

Community REPORTER

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DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE The 2024 Legislative Session Begins



DAVE PINTO
MINNESOTA HOUSE
REP, DISTRICT 64B
columnist

Hello neighbors! The 2024 legislative session will begin on February 12. My second column in the *Community Reporter* is a good chance to check in in advance, especially in light of last year's historic session.

First, a reminder for those whom I haven't yet met: I represent much of the neighborhood served

by the *Community Reporter*, including most of the area south of St. Clair, in the Minnesota House. At the Legislature, I've focused on issues related to kids and families and on community safety, including gun violence. I also chair of the St. Paul delegation in the House. Outside of the Legislature, I serve as a Ramsey County prosecutor specializing in gender violence, especially domestic assault and sexual exploitation.

As I shared in my first column in October, last year's legislative session was one of the most productive in state history, with transformational investments and policy changes that will help everyone in Minnesota to thrive.

This year's session will build on that work, in some particular ways.

As in all odd-numbered years, the 2023 session set a two-year budget for the state; we are in the middle of that budget now. Even-numbered years, like 2024, involve adjustments to that budget based on emerging needs, as well as unexpected changes in spending and revenues.

In December, we received news that state revenues will likely significantly exceed spending this year, resulting in a large budget surplus. At the same time, a significant "structural imbalance" – with spending exceeding revenues – is expected in future years. This forecast will be revised in February. In the meantime, we'll need to continue to carefully keep the long-term consequences in mind as we consider budget changes this session.

Speaking of long-term consequences, again a major focus for me is the well-being and development of our state's children. Minnesota's kids will be our employees (and employers!), our caregivers and our neighbors. Getting them off to a #GreatStartMN is in the interest of us all. In this area this session, I'm working to advance an exciting proposal to help families afford child care and early learning. I'm exploring reforms to Minnesota's child protection system, in my role as House chair of a task force on this issue. And I continue to support action on homelessness; housing instability has such a detrimental impact on child development, and everyone deserves a safe, stable place to live.

Another major component of the 2024 session will be investments in infrastructure, often through state borrowing ("bonding"). I've authored several capital investment projects relevant to our area. One is the creation of a Mississippi River learning center and national park headquarters at Watergate Marina in Crosby Farm Park. This would be an opportunity for recreation, education and environmental stewardship, allowing all of us direct access to the river and strengthening our connection with this incredible resource.

A second project that I've authored is the Riverview Corridor transit corridor, which would run along West Seventh; increased transit opportunities are critical for our region. And finally, I've authored a proposal for an Ethiopian Community Center. We have many

SESSION, PG 3

"Rep who Raps" readies for album release, return to session

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

Better known to some by her stage name, Maria Isa, and by others as Representative Perez-Vega of House District 65B, Maria-Isa Perez-Vega has a lot on her plate this February.

"The Rep who Raps" is more than living up to her nickname this year as she is releasing her latest album, "Unlock the Chamber," on February 12, the same day that Minnesota's legislative session kicks off in St. Paul.

She said last year's legislative session, her first as a State Representative, influenced her latest album in unexpected ways.

"After my first session, the homies met me outside the chamber, and some of the homies that are in the chamber with me, like Representative Samakab Hussein and Representative Samantha Sencer-Mura from the south side, she's an artist and writer, and talking about surviving uprisings and being here for our kids as moms of toddlers, and I went straight to the quadriga. It was night time, like close to midnight, and I went up to the horses with them and it was like they unlocked the chamber and it just stuck with me," she said.

Perez-Vega said that, after session and performing shows in Puerto Rico and at First Avenue, she had a lot of new material written and was ready to get back into the studio to start recording.

But the album, and her personal life, was dealt a major blow in September when her friend and long-time collaborator, DJ Tony Trouble, passed away unexpectedly.

"He was one of the top people that gave me influence to create," she said. "It was like I lost my Mr. Miyagi, my Sensei, you know, So it was a dynamic of like, how am I going to do this?"

After some time to reflect, and the motivation of the upcoming St. Paul city elections, she said Trouble was still able to influence her getting back to the studio, inspiring her to release "Momma Said Knock You Out" as a single this fall, both as a tribute to Trouble (LL Cool J's "Momma Said Knock You Out" was one of



GREAT DEBATORS
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Maria Isa's latest album, "Unlock the Chamber," releases on February 12.

his favorite songs) and to support the female candidates running for City Council.

"I needed to give them some ammunition and some weight from their rep," she said of releasing the song for the City Council candidates. "Sending that to them the week before, it was like, the get out the vote. I'm talking to my colleagues, talking to our city officials that are elected or looking for re-election, and for the new ones that I was supportive of and endorsing them to be 'like go knock these damn doors down.'"

Perez-Vega, who was born and raised on the West Side of St. Paul, said she has been rapping since she was 11.

"The first time I did the talent show at St Matthews on the West Side, I wrote my rap to No Scrubs by TLC," she said.

She said her early inspirations in hip hop were as formative to her art as they are to her politics.

"By the time I was eight years old, my influences in hip-hop, like Tupac, Biggie and Selena had been killed by gun violence. And I

mean that that was traumatizing," she said.

As a legislator, she said she is focused on women and family issues and brings her artist perspective to the House floor and the policy she helps create, working on issues like arts education, housing and economic inclusion, all with an artist's lens.

"I speak with folks that are my constituents or have their businesses in my district to be like, 'how do we make everything work with Equity for everybody that is here?'" she said. "That is also the customers, or how are you able to be their clientele by supporting their artwork through policy or on your walls or as an architect in your new development that's happening."

"People think, you know, I'm rich. Absolutely not," she said. "I don't call myself a struggling artist, I call myself a surviving working artist, and that we need to recognize the impact that that has on our renters, on our homeowners and in spaces where we can curate our art."

Perez-Vega, who's production company

REP, PG 6

COMMUNITY TRADITIONS

Keystone Community Food Center now open

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

After almost five years of planning, fundraising, construction and dreaming, Keystone Community Services has opened their new Keystone Community Food Center (KCFC) at 1800 University Ave. W.

The KCFC is bringing all of Keystone's food shelf programs, including the Foodmobile, food shelf grocery delivery program and resource navigation services under one roof. The new building features a large food market to give participants an efficient and dignified shopping experience, a warehouse to increase capacity to store and distribute food, a lobby and Community Room which will be gathering spaces and places for expanded programming, a three-bay garage, giving space to expand Foodmobile and neighborhood-based community food distribution and volunteer space to expand capacity to engage volunteers who keep Keystone running.

While the building still has a few finishing touches Keystone hopes to complete this spring, like a large mural and some exterior upgrades, they are open for accepting donations and serving their community.

Back in 2019, Keystone knew they needed more space to store and distribute food. Through a community engagement process, where they heard from over 700 members of their community, the idea for the new food center was born.

Since then, their community has given more than \$11 million to support their vision of the



Keystone's new Community Food Center

KCFC for purchasing and upgrading the building.

Once the KCFC is fully operational, Keystone said they will be able to serve over 4,500 households per month.

Shopping hours are: Monday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. & 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., Tuesday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. & 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., Wednesday: closed in the morning, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m., Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. & 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. and Friday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. & 2:00 –

4:00 p.m.

Donations are being accepted and are welcomed during business hours on Monday – Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and on Wednesday evenings until 6:00 p.m.

Learn more: visit keystoneservices.org/opening-doors

and County Credit Union, local retailers or



Dear West End,

Navigating bumps in the road

The declaration of the death of local news may be a bit exaggerated, but that doesn't mean it is easy to bring you a community newspaper.

As 2023 was coming to a close, the *Community Reporter* got a bit of bad news. Our long-time delivery partner, Independent Delivery Service (IDS) let us know about a week before going to press that they were going out of business. What's more, it was happening January 1.

We were worried and a bit sad, not just for our ability to deliver the paper to you, but also for the employees of IDS who found out they would be without work just before the holidays.

Needless to say, this caught us off guard. We scrambled to find a solution for delivering the January edition to newsstands and doorsteps and were able to get the issue to our community to the best of our ability. We've heard from some of you that the January issue didn't make it to your home, and for that we apologize.

We have found an interim solution for delivering the paper and will be working with our new delivery service to make sure you can get the neighborhood news delivered to your door every month.

During this transition, we ask for your patience. We'd also ask for your help by taking some action.

Let us know how it's going

If you got this month's edition, and more importantly, if you didn't, please reach out and let us know. Email info@communityreporter.org. We love to hear from you about how we're doing and want to make sure you are receiving the *Community Reporter* to your home.

Visit communityreporter.org/donate to give today.

Follow us on social media

Like us on Facebook or follow us on Instagram to stay connected. You can find us at facebook.com/SaintPaulCommunityReporter on Facebook or instagram.com/communityreporter on Instagram.

Join our email list

We recently started a monthly email, collecting our stories for the month and previewing what's coming up in the future. Get the *Community Reporter* delivered to your inbox every month by signing up at communityreporter.org/newsletter.

Catch up online

Check communityreporter.org for our latest news. You can also follow us on news apps like Google News, Apple News, News Break and others to stay up to date with what is happening in your community.

While this bump in the road may bring some changes to how we deliver the *Community Reporter*, we are committed to continue bringing you high-quality journalism about, by and for the people and places of St. Paul's West End.

Thanks for your continued support and patience and we're glad to be able to continue bringing you the news.

Damian Goebel, Editor

P.S. Producing a free newspaper isn't free.

The *Community Reporter* is working to raise \$30,000 for some big plans we have this year. Consider making a tax-deductible pledge of \$5 per month – our goal would be met with 500 \$5 monthly commitments this year.

Would you become part of this effort by pledging \$5 per month?

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NOTEBOOK RECOLLECTIONS

Piano lessons, part 2

Local icon 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. He continues writing about his observations to this day. Here is just one tale.

BY TIM RUMSEY, MD
Encore

We last left our beloved outside-the-clinic-piano at the end of January 2017. Under the UFM carport entrance. Inviting, daring patients to tickle the ivory.

February 2017 was piano neutral. Actually, piano nada. Not much action. Then, all of a sudden, St. Patrick's Day was upon us.

3-15-17. noon-ish. 35°.

Eight old school-buses-turned-party-buses, were clomping while tethered along lower Randolph awaiting the St. Pat's starting bell. Two pink buses and one each black, red, purple, green and yellow solos.

3-16-17

Tex cabbed two public housing moms to St. Vinny's for some kitchen utensils and toys for their kids. One of the moms four-year-old son, Cowboy, was a Clinic-piano nut. In a good way.

"How is Cowboy?" Tex asked his mom in the backseat.

"Still petrified of shots."

"Vaccines?" asked Tex.

"I just tell him we're going to the Clinic piano. It's the only way I can get him near the place."

"I like his hat," said Tex. "Looks like a big, white, 52 gallon Yellowstone thing."

"That's Cowboy," said his mom. "He can actually kind of play that piano. Then we go in for the shots."

3-17-17

7:30 a.m. Nice day. The Green Holy Day. Two down on their luck, rich white-boy, rough sleepers, Anthony and Mark, were pianoed up. This time Mark got the keyboard.

I was picking up some trash in the carport.

"We're drinking today," Mark said. It was 7:45 in the morning. He already had a fresh black eye. A good look for today. Maybe preventive.

Anthony said he finally got back with Dr. Ravi the previous week.

"We got my insulin figured out. 10 units of NovoLog per can of Mountain Dew. 12 if two, big Macs included."

"Stop and smell the bacon!" I said

"ERIN Go Bragh," Mark said, pounding the piano.

3-19-17

Because I seem rather focused on the



Clinic piano, I'm also quite focused on the first floor of the parking ramp. That started with the pigeons taking up residence there. Excreting pigeon waste product on the vehicles and concrete below them. Every day. All day. All the time. I've initiated a few pigeon stare downs. They seem pleasant enough but they're certainly not worried. They're non-engaged. They've got to go. I made that clear to them.

They have spared the piano, thank goodness. Although I have noted pigeon feathers in the vicinity.

I've seen a squirrel here and there run through the ramp. Mice are a given. No big deal. Same for the swooping bats. No one loves bats. But we really don't see them much.

We have geese! Visitors from the nearby Midland Grain Elevators.

Geese are classy. Beautiful. But they're major league poopers. Thank goodness they're travelers. They were here for a week and then gone with the wind.

Tex hopes someday there will be a complete Prairie dog village on UFM parking level one.

3-20-17

As a West 7th lifer and cab operator, Tex knows all things West 7th.

He told me today that two down and out young brothers we both knew had stolen an expensive church microphone from St. Stan's and fenced it out to some Minneapolis rock band.

Curt Weiner stopped by for a clinic appointment today. Said he was good. I asked what he was up to.

"Walking West 7th," Curt said. "Checking my parking meters every day."

"How much do you get from them?" I asked.

"Six or seven dollars a day. The closer to downtown the better."

Curt is saving for a Jason Aldean entertainer of the year concert at the St. Paul Civic Center this spring. For he and his sister.

3-26-17

The Minnesota outdoors is taking it out on our 1926 Rauenbusch upright piano. Ravi read this in a book called *The Piano in America* 1890 to 1940: "... Over time as a piano is subjected to the environment, the stress-bearing wood, felt and wire components degrade rapidly." Which

basically translates to mean that in the Mni Sota Makoce winter, an outside piano was dead meat. The veneer "alligators" and loosens. Wires weaken. Felt falls apart and the piano no longer holds a standard pitch. That's our beauty.

The same piano book said that back in the 1900's, the Raundenbush family gave "special inducements to Methodist ministers and Methodist families." (no mention of outdoor piano functionality.)

4-10-17

Warmer now. Finally. And some more great piano players.

Two sweet little Somali girls in beautiful, colorful garb, run from the parking ramp to the piano and start Jerry Lee Lewis-ing. Jumping up and down. Pounding the keys. Running their hands down the "Ivory." Mom hustled over, full-on smile, giggling even, and takes them into the clinic before they backflip off the top of the piano.

4-15-17

Another nice day. Lunchtime. And the best player of them all.

A fair-skinned pizza delivery guy. 25-ish. He speeds into the carport. Slams to a halt, hops out with a pizza or three in a shoulder bag and skips over to the piano. He whips off 10 seconds of some masterpiece and then runs into the clinic for his delivery. The pizza car driver's door is still wide open, motor running. Then he's back to the piano, pounds out something else spectacular, jumps back into the car and squeals away.

It must be noted, our beloved piano player, Edward of the green, fluffy slippers, has not shown at the keyboard since early March. Ravi said he had a bad pneumonia and got septic. He was three weeks in the ICU and is still in the United rehab unit.

4-16-17

I'm eating my bag lunch by the quiet piano. Tex drives in, no fare on board. He stops in front of me and from the cab, through the window down, driver side, asked out of nowhere "Dr., do you think you are a good doctor?"

I was flat footed for a moment with that question. "Well," I said. "I tried really hard to

keep up, to know my stuff... And pay attention to folk, treat them well."

Suddenly we were interrupted by an onslaught of profanity. Not at us or about us. But, wow, what a tirade. Several different languages, echoing and bouncing off the parking ramp walls. "Somebody just got a good deal on a case of Tourette's," said Tex.

I hooted.

Tex said he had to fly. He put his window up, and the way he flew.

Too bad. I hadn't really finished talking about my doctoring. I had been working up a grand soliloquy.

5-1-17

I agree with Tex that there's something going

PIANO, PG 3

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ADVERTISING

Jerry Rothstein, Administrative Director
info@communityreporter.org

EDITORIAL

Damian Goebel, Editor
612-986-8026
editor@communityreporter.org
Jerry Rothstein
Administrative Director
651-587-8859

LAYOUT/GRAPHIC DESIGN

In-Fin Tuan
Graphic Designer

BOOKKEEPING

Ailie Deloia
adeloia.cr@gmail.com

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elisha May Jacobsen
elishamayart@gmail.com

DISTRIBUTION

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Community News & Events

St. Paul’s historic City Council sworn in

On January 9, St. Paul’s next City Council was sworn in at a ceremony at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts. With four new members, the council is going to look different in years past in more ways than one. In a historic election by St. Paul voters, for the first time in St. Paul, or any major U.S. city, our city council consists of all female members. What’s more, all seven members are under 40 years-old and six of the seven identify as people of color. “Today we lift up history that St. Paul residents made with their votes,” said incoming Council President Mitra Jalali during her inaugural speech. “For the first time in U.S. history, an American city of our size has elected a city council of all women and a super majority of women of color.” The historic feat received a great deal of national attention, including stories in the New York Times and Washington Post and congratulatory tweets from former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Timberwolves star Karl-Anthony Towns. The newly sworn in St. Paul City Council is Anika Bowie, Ward 1, Rebecca Noecker, Ward 2, Saura Jost, Ward 3, Mitra Jalali, Ward 4 and Council President, HwaJeong Kim, Ward 5, Nelsie Yang, Ward 6 and Cheniqua Johnson, Ward 7.



RIGHT TRACK JOBS APPLICATIONS OPEN
Right Track St. Paul, a paid summer internship program for St. Paul youth ages 14-21 who come from burdened households or face barriers to employment, has opened their applications for summer 2024 internships. The program was started in 2014 as a partnership between the City of St. Paul, St. Paul Public Schools and the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce. The program has grown in the past 10 years to provide nearly 1,000 youth work experience each summer at over 100 employers in St. Paul. According to the program’s 2022 annual report, over \$1.2 million was paid to youth who worked in six-to-nine week internships over the summer, 85% of whom were from households qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Youth who are interested can apply online through February 29. To learn more or apply, visit righttrack-app.stpaul.gov.

PORTION OF RICE CREEK COMMONS SOLD TO RYAN COS.
The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously on January 16 to approve a \$12.7 million purchase and sale agreement with Ryan Companies for a 40-acre parcel adjacent to Rice Creek Commons in Arden Hills, formerly the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP). Ryan plans to offer build-to-suit property that can accommodate 400,000 to 600,000 total square feet. Development possibilities include a corporate campus, a research and development center, life science offices or manufacturing and distribution facilities alongside on-site retail and restaurant space. Located alongside Interstate 35W, the parcel offers convenient visibility and access to both downtown Saint Paul and Minneapolis and will connect to the Rice Creek North Regional Trail for bicycle and pedestrian access. Ryan also expects to incorporate green space and outdoor gathering areas throughout the development to align with the vision for Rice Creek Commons, which prioritizes clean energy, carbon neutrality and climate resiliency. The agreement between Ramsey County and Ryan

includes a due diligence period of up to 15 months. Purchased in 2013, the TCAAP site is a 427-acre parcel Ramsey County obtained from the U.S. government to clean up and redevelop as a nation-leading, climate-forward and equitable community with homes, businesses and retail. The site was renamed Rice Creek Commons in 2014. Since then, the site was cleaned to residential standards, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency have removed the site’s soil and surface water from the state and federal Superfund lists. The U.S. Army will continue to operate the existing groundwater cleanup system as needed. The total future development value of Rice Creek Commons is estimated at \$1 billion. Learn more at ramseycounty.us/rice-creek-commons.

RYAN O’CONNOR NAMED REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR OF METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
The Metropolitan Council has announced Ryan O’Connor has been named the next Regional Administrator for the organization. O’Connor joins the Met Council from Ramsey County, where he has served as county manager since 2018. Prior to this experience, he also held positions as the deputy county manager and the director of policy analysis and planning for Ramsey County. O’Connor will lead an organization of more than 4,000 employees, oversee the development of Met Council policies and programs, provide leadership in implementation and advise the Chair and Council members on regional policy, program development and implementation.

WORLD JUNIOR HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS COMING TO ST. PAUL
USA Hockey announced that St. Paul and Minneapolis will serve as host of the 2026 International Ice Hockey Federation World Junior Hockey Championship. The 10-nation tournament features the best men’s players in the world under 20 years of age.

SESSION, PG 1
Ethiopian-Americans in our area; as has been true for so many others – including my own Italian and Eastern European ancestors – it’s vital that this community have a place to gather, celebrate weddings and

PIANO, PG 2
on with our piano. Something way beyond the white and black keys . He thinks all Minnesota healthcare systems need to grandstand pianos outside their main entrances. Then check out the patient satisfaction, the return visits, and the did we get better. And while they’re at it, the improved quality of piano plunkers. **5-5-17** Tex had his two most favorite customers today. Cowboy and his mom. On their way to United Family Medicine for his four year immunization catch up. Diphtheria, tetanus,

graduations, mourn losses and be together. There is much more to discuss, and a lot going on. Please keep in touch; full contact info (and email signup) is at house. mn.gov/64B. #EverybodyIn. Thank you for the honor of serving you. whooping cough. And polio and flu. Three of those were combined so it wasn’t like five shots. More like two, maybe three. But they were still shots. Tex addressed the little Liberace: “Where to Cowboy? Vegas?” “If my mom says so.” “You know where we’re going, honey.” “Dairy Queen.” “That’s after.” “To see Dr. Ravi’s piano,” Cowboy said. “He’s my doctor too,” Tex said. “What kind of music do you like to play?” “I like to play the Clinic piano.” *To be continued...*



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The 2026 event marks the 50th anniversary of the IIHF World Junior Championship. Xcel Energy Center, home of the NHL’s Minnesota Wild in St. Paul, and 3M Arena at Mariucci on the University of Minnesota campus in Minneapolis, will serve as the competition venues. The 2026 IIHF World Junior Hockey Championship will mark just the seventh time the U.S. has hosted the event. The first-ever U.S. host site was in Minneapolis/ Saint Paul in 1982. The 29 games of the championship take place over 10 days from December 26, 2025 – January 5, 2026. Learn more at mnsportsandevents.org/2026-World-Junior-Hockey-Championship. **PROFESSIONAL WOMEN’S HOCKEY LEAGUE MAKES RECORD BREAKING DEBUT** The puck dropped on the inaugural season of the Minnesota Professional Women’s Hockey League (PWHL) on January 6 to record breaking results. In their first game, a 3-0 shutout victory over Montreal, Minnesota shattered the single game attendance record for professional women’s hockey, with 13,316 fans listed as the official attendance, dwarfing the previous record of 8,318 set just a few days earlier at the PWHL game between Ottawa and Montreal. The previous record was 7,765 for a game in Sweden. The PWHL is in its first year of operation. It has six teams, three each in Canada and the United States, including the Minnesota squad. The season features 24 games per team. Learn more at minnesota.thepwhl.com/en



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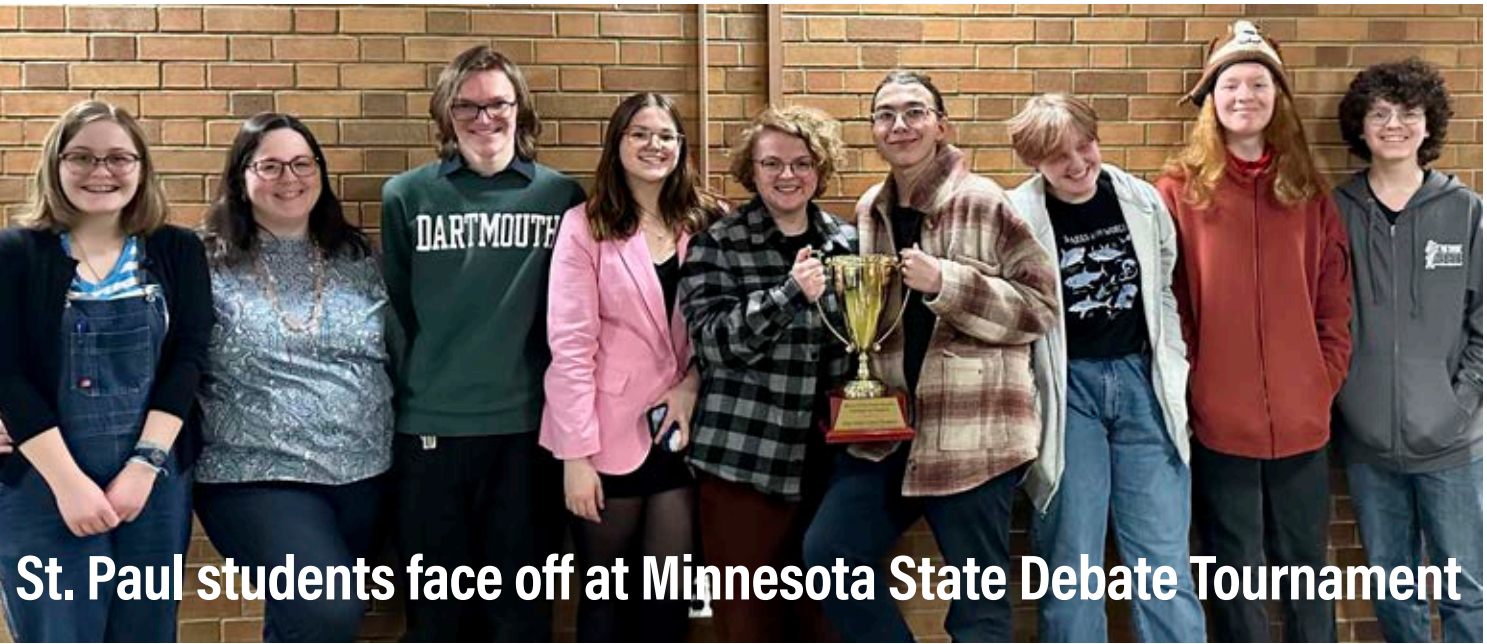
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Community Traditions



St. Paul students face off at Minnesota State Debate Tournament

The Central debate team and coaches celebrate with their Challenge Cup Trophy.

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

Students from St. Paul Public Schools represented the “Saintry City” at the 2024 Minnesota State High School League (MNSHL) Minnesota State Debate Tournament, January 12-13 and the University of Minnesota.

Representing St. Paul Central and Highland Park Senior High School's, the students participated in the two-day event, with St. Paul Central coming out on top in multiple categories.

Max Ulven and Kiernan Baxter-Kauf took home top honors in the policy debate category, defeating students from Minneapolis South 7-0 in the eight-round debate. Ulven and Baxter-Kauf argued for the federal government substantially increasing fiscal redistribution through a federal job guarantee, expanding social security and/or providing a basic income.

“This was a great tournament,” said Ulven. “To win the state championship on top of that is nothing short of amazing.”

“I’m really impressed with how far I have come,” Baxter-Kauf said, reflecting on her personal growth. “Our community in debate is a wonderful place to be with great, supportive people that want to see us grow and succeed.”

Central students Elliot Miller and Eleanor Johnson reached the Quarterfinals in this year’s tournament, where they faced off against Edina.

Johnson, who is a senior at Central this year, was glad to have the opportunity to advance in this year’s tournament.

“I have been debating since Middle School, and if you told 7th grade me that one day I would not only qualify for the state tournament, but be a quarterfinalist, I wouldn’t have believed it,” she said.

However, she added it’s not all about meeting competitive goals. “What means the most to me in debate is the opportunities I’ve had to work with younger debaters. I love coaching and judging middle school, I can’t say enough how amazing those kiddos are. I learn so much from them,” she said.

In addition to the individual honors, the Central debate team was named the Minnesota Debate Teacher Association (MDTA) Policy Debate Challenge Cup Champion. This cup is awarded to the team that consistently performs at a high level throughout the season, determined by the number of wins and speaker points accumulated by a team.

“Of course I’m proud of our team for winning the State Championship and Challenge Cup, but I’m proud we exceeded our non-competitive goals too,” said Cayden Mayer, a first year coach with Central and a Central debate alum. “We had the highest number of debate novices locally and together we built a supportive culture that promotes resilience in our debaters.”

In contrast to the honors taken home by St. Paul Central, Highland Park students Addie Joneswhite and Yao Buchl weren’t even expecting to qualify for the state tournament as underclassmen. Not only did they reach the state tournament, but also won some tough debates against the Prior Lake team, while holding their own against teams from St. Paul Central and Edina High School’s.

“I didn’t know I could debate this well,” said Buchl. “We

DEBATE pg 7



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Community Nourishment

Sauna bathing: Health benefits or just hot air?

BY SHAI FARHI, MD

The practice of saunaing has been getting increasingly popular with claims of health benefits including pain reduction, weight loss, heart benefits and improved sleep. Let's embark on a journey through the history of this multi-cultural tradition and the most recent research to find out if the benefits of sauna bathing are rock solid or just a bunch of hot air.

The tradition of Finnish sauna bathing is an extraordinarily old practice, with discoveries of rudimentary saunas dating back as far as 2000 BCE. Early sauna designs typically involved lighting fires over large stones. The early sauna goers would then allow the fire to burn out, waft out the smoke and then gather around the stones to enjoy the retained heat. It is important to note that the practice of sweltering around heated stones for health benefits or spiritual purposes developed and exists independently in many other cultures. For example, the practice of sweat lodging was popular among several American Indian tribes in the plains which shared a similar concept. However, we will focus on the Finnish dry sauna practice as it has been the subject of the most rigorous research.

Modern saunas have evolved beyond rudimentary flame, smoke and stone for achieving the sweltering temperatures needed to sauna bathe. Alongside woodburning stoves you can find electric saunas and infrared saunas. Variation in the method of heat generation is only the tip of the iceberg as there are ongoing debates about the types of wood, stones, sizes and shapes of saunas as well!*

What are the health benefits?

In the last two decades there has been a growing body of research into the health benefits of saunas. Large studies in Finland have found that frequent sauna bathing improves heart health, lowers blood pressure,



decreases markers of inflammation, reduces the risk of developing dementia and is helpful for combating depression. There is also some compelling evidence that folks who sauna regularly live longer!

The science behind the benefits

The mystifying magic of the sauna lies in its ability to generate intense heat within a confined space. As the body's core temperature rises the heart rate increases, mimicking the effects of moderate exercise. This cardiovascular workout is thought to be the source of the enhanced heart health, improved circulation and beneficial blood pressure effects.

Still, we don't entirely understand how and why Sauna bathing has been shown to be so broadly beneficial for things like mental health, pain and inflammation but there is ongoing research.

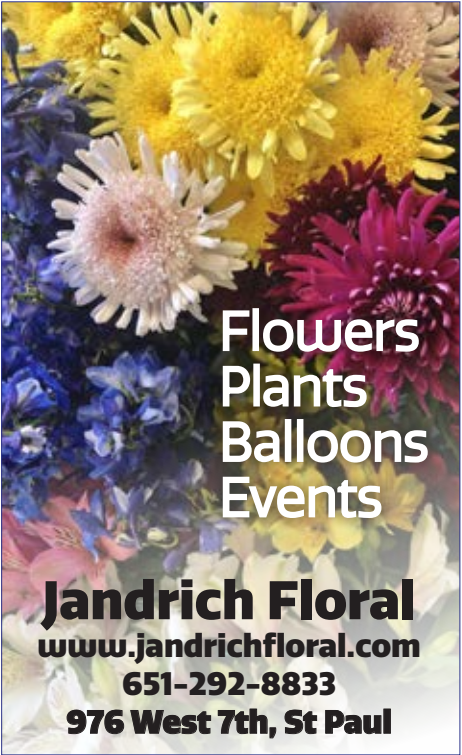
What is the perfect sauna regimen?

The exact specifics of how hot, how long and how often people should sauna to sweat out the maximum benefits is a subject of heated debate. The current consensus seems to be a sweet spot of a temperature between 176°F and 194°F and a duration of 15-20 minutes in order to reap the benefits safely. Saunaing is generally safe, however it may not be suitable for everyone. As with any health-related practice, it is a good idea to consult your doctor to consider your specific and individualized health before stepping into the heat. For those choosing to engage in sauna sessions, remember to stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water!

In the Twin Cities, where many claim heritage from Nordic and digenous people's cultures, it is no wonder the practice of Sauna bathing or sweat lodging has been gaining steam. It seems pretty clear that stepping into the heat to escape the frigid Minnesota winter has many benefits for the mind, body and soul.

*Curious about all the different types and forms of modern saunas? Make your way to The Great Northern Sauna Village at Malcolm Yards. An event that runs until Feb 4 where the blazing passion of thermaculture enthusiasts and the smoldering interest of those new to the practice can be fueled by the exploration of many different sauna types and builds from local sauna companies!

Dr. Farhi is a family physician at Allina Health United Family Physicians, 233 Grand Ave, St. Paul, 651-241-5200.



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Sholom and JFS invites anyone searching for help with their caregiver journey to the new Caregiver Crash Course. A six-class educational series covering different aspects of caregiving.

This series will be facilitated by JFS' Bonnie Jaffe, RN and Tara Burns, MA, LPCC.
All classes are free and open to the public. Register for 1..2.. or all 6!

FEBRUARY 22 Working with Emotions and Emotional Wellbeing	JUNE 27 Improving Communication Skills
MARCH 28 Caregiver Grief and Loss	JULY 25 Quality Caregiving in a Facility
MAY 23 Quality Caregiving in the Home	AUGUST 22 Caregiver Resources

All classes will take place in the Main Auditorium at the Shaller Family Sholom East Campus.
They will take place from 12-1p and lunch will be provided.
CEUs are available for professionals

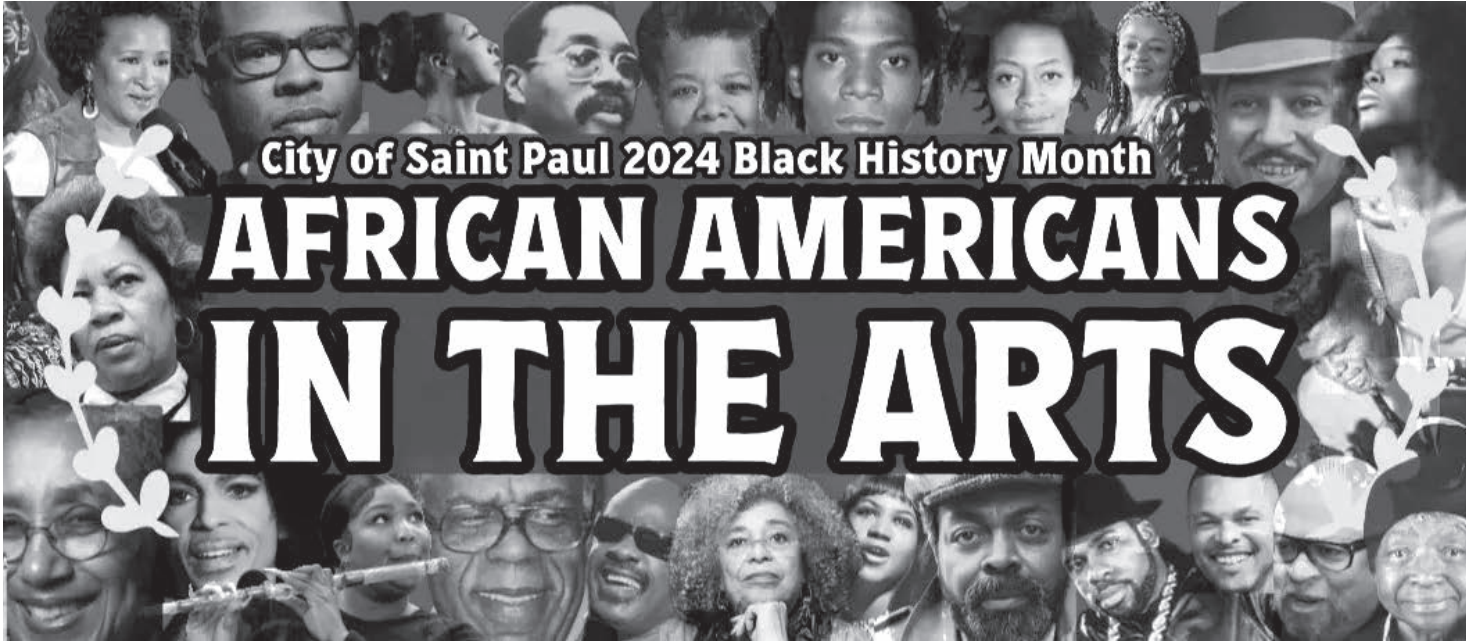
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Please contact Ali Lilja to RSVP or for any questions alilja@sholom.com 651.328.2258



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In the Community



Celebrate “African Americans in the Arts”

By Donicia Soliz, Library Manager
St. Paul Public Library and the City of St. Paul are hosting a cultural celebration throughout February created by and for the Black and African American community. St. Paul residents are invited to explore “African Americans in the Arts” with three events offered virtually and in-person.
All events are free, and all are welcome.
The first event will be on Thursday, February 1 from Noon-1:30 p.m. At this virtual event, we will honor one of our Beautiful Ancestors and have a panel discussion with a

select group of Minnesota Elders. They will share some of their history in the arts as well as some words of wisdom.
On February 15 from 12-1:30 p.m. we are offering a meditation and yoga experience both virtually and in-person. If you would like to participate in person, you may do so at City Hall in Room 40.
Our final event will be in person at Rondo Library, 461 Dale Street North, on Thursday, February 29, from 3-7 p.m. featuring hands-on art creation where you can create a piece of art to take home. We will also celebrate the 50th



anniversary of Hip-Hop with music, and there will be artistic and informational presentations.
Visit engagestpaul.org/black-history-month-2024 to learn more about African Americans in the Arts and to log in.
WEST 7TH PUBLIC LIBRARY, 265 Oneida St. Hours: Mon, Thu 12:30-8 p.m., Tue 11:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. and Wed, Fri 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; closed Sat-Sun.

REP pg 1

turns 15 this March, said her work as a legislator influences her art just as much as her art influences her work as a legislator. Ultimately though, her artistic pursuits are equal parts a job and her passion.
“My art is my medicine and my band are the physicians,” she said. “When we’re in here creating together we really heal a lot of punctures that come from systemic Injustices.”
“Unlock the Chamber” drops on February 12. She is hosting two events leading up the the release:
• Unlock the Chamber Listening Party, February 9, 7:00-9:30 p.m., Pimento, Downtown St. Paul;
• Unlock the Chamber Album Release Show, February 10, 7:00-9:30 p.m., Club Rumba, Minneapolis
Learn more and purchase the album at iammariaisa.com.



SHARE YOUR Good News!

Thanks to Shannon Bohnen, owner of Fancy Clam, the St. Paul digital marketing agency [fancyclam.com], for initiating the monthly **Good News!** feature.
Good News! has brought ideas and encouraging words, and you can sponsor your **Good News!** for \$50 per month.

To share your **Good News!** contact Jerry Rothstein at info@communityreporter.org
“We love the things we love for what they are.”
— Robert Frost



SEEKING PRESENTERS FOR HOME IMPROVEMENT WORKSHOP DAY IN MARCH 2024
The Macalester-Groveland Community Council and Highland District Council’s Home Improvement Workshop Day returns with 45-minute to one-hour workshops. Presenters wanted for March 9 event! More information and the application is available at macgrove.org/hiwd. Workshop space is limited.

BLOOD AND DONATION DRIVE ON FEBRUARY 2
Join us Friday, Feb 2, 10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the Highland Park Community Center for a blood drive and donation drive. Bring a non-perishable food items for Francis Basket Food Market. Learn more at highlanddistrictcouncil.org.

FAMILY SLEDDING PARTY ON PRESIDENTS DAY
Bundle up for some fun in the snow and join us Monday, Feb 19, 12 – 2 p.m. at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Parkway. There will be a bonfire, StoryWalk, hot cocoa, s’mores, sledding and much more. Additional details and updates will be shared on the event Facebook page. In partnership with St. Paul Parks and Recreation and St. Paul Public Library.

UPCOMING MEETINGS
Highland Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy with an online option. Zoom link and meeting agendas at highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.
• HDC Board Meeting - 2/1, 7 p.m.
• Transportation Committee meeting - 2/13, 7 p.m.
• Community Development Committee meeting - 2/20, 6:30 p.m.
• Community Engagement Committee meeting - 2/26 at 7 p.m.

FEDERATION UPDATE



WEST 7TH WINTER WALK - EMBRACE THE CHILL!
Join us for a community outing Feb. 4, 3 pm. Lace up your boots and meet at Victoria Park (852 Thurston St., St. Paul). Whether you’re a winter enthusiast or just looking for a relaxing afternoon, this walk is for everyone. Bundle up, bring your friends and family and enjoy the winter weather.

2ND ANNUAL WEST 7TH COMMUNITY MERCHANDISE DESIGN CONTEST
Seeking artists to submit designs. T-shirt sales proceeds will help West 7th/Fort Road Federation to promote a welcoming and safe community.

SEEKING GARDENS FOR WEST END GARDEN TOUR
The West End Garden Tour returns June 15. If your garden is a haven of blooms, a sanctuary for pollinators or a unique oasis of tranquility, we want to feature it on our tour!

UPCOMING MEETINGS
Transportation & Land Use Committee: 2/7, 6:30 p.m.
Board Meeting - 2/12, 7:00 p.m.
Community Engagement/Fundraising - 2/15, 6:30 p.m.

STAY IN TOUCH
“Like” us on Facebook. Subscribe to e-newsletter. More information at fortroadfederation.org

CONTACT
Julia McColley, julia@fortroadfederation.org;
651-298-5599; 882 West 7th, Suite 6, Rathskeller Building.



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Check the website for the latest information or call the Center.

Foodmobile Bringing Food Shelf to the Neighborhood

Keystone’s Foodmobiles (mobile food shelf) travels throughout St. Paul and the northern suburbs of Ramsey County to bring nutritious food to people in need. For more information about where our Foodmobile stops, you can visit keystoneservices.org

Fare for All at West 7th Community Center

Fare for All allows you to shop for quality, nutritious foods at a discount and budget-friendly prices. All are welcome! The upcoming Fare for All events at West 7th Community Center are Feb 2, March 7 and April 5. The events will all run 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Visit keystoneservices.org/events

Ask a Lawyer - Volunteer Lawyer visits West 7th

With tax season right around the corner, now is the perfect time to talk with a legal consultant to prepare for your taxes. Our legal volunteer, Dave Burns, offers free, one-time 15-minute consultations at the West 7th Community Center every 3rd Wednesday of the month. He can help assist with any legal issue except criminal law issues. To book your appointment, please call the West 7th Community Center at (651) 298-5493.

Play Pickleball!

For people age 55+. Novice and advanced Pickleball matches are played for fun and include similar levels of play. Merriam Park Community Center, Monday-Thursday, 9:15-11:45 a.m. \$2/per session. To get a good and enjoyable workout, call the Merriam Park Community Center at 651-645-0349 to sign up for your first game of Pickleball!



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BEA'S BOOKS

"Once and Future" is a hard to put down



BEATRICE COSGROVE reviewer

Sci-fi? Check. Fantasy? Check. Romance? Check. Action and adventure? Check.

"Once and Future" by A.R. Capetta and Cory McCarthy somehow combines all of those in a well-written, hard to put down story with characters so easy to love, hate and feel something in between the two.

I picked this up at the library after getting recommendations for almost three years (yes, it's taken me that long). I opened it and was instantly plunged into the story of Ari Helix, the latest (and first female!) reincarnation of King Arthur. Merlin, Arthur's well-known sidekick, is awoken from a fantastical slumber when Ari lifts a magical sword (a.k.a. Excalibur) from a tree after crash-landing her trusty spaceship, Error, on Old Earth. Old Earth, as it came to be known, is essentially the planet where we currently reside, but is now in ruins after the galaxy was taken over by an all-powerful company called Mercer.

Ari and her brother, Kay, aren't technically supposed to be on Old Earth, having just escaped Mercer associates. After her exploring leads her to lifting Excalibur from the ground, Merlin wakes and explains to Ari the system of reincarnation. Ari seems to be Merlin's last hope to stop his backward aging; if he succeeds in the (very simple) steps set before him; training Ari, nudging her onto the nearest throne and uniting all of humankind. This (quite shockingly)

proves to be difficult, even with Ari's loyal knights she meets along the way. The tale is spun so elaborately, one adventure melds seamlessly into the next, fabricating an intricate web of politics, corruption, capitalism and a galaxy on the brink of being controlled by a merciless corporation.

I picked this book up, read about 30 pages and put it down for a while, reading increments when I could. Eventually, though, the story just got too good and I read voraciously until the end. I loved how the characters wove into each other's lives and had space given to them within the story. I also liked how the story was inclusive and diverse, highlighting LGBTQ+ and strong female youth.

I was especially hesitant when it came to this book, as I am not a sci-fi/fantasy kind of person, and the pairing of an age-old myth and a futuristic, sci-fi universe seemed odd, but once I got past the irony I found that it worked quite well, though there were a few things that frustrated me. The first was that there was quite a bit of romance that went past what I thought would have been common in a YA adventure story, especially since a lot of it distracted from the storyline and was a bit cheesy. My other critique is that sometimes the dialogue could be hard to follow. This may not be an area of concern for others, but now and again I found myself confused with who was speaking and had to re-read passages several times. Otherwise, I found "Once and Future" to be a thrilling book with lots of twists, telling the classic story of overthrowing society in a whole new way and rebuilding sci-fi from the stars up, one planet at a time. I would recommend this book to ages 13+.

DEBATE, PG 4

debated really good teams and they pushed us to make the best versions of our arguments. You learn more in harder debates and we know what we need to win next time."

These students are members of the Minnesota

Urban Debate League (MNUDL), a program of Augsburg University. MNUDL provides academic competitive debate programming for more than 1,300 middle and high school students in the Twin Cities.

The MNSHL Minnesota State Debate Tournament is the longest running MSHSL event. The 2024 tournament was the 123rd edition.

BULLETIN BOARD



WINTER CARNIVAL RONDO NIGHT

February 1, 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. Landmark Center

Join us at the second St. Paul Winter Carnival's Rondo Night! Enjoy lively Rondo performances. Support BIPOC Rondo artists, businesses and organizations. Savor flavorful bites from West Indies Soul while learning more about the vibrant history of Rondo. Door prizes too! It will be a night to remember...we can't wait to see you! Learn more at wintercarnival.com/event/rondo-night

JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT

Feb. 2-10. King of Kings Lutheran Church, Woodbury. \$15-25. One of the most enduring shows of all time, Joseph is a reimagining of the Biblical story of Joseph, his father Jacob, eleven brothers and their wives and the coat of many colors is being staged by Open Door Community Theater. A portion of ticket sales will go to Joseph's Coat. Bring full-size shampoo, body wash, deodorant and lotion to donate. Info: opendoorcommunitytheatre.thundertix.com/events/222107.

'TIL DEATH

Feb. 2-17. Art House North Theater. \$20-30. The hit musical comedy that's become a Twin Cities Valentine's tradition returns for its 12th season! \$20-30. Info: visitbucketbrigadetheater.com/shows/til-death.

DOGGIE DEPOT

Feb. 3, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Union Depot is going to the dogs. Shop local pet vendors and celebrate the grand crowning ceremony of the 2024 St. Paul Winter Carnival Canine King & Queen. Visit uniondepot.org/doggiedepot



ST. PAUL BOUNCING TEAM TRYOUTS

Feb 2, 6-9 p.m. Landmark Center. These aerial acrobatics, inspired by an Eskimo hunting tradition, are among the oldest performances in the Winter Carnival's history and have continued to impress spectators today. Free and open to the public. Info: stpaulbouncingteam.org

PLEASANT AVE RECONSTRUCTION OPEN HOUSE

Feb. 5, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Linwood Recreation Center. The City of St. Paul plans to reconstruct Pleasant Ave. from St. Clair Ave. to Victoria St. in 2025. Info: stpaul.gov/projects/public-works/pw2025pleasantavereconstruction

CZECH AND SLOVAK GIFT SHOP OPEN

Feb. 6, 9-10 a.m., March 24 10 a.m.-1 p.m. or you can make an appointment via giftshop@sokolmn.org.

RED BULL HEAVY METAL

Feb. 10, 2-6 p.m. State Capitol Building. A street snowboard contest that features the most progressive rail riding in the world. Free. Open to the public. Info: redbull.com/us-en/events/red-bull-heavy-metal

SUNDAYS AT LANDMARK: URBAN EXPEDITION - AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Feb. 11, 1-3 p.m. Landmark Center. Free. Celebrate authentic cultural experiences including music, dance, crafts and traditions for a truly immersive program. Info: landmarkcenter.org/sundays-at-landmark

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