

Community REPORTER

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

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ART CRAWL
page 4

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DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE

Challenging 2025 Legislative Session



DAVE PINTO
MINNESOTA HOUSE
REP, DISTRICT 64B
columnist

Hello neighbors! As the spring turns to summer, I hope that you are looking forward to warmer weather, longer days, and time outdoors with family and friends. This transition also marks the end of the regularly-scheduled legislative session.

As in every odd-numbered year, the major work of the session has been the building of a new two-year state budget. That work has been especially challenging this time, with a closely divided Legislature, long-term fiscal constraints and unprecedented chaos and threats from the federal government.

Closely-Divided Legislature, Long-Term Constraints

Inside the Legislature, the House has been tied for the first time in more than 40 years. (The DFL has a bare majority in the Senate.) Both DFL and Republican votes are required for any legislation to advance. I serve as co-chair of the Workforce, Labor and Economic Development committee, as well as DFL lead on a committee dedicated to fraud prevention and agency oversight. I also serve on the committees for Public Safety – drawing on my outside work as a prosecutor of gender violence – and Ways & Means (i.e., the overall budget).

Readers of my *Community Reporter* column from August 2024 will recall the enormous progress Minnesota made under DFL control during the prior (2023-2024) legislative term. Put simply: Whatever the policy area – environment, housing, education, transportation, health and more – there were transformational investments and policy changes that will help everyone in our state to thrive for years to come.

By necessity – given the tie in the House – much of the focus of my DFL colleagues and me this session has been on protecting these gains. In particular, I have worked to protect the Paid Family & Medical Leave program, which will take effect on January 1. Every worker in our state deserves time to bond with their new baby, heal from serious illness or provide critically-needed care for a family member. We'll continue to stand strong for this principle.

The investments made in 2023-2024 were based on quite-conservative fiscal projections; they included more than \$3 billion placed in a “rainy-day” fund and another more than \$3 billion left unspent. In fact, the current two-year budget is running a surplus. Nevertheless, projections several years out show an imbalance for programs supporting certain vulnerable Minnesotans. These longer-term constraints pose an additional challenge as we finalize a budget.

Chaos and Threats from the Trump Administration

All of the above is only complicated further by the actions of the Trump administration. A large proportion of Minnesota's budget comes via the federal government. The administration has already forced through some cuts, often with scant legal basis. And those that it has proposed to the Republican-controlled Congress would be massive,

SESSION, PG 2

Garbage Depot Plan Approved

Zoning Committee Moves Garbage Depot Forward in 5-0 vote

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

Despite overwhelming opposition from members of the community, the St. Paul Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission unanimously approved the site plan for the proposed garbage depot facility at 560 Randolph Ave on April 24.

The latest decision comes after an intense month of what comes next with the controversial site and what happens with trash collection in St. Paul.

During the public hearing for the site plan, 11 people spoke against the proposal, with another 25 providing letters of opposition to the Zoning Committee. Only one person provided a letter of support.

Kelsey Peterson, a resident of the Schmidt Artist Lofts, which is only about four blocks from the proposed site, said that, while she doesn't believe 560 Randolph is the right place for the garbage depot, her opposition is about more than just whether it fits the neighborhood. It is about the plans the community has worked on with the City to develop a future vision for the area.

“I want to be very clear, these plans are not idle dreams. This is basic livability that we are speaking about today,” Peterson said. “St. Paul has done business this way, following plans for over half a century.”

West 7th/Fort Road Federation Executive Director Julia McColley echoed Peterson's frustration over the use of official planning processes, but also raised concerns about the natural gas refueling station.

“CNG stations are not benign. They bring air pollution. The high pressure compressors operate with a loud, low frequency hum, one that may run continuously for hours and introduce new ambient noise pollution to the mixed use neighborhood,” she said. “A gas leak or mechanical failure at the site, which sits adjacent to the river and homes and businesses, poses real safety risks.”

McColley said that hazardous systems, like the CNG system proposed by FCC, would



FCC Environmental trucks parked for the night at their dispatch and refueling station at 560 Randolph Ave.

normally be zoned for I-2 or I-3, general or heavy industrial use.

Federation President Meg Duhr also pointed to multiple examples of zoning discrepancies in her testimony.

“The fact that we're even here is ridiculous, Duhr said. “The city council already rejected this and the mayor has illegally vetoed it.”

For their part, FCC Environmental maintains that they have fulfilled every obligation the City has required of them.

After a brief discussion, which did not include any debate on whether the site plan met the comprehensive plan intent, the committee voted 5-0 to approve the site plan.

Committee Member Nate Hood, who also serves as a Planning Commissioner for the City, said that he empathized with those speaking out against the facility, but felt his hands were tied in voting to approve the site plan.

“I don't blame anybody who lives near this site for opposing this. I understand that, and I absolutely empathize with that. And I would probably be doing the same,” Hood said. “But as this role that we have as a zoning committee is very narrowly looking at this by the guidelines that are set in front of us and it's my opinion the staff has checked all the boxes and that this application should move legally forward.”

Alternate Sites Shot Down

On April 21, Axios reported that Councilmember Rebecca Noecker had reached out to City Staff at the request of the West 7th/Fort Road Federation to inquire about other potential locations for the garbage depot, only to be told that three sites, the former K-Mart near I-35E and Maryland, the City's Police Impound Lot on the West Side and an industrial site on Pierce Butler Route were not viable solutions.

“The St. Paul Port Authority owns both the K-Mart site and the impound lot, and has bigger plans for both sites, Newton wrote,” according to the Axios story.

Axios said the three sites listed were owned by the City, but the list of three sites was in no way exhaustive and did not include any private parcels that may be available.

Mayor Vetoes Council's Decision

On April 15, Mayor Carter vetoed the City Council's overruling of the Planning Commission's denial of the Federation's Appeal of the site on March 19.

In a letter to the Council, Carter said he believed their decision to be outside the legal scope of their charge in determining zoning appeals, stating that FCC has done everything

GARBAGE DEPOT, PG 6

ORIGIN STORIES

An Introduction of Fort Road/West Seventh Street

BY JOE LANDSBERGER

Since the 1970s the *Community Reporter* has been blessed with reporters, editors and board members who have documented the history of our neighborhoods in its pages, as well as small businesses that supported its publication with advertising. Unfortunately historians of St. Paul and Minnesota have overlooked the West End's presence and importance. Often they refer to a few “landmarks” between downtown and Fort Snelling, but ignore our role in the trajectory of statehood and prosperity.

“The Origin Story of Fort Road/West Seventh Street, the Township/City of Saint Paul, the Territory/State of Minnesota: Glacial Age Forward” is my attempt to remedy this oversight. When the continents separated at the South Pole and ours moved north, geologic forces created our limestone bedrock. After the Ice Age, climatic forces created our rivers, the Mississippi and Minnesota. Then for 8,000 years the Dakota and their forebears settled the land. In the 1600s the French and Ojibwe arrived via the Great Lakes; American control after 1783.

The proletariat history of our neighborhoods, primarily between Wabasha Street downtown



Joe Landsberger

and Bdote/Fort Snelling at the confluence of the Mississippi River, was the product of successive waves of immigrant settlers through the 1800s and 1900s. While our residential neighborhoods and commercial strip are the oldest in both the city and the state, the City of St. Paul has

marginalized its value. The post war period of the 1950s prioritized freeways and white flight over preservation and the scenic river.

In the 1970s West End volunteers rose up. In the 1970s, our neighborhood council, the Federation, and a cadre of volunteers swung into action to rescue our “inner city.” We allied with other councils to fight 35E. We saved Irvine Park, Kipps Glenn and the C.S.P.S. Hall from demolition, saved the Schmidt Brewery complex as an historic site. We advocated for public housing at Sherman Forbes and community centers at Oneida and Palace, saved the local school (Monroe) and founded our local library and community newspaper. The Federation and its Community Development Corporation (CDC) rehabilitated stressed housing and became a model for the district council system in the early 1970s. We developed the North High Bridge Park and Sculpture Garden and a series of garden and history tours.

The Origin Story was seeded when I arrived from the West Side in the later 1970s. I bought my first home at the dead end of Goodrich that I transformed with four additions complementing

ORIGIN STORIES, PG 2





EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

NOTEBOOK RECOLLECTIONS

Rest in Peace, Mr. Positive

BY TIM RUMSEY

I still grieve Mr. Positive, R.I.P. 12-18-25. Carl Lambert Bentson. Age 62.

I've driven or walked by his house most every day for 30 years to the clinic or West 7th. Both ways. 20,000 times I figure. Really.

I still go by his house daily. But no Carl. Now his yard vegetation is slightly overgrown. His orange plastic pumpkins are whitening. The US flag still flies over his front door.

But there is no sage Carl at his table. No big umbrella any longer dampening the sun. The breezes have frayed his green tablecloth.

There's even some shattered glass on his front sidewalk (never would've been tolerated in Carl's presence). The brightly colored faux flowers are forever blooming.

Carl was friends with everyone. But his beloved neighbors were his "besties." Bill Quinn, Barbara, Kent Peterson, Pat and John Mancini, Dave Cossetta, Jim Sasasavitch, John Yust and Karen Koepp, his dearest, mostest bestie.

Karen and Carl went everywhere together. Karen at the wheel, Carl navigating. Kowalskis, Cooper's, Mancini's, Shamrocks, Day By Day, McDonald's, doctors offices, hardware stores and bicycle shops.

Carl's most anticipated destination was always the Minnesota State Fair. Karen often went with him on day one. Carl went every single other day and stayed all day. Bicycling there. He occasionally directed traffic on Snelling Avenue at the main entrance.

Carl never hung in bars other than to eat a burger or listen to music. There never were liquor store pilgrimages.

Carl wasn't particularly a regular churchgoer. But there were funerals, a wedding here and a graduation or retirement there.

West 7th and his flock of neighbors – that was his church.

He and Karen watching 15 Cedar Wax Wings in one of his front yard trees – that was his cathedral!

I have never heard Carl utter an abrasive word or sentence. Ever!

During an evening neighborhood power outage in February, I got a Carl-call.

"Are you in the dark?"

"Yes."

"You ok?"

"Yes."

CLICK .

Oh, it hurts to think of him always helping and assisting humanity. And worrying about his neighbors' lawns. His hobbies were cleanliness and helpfulness.

His favorite words were "OK" and "that's a nice one."

Surprisingly, Carl never liked dogs. I think he was afraid of them. He never put it in words, but whenever a dog was present or approached, there was a stiffening, a backing off, a leaning away.

Carl is famous. Been on the news, both big city newspapers and the wonderful *Community Reporter*, *Highland Villager* and



"Mr. Positive" Carl Bentson

Westside Voice. He's been Knighted and Winter Carnivalized and had an honorary day for himself. There's a movie about Carl, "Mr. Positive" done by Mike Hazard.

And a Dan Rumsey song, "Mr. Positive, That's Who Is."

West 7th artist, Stuart Loughbridge has done his portrait.

Politics never polluted Carl's soul. During

the 2024 presidential election I asked him who he supported?

"The nicer one," he answered.

Carl would've been a holy man in another time, heck, in our time! And he was wonderfully talented. Genius. Always giving, always worrying about others.

Carl Bentson.

Mr. Positive, that's who he is.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

The Necessity of Empathy

TIM JOHNSON
columnist

My grandson's shoe was missing. He is just 13 months in age and has been enjoying the value of upright mobility for the past month or so, making footwear important. On a warm sunny afternoon, the playground we visited was full of other children with either their parents

or grandparents. The adults, like the children, engaged in the type of friendly conversation of people meeting for the first time. One little girl, who said she was seven, sat down and played with my grandson. In general, the warmth and friendliness created an atmosphere of togetherness among this gathering of strangers. It was because of that playground atmosphere that my concern was minimal when I arrived at home only to discover the missing shoe. My hope was that one of those parents would notice the shoe and place it on the table where it would be easy to spot, which is exactly where I found it.

The confidence I had in finding the missing shoe stemmed directly from the belief that these parents or grandparents would immediately think about the cost and the hassle of replacing a pair of shoes and therefore would put it somewhere it might be easily discovered. There was nothing directly gained by this simple action. There was no way I could repay them, not even with a thank you. Yet, rather than ignore the shoe, leaving it lying where it was, they took the extra step to put it in plain sight where it might be found by a grateful grandfather.

At its core, this simple act is what empathy looks like in practice. It is placing yourself in the shoes of another, to use that metaphor, and doing what you can to show care. According to Elon Musk and a growing number of Christian nationalists, empathy is a danger for our country, indeed for the Western world. In a recent Saturday morning Weekend Edition, NPR host Sarah McCammon aired an interview with Musk broadcast from the "Joe Rogan Experience" in which Musk claimed the fundamental weakness of Western civilization

is empathy. In a discussion of immigration he says what we have is "civilizational suicidal empathy." Jettisoning empathy is also convenient when as McCammon notes you are "making massive cuts to the federal government, including humanitarian programs at home and overseas." No need to consider the impact on children, seniors, Veterans or the lives of people who depend on aid for food or the most basic form of health care.

Right wing Christian nationalists have also taken up the anti-empathy cause, claiming as did Josh McPherson, host of the podcast "Stronger Men Nation," "empathy is dangerous. Empathy is toxic. Empathy will align you with hell." McCammon shared that Al Mohler of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary hosted several of these Christian nationalists on his podcast, including Allie Beth Stuckey, who among others considers empathy a particular danger for women because it makes them susceptible to be easily manipulated. New York Times columnist David French in turn points out that it is this belief in women's susceptibility to the evils of empathy that becomes justification for the idea that "Christian men should run the country." To this heretical

Christian belief, one might add from simple observation of the current administration that running the country should be reserved for Christian (in name) white men.

Who would imagine empathy for a grandparent losing his grandson's shoe could be so dangerous. But, apparently when applied to policies that govern our common lives some people view empathy as a serious threat. For my part, I will go with empathy, whether it is on the playground, in our schools, city government or national policies. To be sure, the actions emanating from empathy have limits based on our capacity, which is what creates room for a discussion on an appropriate immigration policy or how much assistance to provide those in need. No one would expect the parents at the playground to take up a collection and buy my grandson a new pair of shoes. But, placing the lost shoe in a place where it might be found was quite doable, which is precisely what they did.

SESSION, PG 1

gutting programs on which our residents rely for health, food, education and much more. The administration's defiance of the law, of our democratic institutions and of basic decency expand the danger exponentially.

Many constituents have reached out to me with alarm about all of this – and asking for ideas about what they can do to help. There are no easy answers, but I do have a few thoughts. The first is that we must not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed or

paralyzed. Vulnerable people — those who are being targeted now, as well as the future generations who will inherit our democracy and our warming planet — are depending on us to step up and lean in.

Each of us must do that in our own way. There are regular protests and rallies; consider bringing your voice and sign. Organizations that advocate for and support vulnerable people in our community (and around the world) are facing cuts and persecution; consider increasing your contributions and volunteer time. There

is much (strategically intended) confusion about the administration's actions; educate yourself about what is going on. And engage in conversations with family and friends, from a variety of backgrounds, about what you are seeing and experiencing.

Our democracy is precious, as is the rule of law underlying it and the vibrant state and country that it has built. They are sustained by the actions of each one of us. #EverybodyIn. I will keep working to protect them, and I know that so many of you will too.

ORIGIN STORIES, PG 1

its Victorian stick style. It was built by Joseph Haag in 1880 and moved shortly after 100 feet with a limestone foundation of the Lauer Brothers. I plunged into community organizing under Betty Moran who guided me through the decades and taught me W7 history. I headed the *Community Reporter* in the 1980s that sharpened my research and reporting skills as well as all aspects of the news publishing process. From 2004 to 2013 I joined Czech and Slovak SOKOL Minnesota as treasurer, archivist and president (2006 – 10) and president of the West 7th Business Association 2014-18.

The breadth of 45 years' affiliations in the West End made me aware of its role in the history of our state. I was born at the end of

the Second World War but my family's rural history (all my aunts and uncles were raised on farms) informally reinforced the narrative, and also informed my genealogy to the 1600s. When my mother's Czech Dvořák father died in 1923, she and her sisters came to live with their Aunt Julia and Uncle Joseph Gust Svobodny on Juno in West 7th. Her two sisters graduated from Ancker Hospital nursing as did my sister Kaye in 1963—one of its last residential nursing classes. My mother worked "up on the hill" as a domestic until she graduated from St. Francis Junior High School (1928). On June 22, 1857 my Luxembourgish relatives hitched up a buckboard and road 30+ miles from New Trier to St. Paul for their son Peter's christening at Assumption Church, its second year.

All these connections impelled me to dive into the history of Fort Road/West 7th Street.

With this introduction the *Community Reporter* will serialize monthly episodes of its history. I have already presented four "talks" and contributed to a PBS documentary on riverside communities, with more talks to come. And if I can find funding, a second edition is in the works—especially with family stories related to me when purchasing books. I hope you will enjoy these as much as I have enjoyed the research and authoring of their origin stories.

LEARN MORE:

You can find a copy of "The Origin Story of Fort Road/West Seventh Street, the Township/City of Saint Paul, the Territory/State of Minnesota: Glacial Age Forward" at your local library. Learn more about the book and find Joe's upcoming conversations about the history of West 7th at josfland.com.

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COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

West 7th/Fort Road Federation elects officers, area coordinators

At their annual meeting on April 29, the West 7th/Fort Road Federation elected two officers and five area coordinators to represent the neighborhood for two years.

Board officer positions up for election this year were the First Vice President and Treasurer. Maggie Rock was reelected to her position of First Vice President that she has held for the previous term. Andrew Greenlee is also returning to his role as Treasurer of the Board.

Hayden Kilkenny and Moz Rude were elected to represent Area 2. Kilkenny has been serving an interim appointment to the Board, while Rude is a renter representative of the area. In area 3, all three incumbent Board members, Tanya Fabryanske Beck, Seth Smiglewski and J.B. Shank carried their reelection bids. Area 1 of the neighborhood, the area bordered by the north side of St Clair Ave., I-35E, Irvine Ave., Kellogg Blvd., Eagle St. and the Mississippi River, is still in need of two representatives on the Board.

In addition to electing new Board representatives, the neighborhood also selected this year's winner of their annual Merchandise Contest. Alxndr Jones was this year's winner and merchandise with the design will be available for purchase after May 5 through Weird Ink Society.

To learn more, including bios of the Board, volunteer opportunities and to purchase new West 7th merchandise, visit fortroadfed.org.



HDC ELECTS NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Highland Park District Council elected eight new members of their Board of Directors on April 23. Board members are elected to serve two-year terms serving on the volunteer Board based on the grid in which they live, with the exception of two at-large members and two business members.

The new members include at-large directors Casey Ulrich and Frank Jossi, at-large alternates Shayne Stone and Mindy Johnson, Grid 1 representative Wolfie Browender, Grid 3 representative John Kennedy, Grid 5 representative Brad Ballinger, Grid 7 representative Lindsay Shimizu and Grid 9 representative Adam Hertell.

Grid 11, which serves the area bordered by West 7th to the North, the Mississippi River to the south, Alton St. to the East and Davern St. to the West remains unfilled.

See more about the Highland District Council Board, including a map of the grids and all of the members, as well as to apply for the open seat, visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org.

MAYOR CARTER TOUTS PUBLIC SAFETY SUCCESS AT STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Investing in housing growth, downtown infrastructure, public safety progress and announcing a citywide summit to address fentanyl and the opioid crisis were among the issues he discussed at the annual State of the City address.

Carter highlighted community-first public safety strategies and the St. Paul Police Department's new non-fatal shooting unit's work to increase clearance rates and decrease violent crimes, resulting in zero gun-related homicides so far in 2025. Watch the address at stpaul.gov/2025-state-our-city-address.

RAMSEY COUNTY OPENS ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Reusing and recycling is now a lot easier for Ramsey County and other metro area residents. The new 29,421 square foot facility, located at 1700 Kent St. in Roseville, offers free disposal of household recyclables, household hazardous waste, electronics, food scraps, scrap metal and more. Learn more at ramseyrecycles.com.

INTERFAITH ACTION PURCHASES BUILDING FOR FAMILY SHELTER, ECONOMIC SERVICES, OPERATIONS

Interfaith Action of Greater St. Paul took ownership of 1010 Bandana Blvd W, previously operated as the Best Western Plus Como Park Hotel.

This transformational opportunity allows Interfaith Action to establish a permanent hub in St. Paul to address the ever-growing community needs of providing emergency shelter, food, clothing, rapid exit housing case management, tutoring and job coaching and more. Learn more at interfaithaction.org.

SPNN NAMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The St. Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN) announced the appointment of Bonnie Schumacher as its new

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

Executive Director. Schumacher has served as a dedicated and passionate leader within SPNN for many years and has spent the last year as Interim Executive Director, where she brought clarity, compassion and vision to the role.

Schumacher brings to the role not just a wealth of experience, but a deep belief in the transformative power of storytelling. "Storytelling is at the heart of connecting with our community. It informs how we understand our neighbors, our city, and ourselves. I'm excited to amplify more of our community's stories by deepening our relationships in the media and arts community, broadening our connections with immigrant and refugee communities, and strengthening relationships with elected officials and community organizers."

Meet Bonnie Schumacher and the SPNN team at our Celebration Open House and Annual Meeting on May 10, from 12 to 4 p.m. Learn more at spnn.org.

MINNESOTA FAMILIES URGED TO GET YOUNG CHILDREN CAUGHT UP ON VACCINES

The Department of Health is urging families to get children caught up on vaccines. The proclamation is being made in conjunction with National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW) to highlight the importance of protecting infants and children from serious diseases by keeping them up to date with well-child visits and recommended vaccines.

Vaccines are among the world's most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing serious illness and death. Unfortunately, immunization rates among our youngest Minnesotans have fallen behind. In 2019, 69% of Minnesota's 2-year-olds were up to date for recommended immunizations, but by 2023, that rate fell to 63%, according to data from the Minnesota Immunization Information Connection (MIIC).

Ideally, this protection begins with vaccination during pregnancy. By getting vaccinated during pregnancy, antibodies are passed to the developing baby. The antibodies help protect the newborn until they can get vaccinated themselves.

Learn more about childhood immunizations, visit health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics.

DORIS HINES, WINTER CARNIVAL MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT 2025-26 HISTORY THEATRE SEASON

History Theatre announced its 2025-26 Theater season, featuring a world premiere about the Minneapolis jazz singer Doris Hines, an adventurous new musical about the world of the St. Paul Winter Carnival, an exploration

of local civil war history through compelling storytelling and Irish music, a brand new irreverent coming-to-age comedy about the Willmar Eight and a young woman's obsession with Duran Duran and ending with a story of a lifelong friendship tested by political divide.

The season will open with "Don't Miss Doris Hines" about Doris Hines, a promising nightclub singer determined to establish a career in show business and the career she led here in Minnesota and around the world.

The holiday season rings in a brand-new musical comedy adventure, "Rollicking! A Winter Carnival Musical" exploring the strange and wonderful world of the St. Paul Winter Carnival.

This winter "Whoosh!", a raucous, comical, emotionally gripping ghost story, will take the stage followed by "Hungry Like The Wolf," a fast-paced, irreverent comedy blending personal narrative storytelling, sketch comedy, off-kilter game shows and totally tubular '80s hits!

Finally, revisit a History Theatre classic, "Courting Harry." Follow Minnesota natives Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justice Harry Blackmun, best friends growing up in the same St. Paul neighborhood, who remained close despite their differing career paths, not to mention their often conflicting personal and political ideologies.

For tickets and information, visit historytheatre.com.

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Golden Chow Mein Announces Closing

West 7th restaurant staple has announced that they were planning to close by the end of the year.

Long-time employee Mary Erjavec posted on Facebook that they didn't have an exact date for closing yet, but expected it would be sometime in October of this year to coincide with their license renewal.

"Qu will be 73 years old this fall," Erjavec said in her statement. "He deserves a few years to enjoy life!"

Golden Chow Mein has been a mainstay of Cantonese fare on West 7th for over three decades. Owner and chef Kwok Qu Ng opened the business, located at 1105 West 7th, in 1987. They celebrated the beginning of their 39th year of operation in early April.

"If Qu could be cloned, we could keep it going, but no one cooks like him!" Erjavec said. Kwok owns the building, but no plans have been made yet for a sale or what may come next in the space at this point.

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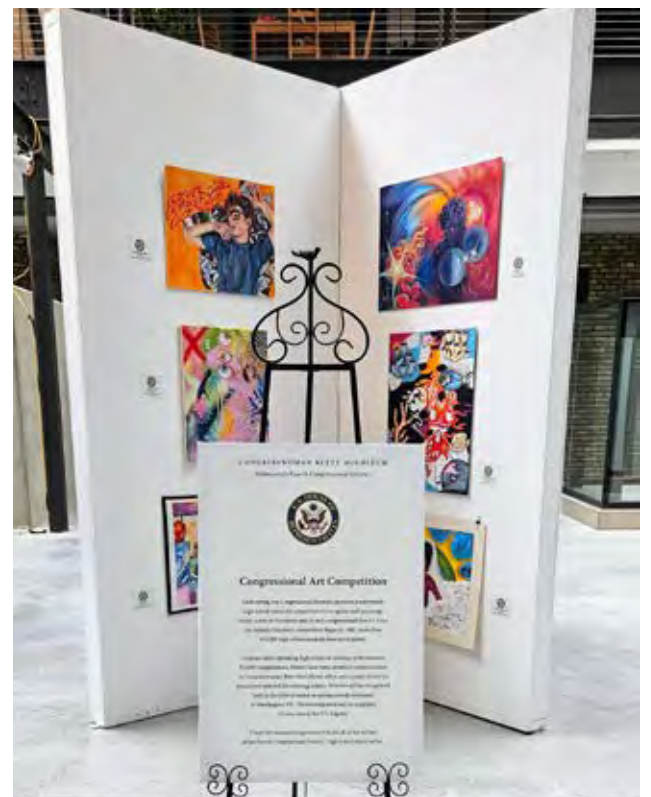
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SEE WEBSITE FOR MUSIC LINEUP

COMMUNITY TRADITIONS

The Sights of 2025 Spring Art Crawl at Schmidt

Spring Art Crawl in Ward 2 was held April 25-27. In addition to the dozens of artists showcasing their art and selling their wares in the Schmidt Artist Lofts, this year also featured the Sounds of Schmidt Music Festival both outside and inside of the Schmidt Rathskeller building and at the White Squirrel Bar, multiple food trucks and the Heart Healing Marketplace on all three floors of the Rathskeller. Over 10,000 people were expected to descend on the West End for this spring's festivities.

Check out a few of the sights and see more at communityreporter.org/sights-of-2025-art-crawl.



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COMMUNITY NOURISHMENT

HEALTH LINE

When Good Intentions Lead To Bad Outcomes: Housing

By Steven Quam, MD

An important aspect of being a family medicine doctor is considering the whole person. Our patients, people that often live in our community, are not just a constellation of diagnosis—they are people with a story.

We know that housing availability and affordability are essential for our patient's overall health. Many studies and statistics support this basic fact. Even for people who have housing, housing expenses are often stressful and can have a negative impact on health. People may have to make compromises on food, medicine or other expenses to make sure that they have a place to live. In that regard, considering housing affordability is important for a family physician. It plays a huge role in our patient's physical and mental health.

Recently, in 2021, a rent control ordinance was passed and put into effect by the voters of St. Paul. This was championed by many of our current elected officials. The policy generally prevented year-to-year increases in rent above 3%.

The reasons behind this policy were admirable. Housing affordability is an essential aspect of the health of our community and something with major ripple effects. The city of St. Paul does not have enough money to build affordable housing itself, so it is understandable that we may try to find another way to force housing affordability.

Unfortunately, however, these good intentions have not born fruit. While there are many factors that contribute to housing development, the rent control ordinance has



Three Affordable Housing Projects Move Forward at Highland Bridge

been one factor slowing new development. This is because housing developers worry that they may lose money if they are not able to change their rents as they want year-to-year. So instead of land being used for housing, it is used for other purposes. This makes housing costs higher and forces residents to live in older, more run-down buildings.

One major side effect of the rent control ordinance has been the placement of a garbage truck depot in the West 7th neighborhood, which has previously been covered by this newspaper. In 2021 the site at 560 Randolph Ave was purchased by Optimistic Partners, a St. Paul developer. They had planned to develop the property with housing, a use that would fit well within the neighborhood, and provide a space for potentially dozens of new West 7th residents. After the rent control ordinance passed, however, the site was felt to be too risky to develop into housing—an unfortunately ironic consequence of such a policy. This caused the site to be sold to FCC

Environmental, St. Paul's new trash collector. Instead of new houses and neighbors, the site will now house garbage trucks. Garbage collection is, of course, an essential service, but one that is ideally not housed in the middle of a residential and commercial corridor.

The West 7th federation has understandably attempted to prevent this use of the space, but the real culprit is the rent control policy which stalled out development of housing in the first place. While a laudable goal, less housing is now being built and there is more pollution in residential areas with the new garbage truck depot. There are ongoing discussions about the future of the rent control policy, and change is needed for the health of our community. We need to continue to explore options to improve the housing situation in our neighborhood. Continued investment is essential for a healthy, vibrant community.

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

FILM REVIEW

A Fascinating Portrayal of Minnesota's Own Legend Bob Dylan

By Zach Murphy

Were you there when Bob Dylan went electric?

Director James Mangold pulls back the curtain and brings the riveting story to the screen with "A Complete Unknown." Based on the book *Dylan Goes Electric!* by Elijah Wald, this film is a fascinating portrayal of Minnesota's own legend Bob Dylan, and it's also a tuneful ode to the power of instruments, songwriting, inspiration and free will.

Oscar nominee Timothée Chalamet plays Dylan, and he's got the look. It's 1961, and Dylan has made his way from Minneapolis to New York City to visit his idol Woody Guthrie and friend Pete Seeger. The film details Dylan's meteoric rise in the folk scene, his relationship with Sylvie Russo (based on Dylan's real-life love Suze Rotolo), his collaboration with Joan Baez (both musically and personally), and it all leads up to that infamous night when Dylan went electric, much to the dismay of his fans and his music label at the time.

"A Complete Unknown" moves at a nice pace that is not too rushed, nor too bogged down, and it utilizes Dylan's seminal musical catalog to mark key turning points in his career, from his foray into political and socially-conscious lyrics to his rocky romantic relationships. Chalamet gives a truly impressive, dedicated, and detail-oriented performance here. It's no small task to step into the shoes of such an icon, but he does it with immense skill. You can tell that he closely studied Dylan's mannerisms, inflections, and yes that unmistakable singing voice. Thankfully, he refrains from over-acting and instead focuses on subtleties, which elevates the performance way beyond a basic

impression. Edward Norton, Elle Fanning, and Monica Barbaro also are great in their supporting roles.

Even if you're not super familiar with Bob Dylan's story or are not even a fan of his music, there is a lot to enjoy in this film. And for us Minnesotans, I know we all get a little giddy inside when we hear our state getting mentioned multiple times on the screen. Ultimately, "A Complete Unknown" is a tale about the art of taking risks. What happens when you go against the grain? What happens when you follow your heart? Given that Dylan has gone on to become one of the highest-selling and most critically acclaimed artists of all time, it's worked out pretty well for him.


"A Complete Unknown" is available to rent or buy on all major streaming platforms, and available to stream with your Hulu subscription.

Zach Murphy is an avid enthusiast of cinema, theater and storytelling. He lives with his wonderful wife Kelly in St. Paul. You can read more reviews at his blog, *Fade to Zach*.

West 7th Neighbor since 1887, C.S.P.S. Hall, an Historic Landmark, is home to

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"The Accidental Hero"
Multi-media one-man performance by Actor Patrick Dewane
Sunday, May 18, 2025
C.S.P.S. Hall, 383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul
Pre-order your tickets online at: www.sokolmn.org/cc
\$20 reserved seats; \$15 general admission. \$15 at the door.
"The Accidental Hero" is a jaw-dropping true story about Czech freedom at the end of World War II. Patrick Dewane's grandfather, U.S. Army Colonel Matt Konop, as a unit commander, liberated the remote border villages his grandparents had left for America decades earlier.

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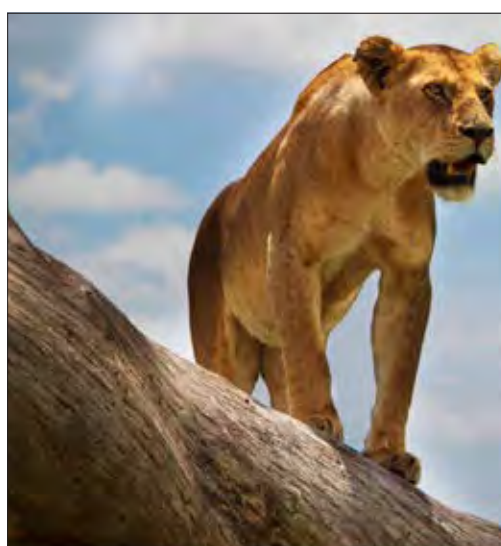
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IN THE COMMUNITY

Visit a State Park for Free with Saint Paul Public Library

Ready to trade your usual weekend plans for a little adventure in the great outdoors? Check out a seven-day Minnesota State Park Pass at any five of the library locations in St. Paul to visit any of the 64 state parks, nine recreation areas or nine waysides for free.

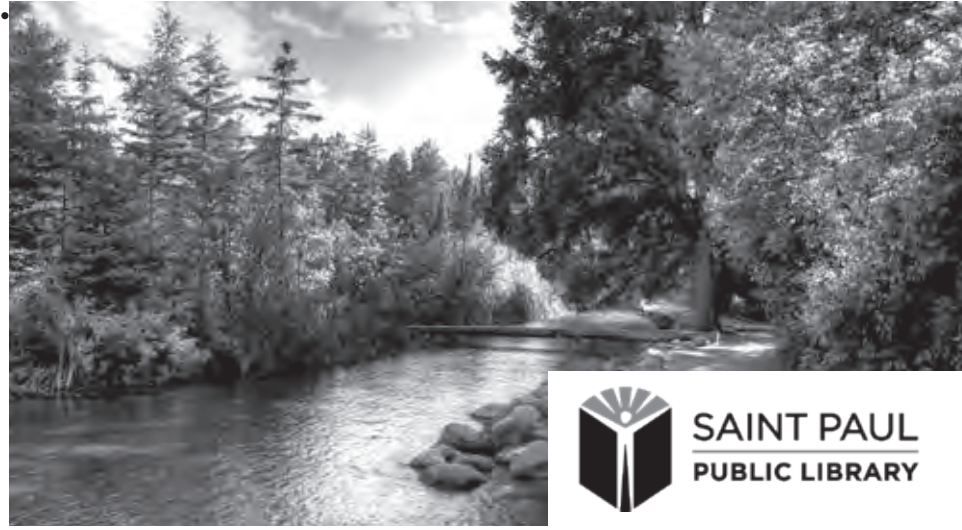
Whether you're craving a hike, a relaxing picnic or even some camping under the stars, your library card can be your ticket to outdoor fun.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources awarded these passes to five SPPL locations to increase access and opportunities for individuals and families to enjoy the health and social benefits of time spent at state parks. Visit nearby Rondo Community or Riverview Library to pick up a pass! Passes are also available at Arlington Hills, Rice Street, and Sun Ray Library locations.

Learn more at sppl.org/free-entry-to-minnesota-state-parks.

Events at West 7th Library

West 7th Library has a great lineup of events for all ages. Visit sppl.org/events.



Lake Itasca



- Playdate @ West 7th – Tuesdays, 3–5 p.m.
- Family Storytime – Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m.
- Family Movie Night - Friday, May 23: *The Wild Robot*. Join West 7th Library and Keystone Community Services for our

featured movie one Friday night a month we'll show our favorite movies on the big screen in the gym. Bring your favorite blanket & snacks--and wear your pajamas if you like.

GARBAGE DEPOT, PG 1

required to meet the zoning criteria for the existing site and their proposed use fits current zoning rules.

In a statement, the Fort Road Federation said they were disappointed by the Mayor's veto, not only because it undermined the unanimous decision of the City Council, but also because they continue to avoid engaging the affected community directly.

"Despite repeated calls for transparency and collaboration, the administration has bypassed both community input and the Council's clear and lawful action," their statement said, calling on Mayor Carter to meaningfully engage the community.

The timing of the veto did not allow the Council to take action to override the veto because state statute required that the final determination be reached within 60 days of the initial application, which expired on April 15.

State of Emergency

Following the City Council's approval of the Federation's appeal of the site on March 19, Carter issued a local state of emergency March 31, he said to ensure uninterrupted garbage pickup as FCC was set to begin their contract on April 1.

The emergency declaration allowed FCC to use 560 Randolph as their depot. The City Charter allows the Mayor to issue a local state of emergency for up to three days. The City Council extended the state of emergency to 90 days until the situation could be resolved.

The Fort Road Federation said that, while

they agree that uninterrupted garbage service was a necessity, the City's continued lack of engagement undermined decisions being made.

"Throughout this process, the City has emphasized that this is a private transaction between FCC and the property seller and that, moving forward, operations would remain private despite FCC's contract with the City. However, the Mayor has acknowledged that the City has worked in close partnership with FCC since last June to advance this facility," their statement read, in part. "During that time, community concerns were repeatedly overlooked, an incompatible zoning interpretation was approved, and now emergency powers are being used to address 'remaining zoning issues' rather than engaging in a transparent and collaborative process. This raises concerns about the neutrality of the City's role in this decision."

After being awarded the City's garbage hauling contract last spring, FCC environmental bought 560 Randolph, as well as the adjoining 540 Randolph, in fall of 2024 with the intent of investing \$25 million to turn it into their regional maintenance, dispatch and refueling facility.

With the emergency declaration, they have begun operating their initial 30 garbage trucks out of the site for their weekday collection of 90% of St. Paul's garbage routes. FCC has said that they hope to grow their business in the Twin Cities, which could increase the garbage truck traffic to as many as 80 trucks rolling out on a daily basis.

At issue is whether the site meets the definition of a public works yard in the zoning code and whether the site should be zoned for light industrial use to begin with.

City code currently does not have a designation for a maintenance facility or garbage depot, and staff have said the closest definition within current code is a public works facility.

Neighbors have argued that, because of the volume of traffic and the planned natural gas refueling station, it exceeds the definition of a public works facility and does not meet the definition of "light industrial."

They also say that the current zoning does not align with decades of city planning and community vision.

The Planning Commission agreed with City Staff and unanimously approved the designation on February 21, but that ruling was overturned by the City Council on March 19, in part because key testimony and documents were not provided to Planning Commissioners for their meeting and because members of the City Council did not believe City staff's findings that the site conformed to the public works facility use based on needs and daily traffic.

What's Next

The Site Plan goes before the full Planning Commission on May 2 for approval.

Once approved, FCC will need additional permitting for construction and operation of the natural gas refueling station.

The West 7th/Fort Road Federation said they have not ruled out future appeals of the site.

FEDERATION UPDATE



WEST END GARAGE SALE 5/17-5/18

Residents interested in hosting a sale can sign up by May 3. Sellers may participate on one or both days, and each registered location will be featured on the official garage sale map. The West 7th/Fort Road Federation will also provide yard signs and promote the event.

WEST END GARDEN TOUR 6/14

Celebrate the beauty and creativity of our neighborhood on June 14 from 10 am–2 pm at Palace Community Center (781 Palace Ave.). Enjoy self-guided garden tours, browse a native plant sale and explore tables from local community organizations. Kids can dive into hands-on fun with crafts hosted by Now.Make.Art, and the Pizza Karma food truck will be on-site. We're still looking for neighbors to host their garden as well! For initial details: fortroadfed.org.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- **Transportation & Land Use**, 3/5, 6:30 p.m.
- **Board Meeting**, 3/10, 7 p.m. Gatherings at Station 10
- **Engagement & Fundraising**, 3/25, 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; 395 Superior Street, St. Paul



WEST 7TH COMMUNITY CENTER
 265 Oneida, St. Paul
 651-298-5493
keystoneservices.org

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

Volunteers are the Key!

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 p.m. and Grocery Delivery ahs shifts Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

Do you love exploring Ramsey County and being outside in MN? 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. 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, visit keystoneservices.org/

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 p.m. at the West 7th Community Center. For more information, call 651-289-5493 or visit keystoneservices.org/youth-families.



HIGHLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

For information, visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org/events

JOIN A COMMITTEE
 We're seeking volunteers to join our Community Development, Community Engagement or Transportation committees. Find dates at highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.

FREE GOLF CLINIC FOR YOUTH
 A fun, free golf event for youth ages 6 and up, co-hosted by St. Paul Parks and Recreation and First Tee Minnesota at Highland National Golf Course on Saturday, May 10, 1 to 2 p.m. Learn the basics of chipping, putting and driving. All equipment will be provided. Free ice cream treats for youth participants. Registration is required. Sign up online at highlanddistrictcouncil.org.

REGISTER YOUR GARAGE SALE BY JUNE 7
 We're hosting a weekend of garage sales June 20-21 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Register your sale and pay the \$25 fee by June 7 to be included in event promotions. Learn more on our website.

UPCOMING COMMITTEES MEETINGS
 Highland Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.

- **HDC Board** – Thu, 5/1, 7 p.m.
- **Transportation** – Tue, 5/13, 7 p.m.
- **Community Development** – Tue, 5/20, 6:30 p.m.
- **Community Engagement** – Tue, 5/27, 7 p.m.



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WEST SIDE CINCO DE MAYO CELEBRATION

May 2-3, Fri. 5-9 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Cesar Chavez Blvd. Free. Minnesota's premier festival celebrating Mexican culture and community! Featuring the amazing Pepe Marquez, local and regional acts, Mariachi bands, and traditional Folklorico dancers. Taste the best of Mexican cuisine. Shop for beautiful handmade creations and support talented local artisans. Fun for all ages with cultural exhibits, games, and kids' activities, parade at 10 a.m., showcasing floats, performers, and community pride! Learn more at stpaulwestsidefiestas.com.

FRAMES OF FAME: PAINTING CINEMA'S SHADOWS

Closes May 31, Lost Fox. Free. Lowertown artist Richard Abraham unveils this evocative body of work, reinterprets iconic film frames from 1940s Warner Bros. to 1950s Italian cinema in oil paint, capturing the shadowy allure of the silver screen. Info: richardabraham.com.

BUCKET BRIGADE PRESENTS JOYFUL NOISE

Through May 10. Art House North Theater. Regional premiere of the unbelievably true tale of the unlikely origin of Handel's Messiah-- an enduring piece of music that almost didn't get written. Info: bucketbrigadetheater.com.

THE WARD 2 ANNUAL MEETING

May 1, 5-7 p.m. Wellstone Center. Learn about projects and volunteer opportunities, celebrate achievements, connect with neighbors and city staff. Light refreshments, activity packs for children. Everyone welcome. Info: stpaul.gov/department/city-council/ward-2.

RETRO ARCADE PARTY

May 2-4. Bad Weather Brewing. Free. \$10 for unlimited arcade gameplay (Kids 12 and Under Play for Free). Food trucks. Info: badweatherbrewery.com/arcade.

ROMANIAN WOMEN IN CULTURAL HERITAGE

Sundays in May, 1-3 p.m. Landmark Center. Explore achievements and contributions of remarkable Romanian women who have shaped the arts, literature, music, and more. Info: hora-mn.org.

NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN UP

May 3, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. 773 S Chatsworth. All supplies provided. Enjoy treats while we work together to keep our streets looking great. Learn more at fortroadfed.org.

URBAN EXPEDITION - ETHIOPIA

May 4, 1-3 p.m. Landmark Center. Free. Authentic music, food, dance, crafts during this program favorite. Info: landmarkcenter.org/urban-expedition.

CIRCUS JUVENTAS COMMUNITY DAY

May 4, 5-7:30 p.m. Circus Juventas. Pay as you can. All welcome. The St. Paul big top is filled with wonder, excitement, and jaw-dropping performances. Info: circusjuventas.org/CommunityDay.

SAVOR

May 6, 6 p.m. Minnesota Museum of American Art. \$500. A unique dining experience in the M's New Wing. Features award-winning Hmong Kitchen Chef Yia Vang and the team bringing together flavors and stories, surrounded by the M's permanent collection in HERE, NOW. Info: mmaa.org/savor.

ROLLERSKATING FUN NIGHT

May 7, 6-8 p.m. El Rio Vista Rec. Center. Dust off those skates & have some fun. Some select sizes to borrow. Concessions for sale. Info: stpaul.gov/news/spring-celebrations-events

2025 POLICE CIVILIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS REVIEW COMMISSION (PCIARC) ANNUAL SUMMIT

May 8, 6-7:30p.m. Rondo Community Library. Learn

about the civilian oversight of St. Paul Police Dept. and how community members file and review of complaints regarding misconduct of sworn officers. Info: stpaul.gov/calendar/2025-pciarc-annual-summit.

CONCERT: PAVIELLE FRENCH, VOCALIST & COMPOSER

May 8, 12-1 p.m. Landmark Center. Free. Hosted by composer Abbie Betinis, this series features accomplished musicians and composers from the Twin Cities and surrounding area. Info: schubert.org.

EARLY 19TH CENTURY SOCIAL DANCE AND LIVE MUSIC

May 10, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Historic Fort Snelling. \$24 Bring your eagerness to learn and enthusiasm for dance to an unforgettable evening. Historic Fort Snelling Fifes and Drums. Info: mnhs.org/events/3388.

CAMP SAVAGE AND THE BIRTH OF US MILITARY LANGUAGE INTELLIGENCE: ONE SOLDIER'S STORY

May 16, 6-7 p.m. Sibley Historic Site. \$20. Dr. Karen Lucas will share the experiences of her father, Walter Tanaka, as part of the first class at Camp Savage, where 6,000 Japanese linguists were trained. Info: mnhs.org/events/3278.

WEST END GARAGE SALE

May 17-18, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. A Weekend of Fun. Last day to register: May 3. Interested in participating? Register at fortroadfed.org/west-end-garage-sale.

NINE LIVES EXPANSION CELEBRATION

May 17, 4-8 p.m. Nine Lives Thrift. Free. We expanded into the vacant space at 1169 West 7th. Let's celebrate, with bubbles, and fun! Featuring Scout Cosmetics and her flash tattoos, Abby Chu Designs, Juliette for their ribbon cutting, Joy of Sunshine Services selling plants! More info at ninelivesthrift.org.

WHOA, NELLIE! THE OUTLAW KING OF THE WILD MIDDLE WEST

May 17-June 8. History Theatre. \$15-\$74. This rip-roaring musical tale of Nellie King, the "wily and scandalous female cowboy detective" whose countless criminal exploits and penchant for male attire made her an 1800s Minnesota media icon. Visit www.historytheatre.com

ST. PAUL SOAP BOX DERBY

May 22, 4-7 p.m. Hidden Falls Regional Park. Free. Cheer on young people compete in derby cars they built over six weeks at local rec centers. Visit: facebook.com/stpaulparks.

GRAND OLD DAY

June 1, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Grand Ave. Free. Celebrate arrival of summer at the largest one-day festival in the upper Midwest. Visit grandave.com/events/grandoldday.

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH BUY NOTHING- EVERYTHING IS FREE

June 7, 9 a.m.-1p.m. St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 530 S. Victoria. Free. Bring items to donate the day of the event or email njcheesebow@gmail.com to arrange a pick up. Visit saintpeterslutheranchurch.com.

THE GREAT PLANT SALE

May 17, 9 a.m.-Noon. St. Luke Lutheran Church, 1807 Field Ave. Free. Nursery and member grown perennials, natives, and annuals. Heirloom tomatoes, vegetables houseplants, gently used garden tools, books, pots and accessories. ramseygardeners.org

RAMSEY COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ANNUAL PLANT SALE

May 17, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Aldrich Arena. Free. Native plants, vegetables, favorite and unique varieties of tomatoes, herbs, annual and perennial flowers, houseplants, and items to get your garden growing strong. Funds raised support Master Gardener community and youth education programs in Ramsey County. Visit RamseyMasterGardeners.org/plantsale.



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