

# Community REPORTER

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## CITY PERSPECTIVES

### Let's get out this summer



ST. PAUL CITY COUNCIL MEMBER CHRIS TOLBERT columnist

Hello St. Paul Friends, Summer in St. Paul is now in full swing with warm temperatures and exciting news about new parks. I want to update you on a couple of projects to reconnect St. Paul with the majestic Mississippi River as well as a reminder to take advantage of all the offerings from our great city parks.

Between the headwaters of the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, no city has more river frontage than the City of St. Paul. In fact, St. Paul has 26 miles of Mississippi River shoreline. For too many years, St. Paul has turned away from recreational activity on the river and severed direct connections from adjacent neighborhoods and communities. I want to share news about a couple of park projects along the Mississippi that are recently finished or in various forms of development to reconnect St. Paul to our beloved river.

On June 14, I joined Mayor Melvin Carter, Parks and Rec Director Andy Rodriguez and skateboarders Luke Hanno and Theo Miller, as we celebrated the grand opening of Gateway Park. Located at the corner of Mississippi Boulevard and Ford Parkway, Gateway Park is the first of four new parks to be built at Highland Bridge – the location of the old Ford assembly plant. When middle school students Luke and Theo heard that a new park was going to be constructed at Highland Bridge, they contacted the City of St. Paul because the nearest park with skating facilities was too far away from their homes. Working with city staff, their initial idea to include skateboard facilities gained traction and was eventually included as part of the overall Gateway Park design. This is a great example of our city staff listening to the concerns of young adults and incorporating their feedback into the final design of a meaningful project.

Additionally at Highland Bridge, Uñči Makħa Park will be the next public space to open later this summer. Uñči Makħa, which means "Mother Earth" in Dakota, includes geography and features that connect people from the developed Highland Bridge site to more natural areas, including access to Hidden Falls Regional Park. The park links the stormwater system from the neighborhood into the daylighted creek to the falls. Together, Highland Bridge and surrounding communities will be better connected to the Mississippi River with expanded parks for all to enjoy our unique environment.

Down River from Uñči Makħa Park, a new park area is in development as part of the Mississippi River Learning Center. This center is a city-led project combining a mixed-use, river-focused space and a National Park Service headquarters at the Crosby Farm Regional Park, serving as a national gateway to the Mississippi River with year-round river learning and outdoor recreation experiences on and along St. Paul's river.

The Great River Passage Conservancy and the City of St. Paul are working with New York-based W Architecture & Landscape Architecture to lead the Mississippi River Learning Center's schematic design process. Schematic design includes site analysis, exploring design concepts, providing a general

SUMMER, PG 2

## Juneteenth renews push for reparations

**J** BY CASEY EK  
uneteenth, the holiday on June 19 commemorating the day in 1865 when slaves in Galveston, Texas learned two years after the Emancipation Proclamation that they were free, was a day of celebration in St. Paul, somber reflection and animated calls for reparations payments to those descended from America's slaves.

At a rally at the governor's mansion that drew a modest crowd who braved intense heat on Juneteenth, local community organizer and vocal proponent for reparations, Trahern Crews, urged President Joe Biden to act on reparations by the Fourth of July. Crews also urged action from Gov. Tim Walz, including using some of the state's over \$7 billion surplus for reparations.

"Reparations is not charity," Crews said. "Reparations is a debt for 400 years of slavery."

On June 15, the St. Paul City Council voted 6-0 (Nelsie Yang absent) to form the permanent St. Paul Recovery Act Community Reparations Commission, which will serve as the advisory body to the city council on matters of repairing racial disparities in generational wealth due to systemic racism and its downstream effects. The commission will be tasked with delivering reparations to St. Paul's American descendants of chattel slavery (ADOCS).

The commission comes together after the city's temporary reparations committee formed last July. The committee held a series of public engagement sessions that drew hundreds of residents in both online and in-person settings before presenting their report to the council earlier on June 15.



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Local proponent for reparations to Black Americans descended from slaves, Trahern Crews, waters a money tree as a ceremonial gesture at a candlelight vigil at Mitchell Hamline School of Law June 23.

Reparations in St. Paul might take the form of targeted school loans, down payment assistance and direct cash payments to St. Paul's ADOCS and other measures. Reparation efforts, the committee recommended by way of public input, should start with past residents of St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood. Rondo was a historic center of Black families, community

hubs and businesses that was leveled to make way for Interstate 94. The community also wants to see measurable outcomes for the commission as well as clear partnerships between the commission, the city council and the mayor's office, according to the reparations committee's 31-page companion report to the

REPARATIONS, PG 2

## We remember Scott McClure: 1968-2022

BY JERRY ROTHSTEIN

Scott Andrew McClure was born on June 25, 1968, to Georgann Warren McClure and Norman Donald McClure (d. 2019). He was the "little brother" to sister Christine Susan McClure, who was two years older. The family lived in St. Paul, where the children attended Randolph Heights Elementary School, and later Ramsey Junior High School, and finally Highland Park High School, from which Scott graduated in 1986. He passed away at the age of 53 on May 13.

His lifelong fascination with trucks, cars and anything automotive began when Scott was very young. Sandbox machinery and trucks gave way in high school to a part-time job working for Olsen's Randolph Station, where he was mentored, but to a great degree, self-taught as an auto mechanic. His uncanny ability to diagnose a problem and his passion for detail quickly marked Scott as a "gifted mechanic" (*Highland Villager*).

An eminently practical fellow, Scott turned his hard-earned paychecks into property in Afton, Minnesota, and subsequently into a self-designed home. He only needed someone to share it with, and on Aug. 25, 2001, he married the love of his life, Deb Peterson, and the two of them began growing their family, with son Michael and daughter Danielle.

Scott had one more dream to fulfill: He purchased Olsen's, and built St. Paul Automotive, a state-of-the-art repair shop, where he could practice his passion and build a loyal client base and stellar reputation through excellence in service. Everyone who walked in the door knew Scott, and also knew that no matter which of the shop's service staff would fix their car, the job would



Scott McClure

have Scott's watchful eye and stamp of excellence.

Scott's community activities were well-known. For years, Scott and St. Paul Automotive hosted the North Star Camaro Club and the Frozen North LX Car Club. Those proud car owners would drive in and display their customized cars in the shop parking lot and would enjoy food, refreshments and each other's cars. Scott had one of the few chassis dynamometers

in the area used to measure the engine horsepower and torque. He would alert the neighbors that on a certain Saturday morning it was going to be noisy!

For a few years, Scott helped at nearby Monroe Technical School going over curriculum for future engine mechanics courses.

The Sisters of Carondelet near St. Catherine's College often brought their cars in for tender loving care. One sister even entrusted Scott to care for her three-wheeled motorcycle. "What a good boy you raised," they would tell Scott's mom, Georgann (who has helped at the shop a few hours a week since "retiring" 11 years ago).

St. Paul Automotive is one of family involvement. Scott's dad, Norman, would stop by a few times a week and do lawn and yard work on the shop property (while Norm's dog, Rocky - familiar to many customers would "guard the car").

Scott through St. Paul Automotive donated many gift certificates for oil changes to community churches and other nonprofits for their fundraising and supported the *Community Reporter* with monthly advertising. As a member of the BNI [Business Network International] Highlanders Chapter, he supported other community businesses in their efforts.

His accomplishments with St. Paul Automotive will live on under that name with new owner Dan Sjolseth.

Scott leaves behind an enduring legacy through his family, his business and his friends. He is greatly missed.



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# Editorials & Opinions

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## Your involvement is requested

As a nonprofit organization we are governed by a Board of Directors, and we have openings for community members to join.  
We encourage your involvement in the creative side of things. We have correspondents, reporters, reviewers and general writers involved. You can write a letter to the editor on a topic we have written about, or in response to one of our columnists, or a

longer “Neighbors Speak Out” piece.  
You can also contribute story ideas: We aim to cover a wide range of interesting areas in the neighborhood. Your ideas for stories and topics are always welcome. Discuss the many possibilities with the editor at editor@communityreporter.org.  
-- Casey Ek, Editor, *Community Reporter*

## BUILDING AN ANTIRACIST COMMUNITY

### Musical Chairs, Scarcity and Replacement Theory



TIM JOHNSON  
columnist

Musical chairs is a game most of us likely played at some time or other. Chairs are placed in a couple of rows; back-to-back with one less than there are participants. Someone turns on the music, and the players begin circling the two rows. When the music is abruptly stopped, everyone hustles to grab a chair. The person who fails to get their posterior on a chair is out of the game. Another chair is removed, and the game continues until there remains only one chair and two participants.

Musical chairs is based on the premise of scarcity, meaning there is not enough for everyone. The winner is the one who is quickest at grabbing the remaining chair.  
While musical chairs can be a fun, competitive game, it also illuminates a perceived challenge we often face when it comes to living in a community. If our dominant model for living is one of scarcity then everyone else is our competitor for whatever resource we deem to be in short supply.  
The softer version of this scarcity model can be seen in congregations and community groups that have a difficult time welcoming new members or participants out of fear that in doing so they will lose something of value. It is OK if new people come and watch the game, stand around on the sidelines so to speak. But the minute they say they would like to get involved, members operating out of a sense of scarcity experience a threat to their leadership, their voice, or whatever it is that gives their involvement meaning. Scarcity insists that someone is going to be left out. There simply aren't enough chairs.

The hard version of this scarcity model is seen in the pernicious notion of “replacement theory”, which is a growing and influential scare tactic of white supremacist groups and is given full-throated support by prominent people like Fox News celebrity Tucker Carson as well as various far-right politicians, including the senator next door, Ron Johnson from Wisconsin. Replacement theory doubles down on a feeling of scarcity by insisting those groups perceived as outsiders will take the chairs which rightfully belong to the insiders.  
“Jews will not replace us”, was the rallying cry of the white supremacists that descended on Charlottesville, Virginia, with the violent intent of stopping the removal of Robert E Lee’s statue, a hero of the Confederacy and today’s white supremacists. In this twisted aberration of musical chairs, straight white males are being replaced and left out by Jews, Black, Indigenous and people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community. The far-right terrorist who killed 23 people in El Paso, Texas, drove 10 hours in order to “stop the Hispanic invasion of Texas.” He specifically referenced

replacement theory. The young gunman who executed 10 people in a Black neighborhood of Buffalo, New York, specifically referenced the replacement theory. It was 31 white supremacists driven by this same ideology that was recently arrested in Idaho with plans of attacking a Gay Pride Parade.  
Senator Ron Johnson, Tucker Carlson, and the many others instilling fear of being a musical chairs loser would likely deny being a white supremacist. But it is difficult, if not impossible to find any daylight between their rhetoric and the rhetoric of white supremacists that resort to violence. Carlson stated on air that Joe Biden wants to “change the racial mix of the country” and “reduce the political power of people whose ancestors lived here.” Ron Johnson said it was the Democrats’ goal to “remake the demographics of this country so they can stay in power.”  
The irony of replacement theory is, of course, more than apparent to First Nation people who suffered genocide and

THEORY, PG 3

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## WEST END HEALTHLINE

### When Thoughts and Prayers are Not Enough

BY JONATHAN DICKMAN, MD

T “May our thoughts and prayers be with the [insert name here] family.”  
“We will now have a moment of silence for the [insert location here] tragedy.”  
When hearing these phrases, people often think that these are what someone who cares would say to us. Unfortunately, the above words have been used by politicians trying to avoid meaningful action on preventing gun violence. These continued expressions of compassion are how many politicians try to avoid losing campaign donations from gun lobbyists. Children continue to be shot and murdered in schools, people are killed in places of worship and movie theaters, and in response politicians send their thoughts and prayers. Today you should tell them that thoughts and prayers are not enough.  
How bad is gun violence in the United States? According to the Gun Violence Archive, in less than six months in 2022 over 20,000 people have died by a firearm. That is over 120 deaths per day or over five people every hour. Even worse is that there is more than one mass shooting every day in the United States (defined as at least 4 people being shot in one incident). Countless more people are traumatized by gun violence as important family members and friends are suddenly lost in a matter of seconds. As physicians, we see these people in the clinic and do our best to support every individual, but nothing can bring back a person that was lost needlessly. Just the other day I listened to a patient describe the trauma of losing his best friend to gun violence and how he turned to alcohol to cope. Gun violence resulted not only in the loss of life of his friend, but also resulted in my patient’s life spiraling out of control as he developed an alcohol use problem.  
Most people would agree that each person’s life should be considered priceless. Every person deserves the chance to live a full life. Some politicians, however, do not agree. They have determined that the value of a life has a price. In 2021, gun lobbyists spent just under \$15.8 million trying to prevent change in gun laws, data compiled by Open Secrets showed. That sounds like a lot of money, but when you look closer and learn that more than 45,000 people died in the United States from gun related incidents you come up with a

Children continue to be shot and murdered in schools, people are killed in places of worship and movie theaters, and in response politicians send their thoughts and prayers. Today you should tell them that thoughts and prayers are not enough.

sickening number: Gun lobbying groups only need to spend \$350 per life lost from gun violence. This is how much some politicians feel they need to be paid to halt meaningful action on gun violence prevention. Those politicians do not think you are priceless like we do.  
So what should we demand? There certainly are “common sense gun laws,” including mandatory background checks at all points of sale, not just licensed dealers, and an assault weapons ban that we can, and should, ask for right now. In addition, however, we need an investigation into what works when it comes to gun violence prevention laws. In addition to funding politicians, gun lobbying groups have historically discouraged and suppressed funding for gun violence prevention research. For decades, more money was spent each year by gun lobbyists trying to prevent change than was spent on research for gun violence prevention, according to a report by Nature.com. More funding was allocated to research starting in 2019, but more money is needed to make up for over 20 years of lost time. With gun-related deaths

PRAYERS, PG 3

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Our voices should not go unheard

By Don Grundhauser

Upon reading Senator Pappas' recent column about public schools needing more attention and funding and then Bill Hosko's reply that more money won't solve the true problems within our public schools, I want to share my own experience with her.  
Regarding putting homeless individuals in Bethesda hospital during COVID, I was opposed, being that I have lived in this Capitol Hill neighborhood since 1968, and I have watched it decline very far. I am now 80. I made several

calls to the senator's office, giving my phone number and more, and I never received any response back. This has been well over a year ago now, of course.  
Her ignoring my phone calls and concerns really upsets me, just as it does that she ignores the lack of order and discipline occurring in our public schools. Thinking back, it appears that the people we elect to represent us don't really care or just plain ignore people they disagree with. It was a bad experience for me.  
*Don Grundhauser is a longtime St. Paul resident.*

## SUMMER, PG 1

overview of the Mississippi River Learning Center's basic features and programming and getting a general idea of the look and feel of the project. A third community meeting will take place on July 21st as part of the community engagement process, visit [greatriverpassage.org/projects/river-learning-center/](https://greatriverpassage.org/projects/river-learning-center/) to learn more.  
These park projects vary in size and completion, but together they will have an immense impact on the future of St. Paul and how we interact with our majestic Mississippi River.

While beautiful, river areas present safety hazards, so please pay attention to your surroundings and abide by all posted signs and barriers to do your part to keep yourself and others safe. As a reminder, because of the fast current there are no designated swimming areas on the Mississippi River in St. Paul. I highly encourage our youth and adults alike to take a break from our digital screens and make time to safely explore the Mississippi River parks system this summer.  
Contact my office by emailing [ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us) or calling 651-266-8630.  
Regards, Chris Tolbert, Councilmember Ward 3

## REPARATIONS, PG 1

council.  
Work on budgeting and staffing the commission is being targeted as part of the 2023 budget, the public hearing process for which will be held this October through December. Funding options for the reparations include American Rescue Plan funds, sales tax and other measures.  
When asked by Ward 2 Councilwoman Rebecca Noecker about the community's response to prospective reparations via the new commission, committee members said that some residents questioned the feasibility of the new commission's prospective efforts and were skeptical that body would be an efficient use of time and resources. Some residents stated St. Paul's ADOCS residents ought to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps,” said Dr. Yohuru Williams, who alongside fellow conveners of the reparations committee Veronica Burt, and Crews, presented the body's findings at the city's Organizational Committee meeting

June 15. One audience member at the meeting, however, was attending in support of reparations and said she was there to witness the Organizational Committee “make history,” according to Councilwoman Jane Prince (Ward 7).  
Williams, a history professor at the University of St. Thomas, said it will be the new commission's job to engage in public education efforts for those who may have different brands of skepticism.  
“The process of making sure that we educate our community about why this[reparations] is necessary will be absolutely essential,” Williams told the Organizational Committee.  
Work on reparations at the federal level, meanwhile, has stalled out in Congress. While he's disappointed top lawmakers can't produce action, Williams sees this time as an opportunity for St. Paul to be an early leader for other cities nationwide, adding that if the city were to lay the groundwork for a reparations

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# Community News & Events



## Register for the St. Paul bike tour September 11

Registration is now open for the St. Paul Classic bike tour. As always Classic riders enjoy the scenic and historic St. Paul Grand Round. This year marks the 150th year anniversary of visionary landscape architect Horace Cleveland coming to Saint Paul and addressing the Common Council and local business community. He called for preserving parks at Lake Como and Lake Phalen and connecting them with a parkway now known as Wheelock Parkway. His bigger vision for a parkway circling the city was also realized and we'll be enjoying the beautiful off-road trails and protected bikeways that have been built. For more information and registration, visit [bikemn.org/all-events/st-paul-classic](http://bikemn.org/all-events/st-paul-classic).

## Absentee voting available now through Aug. 8

Anyone eligible to vote in Ramsey County may cast their absentee ballot – either in person or by mail – for the 2022 state primary election Friday, June 24, through Monday, Aug. 8.

Beginning June 24, in-person absentee voting will be available at the county's elections office, located at 90 W. Plato Blvd. in St. Paul, and the Ramsey County Library in Roseville, located at 2180 Hamline Ave. N. Hours vary by location and

are available at [ramseycounty.us/VoteInPerson](http://ramseycounty.us/VoteInPerson). Eligible Ramsey County voters may visit either location, regardless of their home address

Voters can visit [ramseycounty.us/VoteByMail](http://ramseycounty.us/VoteByMail) to request a mail-in ballot. A ballot will be mailed to the voter along with a pre-paid, pre-addressed envelope for returning their completed ballot materials. Voters can track the status of their absentee ballot through the Minnesota Secretary of State's online ballot tracker.

## BankCherokee Names Andy Gesell as President, adds others for key positions

After 35 years with BankCherokee, Andy Gesell has been named the community bank's new president. Gesell, who was most recently the senior vice president overseeing the commercial banking team, will continue to work with small businesses. The bank also added Bryan Frandrup as a chief lending officer and Scott Beuning as chief strategy officer. BankCherokee also promoted several others to top spots. "I am excited to have such a talented mix of community banking professionals, a team that will lead us for years to come," Bank CEO Heidi Gesell said.

## SPPS approves budget

Facing an enrollment decline of a projected 1877 students, the St. Paul Board of Education on June 21 approved a \$909 million budget, \$563 million of which makes up the general fund that pays for instruction and support services. The decrease in enrollment has led to the district having a shortfall of \$8.3 million compared to last year's general budget. The budget calls for 128 fewer teachers.

## Flint Hills Resources, Ordway announce the 3-year extension of Flint Hills Family Festival

Flint Hills Resources and the Ordway on June 16 announced a three-year extension of the Flint Hills Family Festival through 2025. The annual festival in downtown St. Paul has produced one of the largest and longest-standing events of its kind in the country since its launch in 2001.

"Introducing students and families to the performing arts in accessible, relevant, and fun ways have never been more important," said Ordway President and CEO Chris Harrington. "Experiencing the highly-anticipated festival for the first time this year, I witnessed firsthand how cherished it is by our community and am deeply grateful for this ongoing support from the Flint Hills team." About 14,000 people attended this year's festival, which featured an array of low-cost indoor performances and free outdoor performances and art activities in and around the Ordway, Landmark Center, and Rice Park.

## Free summer meals

St. Paul Public Schools is offering free meals to kids 18 and under or those over 18 with disabilities who are enrolled in a school program. The United States Department of Agriculture waivers allowing home meal delivery has expired, and SPPS is no longer able to offer meal box pick-up or home delivery, so meals must be eaten on site. For a list of meal sites and schedules, visit [spps.org/summermeals](http://spps.org/summermeals)

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## Mississippi River project plans taking shape

The River Balcony is a proposed 1.5-mile promenade along downtown Saint Paul's river bluff, connecting public spaces, civic landmarks, and development sites, providing new connections to the river and sparking economic development along the riverfront. The City of St. Paul and the Great River Passage Conservancy are working alongside James Corner Field Operations and consultants to complete schematic design for the River Balcony. A third community meeting about the project will take place on July 21st as part of the community engagement process, visit [greatriverpassage.org/projects/river-learning-center/](http://greatriverpassage.org/projects/river-learning-center/) to learn more. After the public input period, schematic designs for both projects are expected for the fall.

## THEORY pg 2

literal replacement at the hands of white settlers. Besides the inherent racism of replacement theory, the common denominator of the soft version and the hard version of scarcity is the firm belief there is not enough for everyone and therefore some have to be losers.

Musical chairs can be a fun game, but as a framework

for how we live in a community, there are no winners, only losers. We miss out on the gifts, the talents, the contributions of those who have been denied a chair, and we are forced to live with the anxiety we may someday be among them. The ready-at-hand alternative is to grab an extra chair, expand the circle and live knowing there is enough for all.

*Tim Johnson is a retired pastor of the United Church of Christ.*

## PRAYERS pg 2

rising, we need a bigger and more deliberate push for high quality research to determine what actually works to prevent gun-related deaths.

Politicians are currently scrambling to figure out the minimum laws they need to pass to appease the concern many voters have around rising gun violence in the United States. Because of the gun lobby's influence over some politicians, whatever is agreed upon is highly unlikely to make a sufficient impact on gun violence prevention given the crisis at hand. Even if some legislation is passed in the coming weeks, we should not be satisfied until common sense gun laws are passed and significant funding is allocated for research into what makes an effective gun violence prevention law. Check online under "Who represents me" ([gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/](http://gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/)) to contact the politician who represents you to let them know how important gun violence prevention is for you. Tell them what you learned from this article in addition to your

own experience. Let them know that your life is worth more than \$350. Your life is priceless.

*Jonathan Dickman, MD is a family medicine doctor at Allina Health United Family Physicians, 233 Grand Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55102. 651-241-5200.*



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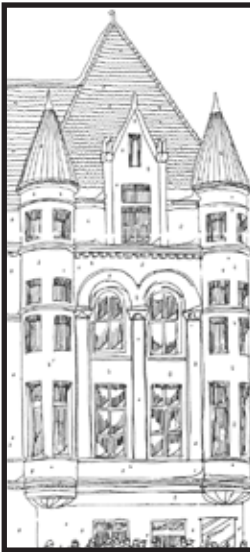


Photo by Bruce Silcox

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# Arts & Culture

## All hands on decks

**BY CASEY EK**  
Zachary Rassett picked up his first skateboard when he was 5 years old, and since then he hasn't looked back. Now, the 26-year-old has launched his own company and is coming full circle on a yearslong mission to find the right board and board company in St. Paul.

Rassett, who has been approached by multiple skateboard companies to shoot video, noticed that some other local companies did not stand by their skaters like they should. Some didn't provide riders with boards and did not foster a team atmosphere among their sponsored riders, meaning Rassett had a great opportunity on his hands.

"I feel like making a fair-trade company where the filmer, the owner and the skateboarders are all on the same page [was crucial]," Rassett said.

From that attitude stemmed Dragonfly Skateboards, which launched in earnest this year. Named for a dragonfly spotted during the production of one of Rassett's video shoots, the company is part skateboard distributor, part video publisher and part mentorship group.

Ranging from 18-31, the Dragonfly riders span multiple decades and bring with them varied styles on and off the board. Often, the older riders will guide the younger riders through the twists and turns of the industry and life in general.

"I've created a team where everybody is just relaxed, and the friendship comes out," Rassett said.

Dragonfly riders can often be spotted in downtown St. Paul where Rassett has spent years honing his video and skateboarding crafts. Rassett might be carrying a camcorder that has been obsolete for years—or maybe decades. They'll often meet at Hamm's Plaza because the "crusty" pavement poses a uniquely rewarding challenge.

Rassett says the team is on good terms with St. Paul's downtown residents as well as the security guards whose job it is to boot the skateboarders from downtown businesses, but he said the stigma of being a skateboarder is unavoidable and has been around for generations.

This is a stigma he carries almost with



(above) Zachary Rassett in downtown St. Paul (left) A Skateboarder with Dragonfly Skateboards grinds on a retaining wall.



a sense of pride amid our moment of post-COVID angst, stating that the role street skateboarders play in current conversations

## Lowertown Sounds off with a bang

The free Lowertown Sounds concert series kicked off June 23 when The New Standards performed for a packed Mears Park in St. Paul's Lowertown. The series will continue through July and August.

On July 14, Heiruspecs will be the headliner. On July 21, Jillian Rae will make her way to the stage, and We are the Willows will close out the month On July 28.

For more info, including the August lineup, visit [lowertownsounds.com/schedule](http://lowertownsounds.com/schedule).



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# Community Nourishment

ABBY'S ANGLE

## The Selection is a hardcore mashup of Cinderella, The Bachelor

*The Selection*, by Kiera Cass, is a dystopian romance that is essentially a hardcore mashup of Cinderella and The Bachelor. This story starts in the country of Illea (the former United States), which is run by a monarchy, and society is organized by a caste system.

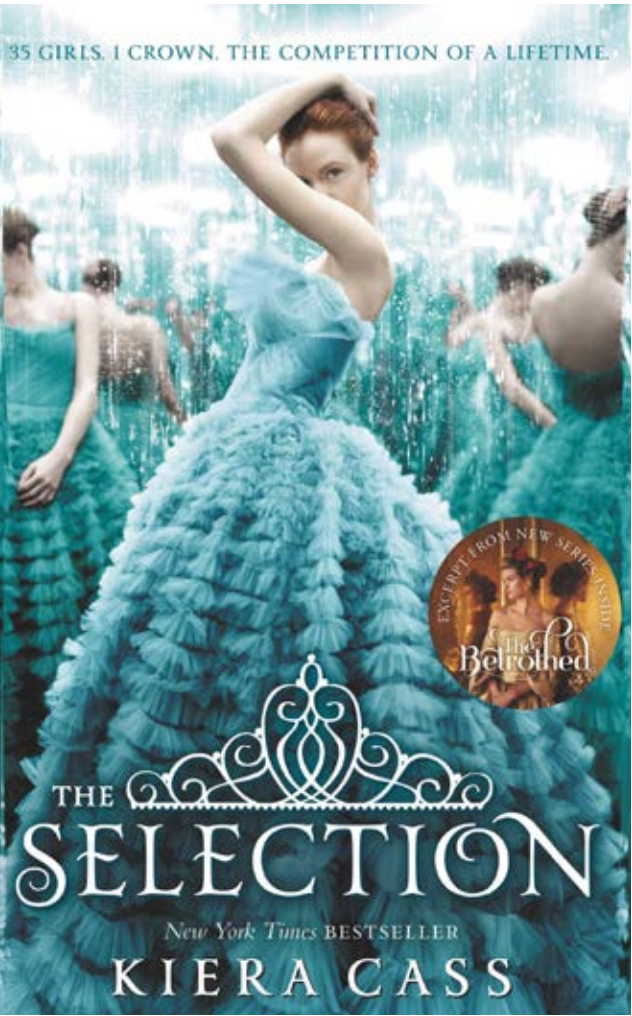
Ones are the wealthy and respected royal family. Twos and Threes are the wealthy aristocrats. Fours through Sevens are various trade workers and servants while Eights are seen as the lowest of the low. When Prince of Illea, Maxon Schreave, comes of age, the selection process begins with girls from the ages 16 to 20 being chosen to marry him. Once chosen, the girls are brought to the palace. Despite loving another boy outside her caste, our protagonist America Singer, a 17-year-old and Five, is chosen to join the 34 other girls to become the princess of Illea. Even though she expresses unwillingness after insistence from her mother and long-time secret boyfriend, Aspen Leger, America is uprooted from her happy, mundane life and thrust into the royal spotlight.

She soon discovers that Prince Maxon isn't unlikable and snotty, as she assumed him to be, but rather an honorable young man with good intentions. Initially, Prince Maxon also came off as a flat love interest, especially in comparison to Aspen, but as we progress through the story, we see him gain more confidence in himself and show genuine care for his subjects and his

country. His conversations with America help him become aware of his privileges and the positive impact he could leave as the future king.

However, *The Selection* is fairly tame as far as dystopian stories go. The romance leads to marriage of the two, and America becoming a positive role model, a respectful daughter and a level-headed heroine. However, before that occurs there is a second story line as well. During the time that this book takes place, the palace falls under attack as many from lower castes grow angry about their situation. Ultimately, these small segments of violence end up appearing in the two next books as well which may not be suitable for younger readers.

Overall, this book really isn't the best given its lack of originality, but it is still an interesting read with the development of America becoming a leader for the country while maintaining her sassy and overwhelming character. Although this review may be perceived as harsh, the result of this was me reading this in two days. In the end, I loved all of the drama that this book had, adding the wonderful descriptions of food and the landscape as well, which allowed me to be easily thrust into the story. This book taught me that not everything in life is always so sweet and dandy, even in romance/dystopian books. In conclusion, I would definitely recommend this book for more experienced readers which is why I deem this as a 12+ book.



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New Standards bassist John Munson addresses a full Mears Park June 23, 2022.

## Are you the next writer for the Community Reporter?

BY CASEY EK

For the last 50 years, the *Community Reporter* has prided itself on being a news source of the community and has leaned into the ethos of being a community of reporters.

That's why I am now inviting you—yes you—to potentially become a writer for our your and my) newspaper.

Do you regularly attend the many fabulous performances that take place in our city? Are you on the pulse of what books local authors are writing? Do you have to try every new restaurant that opens in our neighborhoods? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you might fit in as our next culture writer.

Do you own a business in the neighborhood and often engage in or overhear interesting conversations in your business? Those musings might make for a great column.

Whatever your circumstances in the neighborhood, we'd love to hear from you, and I'm sure our neighbors would be interested in reading what you have to write as well.

The *Community Reporter* relies on its community of reporters to deliver grassroots news to our readers, so if you have an idea for a column or story, don't hesitate to email me at [editor@communityreporter.org](mailto:editor@communityreporter.org) or call me at 507-382-1903.

Casey Ek is the editor of the *Community Reporter*.

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# In the Community

## The Barrens wows on every page

BY TIM RUMSEY, MD

The Barrens, “a novel of love and death in the Canadian arctic” is the writing debut of father-daughter, co-authors Kurt and Elle Johnson. And what a debut.

The Twin Cities first time novelists are experienced canoe trippers. And daughter, Elle, survived a harrowing adventure that anchors the book. A 450-mile, 30-day trip down the remote Tundra and Barrens land of the Thelon River in Canada’s Arctic Circle. Kurt did the writing. Elle gave insight and guidance based on her own adventuring and real-life experiences coming of age as a lesbian woman.

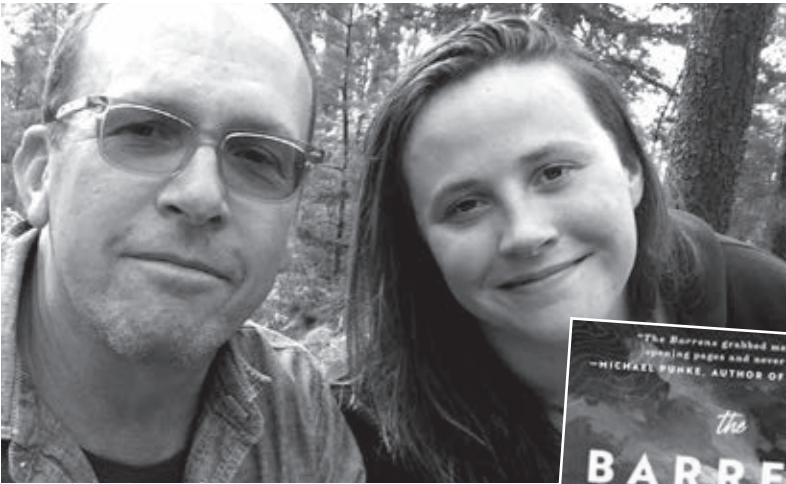
The Barrens is equal parts beauty, poignancy, and danger. The writing is at once powerful, intimate, and efficient. The story sails along like a canoe in white water rapids. The chapters are short. Some are only two or three pages long.

The book’s trip is taken by two Brown University women, Holly and Lee, who are exploring the wilds and exploring their own budding relationship.

They are different people but drawn to each other. Lee describes herself in high school as “almost popular.” I was the girl who sold weed. She adds that “I was more comfortable with chickens and goats than people.”

Holly was more of a girly girl, but yet the more experienced camper-voyager. Upper class, but never showed it to Lee’s rough and tumble.

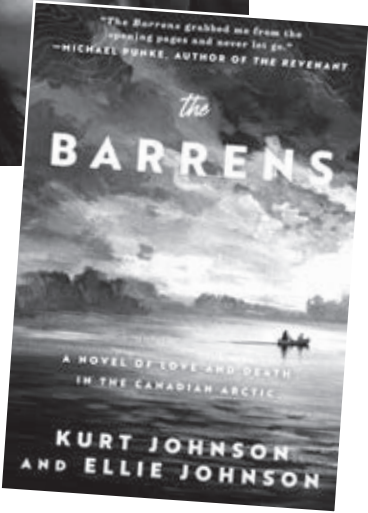
The Barrens were home to long ago native Inuits.



Kurt and Ellie Johnson

Caribou, musk oxen, white wolves and grizzly bears were still close at hand. Lee saw “a herd of Caribou, maybe 50 or more, grazing in a meadow of shrubs and lichens.” She kept “unscented” and saw a majestic antlered male and just born calves with their mothers, one of whom sniffed Holly’s down jacket as they passed by.

The storytelling is clever and welcoming. Complex lives are both woven and unpeeled—Lee and her “eco-terrorist” dad, Jack, Holly, and her parents. And of course, Holly and Lee.



## Notebook Recollections: Soap bubbles for the Angels

Local staple Tim Rumsey walked to work most days from 1987 to 2000. He began as a form of exercise but kept at it for his love of local lore harvested through his interactions with people on the street. He began documenting his musings and eventually filled 53 pocketbooks with his observations. Here is just one tale.

BY TIM RUMSEY, MD

July 1998:

Mr. Positive’s Big Ben thermometer read 93 degrees at 5:30 p.m. today. His house was decked out in Fourth of July glory. We were in the middle of a five-day West 7th heat wave. Mr. Positive slept in a little blue pup tent in his backyard the last three nights.

The late local historian Frank Heller said there was a nasty stretch during the 1934 dust bowl summer following the Saint Stan’s fire. The temperature didn’t get under 100 degrees for over a week. West Seventhers slept outside on front lawns with just a pillow. Fully clothed, shoes and socks on with rolled up sleeves. If not front lawns, it was basements, sleeping porches or tenement house rooftops. Families with cars took windows-down 2 a.m. rides. You could also swim in the river or Crosby Lake. Everybody full- housed the Gem Theater at 7th and Smith, the future Salvation Army chapel, more for the air conditioning than the cinema. Frank remembers newspaper ads and outdoor signs for the Gem’s “cool mountain air” with color pictures of polar bears and icebergs.

On Michigan Street, Mr. Pesek installed

the first domestic air conditioning unit in all of West 7th that summer. It was a large, noisy desk-sized beast set up in a shed alongside their house. The machine is long gone but the shed is still there. It’s been aluminum-sided and used for tool storage.

Tex Dubois, West 7th cab driver all-star, had air in his cab. He was OK when he was by himself without AC if he had regular access to the balm of a Dairy Queen.

On Fourth of July evening, my wife and I and our three girls watched a 360-degree display of fireworks around St. Paul from the sidewalk on the Interstate 35E overpass. There were 20 other people there including Jumpin’ Jack Flash, the camper-biker. He had a can of Pig’s Eye going and chatted with the folks like he was one of the neighbors, which I guess he really was. I walked over to him.

“Good evening, sir,” he said to me. “It’s a fine night isn’t it.”

“Yes, it is,” I answered.

There were too many people around to ask the questions I really wanted to ask him, so we just kept things at hello.

As the fireworks petered out, our family crew walked down Saint Clair to the West 7th Dairy Queen. On the way, I gave them a little tour of my walk. They liked Mr. Positive’s house and the guitar neck nailed to a tree at the Bongs. The pink rock failed to generate the enthusiasm I had hoped for.

So many amateur fireworks were going off on lower Saint Clair, there was a street-level blue cloud of smoke. You could smell

the gunpowder. An occasional boom from a late, professional far away display thundered in the distance. Bottle rockets whistled over rooftops.

There was a crowd of Hmong children and adults on the side lawn of their home by the Bongs. Just as we approached, a police helicopter swept by low and loud and swung its searchlight on the rooftops. Adults frantically collected the children inside.

I remember when I first came to my West 7th home in 1975. There was a Hmong family living in a fourplex by United Hospital when those adults would’ve been kids. I’d see sidewalk chalk drawings of B – 52s dropping bombs on a jungle below.

Dairy Queen was excellent. There for us on the Fourth of July or the fourth of March. Mr. Positive would have approved. toward Maria’s house.

Halfway down the block I turned around and saw Maria’s stretcher come down the front steps. Goodbye, Maria.

Back at the office Aleda said we should blow bubbles for the angel, Maria. Dr. Ravi always had a bottle of soap bubbles on his desk that he blew outside whenever the winter temperature got below -10 degrees (they freeze into cellophane balls).

At least 50 bubbles, backlit and rainbowed, drifted around our work area for a good nine seconds before silently popping.

## Summer with Saint Paul Public Library

By Terry Giinther, Library Manager

Saint Paul Public Library offers opportunities to enjoy reading and learning at home, at the beach, the park, the cabin or while traveling. The library is also a cool, welcoming place to spend a hot afternoon with a book or magazine.

West Seventh Library, 265 Oneida St., is one of the smaller library branches, but it is a neighborhood hidden gem. The books, DVDs, and other materials are non-holdable, which means that some of the most popular novels, movies, and more are on the shelf available for visitors to check out right away. Other library branches offer lucky day collections of non-holdable books and DVDs, but West Seventh Library’s entire collection is a Lucky Day collection for the patrons who visit.

George Latimer Central Library in downtown Rice Park has a much larger collection offering three floors of books, magazines, computers, comfortable reading areas, a maker space for adults, and more. It is the perfect place for any age to escape the heat and learn, discover, and grow—or



SAINT PAUL  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
WEST 7TH

simply enjoy a good read in a quiet, comfortable space. Families with children can play and make themselves at home in the roomy play areas that include toys, games, and family computers.

Saint Paul Public Library is also portable. There are over a quarter million e-book, audiobook, and magazine titles available to download using the Libby app to read or listen to using a smartphone or tablet. With a free library card, anyone can visit sppl.org/libby to bring the library with them wherever they go. If you don’t have a library card, visit West Seventh Library, George Latimer Central Library, or any other library location and get your card today: sppl.org/locations

**West 7th Public Library Hours**  
The library at 265 Oneida St. is open Mondays, Thursdays 12:30-8pm, Tuesdays 11:30am-5:30pm and Wednesdays, Fridays 10am-5:30pm; closed Saturdays and Sundays.

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Months in the making, the Fort Road cookbook is finally available for purchase. For \$25, you can get a hold of about 85 recipes from your neighbors. The book features appetizers, main courses, and desserts alongside salads and other treats. The cookbook also features a 1937 West 7th community cookbook assembled by the West End Commercial Club Ladies Auxiliary. Pick up your copy at Brake Bread or the Federation office.



**Upcoming Meetings, via Zoom**  
Info: [fortroadfederation.org/calendar](http://fortroadfederation.org/calendar)

- **Transportation & Land Use Committee**, Wed, 7/6, 6:30 pm
- **Board Meeting** Mon, 7/11, 7pm
- **Community Engagement and Outreach** Th, 7/22, 6:30pm

**Stay in touch**  
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**Contact**  
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**Duniya Dance & Drum Show**

Join us on July 11 at 4 p.m. for an outdoor performance from the Duniya Dance and Drum Company at the West 7th Community Center. Duniya Dance and Drum Company creates dance and music from Punjab, India, and Guinea, West Africa, as well as unique blends of these forms and beyond. The word duniya means "world" in an array of languages, including Punjabi, Arabic, Susu, and Wolof. Duniya's work embodies this word, as it explores the forces that have brought together the members of the company and their dance and drum styles, including, but not limited to, colonization, globalization, immigration, art, dance, music and love.



**REPARATIONS, PG 2**  
program, larger bodies of government would be more likely to get on board.  
“If we wait for the federal government it’s not going to happen,” Williams said.  
Some data show that Americans may need convincing to be on board with funding reparations through tax dollars. A Reuters/Ipsos poll published in June 2020 suggested that only one in five Americans felt the country should use tax dollars to pay for reparations. Data from Pew Research Center suggests Americans are torn over whether cash reparations would be effective in lowering inequality and “about 48% of those who say the country hasn’t gone far enough when it comes to Black people having

equal rights with white people] say the U.S. government paying cash reparations to Black people who are the descendants of slaves would do at least some to reduce inequality and 51% say this wouldn’t do much, if anything at all,” the study says.  
About 40 million Americans are estimated to be eligible for reparations, according to the Reuter’s report.  
Chris Tolbert, who represents St. Paul’s ward 3, meanwhile, views the city’s steps toward reparations as exemplary.  
“The federal government, the state government and the city are all saying ‘they should do something about it [reparations],’” Tolbert said. “This is St. Paul and our community saying ‘no, we will do something about it.’”

# BULLETIN BOARD



**Water Lantern Festival**  
On July 30 at Phalen Park Beach House, 1400 Phalen Dr., will be filled with fun, happiness, hope and great memories that you'll cherish for a lifetime. Come together to create a peaceful, memorable experience. The festival is billed as environmentally responsible. Tickets: [waterlanternfestival.com/twincities.php](http://waterlanternfestival.com/twincities.php)

**PILATES AT ST. PAUL FARMER'S MARKET**  
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MN History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd. July 5: Ellis Delaney and the OK Factor. Visit [mnhs.org/calendar](http://mnhs.org/calendar)

**JIU-JITSU CLASSES AT PALACE**  
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