TV shows/movies or social media, can help us educate ourselves.

Each one of us has the power to prevent the harm of microaggressions by slowing down and being more aware of the impact of our words on the person in front of us. We can also disrupt a microaggression in progress by asking clarifying questions like, “What do you mean?”

Educating ourselves about racism and examining our own bias and privilege can help us catch microaggressions before we commit them. To learn more about racism and racial justice consider attending a virtual workshop offered by the YWCA of Minneapolis, ywcamps.org/racial-justice.

Just grow it!: Tips for container veggies

By Jennifer Renselbrink, Northrop neighbor

Interest in vegetable gardening skyrocketed when people were stuck at home last spring. Since we’re still stuck at home a while longer, why not try to grow something edible for yourself this year?

One of the best aspects of vegetable gardening is that it can easily be scaled — you don’t have to be crazy like me! If you’d like to dip your toe in, growing a few things in pots is a great way to start.

One challenging aspect of vegetable gardening here in Field Regina Northrop is that many of our yards tend to be shady. Happily, there are options that only need a few hours of sun — four to six hours of sunshine should be enough for these plants. Since all of them are grown for their leaves, not their flowers or fruit, they don’t require additional fertilization beyond what’s in the bag, if you buy regular potting soil. It’s always best to use a container that has a drainage hole in the bottom.

**Lettuce**

I love growing my own lettuce, because I can pick precisely how much I want, and the fresh taste is better than store bought. With its shallow root system, lettuce doesn’t need a particularly large container, but it will need to be watered daily if your container is shallow. It also dislikes heat, so plant in early April and plan to use it up by the end of June. The plants can handle a light frost.

**Collard greens/kale/chard**

Sturdier greens, such as chard and kale, take a lot longer to reach maturity than lettuce, but they grow just as happily in part-shade conditions. They’ll need a slightly bigger pot — the larger and deeper your pot, the less frequently you’ll have to water. I sow my greens as seeds in early April and harvest starting in late summer. However, they can also be purchased as seedlings, and you can start picking individual leaves after only two to three weeks.

**Herbs**

Plenty of herbs will thrive in part shade, including oregano, thyme and mints. If you purchase seedlings, you can start

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Some bicycling and beer prevail

By Sue Filbin, Northrop neighbor

Of the many things that COVID-19 has affected, bicycling and beer aren’t among them. Bike shops and liquor stores have remained open, and recreational bicycling is thriving. But for one enterprising Northrop neighbor, Jason Lardy, part of his involvement with bicycling was cancelled due to the pandemic: the 9th Annual Southside Sprint Bike Race.

Jason’s interest in bicycling coincided with the launch of his home-based business, Nomad Marketing, in 2007. When Jason’s friend, a board member of the Nature Valley Grand Prix pro bike race, invited him to volunteer as marketing director, Jason “fell in love with the sport of cycling.” A year later, Jason discovered the velodrome, a short, steeply banked oval bicycle racing track, often made from wood. “That hooked me into cycling like no other activity ever has before — pedaling a bike with only one gear and no brakes, at a 43-degree angle — that was one of the biggest rushes of my life.”

Bicycling becomes local

Fast forward a couple of years. Jason and his business partner, Andy Dahl, had a vision to develop an event like the Grand Prix, but for the local racing community. They approached Mike Kniewitz, owner/operator of Bikes and Pieces and then-president of the South Chicago Avenue Business Alliance (SCABA), asking what the business community around 48th and Chicago might think of such an event. Mike and the business owners gave the go-ahead for the Southside Sprint Bike Race, which Jason and Andy launched in 2011.

Jason acknowledges, “The riding community was curious, but not overwhelmingly enthusiastic that first year.” However, the riders had such a positive experience in the neighborhood that in 2012, the race became the biggest in the state. Jason said that with the support of the business community, encouragement from the neighborhood organization and the excitement of neighbors, the race has become “an event the riders cherish.”

Beyond our neighborhood

Jason’s work promoting bicycle racing and his dedication to the velodrome led him and his photographer wife, Lisa, to travel to Belgium five times. They combined watching bicycle races with Jason’s work with velodrome owners and operators to understand their business model. As president of the non-profit Minnesota Cycling Center, Jason and his team, have been planning, fundraising, approaching the state legislature and engaging in activities related to building a new velodrome to replace the one now closed at the National Sports Center in Blaine.

Naturally, these executive pursuits require refreshment, and Jason has a passion for homebrewing. He brewed his first batch of beer in 1995. A year later, Jason and Lisa moved into their home, just a block off the Southside Sprint racecourse, where he plants and tends the hops rhizomes he uses in his home brews. Jason described that what started as a 12-inch root has become a “weed” that grows into the foundation and around the air conditioner. “A nurturing and loving relationship has become a battle,” he says.

Jason describes his approach to brewing beer as being a “purist.” He generally uses only the four ingredients allowed by German law — water, malt, yeast and hops — but occasionally adds unique ingredients that create distinctive-flavored Belgian beers. He explained that he experiments with different yeasts and flavors because there’s “room to play around, room for mistakes and challenges.” Perhaps Jason’s approach to beer making holds some lessons for many of us to “experiment and play around” as we cope with the challenges presented by this COVID-19 era, when events and cherished traditions have been cancelled or rescheduled.

Did you know that Close To Home is a two-time winner in the neighborhood newsletter competition of the national organization Neighborhoods USA?

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Close to Home, newsletter for the Field Regina Northrop Neighborhood Group • frnng.org • March/April 2021
At ‘Garage School,’ Field neighbors help kids with distance learning

By Steve Date, Communications Committee

Every family with school-age children has been coping with the challenges of distance learning during the pandemic. One group of parents in the Field neighborhood decided to pool their resources and make the best of it.

The first wave of online school hit last March when COVID-19 abruptly caused schools to close. Nobody was prepared for remote learning. Teachers, as well as parents, seemed to be “building the car while they were driving it.”

Chris Schommer, former FRNNG president, was one of those frustrated parents. “Everybody did their best to get to the end of the school year,” he says. But in August, when it was clear that school would be online again, he and three neighbors, each with a child in first grade at Hale School, decided to be proactive, saying, “The end of last year was so hard. We didn’t want to do that again.”

They tried to find a way for their four students to meet together safely distanced on school days with parents taking turns supervising the group during the online sessions. Figuring out how was key, because of the inherent problems of bringing the kids into each other’s houses during the pandemic.

“I said, “Well, why don’t we use my garage — almost as a joke,” Chris recalls. “My garage was full of stuff, and it was just a mess.” But as he thought more about it, he realized that he not only could do it, but he wanted to. “I kind of went crazy and gutted the whole thing. I got the cars out, took everything out, took it down to the studs, cut a new window, put in new walls, new flooring, drywall, lights, everything.”

The garage remodel became a group effort. Others in the “pod” helped out and got it ready for the first day of school. As the weather got cooler, Chris added heat and a fourth wall behind the garage door.

Chris knows that many families aren’t able to do something like this, that this kind of effort was possible because of privilege. “I had a garage, I had time, and I had the money.” But it took more than that to make it work. “You need like-minded people who have similar schedules, needs, risk profiles, risk tolerance and who work well together.”

The kids arrived each school day a little before 8 a.m. Parents took turns supervising from 8-11 a.m. on a rotating schedule. Everyone was masked and kept a safe distance. The kids went home for lunch and stayed home for their afternoon specialist classes, such as art and physical education. “It became sort of normal for them,” Chris says. “It’s been a little shelter from the storm. Just having some of the kids able to be together has been great.”

“The first-grade teaching team at Hale has been fantastic,” he adds. “They had a plan from day one and adjusted it as needed. They made this all feel much more normal and much more possible. They provided everything, and we just helped our students pay attention.”

The parents and children made the garage space comfortable and welcoming: the students each had a school desk, and children and adults made murals on a wall. Chris went out every school day morning at 7 to turn on the heat and get the room ready. He looked forward to his days with the kids. “It was delightful. We called it ‘garage school,’ like, ‘It’s time to get up and go to garage school!’”

With the Minneapolis schools reopened for in-person learning, the future of this education pod is uncertain. But if Hale School ever needs to close its doors again, this garage school classroom is ready.

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Just grow it, cont’d. from page 8

harvesting their leaves almost right away. Doesn’t a mint julep or a mojito with fresh herbs harvested from your own yard sound delightful? Many herbs are tolerant of dry, poor soil so they do well in pots.

Protect your newly planted pots from squirrels for the first week or two — they love to dig in fresh, light soil. Once your plants are actively growing, squirrels tend to leave these types of plants alone. Hopefully you’ll have a few greens that are not only pretty but tasty!

Jennifer Rensenbrink is a University of Minnesota Master Gardener who lives and gardens in the Northrop neighborhood. Follow along with her gardening adventures on Instagram @jenniferrensenbrink.
Making healthy choices, changes

By Rebecca Marraffa, Regina neighbor

A new year, a new you. Start fresh. Get healthy — right? While it’s common to start the new year with big plans, motivation can fade after a few days or weeks. Sticking with new commitments is hard! Especially in a time like today when what was once predictable (health, stable work, kids in school) is no longer. Our brains are busy, and stress is high. (Are there germs on that doorknob? Did I remember my mask?)

I’m a clinical pharmacist at the Minneapolis Veteran’s Affairs Medical Center. In my clinic, and now via phone and video, I have the pleasure of helping veterans manage chronic conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure, pain and tobacco cessation. Although my work centers around medication management, patients who commit to behavior and lifestyle changes are more likely to succeed in meeting goals, feeling better and, ultimately, living a fulfilled life.

Where to start? Setting a “SMART” goal is a great first step: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound. It should involve something you aren’t currently doing and that challenges you. Using this method helps build a goal that’s specific enough to stick to, encompasses what you actually want to achieve and identifies when you’ve succeeded. Some simple examples are: walking at least 15 minutes three times a week this month; reading 100 pages a week of a book until

I’ve finished it. Write your goal down. Find an accountability partner. And remember to start small! Whether training for a marathon or walking around the block, focus on the step in front of you, not the whole staircase.

Something I’ve personally worked on recently is incorporating more plant-based foods into my diet. My commitment to this change has developed gradually and for a variety of environmental and health-related reasons. For anyone curious about the growing body of research supporting the health benefits of a plant-based diet, I highly recommend the book *Fiber Fueled* by Dr. Will Bulsiewicz. Look him up online or on podcasts for a preview. The book is full of recipes that have literally changed my life.

In this new year more than ever before, remember it requires little time and no money to make positive change for yourself and your family. Start with small goals; you’ll find the sense of achievement will have a ripple effect on other aspects of your life. 

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updates from me, subscribe to my email newsletter at tinyurl.com/ward1updates. In addition, you can always reach me at jeremy.schroeder@minneapolismn.gov or 612-673-2211.

Representing you at City Hall is a great honor. I’m eager to see all that we accomplish together in 2021!

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Jones Financial Group
Helping you create a sound investment strategy unique to your values and goals.
The annual meeting & elections are postponed. Look for updates by mail and on our social media.

Close to Home is produced for neighbors by neighbors. The next deadline is March 20.

We welcome your comments, complete articles, and hi-res photos. Please contact us: editor@frmg.org

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for updates about neighborhood events.