

Community REPORTER

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

NOTEBOOK RECOLLECTIONS 50 Years in West 7th, Part Two



When I was a kid, I wanted to be a dinosaur hunter. When I was a bigger kid, I wanted to be a doctor. I am dang fortunate to have been both.

Dinosaur Hunter? We'll get to that later. I was born at Saint Joseph's Hospital on an early

January morning in 1948 and raised in the Homecroft neighborhood.

I remember it all like it was yesterday. Of course, I don't remember yesterday. But I'm told things went fairly well. For that I am grateful.

Because I love West 7th the place, I always said I was born and raised in West 7th. Well, close anyway. St. Joes is kinda West 7th, The Homecroft neighborhood is kinda West 7th. And I spent nine years at Saint Theresa's grade school on the far end of West 7th.

From 1975 to 2025 (the last three years consulting) I was privileged to work as a family doctor at four different West 7th locations. The high point was when my office was actually in the western end of Mancini's Restaurant, 1978 to 1981. Our office "back door" opened into Mancini's Fireplace Room.

Nick Mancini was proud to have a doctor's office on site. And, true story, when I once said we had a number of people who couldn't pay, Nick said, "you and all those people in charge gotta take care of them. I can help some of them too."

During a nasty St. Paul summer heat wave in the 1980s (temp 103) Northern States Power said there would be an electrical shut off for 24 hours. We had \$10,000 of refrigerated vaccines and injectable meds in our clinic fridge. Nurse Aleda said she'd talk to Nick Mancini.

I said "what could Nick do?"

She said Nick's got his own emergency power back-up for his meat freezer.

Our meds and vaccines spent the next 24 hours chilling at Mancini's.

Nick and Nurse Aleda should've been eligible for that year's Nobel Prize in Medicine.

Let's get back to that clinic history.

1972-1974

The Helping Hand Health Center was started in a former Hub Cap Shop next to Mancini's by a group of committed West 7th folks in 1972 to "provide affordable, quality healthcare to our community." A Grant from the James J Hill Foundation put things in motion.

Dr. Mike Brabec, Internal medicine, was the first medical director and attending physician. Doctors in the Minnesota National Guard did part-time evening clinic sessions for several years that counted for their "duty" hours.

There were dental services in the building basement.

Founding board members included Dorothy Mills, Susie Redman, Harriet Salaba, Jimmy Carter and Laurie Hausely.

I was just finishing medical school at the University of Minnesota.

1974 -1978

The "Hand" moved across 7th to the former Little Bohemian Café and Bakery.

Expanded dental services were added to the downstairs.

Many clinics like the "Hand" were popping up all around the twin Cities and the nation. This "Free Clinic Revolution"

WEST 7TH, PG 7



TOUCH OF
ANDREA
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Noecker, Perez-Vega Announce Runs for Ramsey County Board Seat Long Held By Rafael Ortega

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

The Ramsey County Board seat held for more than three decades by Commissioner Rafael Ortega will be open next year, with St. Paul City Council President Rebecca Noecker and state Rep. María Isa Pérez-Vega announcing bids to succeed him.



Ortega, who has represented District 5 for 31 years, informed supporters on Dec. 13 that he would not seek reelection. In a letter to close supporters, Ortega said the decision was difficult but driven by a desire to spend more time with family while continuing his work at the county through the remainder of his term.

District 5 includes the neighborhoods of Macalester-Groveland, Highland Park, West 7th, Downtown, Battle Creek and the West Side, an area that has seen major public investment during Ortega's tenure. In his letter, Ortega highlighted projects including the Green Line and Gold Line transitways, Union Depot, the Roseville Library and the county's housing levy, which since 2023 has supported the construction of more than 2,000 units of affordable housing.

Noecker was the first to signal her intent to run. She emailed key supporters in mid-November indicating she was preparing a campaign—weeks before Ortega publicly announced his decision not to run. Noecker formally launched her campaign on Dec. 9.

First elected to the St. Paul City Council in 2015, Noecker currently serves as council president and brings more than a decade of municipal government experience to the race. In announcing her candidacy, she said she is running to bring greater urgency, transparency



Ramsey County Commissioner
Rafael Ortega



St. Paul City Council President
Rebecca Noecker



State Rep. María Isa Pérez-Vega

and collaboration to the county board.

"It takes a collaborative leader to work across levels of government to deliver lasting progress," Noecker said in a statement. She argued that some county projects have moved too slowly and said closer coordination between the city and county could reduce inefficiencies and costs for residents.

Noecker's campaign priorities include economic and workforce development, downtown revitalization, transportation, childcare and housing. During her time on the City Council, she supported hundreds of units of new affordable housing, helped lead the creation of the Seasonal Safe Space emergency shelter, assisted in launching the Downtown Alliance and established the Commercial Corridor Organization Assistance Program, which has distributed \$1.4 million to support neighborhood business districts.

She launched her campaign with endorsements from City Council Vice President Hwa Jeong Kim, Councilmember Nelsie Yang, DFL Majority Leader Erin Murphy, School Board Director Halla Henderson and West 7th/Fort Road Federation President Meg Duhr.

Kim described Noecker as "a decisive, clear, and kind leader" who delivers results, calling her



a strong fit for the county board.

Pérez-Vega announced her campaign on Dec. 13, the same day Ortega shared his retirement decision with supporters. Pérez-Vega was first elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2022 and currently represents District 65B, which includes parts of St. Paul. She also chairs the St. Paul legislative delegation.

A small business owner, artist, youth worker and West Side resident, Pérez-Vega framed her campaign around lived experience and state-level accomplishments. In her announcement, she pointed to funding she helped secure for early childhood education, homelessness services and neighborhood infrastructure.

Pérez-Vega highlighted nearly \$3 million delivered to the Listening House to expand day shelter services, \$2.4 million for Ramsey County housing stability programs, and the expansion of more than 5,000 voluntary pre-K seats statewide. She also cited investments in community spaces, including the Wellstone Center renovation, arts and cultural programming at the Science Museum, after-school programs through the Boys and Girls Clubs and early learning access through the Children's Museum.

ELECTION, PG 2

New Boutique Brings Community-Focused, "Life-First" Retail to Grand Avenue

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

When Sara Holst officially opened the doors of her new boutique on October 11, she wasn't launching a long-planned retail venture—she was following what she describes as a sudden, unmistakable pull. Holst, who works full-time in a demanding sales career and juggles parenting a three-year-old with her husband, Matt, says she felt called—spiritually and practically—to create something joyful, sustainable and rooted in community.

The result is a warm, carefully curated clothing and lifestyle shop on Grand Avenue, which has quickly drawn both steady foot traffic and enthusiastic neighborhood support. Even with limited hours—Wednesday through Saturday—Holst says the store has exceeded expectations in its first month.

"We really wanted a life-first business," Holst said. "The goal was never to burn ourselves out or add more stress. This was meant to be something I'm passionate about, something that feeds me."

A Sudden Spark

The dramatic origin story of the boutique began in July, when Holst—approaching 38 and navigating several personal and health challenges—found herself in what she describes as a "midlife crisis moment." She was reevaluating her career, her future and what she truly wanted her life to look like.

Driving to a work appointment one day, Holst passed a vacant storefront on Grand Avenue and noticed an "Available" sign. Instead of dismissing the thought, she felt a strong, persistent urge to call the number.

"I felt like God was telling me to go back to



Owner Sara Holst opened Mor Boutique on Grand Ave. October 11.

St. Paul and make that call," she said. "It was such an unmistakable pull."

Moments later she was touring the space. Despite having no retail experience and no business plan, Holst said she immediately saw potential. That same day, she returned home and told her husband: "I'm going to sign a commercial lease. I'm going to open a store."

Matt didn't blink. "All right," he told her.

"Let's do it."

The couple signed the lease in July with an October 1 start date—and opened just two weeks later.

Curated, Small-Batch Brands With a Personal Touch

Holst stocks the boutique with a blend of small-batch clothing, handmade accessories, apothecary items, candles and gifts. Many come from independent makers—some pouring candles in backyard studios, others crafting bags or textiles by hand. Clothing rotates regularly; nothing is reordered, which keeps the selection fresh.

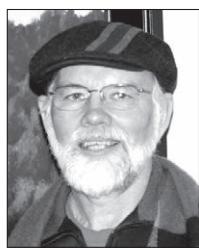
"My target market is really me," Holst said. "I've done a lot of research, and everything

BOUTIQUE, PG 7

COMMUNITY VOICES

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Why Bother?



As much as I'd like to, I don't blame the person driving the city snow plow. He or she has a job to do. I can only imagine the challenge of navigating city streets in a big vehicle with a plow on the front of it. Or the frustration of swinging around cars whose owners neglected to move them, knowing it is your job to get that street clear and passable.

I do have my own frustrations though, as these hard working city employees pass by the corner sidewalk I cleared just 30 minutes prior and fill that same spot with densely packed snow removed from the street. I try to be a good neighbor. When the snow falls, I get out my small snow blower, clear the walk and take extra time to make a path at the corner so children heading off to school or anyone

passing by will have access to the sidewalk without having to climb over a frozen mound. I do my part only to find a short while later it is as if I have done nothing at all. It feels like a complete waste of time and energy.

Sometimes it is hard to escape the question, why bother? If what you are doing is simply going to be undone, why make the effort in the first place? This is far from a new question, anyone familiar with the Hebrew sacred text known as Ecclesiastes will tell you the author would have not only understood, but expected the frustration of having a snowplow fill your freshly cleared pathway with hard packed snow. This writer of wisdom literature rhetorically asks, "What do people gain from all their toil at which they toil under the sun?" His answer is, not much. "All things are wearisome," says Ecclesiastes, "more than one can express."

Those who labored for years to see improvements on West Seventh St. could hardly be blamed for joining Ecclesiastes in

his lament or for simply asking the question, "why bother?" This is true regardless of the outcome that a person believed most desirable. If you were strongly in favor of one particular proposal or strongly in favor of its polar opposite, at the end of the day, it looked to many like the snow plow had just come through and all your previous hard work was for nothing. The one thing that most folks working on West 7th Street improvements likely had in common was a sense of weariness.

Why bother is a question all of us likely find ourselves asking from time to time. We put in the effort. We put in the time. We make our donations. We do our part. We look around and everything is as it was or what little progress that had been made is seemingly gone. It is a dynamic that applies to our personal lives, our families, our community and to our national politics where a growing number of people feel voting makes no difference at all, so "why bother?"

There is, of course, nothing wrong and perhaps necessary about speaking the truth regarding what we experience and naming our frustrations where they exist. There is no wisdom to be found in hiding from the truth. Yet, at the end of the day, the corner sidewalk, as with most everything in need of our time and attention, requires people willing to step up and make a difference.

Part of what keeps us from going back out there, from facing the frustrations, is the feeling that we are doing this on our own. It all falls on us to clear the walk. It makes a difference, therefore, when I look beyond my small section of sidewalk and cast my eyes up and down the street where my neighbors have been hard at work clearing their small sections as well. If what we do feels like it is regularly being undone then it is hard to escape the feeling of why bother, but when we recognize we are contributing to something bigger, then there is reason to grab our shovels and do what needs doing.

FILM REVIEW

Stellar Cast Elevates "Jay Kelly"

By Zach Murphy

Ah, the aging movie star. The price of fame. Public persona versus the real person.

These are familiar themes in the world of Hollywood, and director Noah Baumbach shines a spotlight on them in his latest Netflix-released film, "Jay Kelly." Here, he casts George Clooney in a leading role that seems specifically made for him.

The plot revolves around the titular character (played by Clooney) as he faces a series of crossroads in his A-list career. Who does he want to be? Which direction is he being pulled in? Is he ready to abandon it all, or not? After having a nervous breakdown, he decides to take a trip to Europe in an attempt to repair his relationship with his daughter (Grace Edwards) and to attend a tribute ceremony. At his side are his publicist (Laura Dern) and his manager (Adam Sandler).

Fittingly, George Clooney gives one of the best performances of his career. He's right in his wheelhouse, exercising his charisma with a blend of bittersweet emotion. He makes it look so easy, and often lets his magnetic screen presence speak for itself. Also impressive is Adam Sandler in a formidable supporting role. While he's mostly known for his comedy, it's always fascinating to see how well Sandler truly thrives in more serious and dramatic parts such as this.

"Jay Kelly" is a thoughtful character study that coasts on the strength of its stellar cast. Along the way, we're treated to some nice scenery and cinematic glossiness. The picture proudly wears a sense of nostalgia on the sleeve of its well-ironed suit. Thematically, it's largely about the power of memories and the weight of regret. And while the narrative doesn't dive as deep as

other Tinsel Town stories of a similar ilk (say, 1950's "Sunset Boulevard" or even 2011's "The Artist"), it's hard not to be charmed by its offerings.

All in all, "Jay Kelly" proves to be a perfectly pleasurable watch, even if it doesn't necessarily cover new territory. Everything in this film tends to fall into place in a neat and tidy way. But I guess that's what we'd call a Hollywood ending.

"Jay Kelly" is available to stream with your Netflix subscription.

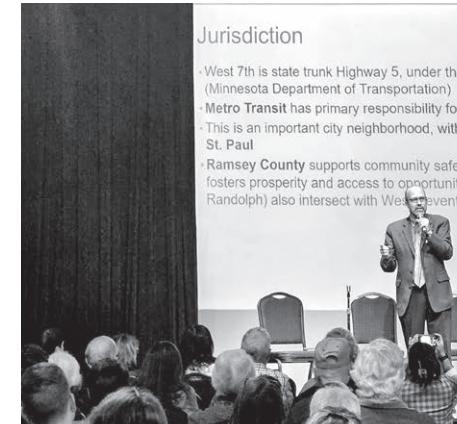
Zach Murphy is an avid enthusiast of cinema, theater and storytelling. He lives with his wonderful wife Kelly in St. Paul. You can read more reviews at his blog, [Fade to Zach](#).



"Jay Kelly" promotional poster

WEST 7TH IMPROVEMENTS

Stalled West 7th Improvements Are On The Community, Too



Rep. Dave Pinto speaks at the "Future of West 7th" event on October 29

government decision-makers. The current president, Meg Duhr, shared many of those values in her presentation at the October 29 meeting. We all want to be able to safely cross the street, to have trees and green space, to support local businesses and to have more options than just driving a car.

At that meeting I heard many people complaining there has not been enough process and we need more community engagement. What I hear in those complaints is, "I am not getting exactly what I want, and I insist on more process until I get it." Part of the blame for nothing

happening needs to be owned by people who keep demanding more process until their exact desires are met. You will never get exactly what you want. I will never get exactly what I want.

If I had what I wanted, there would be no cars at all on West 7th and it would be one large bike lane with transit lanes to the side. Others have to realize that their desires for no transit, parking directly in front of every location, and no bike infrastructure are just as unrealistic as my desire for no cars at all.

We can, however, stand behind those shared values and find compromises that result in something being able to move forward. We do not need more process. We do not need more engagement. We do need government leaders to understand the shared values of this neighborhood and own their leadership role in moving forward a vision in line with those values. If there must be more process and engagement, it should only be with people younger than 30 years old as they will be the ones living with this project. The majority of the people at that meeting will not be.

I encourage all of us to reflect on our role in stalling improvements that may not exactly meet each of our unique needs at the expense of improvements that could meet many of our collective needs.

Dana DeMaster

ELECTION, PG 1

She also played a leading role in passing Minnesota's Insulin Affordability Act, drawing on her experience as a Type 1 diabetic, and said her service on the Capital Investment Committee has underscored the importance of strong county leadership.

"District 5 deserves a commissioner who will champion the projects that shape our neighborhoods and build real partnership across city, county and state government," Pérez-Vega said.

Pérez-Vega's early endorsements include

State Representative Jay Xiong, Ramsey County Commissioners Garrison McMurtrey, Rena Moran and Ortega himself.

WHAT'S NEXT
Precinct Caucuses

Ramsey County's District 5 precinct caucuses for the 2026 election cycle are scheduled for Tuesday, February 3, 2026, beginning at 7:00 p.m., with locations set by the political parties. These meetings provide an early opportunity for voters to participate in party organization, elect precinct officers and delegates and weigh in on local endorsements and platforms ahead

of the 2026 primary and general elections.

Primary election (if needed)

If more than two candidates file for the District 5 seat, a primary to narrow the field would be held on Aug. 11, 2026.

General election

The general election for Ramsey County commissioner District 5 will take place on Nov. 3, 2026, part of the statewide general elections for federal, state and local offices.

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COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

St. Paul Winter Carnival Returns in 2026 to Celebrate 140 Years

BY ABIGAIL HORTON

Starting January 22, St. Paul's annual coolest celebration, the Winter Carnival, returns for another year of festivities, going until February 1. This year's event is especially significant, as the carnival celebrates its 140th anniversary.

To mark the milestone, the Winter Carnival launched a new website earlier this year. WinterCarnival.com provides information on all events and the annual Medallion Hunt. The hunt's prize is expected to be larger than ever, particularly for participants who possess a 2026 Winter Carnival button when completing. Additional commemorative items, including 140th anniversary merchandise, will also be available for purchase through the website.

The carnival officially begins January 22 in and around Rice Park with a family friendly opening celebration featuring an illuminating light show and live performances. The venue will continue to host live shows over the following two days and will debut a new display on January 24 presenting past Winter Carnival button designs.

The Ice Carving Competition begins on opening day and concludes January 25 in Rice Park. For those who prefer snow over ice, a snow sculpting competition will take place at the fairgrounds through January 25 as well. Parades remain a major happening, with the King Boreas Grande Day Parade expected to march on January 24 and the Vulcan Victory Torchlight Parade lighting up the streets on January 31.

Learn more at wintercarnival.com.

FROM TREES TO WRAPPING PAPER, FIND HOLIDAY WASTE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING OPTIONS

St. Paul residents can recycle natural holiday trees and dispose of seasonal waste through City and County programs designed to reduce landfill use and prevent environmental harm.

The City will collect natural holiday trees from Jan. 2-15. Residents may place one tree per household next to their garbage cart on their regular collection day. Trees must be free of decorations and stands and should not block carts or be placed upright in snow.

Artificial trees and live trees larger than six feet or heavier than 20 pounds are not accepted through curbside collection and require scheduling a bulky item pickup. Residents may also drop off trees for free at Ramsey County yard waste sites.

City officials caution that wreaths and garlands are not accepted as yard waste due to metal wires and decorations. These items should be bagged and placed in garbage carts. Burning holiday greenery or leaving it outdoors is discouraged due to invasive species risks.

Most wrapping paper and gift bags are recyclable, though glittered, foil and tissue paper should go in the trash. Extra cardboard can be taken to the Ramsey County Environmental Center in Roseville for free drop-off.

The city is also offering seasonal recycling for holiday lights and electrical cords at libraries and select facilities, noting these items should not go in home recycling carts.

Find more information at stpaul.gov/departments/public-works/garbage-and-recycling/holiday-disposal.

ST. PAUL CITY COUNCIL ADOPTS 2026 BUDGET

The St. Paul City Council unanimously approved the city's 2026 budget, finalizing a \$883 million spending plan shaped through collaboration with the Carter administration and aimed at maintaining core services while limiting tax increases.

The budget includes a General Fund of \$404.9 million and a 5.3% property tax levy increase, amounting to about \$107 annually for a median-value home. City leaders said the plan reflects weeks of joint work to address fiscal challenges, restore key services and avoid layoffs.

Major investments include \$13.9 million for housing and economic development, with funding for downtown office-to-housing conversions and housing affordability efforts. The budget also dedicates \$3.8 million to modernizing city services, including cybersecurity upgrades following an August cyberattack, and \$1 million to fentanyl and opioid response efforts.

The council restored funding for fire and emergency response, libraries and recreation centers, and maintained support for the Commercial Corridors program. Savings were achieved through eliminating vacant positions and increasing ambulance transport

Gnome Scavenger Hunt Returns to St. Paul Parks for Winter Fun

Gnomes have once again taken up residence in St. Paul parks as the city launches its annual winter scavenger hunt, inviting residents of all ages to explore local green spaces during the cold-weather season. The 2025-2026 Gnome Scavenger Hunt challenges participants to solve clues that lead them to hidden gnomes placed throughout parks across the city. Organized by St. Paul Parks and Recreation, the event encourages outdoor activity while highlighting scenic locations ideal for winter walks and hikes.

Participants are asked to search for the gnomes, snap a selfie once they find one and share the photo on social media using the hashtag #stpgnometakeover, while taking care not to reveal the gnome's exact location. Organizers emphasize that the hunt is meant to be fun and accessible, offering a family-friendly way to stay active during winter.

New this year, eight gnomes are hidden throughout the parks, each containing a single letter. When assembled, the letters form an eight-letter password. Participants who successfully find all the gnomes and decode the password can visit Griggs Recreation Center to relay it and claim a prize. Staff will be available at the center Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Parks officials note that, unlike previous years, gnome

fees, which are typically covered by insurance.

Council President Rebecca Noecker said residents consistently called for a focus on basic services and restraint on taxes. Mayor Melvin Carter emphasized that the cooperative process positions the city to manage uncertainty in federal funding while continuing to invest in community priorities.

City officials described the budget as a balance between fiscal responsibility and sustaining services residents rely on daily. Find the full 2026 budget at stpaul.gov/departments/financial-services/saint-pauls-budget.

RAMSEY COUNTY APPROVES 2026 BUDGET WITH REDUCED LEVY INCREASE

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the county's 2026-2027 biennial budget, lowering the proposed property tax levy increase to 8.25% for 2026.

The approved increase is 1.5 percentage points lower than originally proposed. Commissioners cited resident concerns about tax burdens and a commitment to fiscal responsibility while maintaining essential services.

The 8.25% levy increase will generate about \$428.6 million in property tax revenue in 2026. Property taxes account for roughly 46% of the county's budget. The board also voted to keep the Regional Rail Levy flat at its 2025 level.

The total 2026 budget is \$924.1 million, a 5.98% increase over 2025. The 2027 budget totals \$962.5 million. County leaders said key cost drivers include shifts in federal and state funding, growing service demand and workforce investments.

The budget is organized around five strategic themes, including delivering county-responsible services, strengthening partnerships and supporting long-term fiscal health. Officials said the county will continue working with cities and downtown partners to grow the tax base and advance economic development.

Board Chair Rafael Ortega said the final budget reflects difficult tradeoffs made through a transparent process while prioritizing services residents rely on daily.

Find more information about the bi-annual budget at ramseycountymn.gov/your-government/budget-finance.

WEST 7TH BUSINESSES RECEIVE SUSTAINABILITY GRANTS FOR ENERGY UPDATES

Four West 7th neighborhood businesses have been awarded funding through the Sustainable Business Enhancements Grant, a new program aimed at supporting environmentally friendly upgrades while strengthening the local commercial corridor.

names are not clues to their locations and are included strictly for enjoyment. Additional help is available through the city's Facebook and Instagram accounts, and a printable version of the clues will be released soon.

More information is available at stpaul.gov/news/gnome-scavenger-hunt.



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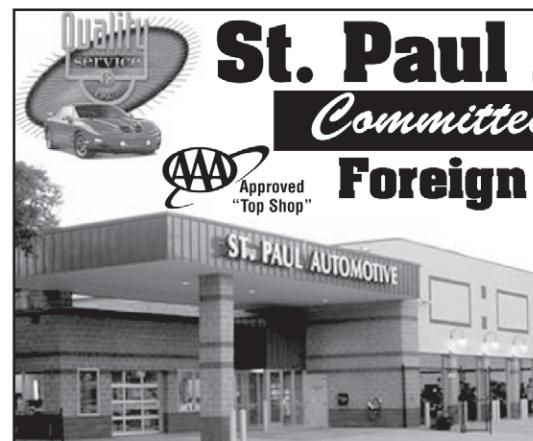
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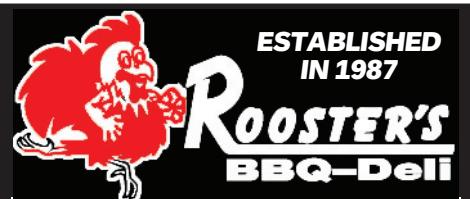
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COMMUNITY TRADITIONS

A Touch of Andrea Salon to Close Christmas Eve After More Than Four Decades of Community Care

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

After more than 40 years behind the chair and nearly three decades as a West 7th neighborhood fixture, Andrea Burnstein quietly closed the door to A Touch of Andrea Salon (1081 West 7th) on Christmas Eve.

Burnstein, who has cut hair in St. Paul for more than 41 years, said the decision to retire is both emotional and deeply personal. Her final day took just three appointments before she stepped back, took a breath and dismantled the space that has been as much a community living room as a business.

"I grew up behind the chair," Burnstein said. "I've had wonderful people who stuck by me through thick and thin. I'm just incredibly grateful."

Burnstein opened A Touch of Andrea 29 years ago, building a loyal following that followed her from earlier locations near Shamrock's and a Randolph Avenue location before settling into her current spot 14½ years ago. She does not own the building, but credits her landlords—owners of Supreme Electric—for their generosity and old-fashioned approach.

"It was a handshake deal," she said. "No contract. They've been just wonderful human beings."

A graduate of Horst Education Center, Burnstein describes herself as part of the "O.G." generation of stylists, long before sleek, high-end salons became common. Her shop reflected a different philosophy—comfortable, conversational and unpretentious.

"I never wanted something sterile," she said. "Mine is more wicker and beer than leather and champagne. You come in, we talk, have coffee. It's like getting your hair done in the kitchen."

That approach resonated. Clients became friends, neighbors stopped in to chat, and longtime regulars shared life milestones in the chair. Among them is Helen Mott, a retired nurse and one of Burnstein's earliest clients, whose hair Burnstein has done since beauty school.

"I've watched people grow up, get married, have kids," Burnstein said. "It's the stereotypical small-town beauty shop, but those places don't exist much anymore."

Burnstein, who lives nearby and raised her son in the neighborhood, said closing the salon also reflects the realities of self-employment. Over her career, she never had paid sick days, vacations, employer-provided insurance or a retirement plan.



Burnstein works on coloring the hair of Helen Mott, her longest client, on December 22.



Andrea Burnstein retired after 41 years behind the chair, 29 of them at her own salon A Touch of Andrea, on December 24.

"Nobody invests in your future but you," she said, noting she began planning for retirement at age 23 after advice from a cousin. "If I hadn't done that, I wouldn't be able to do this today."

While Burnstein plans to fully retire from running a salon, she expects to continue doing

hair occasionally to supplement income and stay connected—on her own terms.

"I'll always do hair to some extent," she said. "But because I want to, not because I have to."

She looks forward to spending more time with family in Florida, caring for her father, and focusing on her own well-being after decades of caring for others.

Burnstein will officially turn in her keys Jan. 30—the same date she first opened her salon 29 years ago. She still keeps the first dollar she earned.

As she prepares to say goodbye, Burnstein said she will miss the relationships most of all—the conversations, the cookies dropped off by clients, the sense of belonging.

"I'm not letting go of all of it," she said. "It's who I am."

On Christmas Eve, she'll close the door quietly, ending a chapter that shaped a neighborhood—and countless lives—one haircut at a time.

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COMMUNITY NOURISHMENT

ORIGIN STORIES

Part the eighth: Fort Snelling at Bdote

By Joe Landsberger

While Fort Snelling has been around a couple hundred years, the Dakota have called Bdote home for eight thousand. Bdote is the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota (St. Peter) Rivers and sacred to Native tribes, particularly the Dakota.

In 1783, the area between the Atlantic coast and the eastern bank of Mississippi River was ceded by Great Britain to the United States. In 1803 the French sold the Louisiana Purchase to the United States; both banks of the Mississippi River were now controlled by the United States. The Americans then needed to impoverish the Dakota to assert control over their land—which they did.

In 1819-20 Lt. Colonel Henry Leavenworth (Connecticut, 1783-1834) wintered at Bdote when he negotiated an agreement with the Dakota at Mni Owe Sni-Coldwater Spring for the construction of a fort to restrict British fur traders, mediate between Dakota and Ojibwe tribes and restrict American settlement until allowed by Native treaties.

In 1820, Colonel Josiah Snelling (Boston, 1782-1828) succeeded Leavenworth. A diamond-shaped fort of local limestone was built. With no formal architect Snelling and Lieutenant Robert McCabe, (Pennsylvania, 1790-1845), the fort's engineer, collaborated on the overall design, using the bluffs to guide its diamond shape. Pvt. James Delaney (Irish, 1823-1890), a master stone cutter and Pvt. William Goddard (England, 1789-) master builder and stone mason were responsible for the successful completion of the construction. All the manpower came from the troops: carpenters, lime burners, quarriers, masons, bricklayers, stonemasons. Liquor was a common fuel against the rigors of frontier life: two gills/half pint of whisky per man through the day, double for men at headquarters.

Snelling suffered from dysentery, addiction to opium and brandy and was quite abusive to his men until his departure in 1827. He was subject to accusations of poor military discipline and embezzlement. He was recalled to Washington, D.C. but died in 1828 before a court marshal.

From 1830-1832 and 1841-48 Seth Eastman (1808-1878) was assigned to Fort Snelling as military commander. He learned the Dakota language, married Wakhá Ináži Wi. After the birth of their baby girl, he declared the marriage over, returned to West Point in 1832, and married Mary Henderson in 1835; they had five children. During the later command Eastman became known for his realistic oil paintings, drawings and watercolors of the everyday life around Fort Snelling of Dakota and Ojibwe people. Mary authored and published "Dahcota; or, Life and Legends of the Sioux Around Fort Snelling" based on her experiences.

It was common, not only for early French



The white cliffs of St. Peter Sandstone, Fort Snelling, 1844.

fur traders, but also American officials to take Native wives, and then move on to white ones. Blended family names dot Minnesota history: Sibley, Woodbury, Kitson, Schoolcraft, Rolette, Talaferro, Faribault, Campbell, Lamont, etc. Their mixed-blood progeny bloodlines continue to this day.

1837-39

The fort's community included soldiers, traders, missionaries, settlers, visitors (tourists!) and lumbermen as well as the Dakota and Ojibwe. The latter camped apart from the Dakota at Coldwater Spring when they ventured south to the fort.

The military community included officers and enlisted men, half American-born, a third Irish. Many were employed in trades for building and maintaining the fort; there were 48 occupations of the soldiers. Some had wives serving as laundresses. Officers came with servants and/or slaves. By the end of January 1838 there were 80 men, 20 per company reduced to half at mid-year, bolstered by 145 recruits in June. A chaplain began work in August.

Connected to the fort was the Indian (St. Peter's) Agency headed by Major Lawrence Talaferro with a cadre of 18 employees who mediated primarily between the Dakota and Ojibwe, but also with settlers and other groups in carrying out treaty provisions. The populations were quite fluid in terms of numbers owing to settlement, seasonal demands and geographical interaction.

White civilian servants at the fort were often related to the soldiers. Duties ranged

from husbandry to household/laundry type tasks. In addition there were a dozen or so slaves. Officers received a government stipend for slaves; pay for civilian servants was through the paymaster.

Major Joseph Plympton (1787-1860) became the post commander in August 1837 and focused on surveying and defining the fort's land boundaries of 100,000 acres, all land between the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers. He evicted settlers to the area of Fountain Cave, then further evicted them to the Upper Landing.

With the first eviction in 1838 civilian settlers, mixed blood and white, around Fort Snelling began an exodus to Le Clere's (Point) downriver via Fountain Cave. The settlement would become Pig's Eye, then the Township of St. Paul.

To be continued.

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, or order up a copy of your own at fortroadfed.org.

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(doors open 4:30p.m.) per person

Menu: Beef in cream sauce and bread dumplings (Svíčková s knedlíkem), dessert, and coffee.

Prepay dinner online and reserve by January 16 credit/debit card go to: www.sokolmn.org/cc/

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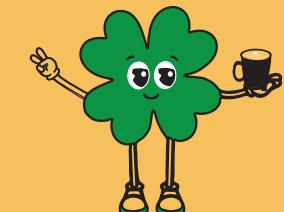
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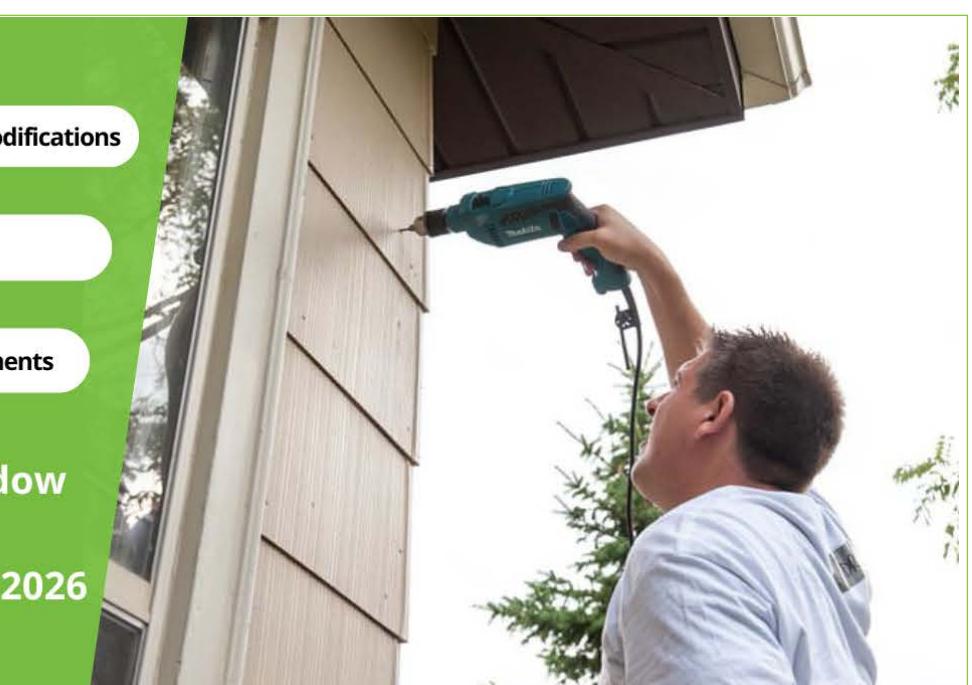
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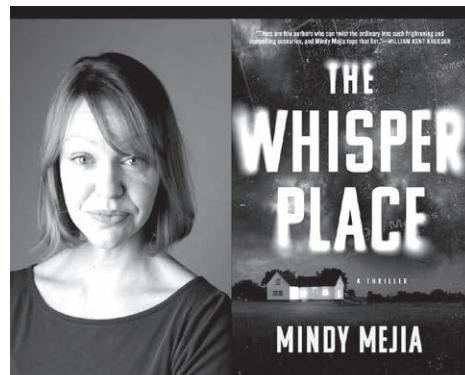
IN THE COMMUNITY

LIBRARY UPDATE

Get Cozy with the Fireside Reading Series

This series highlights some of Minnesota's finest writers with an author talk, a short reading, and time for Q&A. Join in person at Rondo Library at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, 270 N Kent Street, or online every Wednesday evening in January at 6:30 p.m. Learn more at thefireside.org/fireside. Check out the lineup of authors:

Jan 7 | Mindy Mejia: *The Whisper Place*
 Jan 14 | Ricardo Levins Morales: *The Land Knows the Way: Eco-Social Insights for Liberation*
 Jan 21 | Debra J. Stone: *The House on Rondo*
 Jan 28 | Greg Gaut: *The War at Home: Minnesota During the Great War, 1914 - 1920*



EVENTS AT WEST 7TH LIBRARY

ECFE at the Library

Monday, Jan 12, 2026, 2-3 p.m.
 Drop in to an ECFE (Early Childhood Family Education) class at the library second Mondays at from 2-3 p.m.

Family Movie: Matilda!

Friday, Jan 23, 6:15 p.m.

Join West 7th Library and Keystone Community Services for our featured movie: *Matilda!* 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. Fresh hot popcorn will be served!

Playdate

Mindy Mejia

"Plot always comes first for me, but the story has an unmoored quality in my head until I understand the setting."

Tuesdays 3-5 p.m.
 Playdate is an informal playtime for families to gather at the library.

Family Storytime

Wednesdays 10:30 a.m.
 Join MizKathleen for an interactive learning opportunity for you and your child to enjoy stories, rhymes, songs, live music, and fun.

HEALTH LINE

Slip Happens: A St. Paul Guide to Surviving this Snowy Season

By Kathryn DeFoe, DO

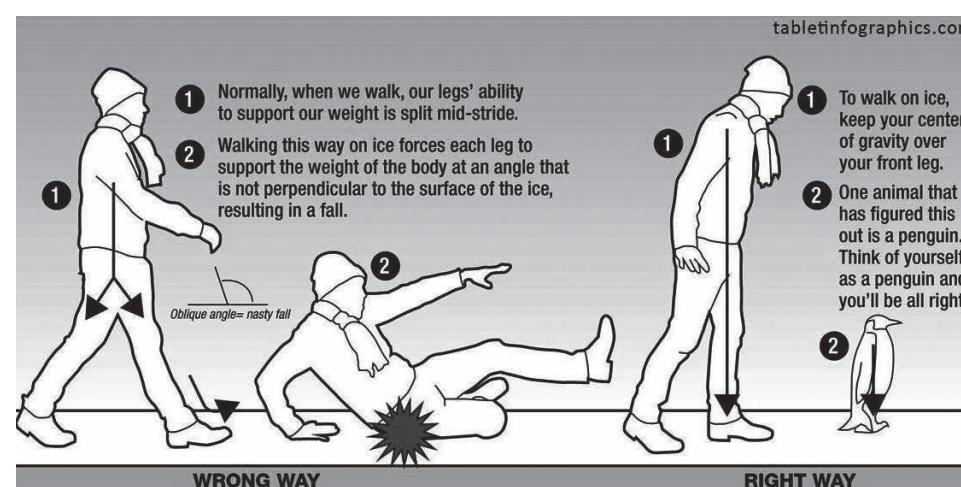
It's the most wonderful time of the year, until you slip on that hidden patch of ice on your way to Grandma's house. Remember these few tips because the best way to ring in the New Year is not falling on your rear.

Clearing snow from your walkway is a pain, but it is important to keep you safe. In St. Paul, property owners are responsible for clearing snow and ice from sidewalks in front of their home or business within 24 hours. Shovel snow into your yard. Though it may be tempting, it is unlawful to pile the snow from your driveway into the street or onto your neighbor's property. If you need to use sand or salt to clear the ice from your walkway, consider using paw-friendly salt, and remember that a small handful goes a long way.

Snowy roads and the stress of getting back to work after the holidays can be a dangerous combo. Remember that it takes longer to commute to work when there is snow outside. Leave early, go slow and give extra space between you and the car in front of you. Accelerate and decelerate carefully. Avoid sudden turns or your car may skid. If you start to skid, steer into the skid to avoid spinning out. In addition to driving carefully, take a closer look at the tires on your car. Worn out tires slip more and get stuck in the snow. Small cars often benefit from snow tires. Although this can be an investment, it is cheaper than having a car accident due to slipping in the snow and ice.

Once you are done driving, knowing where to park is important. If you are parking in St. Paul during a Snow Emergency, remember to look for the red and white Plow Route signs to avoid getting ticketed or towed. When a Snow Emergency is declared in St. Paul:

- Parking is prohibited in all of downtown St. Paul streets at night, even if there is no sign.
- Starting at 9 p.m. on the day a Snow Emergency is called, parking is not allowed on "Night Plow" routes.
- Starting at 8 a.m. the day after a Snow Emergency is called, parking is not allowed on "Day Plow" routes.



- Do not park in these areas until they have been plowed to the curb.

Please also remember, cold weather isn't just uncomfortable, it can be dangerous, especially during long stretches of subzero temperatures. Bring blankets and extra clothes in your car in case you get stuck or the car suddenly stops working. When outside, dress in layers as this is your best defense against getting too cold (hypothermia). Start with a moisture-wicking base layer (polyester, nylon), add something warm (fleece or wool), then top it off with a wind and waterproof outer layer. Hat, mittens, scarves and insulated boots are essential in the cold and snow. Check

in on your neighbors, people living alone or without housing or anyone else who might be at risk. If you are able, consider donating warm coats, socks, gloves or blankets to local shelters in need. Also keep in mind that if it is too cold for you, it is too cold for your pets. Limit their time outside even if they look like they are loving it. Give them breaks indoors to warm up.

Wishing you a warm, safe, and slip-free New Year.

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



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FEDERATION UPDATE



HOLIDAY DECOR COMPETITION

Do you or a neighbor that wows you every year with their holiday decor? Nominations are now open for the 4th annual Fort Road Federation Holiday Decor Competition! Submit a photo and address of your nomination via Google Form by Jan 5, 2026. Voting will take place at our January Board Meeting and the winner will receive a dazzling prize.

SALT REDUCTION IN WEST 7TH

The West 7th/Fort Road Federation is partnering with the Capitol Region Watershed District to help reduce salt pollution and protect the Mississippi River. When excess salt washes into storm drains, it goes straight to our river—harming plants, wildlife and water quality. Join your neighbors by pledging to follow Salt Smart steps this winter.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- Transportation & Land Use, Jan 7, 6:30 pm!
- Board Mtg, Jan 12, 7pm. Gatherings at Station 10
- Community Engagement & Fundraising, Jan 27, 6:30 pm

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

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

**Volunteer for
 Meals on Wheels**

Through our partnership with Meals On Wheels, we service 10 different areas around the city of St. Paul! They include River, Summit, Winslow, Midway, Montreal, North, West Side, District 12, Highland, and Macalester Groveland.

The program is run through our West 7th Community Center, and it serves locally prepared meals that are delivered by a neighborhood volunteers Mondays through Fridays!

Many homebound elderly and adults with disabilities are fragile and vulnerable, and most struggle to prepare a nutritious meal on their own. Meals on Wheels can help! Locally prepared meals are delivered by a neighborhood volunteer. Keystone's Meals on Wheels program is all about choice and friendly service.

To learn more or to sign up to receive Meals on Wheels, call Metro Meals on Wheels at 612-623-3363 and they will find the provider in your neighborhood. For basic information, call Keystone's senior services staff at 651-645-7424 or 651-298-5493.

**Get in Gear
 with Express Bike Shop**

Express Bike Shop, a nonprofit shop and social enterprise of Keystone Community Services, is open Tuesday - Saturday and we're here for all your biking needs! We sell high-quality refurbished bicycles at affordable prices. We are a full-service shop so can tune up your bike or update it to make it more comfortable. We also sell a variety of accessories like seats, locks, helmets, and more. Whatever your bike needs, we're here; give us a call at 651-644-9660 or stop by the shop at 1158 Selby Ave, St. Paul.

HIGHLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
For information, visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org/events

BUSINESSES: APPLY FOR FUNDING

Two corridors eligible for grant funds through the city's Commercial Corridor Organization Assistance Program. Starts Jan 31.

CALLING HOME IMPROVEMENT BUSINESSES

Seeking local contractors (landscape, design, home improvement) to present at March 7 workshop day. Apply at highlanddistrictcouncil.org/hdc-event/hiwd.

UPCOMING COMMITTEES MEETINGS

1978 Ford Pkwy with a zoom option. Get Zoom link, meeting agendas at highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar.

- HDC board meeting - Thu, Jan 8, 7 p.m.
- Transportation - Mon, Jan 13, 7 p.m.
- Community Development - Tue, Jan 20, 6:30 p.m.
- Community Engagement - Mon, Jan 26, 7 p.m.

BULLETIN BOARD

FROST FEST

Jan 24, 2-5 p.m. Groveland Ice Rinks. Free. Celebrate winter with an afternoon of outdoor fun for all ages. Activities include ice skating, games, prizes, hot chocolate, and a cozy bonfire. Hosted at the Groveland Ice Rinks, this family-friendly event brings neighbors together to embrace the season and enjoy community spirit. Whether you skate or simply enjoy the atmosphere, Frost Fest offers a festive way to spend a winter afternoon. Info: macgrove.org/frostfest



ST. PAUL CHESS ENTHUSIASTS

Sundays, 2-5 p.m. Wildflyer Coffee, West 7th. Free. Saint Paul Chess Enthusiasts chess club meets every Sunday afternoon from 2:00 to 5:00 at Wildflyer Coffee on West 7th. We play casual games of chess and everyone is welcome.



SOKOL MINNESOTA FRIENDLY FRIDAY EVENINGS

Jan 9, 7-10 p.m. C.S.P.S. Hall. Free. Cards and board games, fun, food, and friends. No fee. Bring a beverage and/or snack to share. Info at sokolmn.org/all-events.

FACES OF LIFE

Weekends Jan. 10-31, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Burl Gallery. Free. A powerful and intimate photography exhibition by artist Gregory Gilbert that centers on 20 individuals receiving hospice care. Through these portraits, Gilbert seeks to honor the lives and humanity of his subjects while challenging common misconceptions about hospice, particularly the idea that it signals immediate death. Instead, the exhibit highlights dignity, resilience and connection during life's final chapter. Opening reception Jan 10, 1-3 p.m. Meet the artist and engage with the work in a welcoming setting. Info: burlgallery.com

SEWING TIPS WITH SAPHIRA

Jan 10, 10:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. George Latimer Central Library. Free. Expert sewer Saphira will help you mend damaged items, or get you started with a new project! Sewing machines available, as well as some fabric, thread, buttons, etc., or you can bring your own. Registration requested: sppl.org/events.

URBAN EXPEDITION: DAKOTA HOMELAND

Jan 11, 1-3 p.m. Landmark Center. Free. Landmark Center's beloved Urban Expedition program invites families to explore global cultures right in the heart of St. Paul. Experience the vibrancy of authentic music, food, dance, and crafts in this immersive event. Don't forget to grab your passport and collect a stamp at each Urban Expedition for a chance to win a prize! This event is presented in collaboration with Blue Hummingbird Woman and other Dakota community members. Learn more at landmarkcenter.org/event/urban-expedition-dakota-homeland.

CONSTITUTIONAL OBSERVER TRAINING

Jan 15, 6-7:30 p.m. The Wellstone Center. Free. This free Constitutional Observer training equips community members with knowledge about their rights as bystanders and individuals during interactions involving ICE and law enforcement. Hosted by Neighborhood House, the Immigrant Defense Network, and St. Paul City Council President Rebecca Noecker, the session addresses recent increases in visible enforcement activity. Participants

will learn how to observe safely, understand constitutional protections, and access resources for impacted individuals and families. The training emphasizes solidarity, awareness, and community preparedness. Info: eventbrite.com/e/constitutional-observer-training-free-for-the-community-tickets-1977637046643

KING BOREAS GRANDE DAY PARADE

Jan 24, 2 p.m. Grand Avenue. Free. The Parade is back on Grand Avenue in St. Paul. Beginning at Dale and ending just after Lexington, featuring dozens of bands, floats and, of course, the newly crowned King Boreas and his Royal Family. Learn more at wintercarnival.com/events/2026/king-boreas-grande-day-parade.

SVÍČKOVÁ DINNER

Jan 24, doors open 4:30 p.m., serving: 5 p.m. C.S.P.S. Hall. \$35. Beef in cream sauce with bread dumplings, coffee, and dessert. Bar: beer, wine, soft drinks. \$35 per person. Prepay for the Svíčková Dinner online. Learn more and tickets at sokolmn.org/all-events.

COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE

Feb 6, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy. Give blood and help save lives at this community blood drive hosted with Memorial Blood Center. Donating blood is a simple yet powerful way to support local hospitals and patients in need. Reserve your spot and make a meaningful impact in just a short amount of time. Info: mbcherohub.club/donor/schedules

BEING BLACK AND BETTY CROCKER

Feb 14. Historic Fort Snelling, St. Paul. Free. Join culinary visionary Barbara Jo Davis for a special community program featuring a screening of TPT's *Being Black and Betty Crocker*. Includes a moderated discussion, audience Q&A, and a reception with light refreshments. The program explores race, food culture, and identity through the lens of Minnesota history, offering both personal and historical perspectives. Event encourages thoughtful conversation and community connection in an accessible and welcoming environment. Advance arrival is recommended due to limited seating. More info: mnhs.org/events

MUSIC UNDER GLASS

Select dates Jan. 4-Feb. 4, evenings. Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, Como Zoo. Free. A warm winter escape with live local music set among lush tropical gardens. Concertgoers can wander the Sunken Garden at dusk while enjoying performances ranging from folk and blues to rockabilly and world music. Beer and wine are available for purchase, and the Conservatory remains open after the zoo closes. A unique blend of music and atmosphere. More info: comozooconservatory.org



HISTORY THEATRE 2026 CONCERT SERIES

Series celebrates iconic music across genres and generations, featuring beloved songs from 1960s and '70s, Irish folk traditions and Broadway classics. Concerts offer something for music lovers of all ages and tastes. \$35-45; groups 10+ \$20/ticket; Buy 3-Show Pass \$105 (save 22%). More info: historytheatre.com/special_events. Featuring:

Jan 11: "We Dig Peter, Paul & Mary" with Michael Monroe

Feb 15: Northern Shores featuring Danny Diamond and Brian Miller

April 18: The Best of Broadway Belters with Jen Burleigh-Bentz and a full band

FOR MORE CALENDAR EVENTS, VISIT
COMMUNITYREPORTER.ORG/EVENTS

BOUTIQUE, PG 1

points to that—sell what you love. And it's worked. We've had people come in from their 20s to their 70s, and they all find something that resonates."

Holst sources goods through a mix of brand outreach and wholesale platforms, but local makers remain central to her mission. Within days of posting an invitation to collaborate on Instagram, she had messages from several St. Paul artisans interested in being featured.

"I really want to use this space to uplift local creatives," she said. "I know the privilege of being able to open a storefront, and I want to share that."

Building Community One Conversation at a Time

More than anything, Holst wants her boutique to be a place where people feel connected. She and Matt—who helps run the shop and handled much of the build-out—are natural conversationalists. Some customers stay for 45 minutes, chatting. Others stop in simply to browse or warm up.

"In a world that feels more disconnected all the time, having a space where people can come in, talk, feel seen—that matters," Holst said. "Whether they buy something or not, it's all so meaningful to me."

She's exploring future ideas such as hosting local art exhibitions, featuring handmade clothing lines from friends, or even organizing small outdoor markets in the warmer months.

Growing Slowly—and Intentionally

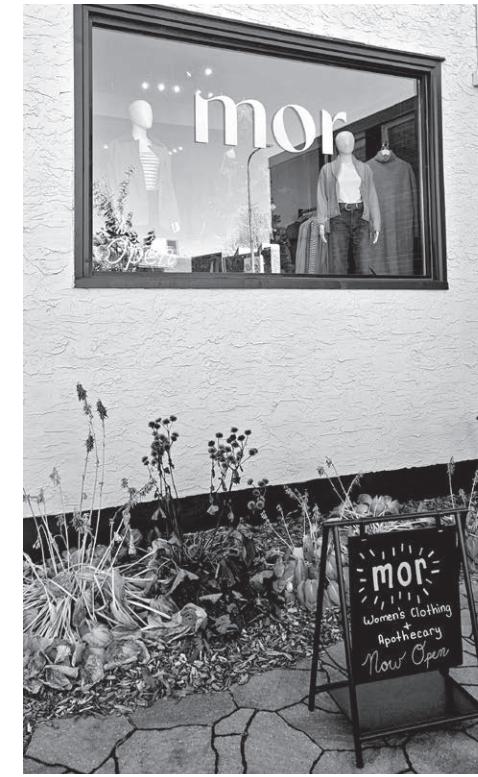
Holst is realistic about the rhythms of a new boutique. Some days bring 50 customers; others bring \$12 in sales. But she stays grounded in her belief that the shop is part of a larger purpose.

"I've spent years letting fear guide me," she

WEST 7TH, PG 1

created medical care and counsel to teens and young adults, but included adults and elderly seeking affordable and community-available healthcare.

Dr. Brabec passed the baton to me in July



Mor Boutique storefront located at 844 Grand Ave.

DAMIAN GOEBEL

said. "But not this time. This is about building something sustainable—not just for business, but for life."

For now, the boutique continues to welcome neighbors, curious shoppers, and anyone looking to rediscover, as Holst puts it, "the joy of trying it on."

If you go

Mor Boutique, 844 Grand Ave. St. Paul. Wednesday-Friday, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. shopmor-mn.com

1975. Two weeks after I had just completed my medical internship at Minneapolis General Hospital.

What about that dinosaur hunting thing? That's next month. Promise ...

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Join us for a three-part presentation on St. Paul's Summit Avenue, St. Paul's Historic Irvine Park, and discover "Building for Beer in the Twin Cities: The Landscape and Architecture Of Brewing"



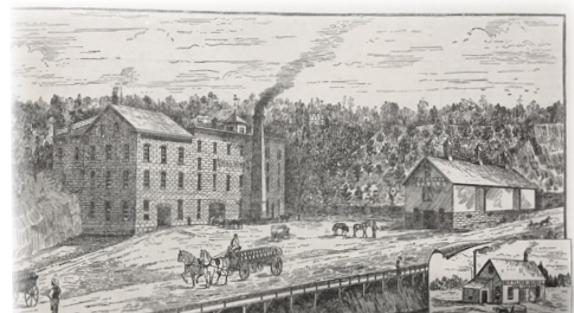
THU, JAN 22, 2 PM St. Paul's Summit Avenue

Everyone in the Twin Cities knows about Summit Avenue, with its grand homes, its colleges, and the Cathedral of St. Paul. In this fully illustrated presentation, we will learn a bit more about these familiar places, and we will also dig into the avenue's history to understand more about this community treasure.



THU, FEB 26, 2 PM Historic Irvine Park

Within sight of downtown and only a block off West Seventh Street, Irvine Park is one of St. Paul's oldest neighborhoods. Located near the Alexander Ramsey House and built around a lovely park, its old houses tell an interesting story of settlement, development, change, and historic preservation.



THU, MARCH 26, 2 PM Building for Beer in the Twin Cities

St. Paul and Minneapolis were once dotted with breweries, biergartens, brewers' mansions, and saloons, all connected to the early brewing industry, and we have seen a renaissance of local beer spaces in recent years. Let's explore the landscapes and architecture of beer from the mid-19th century to the present.

ALL EVENTS WILL TAKE PLACE AT SHOLOM EAST CAMPUS:
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RSVP Required. Contact Ali at 651.328.2258 or alilja@sholom.com

PRESENTED BY:
KRISTIN ANDERSON

Kristin Anderson is a Professor Emerita of Art & Design at Augsburg University in Minneapolis.



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