

Community REPORTER

SERVING WEST END NEIGHBORHOODS, DOWNTOWN ST. PAUL TO FORT SNELLING, SINCE 1970



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VOL. 55 NO. 1

JANUARY 2025

CIRCULATION 13,000

DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE Rice Creek Commons



RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 5 RAFAEL ORTEGA columnist

Although it's not right here in the city, I know many of you are still interested in the former TCAAP property in Arden Hills (now Rice Creek Commons) and how we are working to make it a productive place for people to live and work. One of our challenges is that we are a fully developed county in Ramsey County and the only way to expand the tax base is to clean up brownfields. In 2013, we purchased this property (the largest superfund site in the state) and cleaned it up. By redeveloping this parcel, we will expand our tax base and will be able to reduce every Ramsey County taxpayer's burden. Like most big redevelopment projects, it takes time and we need to get cities, the county and developers to agree and we need the economic vision to fit today's conditions. Here is the update.

The Joint Development Authority (JDA) continues to have productive conversations to advance plans for Rice Creek Commons (RCC), a once-in-a-generation development opportunity.

We've worked collaboratively to build upon prior work of the JDA and community engagement while thoughtfully factoring in how community needs have changed in recent years. The site remains one of the premiere opportunities not just in Minnesota but for fully urbanized counties like ours across the country.

Recent milestones include:

Outlot A: After working closely with the JDA on a request for development interest, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners approved a purchase and sale agreement with Ryan Companies for Outlot A, a 40-acre, shovel-ready parcel located on the north end of the RCC redevelopment site. Ryan Companies has actively marketed the site to a variety of potential end users.

Housing: Earlier this year, the Arden Hills City Council approved amendments to the TCAAP Redevelopment Code (TRC) and the city's Comprehensive Plan that set the maximum number of housing units allowed on the site at 1,960. The JDA collectively moved forward with the increase based on research on current and future housing demands. The decision was informed by community engagement through public meetings and testimony, as well as conversations with Alatus LLC, our development partner, about how to add units without compromising greenspace, amenities and the overall feel of the community.

Infrastructure: This spring, Ramsey County – in partnership with the JDA and City of Arden Hills – selected Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc. to provide infrastructure engineering services, starting with the Spine Road that will serve as the main public roadway through RCC.

Green energy: Last year, the JDA refreshed its green energy vision, aligning it with goals in the State of Minnesota's Climate Action Framework: carbon neutrality, clean energy, climate resiliency, equity and innovation. The JDA and project team are taking tangible steps to implement this ambitious vision, including a decision to pursue LEED for Communities certification at the Platinum level, creating sustainability guidelines for the entire site, and working with Ever-Green Energy and LHB to analyze the site's energy needs and potential green energy solutions.

I'm grateful to my county and City of Arden Hills colleagues on the JDA for their ongoing partnership to realize our shared vision of creating economic prosperity, building an inclusive economy and developing a climate-forward community.

Viengchan Market Opens in Former Cooper's Site

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

The long-awaited return of a neighborhood grocery store to West 7th finally came when Viengchan Oriental Market opened its doors on December 18 at the site of the former Cooper's Foods, 633 West 7th St.



"We are excited to officially open Viengchan's doors to the community," said Herder Her, who along with his siblings Pader Her-Vang and Papeng Her-Yang, own the market. "We look forward to becoming part of this neighborhood."

The new store features traditional Asian foods alongside more American fare.

"Next to your Sara Lee bread, you might find some flavored bread from Korea. Next to your Campbell's chicken noodle soup, you might find some curry," said Viengchan employee Mua Xiong. "You might find a whole wall of rice, which is probably not the same as Cooper's or maybe what you are used to."

Her-Yang said that choice was intentional. "We want people to come in, in one stop, and feel and experience our culture, and experience other cultures when coming here. Maybe you can experience your home country," she said.

The market offers a full deli, with freshly prepared dishes and meats.

"We are trying to provide a core service to the community," said Her-Yang.

In addition, Viengchan offers a loyalty program offering 5% cashback on your purchases.

This is the second location for Viengchan. The first opened in Brooklyn Park in 2016.

"We started with 2,500 square feet, then expanded to 4500 square feet. Then purchased the whole strip mall in 2022 with 7,000 square feet," said Her-Vang. "Now we are 19,000 square feet, triple what we had. It is a big jump



Siblings and owners Papeng Her-Yang, Herder Her and Pader Her-Vang of Viengchan Market cut the ribbon on their newest location at 633 West 7th on December 18 with the help of State Senator Founh Hwaj.



Viengchan's first customers at their grand opening on December 18.

for us and we are proud to be there today."

She said that the business started as a way that the siblings could all work together while still remaining full-time students after their immigration to the United States.

Her-Vang said that working with her siblings can have its challenges, but overall the business has brought them all closer together.

"We are siblings and we are doing business together, sometimes we do run into some problems," she said. "But we are happy that the

relationship as brothers and sisters is so strong we can overcome all that struggle. We are very, very happy that we get to come to America and also have that opportunity to do business together."

Her-Yang said, the learning curve in starting a business was steep, especially as new immigrants.

"It was really challenging at the beginning to start a business with language barriers and was really hard for us to learn," she said.

With that said, they are very excited to be in the West 7th Community.

"When we wanted to expand our business, St. Paul was one of the locations we wanted to expand," Her-Yang said. "We want to get to know other communities and other cultures. That is how we decided to purchase the building here."

If you go

VIENGCHAN ORIENTAL MARKET, 633 West 7th St. Hours 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Monday - Saturday; 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Sunday. viengchanmarket.com

COMMUNITY HAPPENING

New Crisis Nursery Offers Support to Families in Need

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

Sarah Ellefson, the Executive Director of STAR House, the only home based residential crisis nursery in Ramsey County, has been working to make her dream become reality for over two decades.

"Pen to paper has probably been about five years, but I first wrote the marketing plan in 2000," she said.

Ellefson, who said she grew up in St. Paul as the child of a single parent who struggled, recognized the need for a service like STAR House based on her personal experience.

"I had a lot of family drama going generations back," she said.

Ellefson said she put her past experience into her passion and left her corporate job to go back to school and began working at other children's residential care facilities to help shape her vision. That long-standing vision came true in November when STAR House opened its doors.

Offering crisis nursery services for children from 0-5 years old, they provide a free, safe space for families in need.

"A crisis nursery is a place that families can bring their children when they're going through hard times. It can be the stress, or it could be things like domestic violence or being unhoused," said Ellefson. "So they can come stay for a limited time and the parents can go do what they need to do."

The facility, which has 12 paid round-the-



Board President Sarah Anderson and Executive Director Sarah Ellefson work to provide free, safe, holistic and trauma-informed care to children at STAR House.

clock staff, can serve five children at any given time. They provide clothing, food and bedding, in addition to 24-hour care for the kids staying with them.

"The kids really, they come with the clothes on their back and any prescriptions that they need," Ellefson said.

Families have to call to make an appointment, which are first come, first served. Families have to go through an intake

process and children can stay a maximum of 48 hours.

"There's no cost to use it," Ellefson said.

"Families define what their crisis is. We figure if someone is asking for help, they need help."

"There are some criteria that we make sure that they fit," she added.

Those criteria include whether the children are ill and their level of mobility.

CRISIS NURSERY, PG 2



BEA'S BOOKS

Setting My Reading Goals

BY BEATRICE COSGROVE

As 2024 draws to a close, I am reflecting on unrealistic expectations and my attempts to address them. For as long as I can remember I have set my sights on goals that weren't always achievable and almost never led to growth. It has been difficult to learn that starting small is the way to go, but slowly I have begun to discover that I am disappointed less and often find opportunities to achieve those bigger goals that were simply too much. I would like to share some of the things I have learned in this past year in the context of setting reading goals in 2025.

The bottom line is this: be realistic. Falling behind that Goodreads reading goal is so, so, so very easy. Have I said it is so easy? Setting a goal you know you will surpass (even barely) is completely okay and will give you more cause to celebrate when you go above and beyond those expectations. Making monthly goals can be just as effective, if not more. Yearly goals are easy to push off, but having a closer deadline can be more motivating.

Reading goals don't simply have to be about reading a specific amount of books, either. There are a plethora of categories that will make you feel just as successful.



I have found that I shy away from reading longer books because it puts me behind on my yearly reading goal. Granted, I don't love

long books, but know that they are enjoyed by many. Creating an overall page goal (i.e. I want to read 200 pages this month)

can be a better fit. Some readers struggle with challenging books (hello, classics), so making it a goal to read one short classic and working up from that can be a rewarding experience. Non-fiction ties in closely with classic, as well. Some readers love putting off non-fiction (who, me?). These books can take time and effort, so I would recommend choosing your books wisely, knowing they will be a significant time investment no matter the length. Having a small, yearly goal of two or three non-fiction books is a really good start.

Creating these goals requires reflection on several factors, as well. Schedule comes first. How much time do you have on your hands? Are you constantly busy? Are weekends fully booked? Or do you find yourself in need of an activity to pass the time? If your schedule is nonstop, please, I beg of you, do not set your goal to 50 books per year. Please. Alternatively, if you have a relatively free schedule, don't set your goal sky-high, either, find a healthy middle ground with wiggle room.

That's it! Have a wonderful start to the New Year and think twice before typing up a reading goal—in a way you're being kind to yourself this time next year.

COMMUNITYHAPPENING

Plastic in Land and Air

In part six of her series on plastics, Julie Borgerding July fills us in on where we can recycle different types of plastics in our own backyard.

BY JULIE BORGERDING JULY

Plastic is everywhere. While one form of plastic on land is easily seen as litter, there are also microparticles in fields where food is grown. The jury is out as to whether this is something to be concerned about in Minnesota.

Plastics get into agricultural fields sometimes intentionally, sometimes not - on seeds, from plastic mulch sheeting, in airborne and waterborne forms, sludge and wastewater used for their nutrients and from paints. Micro and nano plastics can affect soil structure and soil fertility by destroying microbiota and affecting enzymes in the nutrients cycle, water filtration and contamination of water. All this can affect plant growth.



Sludge from water treatment facilities and manufacturing facilities has been used across the country on fields, some of

which have now been shown to kill plants and cattle. While sludge puts some needed nutrients back into soil, it also can put heavy metals and long-lasting PFAS chemicals in the soil. If PFAS are in the sludge, they will eventually get into water. Plastic can adhere to roots and stunt plants and carry microplastics internally. It can externally stick to leaves and be difficult to wash off. Livestock eating plant material ingest microplastic and if we eat any of these animals, we ingest plastic.

PFAS, used in products like paper cup coating and nonstick and stain resistant materials, are being taken out of production. It has taken many years for their destructive effects to be made known. An "Analytical Chemistry" article notes the lack of standardized research methods for better understanding plastic's environmental impact. Of the 80,000 registered chemicals used in plastic, only 12 are regulated! There is a lot we do not know.

Back to the trash in our streets. This plastic gets blown around to trees, rivers, lakes and can end up in far places by air. Sun and wind break down the plastic bottles,

bags and other stuff into micro plastics, which, if floating, get caught on something, and microbes get blown around in the air across states. Car tire wear leaves 2 or more pounds of microplastic per tire in our sewers via rain or into the air by wind. We might bring this into our homes on our shoes, but we have plenty of other plastic in our homes to get into the air - carpet, curtains, toys, polyester and other fibers in our linens and clothes. We cannot get away from plastic.

However, we can intentionally use less, demand less, buy less. Everyone's effort will be different. But it is the only way to get production down. If there is less demand, less will be made. Recycling empty recyclable plastic is vital. Only 5% of recyclable bottles are recycled. We can easily do way better! Below is a very informative, easy to watch video of the whole plastic problem.

Watch video: [youtube.com/watch?v=49OJoTsZY0o&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49OJoTsZY0o&t=2s)



CRISIS NURSERY, PG 1

"We can't take injectable medications for children other than EpiPens," Ellefson said. She said they try to be as accommodating as possible to ensure families can get the help they need. And that openness shows.

Between their soft opening November 1 through December 10, they have already provided 29 "tuck-ins" (which they define as one overnight stay per child served) to 11 children. Currently, they offer care Friday through Sunday.

Board President Sarah Anderson said that, until very recently, they were an all volunteer organization. They started their

hiring process in earnest this summer in preparation of opening this fall.

While they did receive state funding to get the center off the ground, as a nonprofit, they are reliant on donations from the community and their partners to offer their services, including a major grant from Ikea.

"Ikea has been a big help for us, too. Over half the furniture they donated," Anderson said. "They pulled up their truck and grabbed the stuff and hired Taskrabbits to put it all together."

She said they also donated bedding, dishes and silverware for the house.

All of that creates a feeling of home for the children staying at STAR House. Which

is important, because they want to create a safe, welcoming space for the families who need their service.

"We are a place where kids can be kids while the grownups do the hard things," said Anderson.

LEARN MORE:

To learn more about STAR House, or to donate to their Amazon or Walmart wish lists, visit linktr.ee/starhousemn

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Community News & Events

Safe Gun Storage Signs Installed in Downtown St. Paul Parking Ramps

St. Paul Moms Demand Action, the local chapter of a gun safety advocacy group, recently celebrated the installation of seven signs being installed at parking garages in downtown St. Paul, highlighting the City's gun safety ordinances.

Working with the St. Paul Downtown Alliance and Councilmember Rebecca Noecker's office, the signs have been installed in prominent places in City-owned ramps within the Downtown Improvement District (DID).

Noecker said that Moms demand action really drove the partnership as a way to raise awareness about the new gun laws.

"A new ordinance is only as good as the paper it is written on," said Noecker. "I'm really appreciative of Moms Demand Action. They were creative and persistent in finding ways for people to know about the ordinance."

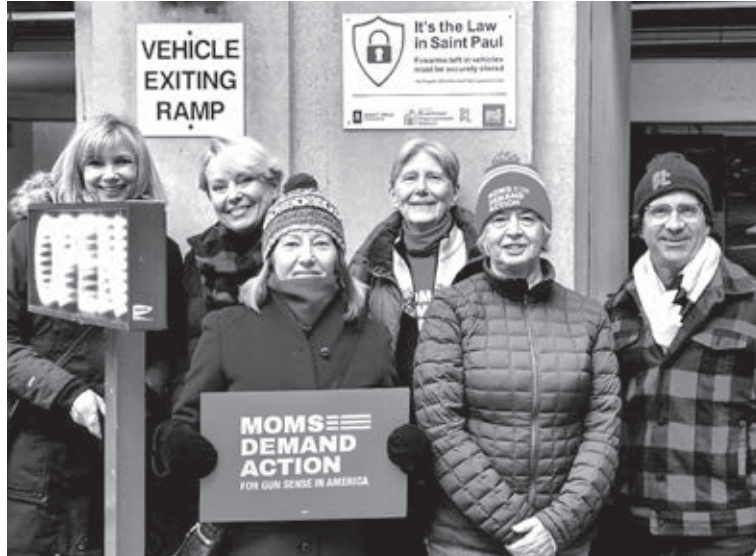
For the Downtown Alliance, it was an easy win for them to help get the word out.

"It seemed like a good, positive public service announcement and public safety initiative," said John Brandamer, Director of Safety Strategies for the DID.

The signage, installed at entrances and elevator banks within the ramps, brings awareness to the City's gun safety ordinances. Passed in May 2023, the ordinance requires that all guns be safely secured with trigger locks when not in the owner's possession, making it a crime to leave firearms unattended, unsecured or in a place where it could be accessed. Someone found to not have their firearm secured could face up to 90 days in jail or confiscation of their weapon.

According to Everytown for Gun Safety, the largest source of gun thefts is from cars, with about one gun theft from a car every nine minutes. Too often, those stolen weapons are used in other crimes.

Brandamer said that, while guns being stolen from cars in downtown St. Paul isn't as big of a problem as it is nationally, getting the message out is still important, especially with many people coming into town for events from places where there are not such rules in place.



Moms Demand Action members Carla Gillespie, Marit Brock, Marti Lybeck (back row) Dawn Einwalter and Gretchen Damon, along with Downtown Alliance President Joe Spencer, celebrate the installation of new gun safety signage.

"We want to remind people coming into downtown of the rules," he said.

Gretchen Damon, a spokesperson for Moms Demand Action, said that she hopes the signs will raise awareness of the ordinance, and more importantly, increase public safety in downtown St. Paul.

"A safe downtown is a visited downtown," she said.

Brandamer said that they plan to continue the program to other parking ramps and lots within downtown in the coming months as the DID expands to include the eastern half of downtown in 2025.

ST. PAUL CITY COUNCIL OVERRIDES MAYOR'S VETO, ADOPTS 2025 BUDGET

In a flurry of activity over the course of two days on December 18-19, the City Council passed the 2025 budget for the City, but not without some tumult.

The Council passed their initial proposed budget on December 18, which included an increase to the city's tax levy of 5.9%, 2% less than the initial budget proposal from the mayor's office.

The next day, Mayor Carter issued a line item veto of five items. At issue were a \$1.2 million cut to the police budget, eliminating the Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity Director position and hiring and contracting freezes. At a special session on December 19, the Council overrode the Mayor's veto on a 7-0 vote, pushing through their initial budget proposal.

Highlights include adding seven new firefighters, restoring \$175,000 in library funding for materials and allocating \$500,000 for the Transforming Libraries project, restoring funding to continue the free swimming program and continuing the free youth sports programs, dedicated funding for tree planting and urban canopy to address the climate crisis, creating a new \$1.4 million fund to support Commercial Corridors, investing \$2.5 million in downtown revitalization efforts and a \$4 million investment into affordable housing and supports for renters.

One of the major sticking points over the proposed budget arose from disagreements over police spending.

In their statement, the City Council expressed concerns about reigning in overtime spending by the police force, which is expected to surpass their overtime budget by \$5 million in 2024.

Mayor Carter said in a statement that the primary drivers of those additional expenses are essential and required tasks, such as back-filling patrol shifts for officers away on military or medical leave, pursuing time-sensitive investigations and testifying in criminal trials.

"As these are essential and required services, this reduction cannot be realized as actual savings," Carter said in a statement. Find the full proposed budget at stpaul.gov/ofs/saint-pauls-budget/2025-proposed-budget

THE GNOMES ARE BACK WITH ANOTHER #GNOMEVASION!!

The Gnomes have settled in St. Paul Parks and Recreation spaces again, but the parks & rec crew teamed up to help you hone in on their locations.

This popular gnome scavenger hunt has gnome seekers solving clues and exploring St. Paul parks to find them. This is a fun activity for all ages and a great opportunity to

FOR MORE COMMUNITY NEWS, VISIT COMMUNITYREPORTER.ORG/CATEGORY/NEIGHBORHOOD-NEWS

get out and about in the beautiful cold-weather season.

When you find them, post a selfie with the Gnome and use hashtag #stpgnometakeover-shhh, be careful not to give away the location in your photo!

Decipher all the clues--can you find the whole Gnome family? Learn more at stpaul.gov/news/gnome-scavenger-hunt.

ST. PAUL CONTINUES TO EXPLORE TRANSIT OPTIONS ALONG WEST 7TH/RIVERVIEW CORRIDOR

The City of St. Paul continues to explore options for bus rapid transit along the Riverview Corridor, working alongside partners at Metro Transit, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Ramsey County and others.

Following the county's decision to end its study into a proposed streetcar project--which would have traveled down West 7th Street, from downtown St. Paul to the airport and Mall of America--partners remain committed to identifying the best options for connections along the busy West 7th/Riverview Corridor.

"We have heard loud and clear from our residents that improvements along West 7th Street are critical for the future vitality of this corridor," said Mayor Melvin Carter. "This is a major commercial thoroughfare in our city, and improvements will ensure efficient public transit and safer conditions for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists."

Chief Resilience Officer Russ Stark said the corridor makes vital transit connections between key regional economic development drivers, while also holding the promise of continued reinvestment in and revitalization of West 7th Street in St. Paul.

"Our neighbors on West 7th are eager for a long overdue transit upgrade," said Ward 3 Councilmember Saura Jost. "They've been thoughtful and engaged on the topic of Riverview Corridor and West 7th's future, and above all, they've been patient. St. Paul is ready to honor that engagement and patience with urgency as we move toward an exciting new future for one of our city's finest streets."

"We must move forward with urgency to build a safer, greener, and more vibrant transit corridor along West 7th Street," said Ward 2 Councilmember Rebecca Noecker. "I'm looking forward to a renewed process that is transparent, efficient, and accountable to the community."

"We appreciate and acknowledge the leadership by Ramsey County in working with the community to

produce a foundation of work from which we can develop transit solutions for the Riverview Corridor that will move the entire region forward," Stark said. "We look forward to reaching a shared vision that brings major transit investments to the East Metro that result in increased prosperity, equity, and mobility for everyone." A community engagement process regarding concepts for improvements to the Riverview Corridor is expected to commence in early 2025.

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Contact us at 651-797-7725 or visit: keystoneservices.org/volunteer

Winter Warming Space Open

Four Winter Warming Spaces in St. Paul are open to anyone in need of a place to warm up overnight. The spaces offer seating, blankets, light snacks and warm beverages. They also provide winter warming supplies such as mittens and hats when available.

The Winter Warming Spaces are open from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. every night through March 31, 2025.

Available locations: The Holy Christian Church, 125 Stevens St. W St. Paul, MN 55107. Serving women; St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran, 100 N Oxford St. St. Paul, MN 55104. Serving families and youth ages 18-24; Phalen Activity Center, 1530 Phalen Dr. St. Paul, MN 55106. Serving single adult males; Newell Park Building, 900 Fairview Ave N. St. Paul, MN 55104. Serving single adult males.

Additional services

When temperatures reach zero degrees or below and/or when windchill reaches -15 degrees or below, additional local shelter beds or warming spaces

Do you or someone you know need a place to warm-up overnight?
Ramsey County warming spaces are open nightly.
Find a space: 651-266-1035

may become available. Contact Ramsey County staff at 651-266-1035 or email ColdWeatherReferrals@ramseycounty.us to receive a referral.

Reach family shelter staff at chs.fas.shelterteam@ramseycounty.us from 7 a.m. - 5:15 p.m.

Find more resources at ramseycounty.us/residents/assistance-support/assistance/housing-services-support

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Community Traditions

Goodbye Mr. Positive

Carl "Mr. Positive" Bentson passed away on December 18. He was 62 Years old.

A lifelong West 7th resident, Bentson was known as "Mr. Positive" because of his always upbeat demeanor, especially in light of his disability, a type of savant syndrome, which caused him to be institutionalized as a child. He was fostered by Vasti Risdall, who herself was a West End fixture, raising over 160 foster children, many with special needs. Bentson is survived by Karen Koeppel, his best friend of over 30 years who helped to care for him after Risdall's passing.

Bentson was diagnosed with advanced esophageal cancer in February. Despite his diagnosis, he remained Mr. Positive. "I'm going to live 20 or 30 more years," he told Tim Rumsey in May of this year. He retired in March of this year from Bridgeview School, where he worked for 40 years.

Bentson was a fixture in the West 7th Community, always willing to help his neighbors mow their lawns and shovel their walks, when he wasn't sitting at his patio table reading an automotive manual. He was the first person to make a snowman after the first snowfall in the neighborhood each year.

After hearing the news of his passing, neighbors gathered after the snowfall on December 19 to make a snowman at his home in his honor.

Bentson was probably most recognizable on his three-wheeled bicycle, which he's ridden everywhere in our community and beyond. Never able to drive, despite his encyclopedic knowledge of classic cars, Bentson would deck out his various trikes over the years with lights, windshields and awnings to make his ride as one of a kind as he was, riding as much as 8,000 miles a year.

He'll be mourned by the entire West 7th Community.



"Mr. Positive" Carl Bentson

**In Memoriam
Carl "Mr. Positive" Bentson**



There is a hole in the heart of West 7th Street now. Carl Bentson, 62, has died. He was a friend of many of us and we were lucky to have known his kind and gentle soul. I will miss his greeting wave from his street side table while having morning coffee when I passed by while driving down St. Clair Ave.

He knew my car. For sure more than I, as he was a savant of automobiles often citing model year, engine specs and many car details from memory. I was one of the lucky ones he adopted. I was adopted before I knew I was. And so, when I knew, with proper payment, Carl mowed my lawn in the summer and blew off the sidewalk snow in winter. He became my friend. Always there, but no more. Only our memories now.

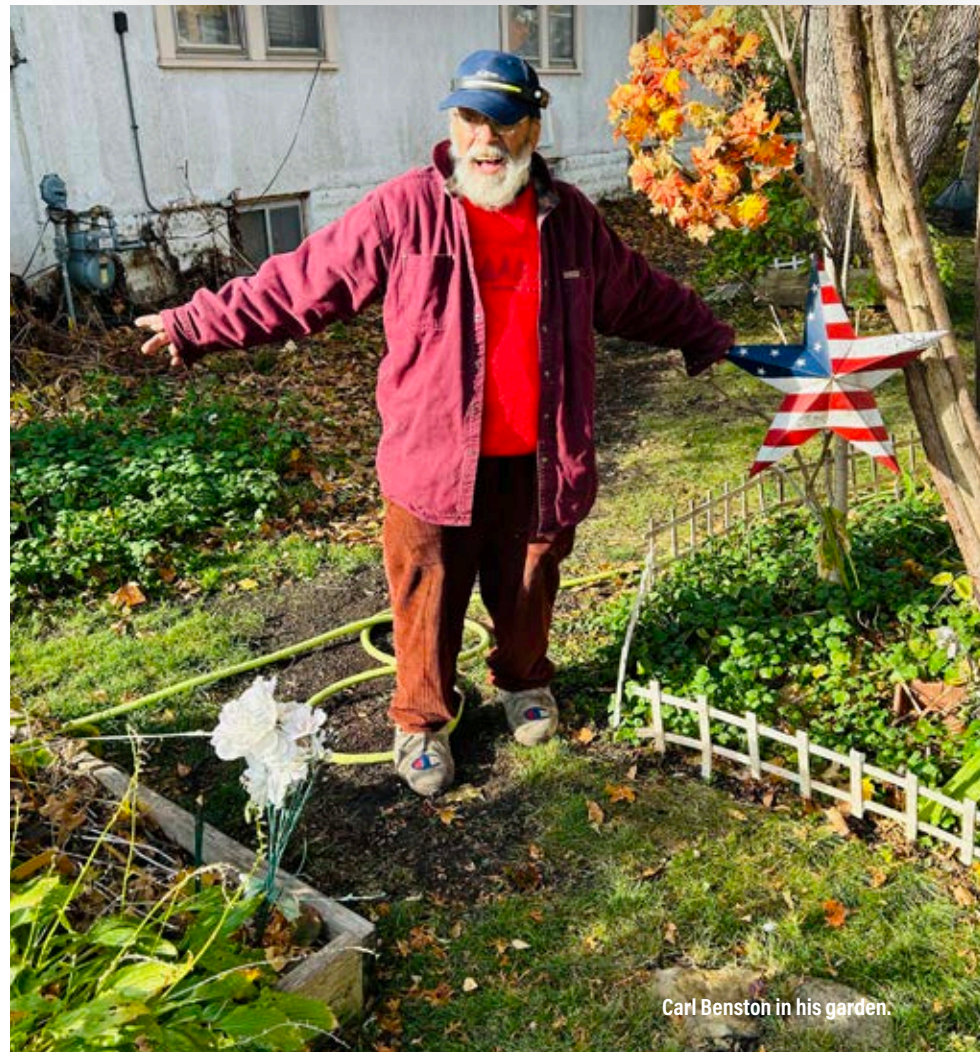
In his last year, Carl slowed down a bit to rest and talk sometimes. That was not often as he had neighbors to take care of and he showed up to do that. To the end he was Mr. Positive, flagging me down one day this fall to show off his last rose of the season and delight that Dr. Rumsey had taken him shopping and he was stocked up on batteries and reflectors for his bike.

God Bless Carl Bentson.
~ Kent Petterson, West End Resident & Business Owner

Read more

The Community Reporter has featured stories about Bentson for years in our pages. Visit bit.ly/mr_positive to go deeper and learn more about Bentson's life.

Filmmaker Mike Hazard made a documentary about Bentson entitled "Mr. Positive" that you can watch at communityreporter.org/a-community-lesson-for-the-whole-world.



Carl Bentson in his garden.



Carl's last rose



Neighbors paid tribute to Bentson's annual snowman the day after his passing on December 19.

KENT PETERSON

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Community Nourishment

HEALTHLINE

Setting SMART goals this New Year!

BY TATUM WILLIAMS, MD

It's a new year and a new you! The time has rolled around again to write down your New Year's resolutions and make good on your goals. Many people use this time to kickstart changes to improve their health. Unfortunately, research shows that almost 80% of New Year's resolutions, no matter how well intentioned, come to an end by the second week of February. Often this is because the goals we set are too broad or unrealistic. For example, the goals to exercise more or eat healthier, while great ideas, do not give us a strong foundation to achieve those goals. Without specific steps and smaller milestones, it's easy to feel overwhelmed or discouraged when progress is slower than expected. When changes don't happen right away, it's easy to lose motivation, but slow and steady wins the race.

Small changes are easier to incorporate into your daily routine and make consistent change over time. For instance, deciding to completely cut out carbohydrates in your diet may feel attainable in short bursts when the idea is fresh, but this is very hard to keep up for more than a couple of weeks. A smaller, more sustainable change such as switching out your pastas and breads for whole grain options will still help improve your cholesterol and lower your risk for developing diabetes, and you will be more likely to continue your resolution throughout the year.

With small changes in mind, a good way to make your resolutions last clear through to December is to set SMART goals. These goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable,



Relevant and Time-bound. Here are some examples:

Specific: Be clear about what you want to achieve. For example, if you want to improve your fitness, state how often you'll exercise and what type of exercise you will do.

Measurable: Choose a goal that you can track, your daily servings of fruits and vegetables or drinking 8 glasses of water each day. Tracking progress helps keep you motivated and accountable.

Achievable: Make sure your goal is realistic for your current situation. If you're new to exercise, aiming for 30 minutes a day, five days a week, could be daunting, but going on a 10-15 minute walk each day and working up from there is much more doable. If you are already active, you can challenge yourself with more intense or longer workouts.

Relevant: Your goal should matter to you. Pick something that aligns with your values and will have a meaningful impact on your life. For example, improving your heart health, building strength or managing stress can all be strong motivators.

Time-bound: Set a timeframe for checking your progress. For example, "I will

reduce my sugar intake by 25% within the next two months" or "I will have my last cigarette in 1 week." Having a time frame gives you a sense of urgency and helps you stay focused.

No matter what SMART goal you may set, it's important to be kind to yourself. Change can be hard and it is normal to have setbacks in your health journey. If you miss a workout or eat something that does not align with your resolution, do not let it ruin the hard work you've already put in. What matters more than the miss-steps or cheat days is the decision to keep working toward your goals.

It is also important to have a good support system of friends, family and even your doctors to keep you motivated and accountable. Making resolutions with these people can help to keep you on track or even give you new ideas for goals to work towards. If you're interested in improving your health but not sure what to do, your primary care doctor may have some suggestions!

Dr. Benson is a physician at Allina Health United Family Physicians, 233 Grand Ave, Saint Paul, 55102, 651-241-5200.

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2025 Winter Carnival buttons designed by local artist Heather Friedli.

West 7th Artist Designs Winter Carnival Button

Heather Friedli, owner of Friedli Gallery 943 West 7th, was chosen to design this year's St. Paul Winter Carnival buttons. Her designs were unveiled at a ceremony at Union Depot on December 7.

Friedli has a long history with the Winter Carnival as part of an all-female team that competes annually in the Minnesota State Snow Sculpting Competition at Vulcan Snow Park.

"My inspiration for the button art comes from my personal delight taking part in the Winter Carnival, competing as both a professional snow sculptor for over a decade and as a mom who gets to share the joys of the winter with her kids! When I think of the Winter Carnival, I think of all the magic, artistry and fun that goes into it.

"This event brings the whole community together to celebrate our lives and bring the light during the darkest times of the year," she added.

Friedli is a first-generation descendant of the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, and the indigenous peoples of Sonora Mexico.

Buttons are on sale now. Proceeds from the sale of the souvenir buttons assist the St. Paul Festival and Heritage Foundation to continue producing the St. Paul Winter Carnival. Prices are \$5 for one and \$19 for the collector's pack of all four. A limited edition four-pack with a commemorative pin will also be available during Winter Carnival for \$20. Buttons may be purchased at Cub

Foods, Blaze Credit Union, City and County Credit Union, local retailers or online at wintercarnival.com.

Each button card features a Winter Carnival schedule and a new Winter Carnival Fun Pass provides great deals to numerous local businesses. And as a bonus, the Fun Pass gives holders the chance to win

exclusive prizes and experiences. The St. Paul Winter Carnival will take place Jan. 23 - Feb. 2, 2025. "The Coolest Celebration on Earth™" is managed by the St. Paul Heritage and Festival Foundation. For information, visit wintercarnival.com.

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In the Community

NOTEBOOK RECOLLECTIONS

A 1950s Gentleman-Type Doctor Exchange

BY TIM RUMSEY

I asked real estate sale guru-friend Steve Sprafka if he had any famous clients or notable sales recently.

“Eric Clapton bought two 1969 Fender twin reverb amps last year. He calls me sometimes.”

... “But probably my best find ever was a couple years ago. Two 1868 Sharpes .50 caliber buffalo rifles from a house on Summit. And the Buffalo.”

“The Buffalo that took the bullets from the Sharpes?”

“Yes. \$30,000 for the Buffalo, \$20,000 apiece for the rifles.”

“Holy cow!” I said. “Who sold that to you?”

He said he couldn’t reveal that. But his Uncle, Dr. Greg Sprafka, referred him.

“There are a bunch of Dr. Sprafka’s,” Steve said. “My dad, his dad. Uncle Greg. Uncle Joe was a dentist and Grandpa Joe started it all in Detroit Lakes in the 1900s.”

I knew that Dr. Greg was a long-time West 7th general practitioner for 40+ years. I ran into him one afternoon smoking in the “St. Luke’s” doctors lounge.

Smoking! Oh yes, you could smoke at St. Luke’s in the 1970s. And not just in the doctors lounge. And on every patient floor there was a smoking lounge. You could smoke in any hospital in the Twin Cities in the 1970s.

I asked Dr. Greg about the smoking.

“Heck, smoking was nothing,” Dr. Greg said to me. “St. Joes had a doctors smoking lounge with brandy snifters.”

Then he asked me about my clinic, the helping hand health center. Where I had started in 1975.

“What kind of clinic are you running down

there on Seventh Street by Mancini’s?”

“A free clinic,” I said. “A community clinic.”

“You got hippies and social workers and crap like that there?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Are there real doctors there?”

“We’ll me,” I said. “And Dr. Ravi.”

Dr. Ravi was our relatively new Free clinic physician in the fall of 1985. And he rolled up his sleeves and dove right in. Hospital calls and weekend rounds, evening clinic. Some neighborhood politics and gatherings. Even did some St. Luke’s evening shifts in the emergency room.

“I think I ran into him one late night in the ER,” said Dr. Sprafka.

There were occasional encounters between Dr. Sprafka and Ravi and I at the hospital.

One day in 1986 he came to the Helping Hand and asked for a tour from our clinic manager.

Occasionally, Dr. Sprafka patients migrated to our clinic over the years. And I suppose a few of ours went to his office.

On rounds one day, I ran into Steve’s customer Eric Clapton at midnight on St. Luke’s adult men’s floor. He had finished a concert at the St. Paul Civic Center and was hospitalized later that evening for emergency gallbladder surgery.

He was obviously post/op now.

“Got a light mate?” Eric Clapton asked me.

“Sorry no,” I said, “but there is a patient smoking lounge up here.”

“Where is that place?” he asked. I told him, showed him actually.

I asked if he was gonna pick up any gear from Steve Sprafka while he was in town.

He snapped his head toward me. “He’s a good guy. I’ve bought quite a few amplifiers

from him over the years.”

Ravi and I saw Dr. Greg Sprafka here and there in St. Luke’s over the next eight or nine years. The doctors lounge of course for donut bonanzas, meetings, medical records.

Dr. Greg actually took Ravi and I to dinner at Mancini’s. Nick Mancini personally blessed our steak dinners.

Our clinic had actually opened up our new office and some space next to the bar area of Mancini’s. What a Clinic. One evening I saw famous crooner, Tony Bennet, get out of a silver limo and head into Mancini’s for a performance in the bar. It was said he got 10 Gs and a steak dinner for a two hour show and a meet and greet. Doc Sprafka was there and got a personal autograph with Nick Mancini’s help.

Our practice was growing. Ravi and I noticed a few longtime Dr. Sprafka patients were transferring to our growing clinic in the famous nightclub. I suppose a few of our patients were going his way also.

In the spring of 1992 I arrived at our clinic early, 7 a.m. Two large cardboard boxes were inside our outside patient door. I slid the boxes inside. There were 12 shoeboxes full of large recipe cards, each one appeared to be part of a patient file. I looked at several cards. Handwritten, short sentences. “Sore throat,” “2.4 cc penicillin shot,” “School exam,” “diabetes,” “check,” “anxiety,” “worse.”

This was all Dr. Dr Sprafka’s world. His patient records.

Dr. Sprafka was “giving us” his practice. A 1950s gentleman-type doctor exchange that extended into the early 70s.

Not selling his practice. Turning it over to us. Trusting his patients to Ravi and me and our place. We were, after all, real doctors and staff. At a real Clinic.

Fireside Reading Series Brings Minnesota Writers to Rondo Library

Cozy up with the Fireside Reading Series, a beloved annual program hosted by The Friends of the St. Paul Public Library in partnership with St. Paul Public Library. Taking place Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. throughout January, the series will feature readings by four celebrated Minnesota authors. Attend in person at Rondo Community Library or join via Zoom to enjoy this enriching literary tradition from the comfort of your home.

Here’s the lineup of featured works:

January 8: Taiyon Coleman, *Traveling Without Moving: Essays from a Black Woman Trying to Survive in America*

Jan 15: Jokeda “JoJo” Bell, *Red Stained: The Life of Hilda Simms*

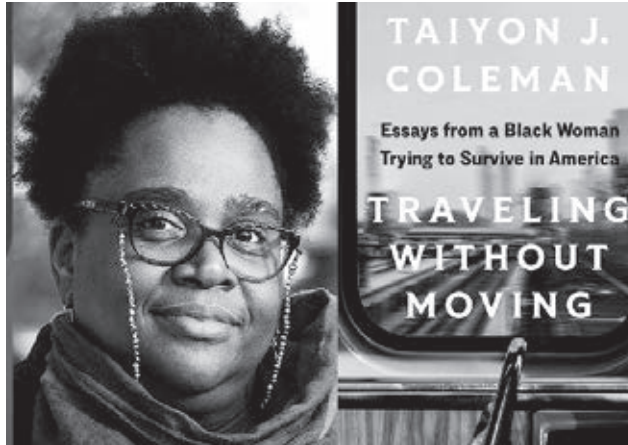
Jan 22: Naomi Cohn, *The Braille Encyclopedia*

Jan 29: Pallavi Sharma Dixit, *Edison*

The Fireside Reading Series is made possible through funding from the Minnesota State Legislature to The Friends of the St. Paul Public Library as the

Minnesota Center for the Book.

For more information and to register for Zoom access, visit thefriends.org. Each event will include live captioning, and ASL interpretation is available upon request with at least seven days’ notice (ASL will be provided automatically for the January 29 event). For accessibility requests, contact info@thefriends.org or call 651-222-3242.



For information, visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org/events

RECYCLE HOLIDAY LIGHTS AND CORDS

Drop off your holiday lights and cords at any St. Paul Public Library, including Highland Park, through January 22. Accepted items: Holiday lights, electric cords and telephone cords. Please no cord adaptors, battery packs, plastic rope lights or CFL lights. For more details, visit stpaul.gov/recyclingholidaylights.

UPCOMING COMMITTEES MEETINGS

Meetings take place at the Highland Community Center at 1978 Ford Parkway with an option to join online unless noted. Get the Zoom link and meeting agendas at highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.

- **HDC Board** – Thu, 1/9, 7 p.m.
- **Transportation** – Tue, 1/14, 7 p.m.
- **Community Development** – Tue, 1/21, 6:30 p.m.



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FEDERATION UPDATE



HOLIDAY DECOR AWARDS

Do you have a neighbor that wows you every year with their holiday decor? Think yours are the best? Nominations are now open for the third annual Fort Road Federation Holiday Decor Competition! Submit a photo and address of your nomination via Google Form by 11:59 p.m. January 6, 2025. Voting will take place at our January Board Meeting and the winner will receive a dazzling prize. Information is available on our website.

INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED?

We are currently recruiting candidates for an Area 1 Coordinator position (homeowner or renter).

UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- **Transportation & Land Use**, 1/8, 6:30 p.m.
- **Board Meeting**, 1/13, 7 p.m. Gatherings at Station 10
- **Engagement & Fundraising**, 1/16, 6:30 p.m.

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

Make a Difference by Volunteering at Keystone

Keystone provides food support to over 11,000 individuals every month. We are able to provide support for so many in our community thanks to our wonderful volunteers! Volunteer opportunities are available Monday – Friday during the day as well as Wednesday evenings. Shifts may be as short as an hour, with most running from 90 minutes to three hours. Our volunteer shifts are flexible – come help out once a month or weekly or somewhere in between.

Have a vehicle and want to deliver food and a friendly face? Meals on Wheels delivers Monday-Friday from 10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. and Grocery Delivery ahs shifts Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Do you love exploring Ramsey County and being outside in MN all seasons? Our Foodmobile has 30 distribution sites each month in 2.25 hour shifts

Do you want to help 10,000 community members receive food support at the Keystone Community Food Center? The Market and Warehouse has multiple shift opportunities

Volunteering at Keystone is a fun and meaningful way to show care to your community and a great way to give back this holiday season. Our volunteer staff will work with you to find a role that fits your interests and schedule. To learn more about volunteering at Keystone and fill out a volunteer application, please visit keystoneservices.org/volunteer.

Community Kids Free After School Program

Students in grades K-8 are invited to participate in Keystone’s FREE after school program, where they’ll have the opportunity to receive homework help and engage in other learning opportunities and fun activities. This program takes place from 2:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. at the West 7th Community Center. For more information, please call 651-289-5493 or visit keystoneservices.org/youth-families.

BULLETIN BOARD



PORTRAITS OF INDIGENOUS AUTHORS AND ARTISTS

Through June 30. Minnesota State Capitol. 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Saturday. Free. A collection of intimate portraits that honors the voices and legacies of influential Indigenous leaders will be on view for free at the Minnesota State Capitol's 3rd Floor Exhibit Gallery. Portraits of Indigenous Authors and Artists is a 30-year project by photographer John Ratzloff. The exhibit will run December 1 - June 30. Admission to the Minnesota State Capitol, including the gallery, is free. The building is open weekdays from 8 am-5 pm and Saturdays from 10 am-3 pm. Learn more at mnhs.org/capitol/activities/gallery.

HOLIDAYS ON THE HILL

Through January 5. James J Hill House. \$16-\$25. Step back in time to Christmas in 1910 at the elegant James J. Hill House. Experience the magic of the season as you explore this festively decorated Gilded Age mansion. Enjoy self-guided access to holiday exhibits and a 60-minute guided tour with lavish sights and heartwarming stories from the Hill family and their staff. \$25 for adults, \$20 for seniors, college students, and military, and \$16 for children 5-17. Children under 4 are free, and MNHS members save 20%. For tickets and more visit mnhs.org/events.

MINNESOTA BOYCHOIR HOLIDAY CONCERTS

January 5, 1 p.m. & 3:30 p.m. Landmark Center. End your holiday season on a high note with the Minnesota Boychoir's Annual Winter Concerts. This beloved tradition showcases the talented young singers in an unforgettable musical experience. Visit landmarkcenter.org/event/sundays-at-landmark-minnesota-boychoir-concert-3.

MNHS WINTER FREE ADMISSION DAY

January 11. Various Sites. Free. Explore world-class exhibits, discover historic landmarks, and learn about the story of our state—all without having to worry about entry fees or tickets. Registration is not required, but appreciated. Please note that not all standard programming and tours will be available during free days. Funding for free admission is provided by the State of Minnesota's Legacy Amendment, through the vote of Minnesotans on Nov. 4, 2008, and our generous donors and members. Learn more at mnhs.org/events/2268.

MINNESOTA HISTORY CENTER HOSTS THOUGHT-PROVOKING LECTURE SERIES

January 11, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. Minnesota History Center. \$15-\$20. This year's line-up, running through April 2025, features a range of speakers who demonstrate excellence in historical scholarship and showcase the complexity, diversity, and power of our shared American story. This month's discussion is *The Girls Who Desegregated America's Schools*. Historian Rachel Devlin shows how young Black girls were at the center of the grassroots movement to desegregate America's schools and fight racial inequity in public education. From filing desegregation lawsuits with their parents, to bravely enduring harassment and abuse while integrating formerly all-white schools, Black girls took on the difficult work of reaching across the color line in public schools. A revelatory history that recovers the underappreciated contributions of a generation of civil rights pioneers.

In-person \$20, Virtual \$15. Series pricing available. MNHS members save 20%, free student rush tickets available day-of. Info, visit mnhs.org/events/2864.

SVIČKOVÁ DINNER

January 25, doors open 4:30 p.m. C.S.P.S. Hall. \$30. Beef in cream sauce with bread dumplings, coffee, and dessert. Bar: beer, wine, soft drinks. \$30 per person. Pre-paid reservations by Jan 17 online or by texting or calling 651-210-0401, or by mailing a check (by January 3) to: 383 Michigan Street at West 7th, St. Paul, MN 55102. Register and learn more at sokolmn.org/all-events.



GLOW HOLIDAY FESTIVAL

Through January 5. CHS Field. Free-\$21.75. Featuring over a million lights, the Enchanted Forest, Vixen's Zip Line, and Giant Slide, GLOW is a must-see experience. The elves have been busy gussying up the place with new exhibits to make sure your holidays are shiny & bright. Adult General Admission is: \$21.75, children (ages 3-12): \$12.75, children ages 2 & Under are free. Tickets and more at glowholiday.com/st-paul.

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