

# Community REPORTER

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



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JUNE 2026

CIRCULATION 20,000



## Grand Old Day 2026

**F**or more than five decades, Grand Old Day has marked the unofficial start of summer in St. Paul, transforming Grand Avenue into a sprawling neighborhood celebration filled with music, food, art, community groups and thousands of visitors.

First launched in 1973 by the Grand Avenue Business Association, the festival has grown from a local business promotion into what organizers describe as the largest free street festival in the Midwest. Stretching roughly

two miles from Dale Street to Snelling Avenue, Grand Old Day blends the feel of a neighborhood block party with the scale of a major summer festival.

This year's event takes place Sunday, June 7, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., with live music stages and beverage gardens opening at 11 a.m. The festival again features six music stages, a parade, family activities, food and art vendors, the return of the popular wiener dog races and a morning 5K fun run.

What has long made Grand Old Day distinctive is its mix of community traditions and changing attractions. Visitors can spend the morning watching marching bands and floats in the parade, browse local artists and nonprofit booths in the afternoon and end the day listening to Twin Cities musicians outdoors along Grand Avenue.

The 2026 festival also leans heavily into neighborhood-focused experiences and

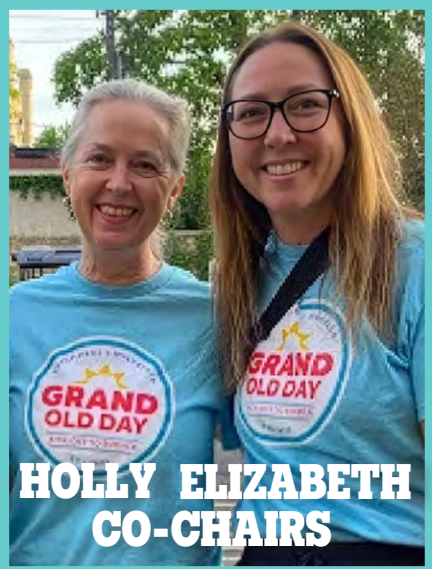
interactive activities. Organizers are introducing several new features this year, including a Future Innovators Zone with STEM activities and a Kids Market designed for young entrepreneurs ages 5 to 17. The market will allow children to sell handmade items, games, treats and services while gaining real-world business experience in front of thousands of attendees.

Another new addition is the Glow Zone, presented by Face Foudnri, offering free skin consultations, giveaways and wellness-focused activities near Red Balloon Bookshop.

Pet lovers will also see an expanded footprint this year. After the popularity of last year's dachshund races, organizers are launching a new Pet Pavilion area near Snelling Avenue featuring pet-focused vendors and activities in addition to the returning races.

Festival organizers are also emphasizing

GRAND OLD DAY 2



### THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING GRAND OLD DAY

Grand Old Day is truly a community effort over 50 years old and made possible by volunteers, neighbors, local businesses and community partners who generously give their time and energy to help bring this St. Paul tradition to life each year.

As event co-chairs, we want to thank everyone who helps create the welcoming, fun, and connected atmosphere that makes Grand Old Day so special.

This celebration is proudly supported by the Grand Avenue Business Association and its continued commitment to supporting local businesses and strengthening our community. Grand Old Day is a reflection of the people, organizations and small businesses that make Grand Avenue such a vibrant place to gather and celebrate.

We're grateful to everyone who helps make this event possible and look forward to being together on June 7!

*Grand Old Day Co-Chairs:  
Elizabeth Emerson George,  
Goff Public  
Holly Weinkauff, Red Balloon  
Bookshop*

### FUN RUN

**BEGINS/ENDS AT SNELLING AVE**  
Pre-registration required.

The day begins with the Grand Old Day 5K Fun Run and Kids Half-Mile at 8 a.m., giving participants a chance to kick off the festival before parade crowds arrive.

The family-friendly run and walk starts and ends near Snelling and Grand avenues and is open to participants of all ages and experience levels. Organizers describe the race as an all-ages event designed for runners, walkers and families alike.

Participants can register online in advance and purchase commemorative race T-shirts while supplies last.

Register at [grandave.com/events/grandolddaygrandoldday](http://grandave.com/events/grandolddaygrandoldday).



### Way Cool Cooking School Brings Communal Cooking To St. Paul

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

For more than two decades, Way Cool Cooking School has built a following in the Twin Cities by turning cooking classes into something more than a lesson in the kitchen. Now, the longtime Eden Prairie business is bringing that approach to Grand Avenue with a newly opened second location aimed at serving families, businesses and budding cooks across the east metro.

Co-owners Rob Williams and Rocky Shilhanek said the expansion was driven by growing demand from customers traveling from across the region for classes, camps and parties.

"We were having people call up looking for birthday parties for cooking classes," Williams said. "We're filling up. We're having wait lists. I said, 'I think that we can support this in a second location.'"

The business traces its roots to 2004, when the original school opened in Eden Prairie. Williams and Shilhanek, who both previously worked in corporate settings, later purchased the company from founder Linda Elliot after searching for a small business opportunity outside corporate life.

"We both love food. We both love entertaining," Williams said. "We kept going back to it. It's like, this is kind of intriguing."



Co-owners Rocky Shilhanek, left, and Rob Williams flank their long-time chef Mary Matthews at the newest location.

The new St. Paul location officially began taking bookings in April and has already hosted birthday parties, team-building events and family cooking classes. The response from neighbors has been immediate, the owners said, including an open house that drew more than 300 people after they had prepared for roughly 100.

"There's a lot of support, a lot of excitement from the neighborhood," Williams said.

That community focus was a major reason the owners chose Grand Avenue over a more conventional suburban expansion. Shilhanek said neighborhood curiosity has been constant since construction began.

"Anytime we're here, it never fails,

WAY COOL, GRAND OLD DAY 3





# Grand Old Day 2026 Guide

VISIT [GRANDAVE.COM/EVENTS/GRANDOLDDAY](http://GRANDAVE.COM/EVENTS/GRANDOLDDAY)



**CAR SHOW**



**WIENER DOG RACE**



**FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES**

## LIVE MUSIC

Live music once again anchors much of the afternoon programming, with six stages operating from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For showtimes and more, visit [grandave.com/grand-old-day-entertainment](http://grandave.com/grand-old-day-entertainment).

### GRAND STAGE GRAND AND AVON

Located at Grand and Avon, the Grand Stage serves as the festival's headline venue. Sponsored by The Current, the stage features indie rock and alternative acts including Gully Boys, The Plastic Constellations, Thomas Sticha and Bunny Blood.

### AMERICANA STAGE GRAND AND MILTON

The Americana Stage focuses on folk, roots and bluegrass music with performances from Molly Maher, Clover and The Bee and Haley E Rydell.

### LIVE AND LOCAL STREET STAGE GRAND AND ST. ALBANS

Emerging Twin Cities performers will take over the Live and Local Street Stage between Dale St. and St. Albans. Featured acts include LASALLE and Obi Original & The Black Atlantics.

### NOTHING BUT CANNA STAGE GRAND AND GROTTO

The reggae-focused Nothing But Canna Stage at Grand and Grotto will feature International Reggae All Stars and additional world music acts.

### DECADES STAGE GRAND AND SNELLING

The Decades Stage highlights cover bands and retro favorites, including The Cellar Dwellers and DJ Matt Kotefka's Rewind retro set.

### SCHOOL OF ROCK STAGE GRAND AND LEXINGTON

Youth performers from regional School of Rock programs will perform throughout the day near Grand and Lexington Parkway.

## FOOD & ART

### BETWEEN DALE AND SNELLING

From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Grand Ave will fill with food vendors, artists, nonprofit organizations and local businesses. Festivalgoers can expect everything from classic fair food and local restaurant offerings to handmade crafts, artwork and community booths lining the avenue between Dale St and Snelling Ave. The Arts and Nonprofit Zone returns this year alongside expanded vendor areas. Organizers are also introducing the new Pet Pavilion near Snelling Ave, featuring pet-related vendors and activities aimed at animal lovers attending the festival.

## CAR SHOW

### GRAND AND HAMLIN

Classic cars and vintage vehicles return to the Grand Old Day Car Show near Grand and Hamline. Presented by White Bear Mitsubishi and Volkswagen of Inver Grove, the car show offers visitors a chance to browse restored vehicles, muscle cars and collector favorites throughout the day. The display will be centered near the Sinclair gas station area and is expected to attract enthusiasts of all ages.

## WIENER DOG RACES

### GRAND AND SNELLING

One of the festival's most popular recent additions returns with even more fanfare in 2026. The Wiener Dog Races will take place at noon and 1 p.m. near Grand and Snelling avenues. Check-in begins at 11 a.m., and organizers are encouraging early registration for participating dachshunds. This year's races expand into a broader Pet Pavilion experience featuring vendors, pet activities and additional seating for spectators.

Organizers are billing the event as "the cutest showdown of the year," with bleachers added this year to accommodate larger crowds.

Register your pup at [grandave.com/events/grandoldday](http://grandave.com/events/grandoldday).

## FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES

### GRAND AND DUNLAP & THROUGHOUT THE FESTIVAL

Grand Old Day continues to emphasize family programming throughout the festival footprint. This year's new Future Innovators Zone will occupy the Willwerscheid Funeral Home parking lot near Grand and Dunlap. The area will feature interactive engineering and building activities from the University of St. Thomas School of Engineering, heavy-equipment simulators from IUOE Local 49 and the new Kids Market for young entrepreneurs. Families can also explore sports and wellness activities, including outdoor yoga sessions and interactive exhibits. The new Glow Zone presented by Face Foundrie will provide a wellness-themed rest stop with free consultations, masks and giveaways. Community-building activities also return through the Neighborly Notes booths at Red Balloon Bookshop and Catzen Coffee, where visitors can write and exchange encouraging messages.

## PARADE

### BEGINS AT DALE

The Grand Old Day Parade, presented by Flint Hills Resources, steps off at 9:30 a.m. and remains one of the festival's signature traditions.

The parade travels west along Grand Ave from Dale St to Snelling Ave and features marching bands, dance groups, floats, community organizations, businesses, pets and neighborhood performers.

Festival organizers encourage visitors to arrive early and bring lawn chairs to secure viewing spots along the route. The parade serves as the ceremonial centerpiece of the day, officially launching a full afternoon of activities stretching across Grand Ave.

## WRIST BAND AND PIT PASS INFO

### FESTIVAL ADMISSION AND STAGE ACCESS ARE FREE.

### A 21+ WRISTBAND IS REQUIRED FOR BEVERAGE PURCHASES IN ENTERTAINMENT GARDENS.

- 21+ Wristband\*: \$10 advance; \$15 day of festival
  - Music Pit Pass\*: \$25 advance; \$30 day of festival
- Includes front-row pit access at select stages and a 21+ wristband

\*Advance purchases are available through Showpass at [showpass.com/grand-old-day](http://showpass.com/grand-old-day).



SCAN QR CODE TO BUY A WRISTBAND

## OFFICIAL APP & TRANSPORTATION

Festival organizers encourage attendees to download the official Grand Old Day app to access maps, schedules, vendor lists and real-time updates. Find the Grand Old Day App at [grandoldday.app](http://grandoldday.app).

**FREE METRO TRANSIT PASSES** are available through the Metro Transit Ride Pass Survey at [surveymonkey.com/r/2026GrandOldDayJune7](http://surveymonkey.com/r/2026GrandOldDayJune7).

Visitors can also use the **MOOV RIDESHARE APP FOR TRANSPORTATION** to the event at [themoovapp.com/download-grod](http://themoovapp.com/download-grod).



SCAN QR CODE GET YOUR FREE METRO TRANSIT PASS

## GRAND OLD DAY, PG 1

accessibility and transportation. Attendees can download free Metro Transit passes through a festival survey, use shuttle service from the Anderson Parking Facility near Cretin Avenue or bike to the event using designated bicycle parking near Ayd Mill Road.

Live music remains one of the festival's

biggest draws. This year's lineup includes indie rock, Americana, reggae, cover bands and youth performers spread across six stages. Organizers say all stages remain free to attend, though wristbands are required for 21-and-older beverage garden purchases. Pit passes offering front-row access at several stages are also available.

Among this year's featured performers are Minneapolis indie rock veterans The

Plastic Constellations, Twin Cities trio Gully Boys and reggae group International Reggae All Stars.

Despite rising event production costs, organizers say maintaining free admission remains central to the festival's identity. Wristband and sponsorship sales help fund music stages, security and festival operations while supporting local businesses and organizations along Grand Avenue.

For many St. Paul residents, Grand Old Day has become as much a seasonal ritual as a festival — one that combines neighborhood pride, local music and a distinctly Twin Cities sense of community.

Find all their year's information at [grandave.com/events/grandoldday](http://grandave.com/events/grandoldday).

~ Damian Goebel and The Community Reporter



## Access the app!

Interact with live music schedules, vendor maps, event updates, and exclusive festival deals.

Available Now!



Sunday, June 7th

[GrandOldDay.app](http://GrandOldDay.app)

\*Use instantly in your mobile browser or add it to your home screen for notifications

# Community REPORTER

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

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Community News • Pg 2
- Building Community • Pg 3
- Federation Update • Pg 5
- Healthline • Pg 6
- Bulletin Board • Pg 10
- Highland Update • Pg 10
- Library Update • Pg 10
- Origin Stories • Pg 12



SANDY PAPPAS READIES FOR RETIREMENT page 7

VOL. 56 NO. 56

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## DISTRICT PERSPECTIVES

### Downtown St. Paul's Billion Dollar Moment



JOE SPENCER  
PRESIDENT, ST. PAUL DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE  
columnist

The St. Paul Downtown Alliance held its first Annual Meeting last month at the Palace Theatre. There, we painted a picture of how all the recently announced investments by public and private groups come together as an unprecedented, collective \$1.293 billion investment in downtown.

Because project by project, announcement by announcement, it can be hard to feel the scale of what's happening here. Across multiple sectors, multiple partners and multiple years of aligned work—something extraordinary has taken shape since the Downtown Investment Strategy was unveiled just two years ago.

The City of St. Paul is investing over \$242 million in downtown — in road improvements, parks, and a downtown vitality fund. They have also committed \$200 million to the Grand Casino Arena Complex, which is being matched by the Minnesota Wild. That's over \$442 million flowing into downtown St. Paul from the City. The City is all in.

Ramsey County is committing \$230 million to downtown St. Paul through their Building Stronger Together, Dynamic Downtown strategy. That means catalyzing projects like the Park at RiversEdge, investing in a housing fund to bring more residents into the core and infrastructure investment to spark connection and create spaces for events, culture and celebration.

The St. Paul Port Authority is taking the lead in readying the former St. Joseph's Hospital campus for its next chapter. Just steps from St. Paul's entertainment district, they are unlocking this long-dormant site through a unique, public-private partnership with Fairview. Together, they are tearing down vacant buildings, cleaning up the property, and preparing 5.5 acres for new investment.

We also have a number of active private developers. The value of the developments recently completed, under construction, or in the near-term pipeline are in excess of \$250 million and growing. Each week, we hear of another interested developer being attracted to our downtown. The deals are happening and I expect the pace to increase to match the current effort being displayed by the public and corporate sectors.

The major downtown corporations of Ecolab, Securian Financial, Travelers and others are investing \$100 million in upgrading their campuses. That is a statement of confidence. That is businesses saying: we are investing in our future here.

Metro Transit recently completed \$21 million in new rapid transit systems and MN Dot is investing \$16 million into the new John Ireland Bridge, making visitation faster and easier for our downtown events, which supports our local bars, restaurants, and shops.

And our own Downtown Development Corporation started an investment fund, seeded by the Bush Foundation and Securian Financial to the tune of \$30 million, so that we could purchase and develop buildings that were in extreme distress and turn them into catalyst properties in our core.

This investment was leveraged by the people who showed up when showing up wasn't glamorous. The small business owners who bet on this downtown when the odds weren't obvious. The residents who chose this city and defended it when others wrote it off. Volunteer and

MOMENT, PG 6

## Six Months In, Mayor Her Reflects On Initial Crises And The Long-Term Future

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

**W**hen Kaohly Her took office in January as the first woman and first Hmong American elected mayor of St. Paul, she expected to spend her opening months focused on improving city operations, streamlining development and advancing economic growth.

Instead, within days of her election, her administration was thrust into crisis management as federal immigration enforcement actions intensified across the city under what became known as Operation Metro Surge.

"I think that there was a part of me that maybe was already a little bit prepared because I knew what had been happening," Her said during a recent interview marking her first six months in office.

Her defeated incumbent Mayor, and her former boss, Melvin Carter in a November 2025 upset victory and was sworn in Jan. 2. Her campaign centered on what she called three core priorities: safe communities, a vibrant economy and affordable housing. She also pledged to defend immigrant and LGBTQ+ residents from federal policies she described as hostile.

Born in Laos and raised in the United States after arriving as a Hmong refugee, Her's election was widely viewed as historic for both St. Paul and Minnesota's large Hmong community. Before becoming mayor, she served in the first years of the Carter administration before winning election to the Minnesota House in 2018, becoming one of the first of two Hmong American women elected to the Legislature and later the first Hmong American woman to serve in House leadership.

**"That was three days into my administration."** Her said concerns over immigration enforcement had already become central to her campaign before the surge reached public attention.

"When I said that immigration was an important platform issue for me, lots of people



Mayor Kaohly Her cuts the ribbon at the new Aldi in downtown St. Paul.

actually said to me, 'We don't think that you should include that because that's a federal issue. That's not a local issue,'" Her said.

While serving in the Legislature, Her said she began hearing from immigrant families months before the mayoral election about increased immigration enforcement activity.

"I had my first meeting with ICE representatives in April," she said. "We were already seeing targeting of specific communities."

She described accompanying residents to immigration check-ins during the summer and hearing increasingly fearful stories from community members.

"I remembered by early July, families who I was going with called me and said, 'You don't need to go anymore,'" Her said. "And I said, 'Why?' And they said, 'We're just going to hide our person for the next three years.'"

Her said reports of enforcement activity particularly affected Latino and Southeast Asian communities, including Hmong residents in Frogtown and Midway.

"The Hmong community had told me that there were weekends where they were heavily targeted in the Frogtown and in Midway neighborhoods," she said.

Federal immigration enforcement escalated during Her's transition into office, coinciding with violent incidents and protests that consumed the opening weeks of her administration.

"When everything started, culminating in the killing of Renee Good and Alex Peretti, that was three days into my administration," Her said.

### Moving Forward While in a Crisis

Despite the strain of the crisis, Her said her administration continued advancing other priorities by restructuring the mayor's office rather than replacing large numbers of city staff.

"I'm the first mayor in the history of St. Paul that changed from a mayor-deputy mayor system into a four assistant mayor," Her said. "I didn't grow our departments. I just didn't hire for other positions and sort of rolled everything up into these other positions."

Unlike many incoming administrations, Her also chose not to immediately replace department directors.

"Usually mayors appoint all new people in the beginning," she said. "Having that continuity, wanting to do that assessment, to say, 'Why haven't things been working well? Is it the people or the structure that is making it difficult?'"

MAYOR HER, PG 6

## St. Paul Rotary Bringing Fireworks Back To St. Paul This July 4th

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

Public Independence Day fireworks are set to return to St. Paul this summer for the first time in years, as the St. Paul Rotary Club launches a new community celebration tied to the nation's 250th anniversary.

"We want to have fun like everyone, so we're bringing fireworks back," said Carolyn Will, a Rotary Club member helping lead the effort.

The event, called "Red, White & BOOM!," is scheduled for July 4 at Cathedral Hill Park near the Cathedral of St. Paul, with fireworks planned at dusk overlooking downtown St. Paul.

The celebration marks a significant return for citywide public Fourth of July fireworks in St. Paul. In 2018, then-Mayor Melvin Carter ended the city's annual municipal fireworks funding, citing other budget priorities. Since then, residents seeking large public Independence Day displays often traveled to Minneapolis or suburban celebrations.

The fireworks will be launched from the former chancery property owned by the cathedral. Organizers have reserved Cathedral Hill Park and North Cathedral Park, while St. Paul College plans to open its front lawn for spectators.

"There is a lot of parkland to watch the show," Will said.

The evening will include eight food trucks along Dayton Avenue beginning at 6 p.m., free water provided by St. Paul Regional Water Services, free music inside the cathedral and a



JULY 4, 2026

Rotary Club of St. Paul #10

Red, White, and Boom logo

short program before the fireworks.

"Steven C, the pianist, is going to have a patriotic concert free at the cathedral at 7:30," Will said. "Doors will be wide open with speakers going out to the park."

"He'll be playing traditional music, folk, bluegrass and patriotic songs," she added.

"That will be a lot of fun."

John Ireland Boulevard between Selby and Dayton will be closed from 6 to 10:30 p.m. to create a pedestrian-friendly area around the celebration.

Organizers also hope to incorporate

FIREWORKS, PG 4

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

Ramsey County Attorney's Office Touts Gains in Reducing Youth Crime

BY AEDEN EVENSON-MCDERMOTT

The (Re)Imagining Justice for Youth (RJY) initiative aims to help youth connect through community to reduce criminal behavior. Ramsey County Attorney John Choi announced the initiative's success in February with state, local and community leaders. The initiative started in July of 2021 as a means of trying to help victims, families and young people through systematically evaluating harm, needs and youth development, according to a news release. The goal of the initiative is to create behavioral changes surrounding recidivism so that legal consequences such as relapses into criminal behaviors like re-arrests, re-convictions and re-incarcerations are significantly limited. Results show that community accountability outperforms traditional court processing with 66% reduced risk of recidivism for first assaults and 50% reduced risk of recidivism for first gross misdemeanor or felony. "Our study is further evidence that turning to each other keeps us more safe than relying on punishment and control," said University of Minnesota Medical School research partner, Kara Beckman. County Officials said, of the total cases presented by law enforcement to the youth justice system, about 30% were reviewed by the Collaborative Review Team (CRT) and 15% were fully

resolved through based community accountability programs with no court involvement. "We have also seen promising results around eliminating the substantial and persistent racial disparities in the system, having decreased racial gaps with respect to which youth were offered community-based accountability and which youth succeeded in it," Choi said. According to a baseline data analysis from the University of Minnesota that examined racial disparities, young people's experience in the legal system (aged 10-17), and how that affected their likelihood of ending up in the adult system across three areas found that the traditional legal system was not meeting the needs of young people, was the least effective when responding to serious behaviors, and was especially ineffective for Black, Latino, and Indigenous youth. "The documented and transparent results from the County Attorney demonstrate meaningful progress. We appreciate the collaborative approach and inclusion of law enforcement perspectives. The practices implemented since 2021 — combined with the proactive work of the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office — are clearly improving public safety outcomes for our youth," Ramsey County Sheriff Bob Fletcher said.



ONEIDA SCHOLARSHIP OPENS FOR ADULT LEARNERS

Adult learners in St. Paul's West 7th neighborhood can now apply for the 2026 Oneida Scholarship, a program offering grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000 to help residents continue postsecondary education and training. The scholarship, administered through Keystone Community Services, is aimed at residents age 18 or older who are enrolled in undergraduate certificate or degree programs during the 2026 academic year. Organizers said the awards are intended to support students facing financial barriers while pursuing educational and career goals. Applicants must live in the West 7th neighborhood and demonstrate financial need related to completing their education. Selection criteria also include educational and training goals, along with any special circumstances affecting applicants. Completed applications are due June 11 and may be submitted by mail or email to Keystone Community Services. The program reflects continuing efforts by neighborhood organizations to expand access to higher education and workforce opportunities in one of St. Paul's most historically diverse communities. More information and application materials are available at keystonecommunityservices.org/oneida2026

and community priorities. Highland District Council represents residents and businesses in the Highland Park area. Learn more at highlanddistrictcouncil.org

ST. PAUL SECURES PARTIAL WINS DURING 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

St. Paul lawmakers and city leaders secured several infrastructure and economic development investments during the 2026 legislative session, though many of the city's largest requests fell short at the Capitol. The Legislature approved portions of a \$1.2 billion statewide bonding bill that included several projects affecting the capital city. Among the largest St. Paul allocations were \$40 million for renovations to Roy Wilkins Auditorium and \$10 million for upgrades to Grand Casino Arena. Mayor Kaohly Her had sought \$200 million for broader improvements to the arena complex and RiverCentre facilities, but lawmakers did not approve the full request or an extension of the city's half-cent sales tax proposal tied to the project. Other local investments included \$13 million for utility improvements along West 7th Street, \$1 million for the St. Paul Port Authority's Heights redevelopment site and \$3.6 million for a Latino museum project.

HIGHLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL NEW BOARD MEMBERS

The Highland District Council welcomes 10 new members who will help guide neighborhood issues ranging from development and transportation to housing and environmental concerns. Newly elected grid representatives include Tim Morehead for Grid 2, Elisabeth Seburg for Grid 4, Jack Rossmann for Grid 6, Blanca Monter for Grid 8, Patti Brady for Grid 10 and Cheryl Calloway for Grid 12. Kathy Schubert and Shayne Stone were elected to at-large seats, while Mindy Johnson and Youa Thao were named at-large alternates. The new board members officially began serving May 7 following the council's board meeting. District councils play a key role in St. Paul civic engagement, advising on neighborhood planning, zoning, transportation projects

Several policy and funding priorities supported by St. Paul leaders did not pass, including a proposed tax credit aimed at converting underused downtown office buildings into housing and a \$100 million economic relief package tied to the impacts of Operation Metro Surge. Homeowners statewide did see some relief after lawmakers approved a \$125 million property tax refund program benefiting qualifying homestead property owners. Lawmakers also approved a one-year reduction in vehicle tab fees totaling roughly \$250 million statewide.

TWIN CITIES IRISH FEST LAUNCHES EMERGENCY FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Organizers of Twin Cities Irish Fest have launched an emergency fundraising campaign aimed at preserving

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

one of St. Paul's largest annual cultural festivals. Festival leaders said the organization is seeking to raise \$185,000 by June 27 to help cover rising production costs and upfront operational expenses ahead of the 2026 event scheduled for Aug. 7-9 at Harriet Island Regional Park. Formerly known as the Irish Fair of Minnesota, the festival has operated for more than 40 years and draws thousands of attendees annually for Irish music, dance, athletics, food and cultural programming. The organization said it has already secured roughly \$106,000 through donors and traditional funding sources but remains short about \$77,500 needed for entertainment deposits and festival amenities. Donations and campaign information are available at twincitiesirishfest.com/love.

The house, believed to date to 1853, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is considered the oldest surviving stone structure in either St. Paul or Minneapolis. Preservation advocates also emphasized the building's significance to St. Paul's Black history, noting that formerly enslaved residents George and Maria Perkins once lived there, along with several other Black families and business owners during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The controversy drew significant neighborhood attention, including public meetings, preservation campaigns and petitions signed by more than 1,500 residents seeking to halt demolition efforts. Eventually, the house was dismantled and reconstruction began at the Minnesota Transportation Museum.

DOWNTOWNER RESTAURANT CLOSES AFTER 38 YEARS

The longtime downtown St. Paul restaurant Downtowner Woodfire Grill permanently closed May 17 after nearly four decades in business, marking the end of an era for one of the city's best-known gathering spots near the Xcel Energy Center entertainment district. In a public statement, owner Moe Sharif thanked St. Paul residents, employees and loyal customers for supporting the restaurant over the years, describing the Downtowner as "a true icon" within the city. Sharif and his family were connected to another highly visible West 7th controversy in recent years involving the historic Justus Ramsey House, located adjacent to Burger Moe's. In 2022, preservation advocates and neighborhood residents rallied to save the small stone structure after Sharif applied for a demolition permit following a partial collapse of the building. Engineers hired by the property owner and reviewed by the city described the structure as severely unstable and potentially dangerous, while preservationists questioned how the deterioration occurred so rapidly and pushed for alternatives to demolition.

ST. PAUL, MINNEAPOLIS RANK AMONG NATION'S TOP PARK SYSTEMS IN 2026 PARKSCORE INDEX

Trust for Public Land has again ranked both Minneapolis and St. Paul among the nation's best big-city park systems in its 2026 ParkScore index, with Minneapolis placing third and St. Paul fourth nationally. St. Paul continued to score highly for overall park access and system quality. According to Trust for Public Land, the rankings are considered one of the nation's leading benchmarks for evaluating urban park systems. The organization also released a companion economic report concluding that city parks generate roughly \$3 in public benefits for every \$1 invested through improved health outcomes, stormwater management, recreation access and other community impacts. Trust for Public Land reported that 88% of Americans visited a public park during the past year, while more than half of survey respondents said they wanted to spend more time outdoors. The full ParkScore rankings and methodology are available through tpl.org.



Ramsey County Opens Renovated Government Center in St. Paul

Ramsey County has reopened and renamed its downtown service hub as the Ramsey County Government Center following major renovations intended to improve public access to county programs and services. Formerly known as Metro Square, the building at 121 7th Place East now consolidates county departments and public-facing services under one roof in downtown St. Paul. County officials said the redesign focuses on making government services easier to navigate while improving accessibility and coordination between departments. The site includes the county's busiest service center, which handled more than 14,000 visitors during the first three months of the year. Services include financial assistance programs, SNAP and health

care enrollment support, child support services, county navigator assistance and public computer access. The building also houses the state's busiest CareerForce location, averaging about 400 in-person visits each month for job search assistance, resume support and employment services. Ramsey County Community Corrections operations have largely consolidated into the facility, allowing probation clients to access programming, mental health services and remote court hearings in a centralized location connected to other county services. More information is available at ramseycounty.us/residents/assistance-support/basic-needs/service-centers/saint-paul-service-center.

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Dear West End,



Support 55 Years Of Free, Nonprofit Community News

The Community Reporter has been serving St. Paul for 55 years this July.

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Damian Goebel Editor Community Reporter

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BUILDING COMMUNITY My Father's Flag



TIM JOHNSON columnist

The flag holder is now installed on one of the columns holding up the portico by our front door. It took a while. My brother gave me the flag given to my mom in honor of my father's World War II service, which she received upon his death. My brother had come into possession of the flag given to our family upon the death of our uncle, who served in the Battle of the Bulge during WW II. His battalion was largely wiped out. He was severely injured and spent his life with what would only much later be called PTSD. My brother did not need two flags, so he gave me one. Yet, in spite of the personal connection it took me a good while before I installed a flag

holder with which to fly the American flag given to my dad.

Part of the delay was simple procrastination. But, in all honesty a more significant part of the delay is the ambiguous feelings I developed about the flag as a young man coming of age during the Vietnam War. I remember sitting in a college dormitory for that first draft watching as a ball with a number was drawn from a container, a number that would largely determine my fate. A low number and your chances of getting drafted were extremely high. A high number and you could breathe a sigh of relief because the likelihood of going through all the numbers in one year was extremely low, meaning you would escape the draft. I drew a high number.

Like many college age people, I opposed the war. Those who supported the war often waved the flag proudly and sometimes accompanied the flag with admonitions like "America, love it or leave it". Loving it, of course, meant loving everything the U.S. did, including the war in Vietnam. A few of those opposing the Vietnam War went so far

as to express their opposition by burning the American flag, an act with which I never felt comfortable, but understood.

Recently having traveled to Vietnam and engaging some of that history, my feelings about the war have not changed. My feelings about the flag, however, have. It could be maturing that freed me from seeing the flag through the lens of a narrow patriotism of dominance and superiority. It could be a softening with age that allows me to see the values and ideals the flag represents, even when a honest telling of history reminds us how short we too often have fallen in living out those ideals. It could be that in a nation so fractured by red and blue alliances that a symbol of unity in which red, white and blue come together feels especially needed. It is probably a combination of all three that causes me to unfurl my father's flag and let it fly beneath our portico.

Thirteen stripes of red and white signifying the founding colonies and we are reminded that ours is a nation with a history. It is a history we must tell with as much truthfulness

as we can muster for that is the nature of true patriotism and what the flag represents. The successes and accomplishment in which we take pride, can share space with our failures and struggles because it is in this honest telling of history that we strive to be the "more perfect union" aspirationally given to us in the preamble of the constitution. There can be no striving for a more perfect union without an honest telling of our own story.

The 50 stars laid out in a sea of blue, challenge us to continue striving for union and mitigate any notion of permanent red/blue divisions so deeply at odds with what our founders dreamed we might become. Union, unity, community don't just happen by chance. They come from people willing to step up, sacrifice, moving beyond what's in it for me or differences that divide and instead live into higher ideals like those expressed in our national flag.

This year the American flag given to my mom in honor of my father's sacrifice will fly proudly at our home.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS If No One Cares, Who Does?



KORINNE DENNIS columnist

Another May has come and gone, and just like that, Mental Health Awareness Month programming and events are wrapping up. But mental illness does not end when the calendar changes, nor is it cured during one month of awareness efforts.

Over the last few weeks, I've been working with NAMI Minnesota to gather shareable resources and partner on experiences that support our colleagues' mental health. On the evening of May 18, more than 300 of us gathered at The Parkway Theater to watch the documentary No One Cares About Crazy

People. I left my seat feeling even more anger toward the systems that continue to fail families actively seeking help for their loved ones. I won't spoil the documentary for anyone, but I will say this: it is a must-watch for education, awareness and understanding of the fact that sometimes the people we love are simply not okay.

During the Q&A portion of the evening, one audience member asked about community. Many of the other questions centered on government systems, lack of funding and resources and the heartbreaking realities shared by a mother raising a child with severe mental illness. She spoke openly about the physical and emotional trauma her family has endured while trying to navigate care and support systems on a teacher's salary.

I felt compelled to respond to the question about community because, after all, my daytime title is Community Relations Manager.

Minnesota is the only other place I've ever lived. My original home is Philadelphia. In many of my previous writings, I've reflected

on the kind of community I grew up in — one where neighbors looked out for one another, took each other's trash bins in, walked neighborhood children home from school if parents were working late and simply made sure everyone was safe.

So you can imagine how shocking it was to hear colleagues say they've lived in their homes for 5, 10 or even 20 years and barely know their neighbors.

As a transplant with no biological family here, and as someone who has been diagnosed with mental health differences, the move has been difficult. Nearly six years later, there are still moments when the transition does not feel any easier. Friends would joke, "The thing about Minnesotans is they'll give you directions to anywhere except their homes." Every time I heard that, my face fell a little flat.

How can we build community when our connections end at the end of the workday? How can we expect people to feel supported when we rush from our front doors to our cars to avoid speaking to neighbors? And how does reminding transplants that "you're not

from here" strengthen community rather than reinforce isolation?

Are we aware of the families around us who may need help? The loved one walking down the street in the middle of a mental health episode? The neighbor who may need someone to simply pause, offer directions, or help keep a person safe until professional support arrives?

Recently, I was listening to Trevor Noah on his podcast, What Now? with Trevor Noah, where he shared a story about someone becoming upset during one of his stand-up routines after he joked about America. His response stuck with me: Shouldn't we be happy that people choose to live here?

Instead of saying, "Don't tell people how great our summers are because we don't want more people moving here," what if we said, "Welcome. Let me tell you where to get a really good burger or find the best 2-for-1 specials." Or if that sentence is too long, just say, "hello."

That question has stayed with me because community is not built through slogans, campaigns or a single awareness month. It is built in the small moments, whether we acknowledge one another, make space for one another, or choose to care about people beyond convenience. Sometimes the strongest form of mental health support is simply making sure no one feels alone.

I have been called racial slurs and told to "go back to where I came from," only for the person to become frustrated when I responded, "To Philadelphia?" But maybe that's the real question we should ask ourselves: when someone different from us arrives in our communities, what kind of welcome are we offering them?



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**COMMUNITY VOICES**

**Performing Arts Going Strong Downtown**

BY PAUL BARD

Mark Twain's oft-quoted comment that reports of his death had been "greatly exaggerated" can also be applied to the much-maligned downtown of our own capitol city. Yes, downtown St. Paul is hurting in some areas. But a recent Friday night provided evidence that things are not as bleak as the naysayers would have us believe.

On Friday, April 10, a friend and I drove downtown to see a concert by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in their beautiful Concert Hall at the Ordway Center. As we got near the Ordway, we noticed that the sidewalks were full of colorfully dressed people heading to see one of the world's biggest pop stars—Lady Gaga—at Grand Casino Arena on her Mayhem Ball tour. We found on-street parking near Rice Park and walked to the Ordway, which we discovered was hosting another live event on the same night. It was "Freddie," a ballet set to the music of the rock group Queen.

We grabbed cocktails in the lobby, found our seats in the Concert Hall and enjoyed a typical stunning performance by the SPCO. After the concert, we drove down West 7th a few blocks for a late dinner at Shamrock's, which was busy as usual and, as it happened, was presenting live music by a local group called the Top Shelf Band. (Across the street from Shamrock's, the White Squirrel had two bands, Brunch and Bright Young Things.) If



Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

you're counting, that makes for six different live music performances. Also, the next day, with a little help from my friends at Google, I discovered that downtown St. Paul had also hosted a comedian, Matt McCusker, at the Fitzgerald Theater on Friday night. Not bad for a town that gets more press for its supposedly "deserted streets and skyways" than a vibrant entertainment scene.

So, the next time you hear Debbie Downer complaining about the lack of "action" in downtown St. Paul, suggest that she check out the calendars of the Ordway, the Fitzgerald

Theater, Palace Theater, Park Square Theater, CHS Field and, of course, Grand Casino Arena, where, in addition to concerts by world-famous stars, a certain NHL hockey team was recently making a run for the Stanley Cup. If you just open your eyes to what downtown St. Paul has to offer, there's more than enough to keep the most demanding patron of the performing arts—or professional sports—plenty busy.

*Paul Bard is a fourth-generation St. Paulite and a member of the Community Reporter Board of Directors.*

**Borealis Celebrates Two-Year Anniversary**

DEAR EDITOR,

Two years ago this May, something significant happened for communities stretching from Chicago to St. Paul. Amtrak's Borealis made its inaugural run, launching a new era of passenger rail service across three states. As chair of the Great River Rail Commission—an organization that has spent years advocating for exactly this kind of expanded service along the Mississippi River Route—I find this anniversary worth celebrating and reflecting upon.

The numbers alone tell a compelling story. More than 400,000 passengers have boarded the Borealis since May 21, 2024, surpassing the projections of both Amtrak and the state

Departments of Transportation. That's not a fluke; seats on Borealis are often sold out. That's pent-up demand from people who have been waiting for a reliable, affordable connection between the river towns of Minnesota and Wisconsin and the broader economic opportunities of the Chicago corridor.

At the Great River Rail Commission, our long-range vision has always been that a successful Borealis would make the case for what comes next—faster service, greater frequency, and an additional daily round trip that could serve an estimated 124,000 more passengers each year. The ridership success we're celebrating today validates that vision.

For communities along the River Route, this isn't an abstract policy debate. Passenger rail connects people—college students, seniors,

workers and travelers who may not own a car or have easy access to an airport—to jobs, family, healthcare and opportunity. Stations are in downtowns, not on the outskirts of cities. The benefits are real and local.

But progress requires sustained investment. The Borealis succeeded because Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Amtrak, Canadian Pacific Kansas City Southern Railway, the federal government and local partners committed to making it work together. That same commitment will be required to expand service further. We need our legislators to hear clearly: the demand is there, the economic case is strong, and the time to build on this momentum is now.

*Chris Meyer  
 Chair, Great River Rail Commission*

**FIREWORKS, PG 1**

historical themes tied to the country's founding and Minnesota's early settlers.

"We are doing outreach to all these historical groups—any descendants of our Minnesota regiment who fought in the revolutionary war and helped us win the revolutionary war, along with descendants of early settlers," Will said.

She said organizers hope the celebration will "lean into all those good values that we want to remember and protect and hold up."

The Rotary Club is using the event both as a community gathering and as a way to highlight the organization's work in St. Paul. Founded in 1910, the St. Paul club was the 10th Rotary club established worldwide and has supported local scholarships, nonprofit grants and youth programming for decades.

"We are people of action. We are all about community and bringing community together," Will said. "We need something that unites us right now."

The event remains heavily dependent on fundraising. According to organizers, the

total cost is projected at about \$125,000. The St. Paul Rotary Club Foundation has already contributed a substantial amount, along with volunteering to handle planning and logistics.

"St. Paul Rotary is hosting. We have put \$20,000 in and all the leg work and volunteers," Will said. "We are asking for additional support from the community and sponsors."

"Rotary is happy to be hosting this community event at no-cost, but we need the community's support," she added.

Will said the fundraising campaign is currently about one-quarter of the way toward its goal. Donations of \$30 or more include a commemorative T-shirt designed by University of Minnesota student Ezra Young, a descendant of Declaration of Independence signer Lewis Morris.

People can find event information at [stpaulrotary.org/event/red-white---boom](http://stpaulrotary.org/event/red-white---boom).

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## COMMUNITY VOICES

### NOTEBOOK RECOLLECTIONS

## Preventative Medical Tips, Part One or What Would Carl Do?



**TIM RUMSEY**  
columnist

I have bilateral hearing loss. In both ears. From automatic hand dryers in men's public restrooms. It's like putting my hands in a jet fighter's exhaust. Your hands dry quickly, sure, but the decibels shred your eardrums, singe your hair and untie your shoes!

You can't put your hands over your ears. What do you do? Stuff your ear canals with toilet paper? Have the guy behind you cover your ears? But then there's his hands!

Carl "Mr. Positive" Bentson knew what to do. Not use public restrooms.

And certainly not peeing outside either, which has been illegal in Minnesota since 1957.

I had never known Carl to use a public restroom. I once used the bathroom in Carl's house. With permission. It was clean as a whistle, of course. You could eat a meal in there. But why would you?

Mr. Positive was many things. All good. Filmmaker Mike Hazard said Carl was all goodness. I miss Carl so much.

It had been mentioned previously that Carl passed out paper cups of ice water to walkers by his house on 99-degree summer days. By the way, Carl had a huge, round, thermometer on the outside of his house, as big as a garbage can lid.



Carl Bentson and his bike

Carl was a weather savant. Really! He could have put meteorologists out of work. He knew future weather, past weather. The weather in Asia Minor. The weather in ancient Greece. He got the Minneapolis and St. Paul papers every day just to see "which one was right about the weather."

Oh, I miss Carl!

He called me once, at 9:30 at night, so I could drive him to the Jefferson Avenue McDonalds for a take-out of a chocolate vanilla twist cone for the both of us.

I never turned that down!

On another night when I was making late night rounds at United Hospital, I received a phone call from Carl. He wanted to know if I could break away to go to Dairy Queen for ice cream cones for both of us and the patients.

Oh, I miss Carl! An angel on earth. Ding-dang!

Read more about "Mr. Positive" at [communityreporter.org/tag/mr-positive](http://communityreporter.org/tag/mr-positive).

### WESTEND HEALTHLINE

## Aging Successfully To Live A Long And Healthy Life

By Sibel Dikmen, MD

According to the US Census Bureau, from 2010 to 2020, the 65-plus population experienced its largest-ever 10-year increase – from 13% to 16.8% of the total population – as well as its fastest growth rate from 40.3 million to 55.8 million people. Many people aim to live a long and healthy life, and for that reason, attend doctors' appointments when necessary and complete recommended annual screenings. But more than taking care of your health inside a doctor's office, focusing on a few key aspects of your daily living can help you work towards your goal of longevity and agiNg well.

In Blue Zones, areas of the world where many residents live to be 100 and functioning well, there are common features of those communities that when examined individually in other parts of the world, have been shown to lead to thriving in later age. A large portion of the Blue Zone commonalities focus not on where you live but with whom you live.

In addition to multi-generational living being more common in Blue Zones, those who are aging well also prioritize family and social proximity and gatherings first. They live in communities amongst their relatives and chosen family and experience a feeling of belonging. As we age, it can be common to downsize or even move, if this is an option for you - moving closer to family and friends has been shown to increase your life span!

Inside these close-knit communities, residents consistently report feeling a sense of purpose. The sense of purpose can be from possible sources, but people often cited taking care of young children in the family, providing a good or service to their community or giving back to others in the form of volunteering. St.

Paul and the greater Minnesota area are full of opportunities to volunteer, which can be found with a quick internet search and can help you develop your "why". Not only does developing a clear sense of why you wake up each morning help you live longer, but it is also proven to help you live better.

Purposeful living and community placement are both things that lead to increased social networks, which have been associated with a decreased risk of developing cognitive impairment and dementia. Another common feature of many successfully living centenarians, someone who has lived to be 100 years old, is an emphasis on natural movement. This can include walking to the store or a neighbor's house each day instead of driving or taking the stairs rather than the elevator. Each of these small moments of movement throughout the day not only contributes to your decreased risk of dementia by increasing your total daily movement but also increases the likelihood that you will maintain the ability to move independently as you age.

While many of the previous recommendations can be more challenging to fully enact, depending on where you live, one easy-to-change feature of your life that can lead to more successful aging is your diet. There is a multitude of evidence that shows eating a plant-based, legume-forward diet leads to better health and aging. In the simplest of terms, eat more beans and less meat. For more specific details, you can reference a previous Healthline article, "What's up doc, is a plant-based diet right for me?" featured in the May 2024 issue.

While not everyone aims to live to be 100, most aim to be as independent and as healthy as they can be for as long as they can. Working

on a few elements of successful aging can set you up to achieve those goals.

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

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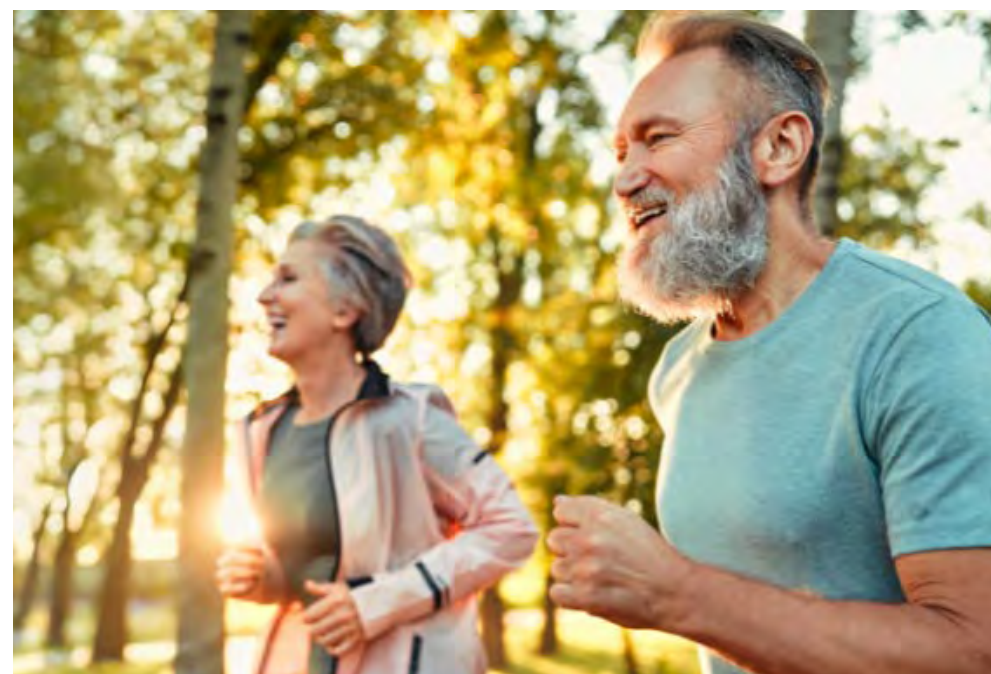
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## FEDERATION UPDATE

### 16TH ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR

June 20, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. 773 Chatsworth Ave S. Celebrate the beauty of the West End with self-guided tours of neighborhood gardens, live music, a native plant sale, kids crafts, community orgs, Potter's Pasties and more!

### DISCOVER WEST 7TH: SHOP SMALL ADVENTURE!

Grab your passport and embark on a West 7th small businesses journey for a chance to win gift cards to local businesses! June 1-July 31. [fortroadfed.org/shop-small-adventure](http://fortroadfed.org/shop-small-adventure)

### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

Interested in seeing Dousman Park reimagined? We need neighbor support at the public hearing. June 8, 5:30-7 p.m. Arlington Hills Community Center

### FORT ROAD HAPPY HOUR

June 25, 4-6 p.m. Pizza Maya, 1324 7th St W. Enjoy a casual gathering with neighbors, business owners and community members—no agenda. More info [fortroadfed.org](http://fortroadfed.org)

### UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- **Transportation & Land Use**, June 3, 6:30 p.m.
- **Board Meeting**, June 8, 7 p.m.

### STAY IN TOUCH

"Like" us on Facebook. Subscribe to e-newsletter. More information at [fortroadfederation.org](http://fortroadfederation.org)

### CONTACT

Julia McColley, [julia@fortroadfederation.org](mailto:julia@fortroadfederation.org); 651-298-5599; 395 Superior Street, St. Paul

## MOMENT, PG 1

nonprofit organizations such as the Friends of Mears Park, the Friends of Pedro Park, The CapitolRiver Council, the Friends of the Skyway, Rice Park Association, St. Paul BOMA, St. Paul Chamber of Commerce, Parks Conservancy and Sustain St. Paul deserve a special shout out.

That is sweat equity.

This investment is a credit to everyone who ever refused to give up on downtown St. Paul. We have always believed in this place. And that belief has attracted the capital to make dreams come true.

But this is just the start. What we are seeing now is momentum. Investors and developers across the region are beginning to recognize what those of us closest to downtown have known for years: St. Paul is a great place to invest. We expect additional investment announcements and new partnerships to continue building on this foundation into the future. The story of downtown St. Paul is no longer about potential. It is about progress already underway and a future that is becoming impossible to ignore.

# Town Hall Focuses On Election Security, Operation Metro Surge

BY NICOLO SCHAUST

More than 400 community members packed C.S.P.S. Hall on May 19 for an opportunity to talk to three of St. Paul's highest ranking public officials about election integrity and safety this November.

The town hall was organized by W7th Gardeners of Resistance, a local chapter of Indivisible; a grassroots organization dedicated to civic involvement and progressive policies. Organizer Emily Goodhue hoped the meeting would foster positive discourse leaders.

"One of our main goals is wanting to create more of a coalition with our leaders," Goodhue said. "Tonight is trying to share feedback on what went wrong when ICE was here."

On flash cards passed to organizers, some attendees wrote that they fear federal presence and intimidation during upcoming midterm elections.

"I'm concerned about poll safety when it's time to vote, especially for people of color," St. Paul resident Patty Torres said, later questioning police involvement with immigration enforcement operations in St. Paul. "Since they've now cooperated with ICE, how do they plan on balancing that with protecting citizens of St. Paul?"

St. Paul Mayor Kaohly Her, St. Paul Police Chief Axel Henry, and Assistant Ramsey County Attorney Hao Nguyen tried to address those concerns at the two-hour event.

The crowd's distrust of law enforcement was evident, with SPPD's response to the Rose Avenue ICE raid in November, where they used chemicals and less-lethal munitions on protestors, still fresh. This incident occurred alongside diplomacy with federal agencies to de-escalate situations like the Bro-Tex raid November 14, according to Henry.

"They wanted to arrest protestors and I convinced [DHS] to leave. I thought I was going to be able to do the same thing on Rose and unfortunately that wasn't the case," Henry said. "Looking back on it, I would've personally gone back to that scene and literally waded right into that and just made a bigger stink about that."

The SPPD is still under an active investigation for their role in the November incident to determine whether they violated the City's separation agreement in assisting federal immigration activities.

Amidst occasional boos and interjections from the crowd, Her, Henry and Nguyen



St. Paul Police Chief Axel Henry, St. Paul Mayor Kaohly Her, and Assistant Ramsey County Attorney Hao Nguyen at CSPS Hall in St. Paul, where the W7th Gardeners of Resistance organized a town hall meeting

received applause for explanations of their work behind the scenes during Operation Metro Surge.

"Chief Henry and I did sit down with Monarca and we did sit down with the Immigrant Defense Network," Her said. "And we did say to them, we want there to be a community response in the future."

She went on to say that community involvement is so important because local police were in a no-win situation responding during the highly charged Operation Metro Surge enforcement activities.

"It's going to look like we are coordinating with ICE when we're called to be at that scene," Her said.

Though many pre-written questions revolved around St. Paul's response to Operation Metro Surge, the evening was framed around maintaining local integrity in upcoming midterm elections, fear from continuing immigration enforcement operations and how local law enforcement, especially SPPD, would be able to maintain public safety at polling sites.

"SPPD may again find yourself in a position where you have to make a choice," one crowd member said to Henry. "To avoid any actions that may upset our government, or to step up

and protect us, our community?"

But it isn't as simple as choosing between one or the other, Henry said, receiving boos from some crowd members.

Her said she's working with Secretary of State Steve Simon on election planning, but since elections are administered by Ramsey County, the City of St. Paul has little jurisdiction over elections. She said that suggestions can be sent to her office and that public discourse is welcome.

Her said, for people feeling unsafe, Minnesotans can place their vote by mail as an alternative to visiting polling sites.

Both federal and Minnesota laws limit law enforcement presence at polling sites, putting local leaders at the drawing board for legal solutions should federal agencies become involved in elections. Police can only be present at polling sites should a 911 call be received and discussed with the location's election judge.

That said, Her was sympathetic to the community's concerns.

"None of us believe that this federal government isn't going to continue to violate our constitutional rights," Her said. "That this president is done with what he has done to us as a city or as a state."

## MAYOR HER, PG 1

Her credited longtime city employees and her assistant mayors with allowing projects to continue moving while she focused on the immigration-related emergency response.

"Assistant Mayor Schumacher and I were every day dealing with what was happening with ICE and with the surge," she said. "But Assistant Mayor Nick Stumo-Langer continued to work with PED and Public Works and DSI to look at why the permitting and processing hadn't been working."

## Spurring Development in Downtown and Beyond

Her pointed to visible development projects across the city as among the administration's biggest accomplishments so far.

"If you drive by United Village, having those cranes up, having that CVS down," she said. "The purchase agreement for the CVS site signed and plans going up on that."

She also cited ongoing redevelopment work downtown and increased investor interest in the city.

"There's been a lot of good wins from this," Her said. "People saying that they're bullish on St. Paul and they want to have a small presence here."

Earlier this month, the St. Paul Downtown Alliance announced more than \$1.2 billion in planned and proposed downtown investment involving partnerships among the City, Ramsey County, the St. Paul Port Authority and private developers.

MAYOR HER, PG 8



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# From Arts Organizing To 42 Years In The Legislature Sandy Pappas Readies For Retirement

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

For more than four decades, Senator Sandy Pappas helped shape both Minnesota policy and the physical landscape of St. Paul — from women’s workplace protections and public education to riverfront redevelopment and neighborhood investment.

Now, after 42 years in the Minnesota Legislature, the longtime DFL lawmaker is preparing to step away at the end of the 2026 legislative session, closing one of the longest tenures in Minnesota political history.

“It’s been the privilege of a lifetime to advocate for each of you,” Pappas said in announcing her retirement earlier this year.

Pappas, who first won election to the Minnesota House in 1984 before moving to the Senate in 1990, ranks among the longest-serving legislators in state history. According to the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, she has served more than 15,000 days in office — placing her behind only a handful of lawmakers, including longtime Minneapolis legislator Lyndon Carlson and former Rep. Mary Murphy of Hermantown.

Her career traces not only the evolution of Minnesota politics, but also decades of social movements that shaped her worldview.

“I sort of view my life as a series of social justice movements,” Pappas said during a recent interview.

Born in Hibbing and raised in the Twin Cities, Pappas said politics and activism were present early in her life. Her parents supported Adlai Stevenson, and her great-aunt Elsie ran for mayor of Columbia Heights in the 1950s.

“There’s women’s leadership,” she said.

She recalled being deeply affected by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy at age 13 and inspired by the words, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.”

From there came involvement in anti-war demonstrations, the women’s movement and community organizing.

“In Minneapolis, I was involved with the Twin Cities Women’s Union and a feminist theater,” she said. “So I became interested in the women’s movement.”

After moving to St. Paul’s West 7th neighborhood in the 1970s with her husband, Neal Gosman, Pappas became immersed in neighborhood activism. The couple worked with the early years of the “Community Reporter” newspaper and neighborhood



Sen. Pappas (D- St. Paul), left, smiles and shares a moment with Sen. Jim Carlson (D-Eagan), right, during a floor session Monday, May 6, 2024.

planning organizations while raising their children.

“We had a job share,” Pappas said. “He was part-time parent. I was a part-time parent while the other one worked. It was very unusual back then to do that.”

At the same time, she worked in the arts through COMPAS and the Fort Road Arts Committee, organizing arts parades, puppetry programs and community theater projects.

“We did puppetry with kids,” she said. “I wrote a play that was in the ‘Community Reporter.’”

Her entry into electoral politics came almost accidentally.

After being laid off from her arts organizing job while pregnant with her third child, Pappas said her husband suggested she run for the Legislature.

“My husband said to me, ‘Well, you don’t have anything to do for the next few months, right? Why don’t you run for the legislature?’” she recalled with a laugh.

She lost her first attempt in 1982 after failing to secure the DFL endorsement, but spent the next two years preparing for another campaign by interning at the Capitol and St. Paul City Hall while completing coursework at

Metropolitan State University.

When she ran again in 1984, she won the DFL endorsement on the 10th ballot and narrowly captured the primary by 54 votes.

“That’s my closest race,” she said.

Over the next four decades, Pappas became one of the Senate’s leading negotiators and policy architects, eventually serving as Senate president from 2013 through 2017 and chairing the powerful Capital Investment Committee.

She points to Minnesota’s recent bonding packages as among her proudest accomplishments.

“To get \$4 billion in infrastructure for the state of Minnesota over four years, passed three bonding bills out of four years — that’s probably my biggest accomplishment,” Pappas said.

Bonding bills, which fund infrastructure projects statewide, often require delicate negotiations between parties, chambers and regional interests.

“It’s a very big puzzle to put it all together,” she said. “You have to have really good relationships with the House and with Republicans. That’s something I’ve worked really hard at.”

Those negotiations helped fund projects

across St. Paul over the years, including improvements to Harriet Island, Raspberry Island, Union Depot, the Mississippi riverfront and the reconstruction of the Third Street bridge connecting downtown and the East Side.

Pappas also helped secure funding for cultural institutions including the Victoria Theater Arts Center, Wakan Tipi Center and the Minnesota Children’s Museum, while supporting transit-oriented development tied to the Green Line corridor and Allianz Field.

But she said some of her proudest work came through labor and women’s rights legislation.

In 2013, Pappas authored the Women’s

**PAPPAS RETIRES, PG 10**



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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Do What Moves You, Don't Pander Or Compromise

By Korinne Dennis

One thing that inspired me to contribute to *The Community Reporter* was the open conversations with colleagues and friends who have lived in their communities for 5, 10 or 22 years and do not know their neighbors. Community is composed not only of our public officials, the mayor, or the coffee shop owner, but also of people who work full-time corporate jobs and take additional time to create art, assist others with gardening or become trusted babysitters. Let's take a look at one of our neighbors who, outside of work, builds art for all of us to admire and enjoy. Meet Jean!

How long have you lived in St. Paul?

For about 20 years after buying a house in the Little Bohemia neighborhood.

Tell us a little about your day job and where art fits in.

I work in mental health. I have always been interested in advocacy and mental health, which is why I earned a master's in social work and have worked in the field ever since. That was 36 years ago. I work a lot, which is why art, in general, making things is so appealing. It's a good way of redirecting the challenges of work.

My business name is Wildarabesque. I got into jewelry making as a child when my mother taught me to make beaded earrings and work with wire. I took a silversmithing class in college. Once my career was established, I returned to making jewelry. That was about 10 years ago, although I've made jewelry in some

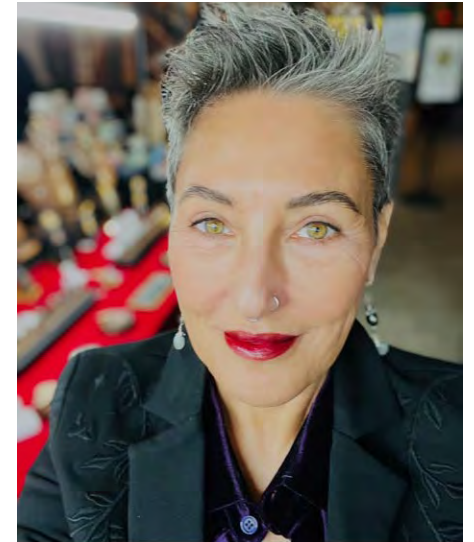


Some of Jean's jewelry for sale at the Schmidt Art Crawl.

form for the past 20 years.

I use silver, copper, brass and bronze to make a fairly eclectic style of jewelry, framing and accenting beautiful natural stones. My style incorporates different elements, whether it's some southwest influence, natural botanical influences, or even "whimsy Goth", with bats, spiders and skulls.

I will be doing several art fairs this summer. I will be participating in the Loring Park Art Fair, the Minnehaha Falls Art Fair, the Powderhorn Park Art Fair and the St. Paul Fall Art Crawl at the Schmidt Artists Lofts. I will be adding more shows to my official schedule



Jean is an artist who has lived in Little Bohemia for for about 20 years.

good restaurants and cute shops.

Advice to an artist who may shy away from taking risks.

To someone new who's trying to put their art out there, I would say: do what you love, and don't pander or compromise to please an audience or a customer, because it's not gonna be what you love anymore. Do what moves you to make art, and the people who like what you're doing will find you and appreciate it.

as I get more information about them.

Woah! Busy lady. How can people find your creations?

You can find me online on Facebook, Etsy and Instagram under the name Wildarabesque. I post most of the new jewelry that I'm making and the shows that I'm doing on Instagram.

Now to the non-business stuff. What do you love about St. Paul?

That's a tough one because there are so many places that I love in St. Paul. I'm really enjoying the new strip of vintage stores opening along West 7th. There are so many

MAYOR HER, PG 6

Her described that collaboration as evidence that St. Paul's redevelopment efforts depend on partnerships rather than isolated projects.

"It really is the power of coming together and building big things, one small piece at a time with each other," she said.

Some residents have questioned whether the administration's emphasis on downtown redevelopment risks neglecting other neighborhoods, especially as property taxes rise and residents continue demanding investment citywide.

Her rejected the idea that downtown investment comes at the expense of other parts of the city.

"The people who invest there are investing there for very specific reasons," she said. "If they didn't invest there, it's not like they would say, 'Oh, I would go to the East Side.'"

She pointed to development efforts at Highland Bridge, The Heights on the East Side and around United Village as examples of investment occurring throughout St. Paul.

"We continue to move things forward in all different areas," Her said.

Her also argued that expanding commercial

development is necessary to stabilize property taxes and support affordable housing goals.

"Affordable housing does not add to the tax base," she said. "I have to grow commercial and retail and all of that business because it has to be the entire portfolio of it."

Getting the Basics Right

Rather than promising sweeping policy changes during her first year, Her said her administration's focus remains on improving basic city operations and transparency.

"My promise to people is that I would run the city well," she said.

That includes improving permit processing, tracking constituent complaints and eventually modernizing public works systems so residents can monitor services such as snow plowing and pothole repair in real time.

"My goal is that one day we will have a real-time tracking system where people will see where our plows are," Her said.

She acknowledged such systems would require additional investment and potentially higher taxes but said residents are more understanding when city government communicates clearly.

"I think people are so understanding and they are so forgiving," Her said. "So we just need to be transparent."

Six months into a tenure shaped as much by crisis response as economic development, Her said success may not always appear dramatic. "It's not sexy, it's not grand," she said. "But it is what I promised people."

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Mayor Her visiting a construction site earlier this year.

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**DOWNTOWN NEWS**

**Downtown St. Paul Alliance Announces Over \$1 Billion In Downtown Investment**

By Damian Goebel

More than \$1 billion in public and private investment is flowing into downtown St. Paul, city and business leaders announced Tuesday during the St. Paul Downtown Alliance Annual Meeting at the Palace Theatre.

Leaders with the St. Paul Downtown Alliance said the combined \$1.293 billion total reflects projects underway or committed across downtown, including infrastructure improvements, redevelopment efforts, housing, corporate campus investments and the proposed overhaul of the city-owned arena complex.

“We wanted to actually show the full picture of all these investments,” Downtown Alliance President Joe Spencer said during the event. “We’ve all heard about these different individual projects, and they’re all great, but it may feel from time to time like that one doesn’t quite rise to the needs that we have in this moment.”

The announcement marks a major milestone in the city’s Downtown Investment Strategy, launched in 2024 to guide redevelopment and reposition downtown following the pandemic-era decline in office use and rising property distress.

“A few years ago, we looked around at each other and realized, like, the world has changed, and waiting around for it to go back to normal was just not going to be a winning strategy,” Spencer said. “We pulled everybody around that table and we said, ‘There’s a million ideas out there, but we all agree if we can get on the same page around what those key strategies are and work together in coalition, we’re going to set the stage for success.’”

Projects highlighted Tuesday included the proposed \$600 million arena redevelopment partnership between the city and the Minnesota Wild, Ramsey County’s “Building Stronger Together” downtown initiative, more than \$250 million in housing and private development projects, and \$100 million in corporate campus investments by companies including Ecolab, Securian Financial and Travelers.

“The city of St. Paul is investing in over \$225 million in downtown in road improvements, parks and Downtown Vitality Fund,” Mayor Kaohly Her said. “And we’ve committed \$200 million to the Grand Casino Arena complex, which the Minnesota Wild is matching. So that’s over \$425 million flowing into downtown St. Paul from the city. So we are not on the sidelines. We are all in.”



Local Leaders share major development milestones in downtown St. Paul at the Downtown St. Paul Alliance Annual Meeting on May 6, 2026.

Ramsey County Manager Ling Becker said the county is committing \$250 million toward downtown projects focused on housing, infrastructure and public spaces.

“The time to act is now,” Becker said.

Officials also emphasized the role of the newly launched St. Paul Downtown Development Corporation, which has spent the past year acquiring distressed downtown properties and building a \$30 million investment fund backed by major institutional partners.

“We are using it to acquire properties, to handle their carry costs over time and also to begin pre-development,” said Dave Higgins, president of the development corporation. “It’s symbolic of commitment. It’s symbolic of leadership.”

During the event, the Downtown Alliance also launched a new downtown-focused website, [downtownstpaul.com](http://downtownstpaul.com), featuring event listings, residential resources, visitor information and business data intended to serve as a centralized hub for downtown activity.

“There’s a lot that is going on in downtown St. Paul,” Spencer said. “There’s a lot of events. There’s a lot of visitor destinations. There’s a lot of restaurants and businesses and storefronts. And if nobody

knows where to find it, we are all sort of not living into our potential.”

The annual meeting also recognized Downtown Improvement District ambassador Jerry Agnew as the organization’s first Ambassador of the Year for his work cleaning streets, removing graffiti and assisting visitors downtown.

Despite ongoing challenges in the downtown office market, leaders repeatedly framed Tuesday’s announcement as evidence the city is entering a new phase of redevelopment momentum.

“We are still just getting started,” Spencer said. “We haven’t even seen a hint of boredom yet.”

Learn more: [downtownstpaul.com](http://downtownstpaul.com); [communityreporter.org/tag/downtown-revitalization](http://communityreporter.org/tag/downtown-revitalization)



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# BULLETIN BOARD



**6TH ANNUAL SOAP BOX DERBY**  
 June 2-25, 5-8pm. Hidden Falls Regional Park, St. Paul. Free. Watch young racers take to the hill at the 6th Annual Soap Box Derby, where youth ages 9-14 compete in handcrafted cars they've spent weeks designing and building. Teams from St. Paul and Minneapolis gather for this exciting community event, showcasing creativity, teamwork, and engineering skills. Each participant gets a chance to race, with awards given to the fastest teams in the Twin Cities. The event offers a fun, family-friendly atmosphere and an opportunity to cheer on local youth as they put their hard work to the test. Spectators are encouraged to attend and enjoy the thrill of the race. More info: facebook.com/events/1979589042658302.

**WEST 7TH COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER AT MANCINI'S**  
 June 4, Dinner 5 p.m.; music 7-9:30 p.m. Mancini's Char House. \$25-\$75; VIP \$500. Support the future Dousman Park playground at this lively community fundraiser featuring live music by The Cellar Dwellers. Info: saintpaulparksconservancy.org/mancinis

**COMMUNITY REPORTER OFFICE HOURS**  
 June 4, 10 a.m.-noon at Sholom East Campus. Free. Meet staff and board members from Community Reporter while supporting local neighborhood businesses. Info: communityreporter.org

**EVERYTHING IS FREE - BUY NOTHING EVENT**  
 June 6, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. St. Peter's Lutheran Church. Free. Attendees can browse and take what they need. Donate gently used items ahead of the event. Info: Email njcheesebrow@gmail.com.

**30 HIGHLAND, MAC-GROVE, SUMMIT HILL COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE WEEKEND**  
 June 12-13, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Multiple locations, neighborhoods. \$25-30 registration. Residents and businesses can register to be included on the official sale map, making it easy for shoppers to explore dozens of sales across the area. Info: macgrove.org

**LOWERTOWN SOUNDS - POLIÇA**  
 June 11, 6-10 p.m. Mears Park Free. The Lowertown Sounds series continues with an eclectic night of music featuring Poliça and Sophie Hiroko. Info: lowertownsounds.com.

**STP PRIDE FESTIVAL 2026**  
 June 13-14, 12-8 p.m. Dual Citizen Brewing. Free.

Live entertainment, cultural performances and community celebration at Dual Citizen Brewing. Features live music, DJs, food trucks, breakdance competitions and family-focused programming. Info: stppride.org.

**TWIN CITIES JAZZ FESTIVAL 2026**  
 June 19-20. Multiple venues. Free. Featuring internationally recognized artists, local musicians and youth ensembles. Info: twincitiesjazzfestival.com.

**SAINTS AND SINNERS HISTORY TALK**  
 June 20, 10-11:15 a.m. St. Stanislaus Church, 398 Superior Street., Free. Historian Gary Brueggemann will discuss his book.

**HMONG INTERNATIONAL FREEDOM FESTIVAL**  
 June 26-28. Como Regional Park admission varies. Cultural celebration, athletics, food and live entertainment. Info: unitedhmongfamily.org.

**TWIN CITIES IRISH FEST BLOCK PARTY**  
 Saturday, June 27, 3-11 p.m. Prior Ave. between Pennock and Hewitt. Free. Live music, Irish dance and family activities will feature performances from the Brian Boru Irish Pipe Band, Center for Irish Music, The Northerly Gales and The Gunn Slingers and more. Info: twincitiesirishfest.com/block-party.

**MUSIC IN IRVINE PARK**  
 June 28. Irvine Park. Free; donations encouraged. New format featuring two larger outdoor music lineup includes Jordan Johnston, CLARQ and Ipso Facto. Info: Historic Irvine Park District facebook.com/group.



**THE ROOT BEER LADY**  
 July 8-26. History Theatre, St Paul. \$25-65. Info: historytheatre.com  
 History Theatre brings back its acclaimed one-woman production written and performed by Kim Schultz. The production tells the story of legendary Boundary Waters resident Dorothy Molter, who became famous for brewing root beer and living independently in the remote North Woods near the Canadian border. The production blends storytelling, humor and Minnesota history while highlighting themes of independence, wilderness preservation and personal choice. Organizers say the show has become a beloved Minnesota theatrical tradition celebrating one of the state's most enduring folk legends.

FOR MORE CALENDAR EVENTS, VISIT  
[COMMUNITYREPORTER.ORG/EVENTS](http://COMMUNITYREPORTER.ORG/EVENTS)

## PAPPAS RETIRES, PG 7

Economic Security Act, which laid groundwork for later policies including earned sick and safe time, paid family leave and Minnesota's Secure Choice retirement program.

"I kind of started the whole process," she said. "eventually every employer will have to offer a retirement plan"

She described the legislation as incremental work that took years to build. "That's so much of what happens," Pappas said. "It takes years and it takes collaboration and it takes other people really caring about that issue."

Her broader legislative legacy includes helping eliminate the statute of limitations for sexual assault cases, banning child marriage in Minnesota, supporting human trafficking protections and helping establish the Children in Need of Protection and Services program.

Despite the accomplishments, Pappas said the work often involved compromise and patience rather than ideological grandstanding.

"I call myself a pragmatic progressive because I do want to get the job done," she said. "I do know that you have to compromise."

Sometimes, she joked, that even means using "the mumble strategy" on the Senate floor.

"You hold the mic really close to your mouth and you go, 'This is a really great bill, I just hope you all vote for it,' and you sit down," she said.

Pappas said her Jewish faith, community activism and decades in St. Paul

neighborhoods shaped her approach to public service.

"When I moved to West 7th is kind of the final step when I became a community activist," she said. "When I understood the importance of community."

Even after decades in office, she said legislators must remember who they ultimately serve.

"Don't forget your boss," Pappas said. "It's your district."

As retirement approaches, Pappas said she hopes younger generations interested in politics understand that effective leadership requires both passion and collaboration.

"Find something you're passionate about and demonstrate leadership," she said. "Be open to other ideas and opinions."

And despite today's political divisions, she still believes relationships matter. "Sometimes the people in the legislature who are really, really far right and do horrible things on social media can be perfectly nice to talk to," she said. "Making those friendships — because you're not always going to be in charge."

Before leaving office, Pappas plans to continue community work, including a scholarship fund at Metropolitan State University tied to her retirement celebration later this year.

"It's kind of a legacy," she said.

While her time serving St. Paul in the legislature is coming to an end, she is still representing her boss, the people of her district, until they pick her successor this November.

"I still am, till the end of the year, a legislator."

## LIBRARY UPDATE

### Spend Your Summer at the Library!

Make St. Paul Public Library your summer break destination! Kids, teens and families are invited to explore, create and connect at the library. From June 1 to August 31, Summer Spark, the Library's summer reading program, offers a wide range of free activities designed to keep youth engaged and inspired all summer long.

Kids and teens can get started by visiting any library location to pick up their own Summer Spark Reading and Activity Log—plus a free book to keep. Readers can track their progress all summer long as they read and complete fun learning activities. Teens can also earn entries into prize drawings—the more they read, the more chances

they have to win a pair of their very own headphones! Find events and programs at all St. Paul Public Library locations at [sppl.org/summer](http://sppl.org/summer) all summer long. No registration or library card is needed for most events—just stop by and join in!

#### Events at West 7th Library

Find more events at [sppl.org/events](http://sppl.org/events).  
 Playdate @ West 7th - Tuesdays, 3-5 p.m.  
 Memoir Writing for Adults - Tuesdays, June 30 - July 28, 1 - 2:30 p.m.



**HIGHLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
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#### WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We're thrilled to welcome 10 new board members who will represent you on issues that impact our neighborhood. Grid 2: Tim Morehead; Grid 4: Elisabeth Seburg; Grid 6: Jack Rossmann; Grid 8: Blanca Monter; Grid 10: Patti Brady; Grid 12: Cheryl Calloway; At-Large - Kathy Schubert and Shayne Stone; At-Large Alternates - Mindy Johnson and Youa Thao. View the full board list at [www.highlanddistrictcouncil.org/board-members](http://www.highlanddistrictcouncil.org/board-members)

#### MUSIC AT HIGHLAND BRIDGE PRESENTED BY THE DISTAD REAL ESTATE TEAM

June 11, 5:30 p.m. Civic Plaza at Highland Bridge. Food trucks and live music near Ford Parkway and Cretin Avenue. Presented by The Distad Real Estate Team. Sponsored by Marvella and VanGo Auto.Music by School of Rock at 5:45 p.m. followed by 5 Speedz. .

#### NEIGHBORHOOD GARAGE SALE WEEKEND

Highland Park, Macalester-Groveland and Summit Hill neighborhoods are hosting garage sales, June 12-13, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. [highlanddistrictcouncil.org/hdc-event/garage-sale](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/hdc-event/garage-sale). Want to participate? Register online by June 1 to be included in event promotions.

#### UPCOMING MEETINGS

1978 Ford Pkwy; option to join online. Get the Zoom link, agendas at [highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar).  
 • HDC Board - Thu, June 4, 7 p.m.  
 • Transportation - Tue, June 9, 7 p.m.  
 • Community Development - Mon, June 16, 6:30 p.m.  
 • Community Engagement - Tue, June 22, 7 p.m.



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**COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE- JUNE 12+13**  
 Summit Hill, Highland Park, and Mac-Groveland are teaming up to host the Great Neighborhood Garage Sale from 9am - 3pm on Friday, June 12 & Saturday, June 13. Households across these neighborhoods will be participating, featuring items from clothing to books to furniture. Stop by to meet your neighbors and shop sustainably. You never know what you might find!

#### PUPPET SHOW - JUNE 17TH

Tucker is a young boy who needs to go back in time to face a neighborhood bully. How do you go back in time? With a time traveling robot of course! Together Tucker and his robot discover the importance of friendship and the courage to face a bully. Learn more [openeyetheatre.org/driveway-tour](http://openeyetheatre.org/driveway-tour)

#### VOLUNTEER FOR HISTORIC HILLS HOUSE TOUR

Interested in being part of the Tour? Help shape a neighborhood tradition, contribute to a good cause, and have fun along the way! [stpaulhistorichillstours.org/volunteer](http://stpaulhistorichillstours.org/volunteer)

#### UPCOMING MEETINGS

Board meeting; June 9, 7pm at Linwood Community Center. More info at [summithillassociation.org](http://summithillassociation.org).

## CLASSIFIEDS

**PAINT PATCH:** Interior, exterior, caulking, stain, mold, small jobs wanted. Painter Jim. 612-202-5514

**YARD HELP:** Customer supplies lawn mower. Contact Jim at 612-202-5514.

**WE'RE HIRING! CARPET CLEANING TECHNICIAN.** Full/PT. Flexible hours. \$16-20/hr + commission, depending on experience. Background check, drug test required. Local, family-owned company. Contact: Paula 651-341-0933 or [Paula@naturewisecemdry.com](mailto:Paula@naturewisecemdry.com)

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**SHOP LOCAL**

**Win Big By Shopping Small This Summer on West 7th**

**By Damian Goebel**

The Fort Road Federation and West 7th businesses are launching a two-month “shop small” campaign aimed at encouraging residents to explore and support neighborhood retailers, restaurants and service providers this summer.

“Discover West 7th: A Shop Small Adventure” will run June 1 through July 31 and features a passport-style promotion connecting shoppers with more than two dozen local businesses along the West 7th corridor in St. Paul.

Participants can pick up a passport at participating businesses or print one online through the Fort Road Federation website. Customers receive one stamp for each participating business where they make a purchase.

Shoppers who collect 10 stamps will be entered to win a \$25 gift card from one of the participating businesses. Those who collect stamps from 20 or more businesses will be

eligible for the grand prize: a gift card from every participating business.

Passports must be submitted by Aug. 1 by email to the Fort Road Federation to qualify for prizes.

The program grew out of discussions between neighborhood business leaders and the Fort Road Federation about ways to boost foot traffic and highlight the diversity of West 7th businesses during the summer months. Organizers described the effort as a way to encourage residents to discover new destinations while supporting locally owned establishments.

Participating businesses include Bennett’s Chop & Railhouse, Day by Day Cafe, DeGidio’s Restaurant and Bar, Mickey’s Diner by Willy, Parlour St. Paul, Shamrocks and Bad Weather Brewing Company, along with salons, coffee shops, boutiques and specialty retailers throughout the neighborhood.



Great River Gallery



Degidios

**SHOP LOCAL AT PARTICIPATING WEST 7TH BUSINESS**

Get the full list of West 7th businesses and download your passport at [fortroadfed.org/shop-small-adventure](http://fortroadfed.org/shop-small-adventure).

**Discover West 7th**  
A SHOP SMALL ADVENTURE!  
JUNE 1 - JULY 31

SHOP LOCAL & WIN PRIZES!

Details and Participating Businesses Here!



**HIGHLAND PARK COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT**

**Bricks And Minifigs Specializes In Hard-To-Find Lego Sets And Minifigures**



Each month, we are featuring a Highland Park business or organization. Community Spotlight honorees may have deep roots in Highland Park or might be new to the neighborhood. Visit [highlanddistrictcouncil.org/community-spotlight](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/community-spotlight) to see more spotlights and to have your business or organization featured.

This month, we are featuring Sibley Manor. For over 70 years, they have provided quality, affordable housing in the neighborhood.

From Blake Lemcke, Owner

**Please describe your business/efforts in Highland Park.** Bricks & Minifigs is an authorized LEGO® retailer that specializes in used, retired and hard-to-find LEGO sets and minifigures. Our 'Buy, Sell, Trade' model

is popular with both kids and adult collectors. We also host birthday parties, summer classes and special events in our party room! We are a small, locally-owned business thriving to bring the joy and creativity of LEGO to all!

**When did you first start your business/efforts in Highland Park?** I've worked in St Paul for nearly 20 years and in early 2024 decided it would be a great place to start a business! The store opened on January 11, 2025.

**What was the inspiration for doing the work you do?** I am a lifelong fan of LEGO and being a dad myself, could not resist seeing the happiness it brings to so many different people - both young and old!

**What's your favorite thing about Highland Park?** Highland Disc Golf course!

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COMMUNITY HISTORY

ORIGIN STORIES

Origin Stories part 13: Einwanderung Angespante/German Fraught Immigration Part 1

BY JOE LANDSBERGER

Life wasn't easy for Minnesota's German immigrants. The stresses of life in one's country can bring desires to "emigrate" for a new life. For the Germans the revolutions of the mid-1800s responded to dramatic conditions: wars, famine, epidemics (particularly cholera), repression, lack of opportunity and social mobility and the erosion of established norms.

The Turnvater, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), is considered the father of the Turnverein movement that emerged out of sports clubs in Berlin in 1811. It was banned in 1819 in Prussia, restored in 1842. Turner adherents joined athletic and social clubs that promoted physical fitness, liberal politics and German culture. "Physical culture," organized health and strength movements, emphasized "heavy gymnastics": strenuous exercises performed with apparatus (pommel horses, parallel bars and climbing structures) or track and field (running, jumping, even swimming) reflecting the philosophy of a "Sound Mind in a Sound Body." It combined physical training with intellectual pursuits and culture. They also became occasions for members to bridge borders for festivals (*Turnfeste*), games, travel and to discuss politics. These discussions morphed into promoting nationalism, political and religious freedom, educational opportunity and equality. It is a model for the American youth of today.

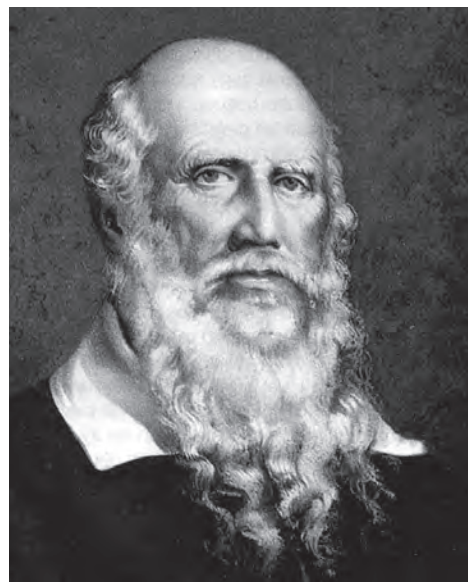
*Achtundvierziger*/Forty-Eighters were progressive, educated German revolutionaries who immigrated to the Midwest and Minnesota after the failed 1848-49 insurrections. Thousands were killed and imprisoned. Forty-Eighters, Turners, proletariat and common peasantry embraced the US as a refuge. However, in their new land, as their numbers increased, they were met with anti-German nativism. In 1854 they formed the German American Chicago Land Association to relocate and found a colony in New Ulm.

Jacob Wilhelm Pfaender (1826 - 1905) also left Germany amid the turmoil of the 1848 revolution. He traveled through England (meeting Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels) and settled in Cincinnati, Ohio. There he founded a Turner Society and served as its first president. In 1851, he married Catherine Pfau, who had grown up in a Turner family. In 1855 Pfaender advocated for "Practical Turnerism" toward founding an intentional (Turner) community. In 1856 in Cincinnati they established the Settlement Association of the Socialist Turner Society and joined the Chicagoan émigrés/settlers in New Ulm. The two groups merged in 1857 and New Ulm incorporated its township under Turner guidelines—named after Ulm in Württemberg, Germany. They survived grasshopper plagues, fires and the challenges of farming on the Great Plains, often in isolated farmsteads, as well as the Civil War and Dakota Uprising. It is estimated that 390 individuals (60%) of civilian victims of the Uprising were of German origin, centered in Brown and Renville Counties.

German immigrants in St. Paul were also busy organizing. In 1852 its St. Paul Lesevereine (German Reading Society) was



Emigrant Landing Depot (1855-189) at Castle Garden, New York City. Predecessor of Ellis Island.



Turnvater Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852)

formed with 121 members. In 1857 they built an Athenæum, a Deutsches Haus (German House) below Seven Corners at Exchange and Pine. In 1858 they founded St. Paul Turnverein – two years after New Ulm's.

German immigrants became a predominant group in St. Paul after it became a territory in 1849. Following 1848, hundreds of thousands German-speaking immigrants came to the U.S.. While Turners were small in number, they were well-educated and often played a leadership role in cultural and intellectual life, and became voices and publishers of local newspapers.

One such in St. Paul was Albert Wolff (1825-1893), a Forty-eighter and revolutionary. He was sentenced to death for participating in the 1848 revolutionary movement in Dresdaen, Germany, though was pardoned and immigrated to St. Paul in November 1852. When the Athenæum was dedicated in November 1857 Wolff was featured as speaker. Wolff founded the *New Ulm Post* with Josef Hofer in February 1864 as "An independent newspaper for freedom,



Jacob Wilhelm Pfaender (1826 - 1905)

justice, and progress." He was editor of the St. Paul *Volkszeitung*: "As a clear and able writer, Mr. Wolff has no superior among the German editors of the Northwest." He served as Minnesota State Commissioner for Germany 1864-71 for the recruitment of immigrants. From Bremen he wrote to editors of periodicals and newspapers to "concentrate emigration to Minnesota where Germans were the most likely to find healthy and congenial climate, the greatest supply of unoccupied lands and the best chances for investments in enterprises of industry".

Wolff built his home at 318 Goodhue Street in the West End in 1887. He committed suicide by train at the St. Paul Union Depot in the economic crisis of 1893. His *Literarischer Nachlass*-Literary Legacy was published posthumously St. Paul in 1894 and can be accessed at the Minnesota Historical Society.


*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/



Albert Wolff (1825-1893)

State of Minnesota: Glacial Age Forward" at your local library, or order up a copy of your own at [fortroadfed.org](http://fortroadfed.org). Learn more about the book and find Joe's upcoming conversations about the history of West 7th at [josfland.com](http://josfland.com).



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GRAND OPENINGS

# New Businesses Pop Up All Over Grand Avenue

**N**ew investment is popping up all over Grand Avenue this spring, as a series of ribbon cuttings in May showed the range of businesses and opportunities along the commercial corridor. Local businesses, neighborhood organizations and city leaders marked new openings and community improvements last month

at the series of festivities.

Ribbon cuttings included the April 29 event for **MOR BOUTIQUE** and the May 1 opening of **WAY COOL COOKING SCHOOL** at its new Grand Avenue location.

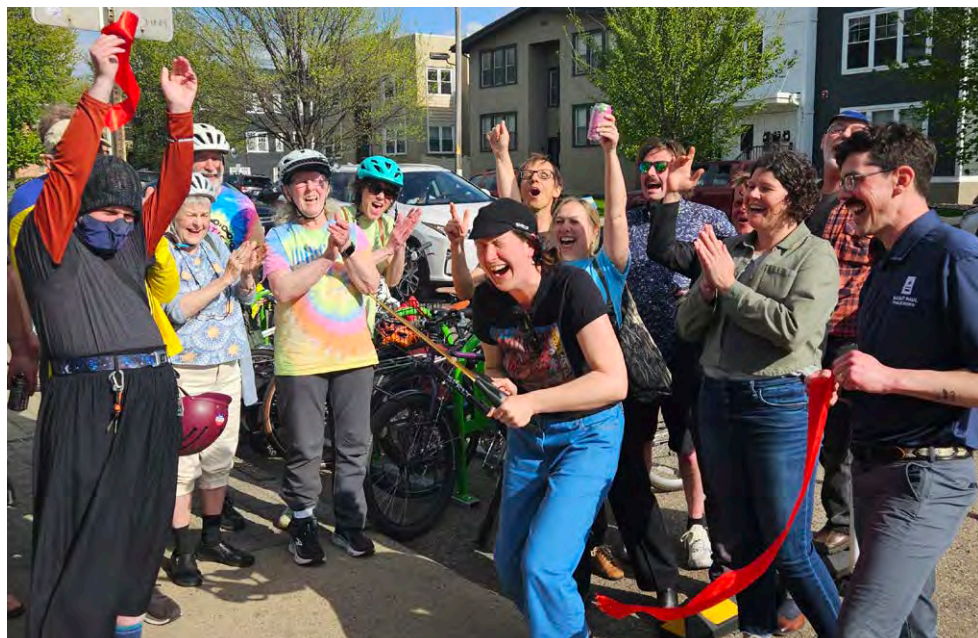
On May 8, **CATZEN COFFEE** celebrated the opening of a new patio space featuring a mural by artist Ara Elizabeth. Kaohly Her joined community members for the event.

The same day, the **new bike corrals** installed outside Dunn Brothers Coffee and Kowalski's Market on Grand Avenue were celebrated by community members. The yearlong pilot project, funded through the city's Commercial Corridor Program, converts street parking spaces into bicycle parking designed to improve accessibility and support local businesses.

"These investments help more people stop, shop and spend time in the neighborhood," Sarah Johnson, MGCC Grid 3 representative, said in a statement.

Ribbon cuttings are scheduled for **CALMERA MASSAGE** on May 29 and **SENCHA TEA BAR** on June 3, adding to the eclectic mix of businesses opening on the avenue.

-- Damian Goebel



Grand Opening of Macalester-Groveland's onstreet bike corrals.



Mor Boutique officially cut the ribbon on their store on April 29.



Way Cool Cooking School cut the ribbon on their new space on Grand Ave.



Catzen Coffee unveils their new patio space.

## WAY COOL, PG 1

somebody stops and they want to see, they want to know what's going on," he said.

The school offers a broad mix of programming, from adult date-night classes and international cuisine workshops to children's birthday parties, field trips and summer camps. Adult cooking classes typically run two hours and cost about \$99, while birthday parties start around \$400 for 10 children. Summer camps run several days and serve dozens of children each day during the busy season.

Classes range from pasta-making and sushi rolling to themed experiences focused on cuisines from places like Thailand, India and Morocco. Team-building events often center on collaborative cooking challenges inspired by television competitions.

"It's very much a social thing," Williams said. "They always leave having a good time."

That sense of connection is central to the school's philosophy, according to chef instructor Mary Matthews, who has worked with the business for more than 16 years.

"Everything we do builds off of each other," Matthews said, adding that many children who attend camps or birthday parties later return for more classes, and some eventually come back to work at the school themselves.

"I'm humbled every single day by the ripple effect we have on the community," she said. "They remember how you made them feel."

The expansion did not come without challenges. The owners said permitting and development delays stretched the St. Paul project to nearly two years and added significant financial pressure.

"An average person couldn't do it," Shilhanek said.

But the pair remained committed to opening in St. Paul because they believed they offered an experience the neighborhood would appreciate.

"What we offer is something that will resonate especially with this neighborhood and with St. Paul in this area," Williams said. "We have a fun experience to offer."

**IF YOU GO**  
Way Cool Cooking School, 1824 Grand Ave. Find their classes and offerings at



### ALLEY GARDEN AWARDS 2026 JUDGING PERIOD JULY 9-19

The Alley Garden Award program returns! The judging period is scheduled from July 9-19. For details on how to ensure you receive a flag this year, visit [macgrove.org/what-we-do/alley-garden-awards/](http://macgrove.org/what-we-do/alley-garden-awards/). We also need volunteers to act as judges for the Alley Garden Awards. If you would like to volunteer as a judge, please contact [mgcc@macgrove.org](mailto:mgcc@macgrove.org).

### THE GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD GARAGE SALE JUNE 12-13, 9AM - 3PM

All residents are welcome to participate. To view the map and program, please visit [macgrove.org/garagesale/](http://macgrove.org/garagesale/).

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

- **Community Building Team**, June 9, 6:30 p.m., featuring a special guest discussing Native Gardens
  - **Board of Directors**, June 11, 6:30 p.m.
  - **Transportation Committee**, June 22, 6:30 p.m.
  - **Housing and Land Use**, June 24, 6:30 p.m.
- Meetings are held in person at Edgcombe Recreation Center and are shown on Zoom. Visit [macgrove.org/](http://macgrove.org/) participate for more information.

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# SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2026

- 8 AM ..... 5K Fun Run
- 8:30 AM ..... CorePower Yoga
- 8:45 AM ..... Kids 1/2 Mile Fun Run
- 9 AM - 6 PM ..... Vendor Booths & Zones Open
- 9:30 AM ..... Grand Old Day Parade
- 11 AM - 6 PM ..... Music Stages & Beverage Gardens Open
- 11 AM & 4 PM ..... Circus Juventas Performances
- 11:30 AM & 1 PM ..... Sweet Science Ice Cream Demos
- 12 & 1 PM ..... Weiner Dog Races
- 1-3 PM ..... Skateboard Competition
- 6 PM ..... Event Ends

Scheduled performers & times subject to change

## Future Innovators Zone

WILLWERSCHIED & WEDDING SHOPPE LOTS

Shop the Kids Entrepreneur Market

Flint Hills Resources Ice Cream, Sweet Treats & Cool Science Demos

St. Thomas Engineering & WSB present Marvels of Design

Games and giveaways from Xcel Energy

## Family Fun & Sports Zone

presented by IUOE Local 49

KOWALSKI'S LOT

Inflatable bounce houses and bungee trampolines

Take a shot with the Minnesota Wild

Meet Minnesota's new professional volleyball organization

Kick it with the MN United Football Club

Visit Archie, the Blaze Credit Union classic truck

Mini-digger simulators from Operating Engineers

Try out archery with the Boy Scouts

## Art & Nonprofit Zone

HAMLIN - SNELLING

Shop one-of-a-kind treasures from local makers and artists

Send a 'Neighborhood Note' sponsored by Macalester College

Chalk mandala sponsored by Wet Paint

Shop the Vintage Market sponsored by Zimmerman's Dry Goods

**Car Show** Sponsored by White Bear Mitsubishi and Volkswagen Inver Grove

## Pet Pavilion

SNELLING

Thanks for leaving your pets at home

Pet vendor market sponsored by Catzen Coffee - join our Cardboard Cat House Competition!

Weiner dog races presented by Brian Wager Coldwell Banker Realty

Bleacher seating sponsored by BankCherokee



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Help us keep Grand Old Day a free community event. DONATE TODAY!

## Entertainment Zone

DALE - LEXINGTON & AT SNELLING



### Live and Local Stage

Sponsored by Mick's Bottle Shop

LOVE BAND | 11 AM

MARVELOUS | 12 PM

OBI ORIGINAL & THE BLACK ATLANTICS | 1 PM

BAND TBA | 2 PM

LASALLE | 3 PM

TABAH | 4:30 PM



21+ beverage garden limited to Mick's Bottle Shop lot. No alcohol in the street.

### Skate and Sip Zone

AFTER HOURS SKATESHOP COMPETITION AND DEMOS | 1-3 PM

RENT MY PARTY BUS

DJ & BEER GARDEN

### Nothing But Canna Stage

Sponsored by Nothing But Canna



INTERNATIONAL REGGAE ALLSTARS

BRANDYN LEE TULLOCH & POETIC ROOTS

ENJOY GRAND OLD DAY EXCLUSIVE THC BEVERAGE | MUST BE 21+

21+ THC Beverages sold in the Nothing But Canna patio garden only. No alcohol in the street.

### Grand Stage

Powered by The Current



BUNNY BLOOD | 12:30 PM

THOMAS STICHA | 1:30 PM

THE PLASTIC CONSTELLATIONS | 3 PM

GULLY BOYS | 4 PM

Funding with the support of the Minnesota Legacy Amendment's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund

### Americana Stage

Sponsored by KATEYB.COM Grand Ave Edina Realty



CIRCUS JUVENTAS PERFORMANCE | 11 AM

HURRICANE, SCHWALBE & OTTO | 11:15 AM

BETTINA V. & LENZ N FRENZ | 12 PM

MOLLY MAHER | 1 PM

HALEY E RYDELL | 2 PM

CLOVER AND THE BEE | 3 PM

STRINGDINGERS | 4 PM

KATEY BELLEVILLE & SONS | 5 PM

### School of Rock Stage

Sponsored by The School of Rock St. Paul



ST. PAUL YOUTH ROAD CREW

PLYMOUTH HOUSE BAND

ST. PAUL TOUR BAND

EDEN PRAIRIE JR. HOUSE BAND

EDEN PRAIRIE HOUSE BAND

### Decades Stage

Sponsored by The Cellar Dwellers

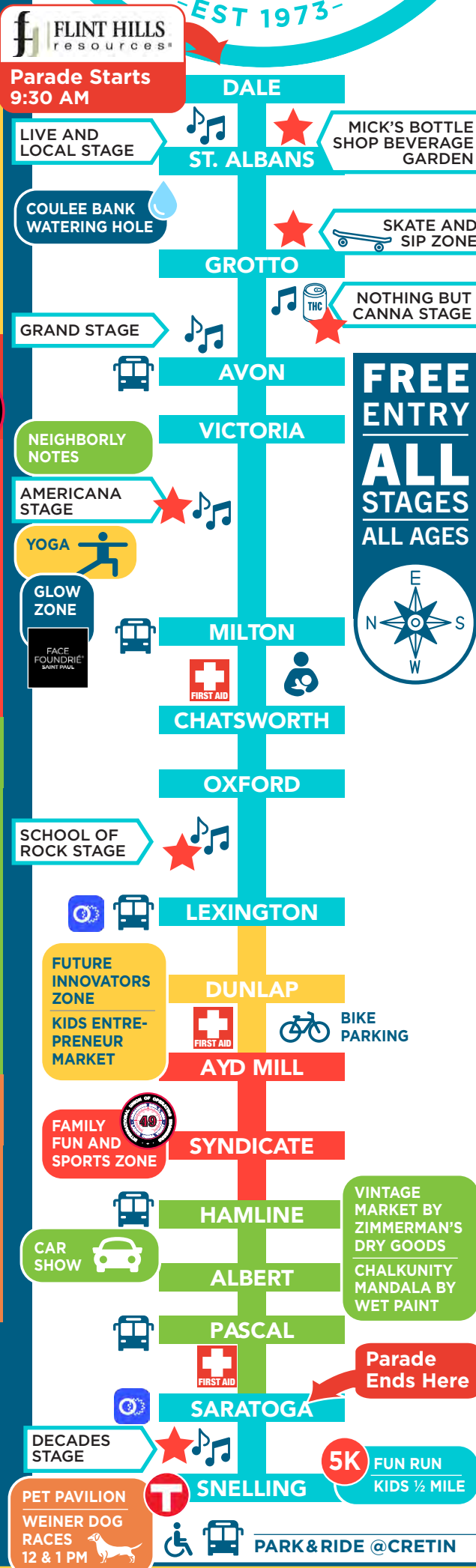
REWIND ALL 80'S PLAYLIST W/ DJ MATT KOTEFKA | 11 AM

WEINER DOG RACES | 12 & 1 PM

THE COMEBACKS | 2 PM

LADIES OF THE 80'S | 3:15 PM

THE CELLAR DWELLERS | 4:30 PM



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### 21+ Wristbands

\$10 in advance | ID REQUIRED  
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Grand Old Day entertainment is FREE for all ages. Wristbands are for use in our six 21+ beverage gardens.

### PIT PASSES

Include wristbands AND front row access at Americana and Grand Stages

\$25 in advance | ID REQUIRED  
\$30 event day

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