

Community REPORTER

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

DISTRICT PERSPECTIVES

Flag Football Should Be a Varsity Sport For Girls



MARIA ISA PEREZ-VEGA
MINNESOTA HOUSE REP.
DISTRICT 65B
columnist

The final whistle has blown on another season of Minnesota girls flag football.

At TCO Stadium, girls from across our state ran routes, pulled flags, called plays, trusted teammates, recovered from mistakes and left everything they had on the field. Some walked away with medals. Some walked away with

disappointment. All of them walked away having proven something important.

They proved that girls flag football in Minnesota is not an experiment. It is not a novelty. It is not a passing trend waiting to be measured from a distance.

It is here. It is growing. And it deserves to be recognized.

As a young girl growing up on the West Side of St. Paul, I was always playing flag football with the boys in elementary school, oftentimes being the only girl on the field. I was the only girl who played flag football during recess, and I was always the first or second pick for the team. I had hands and speed back then. These are core memories that have stayed with me into womanhood. When I stepped on that field, I felt empowered, and it taught me teamwork, leadership, and perseverance. This is what I want all young girls to feel and take from this sport.

Now that the season has ended, the question moves from the field to the Minnesota State High School League: How do we meet this momentum with the structure and support it deserves?

The Minnesota State High School League recently tabled a proposal that would have moved girls flag football toward emerging status, an important step on the path to becoming a fully sanctioned varsity sport. I respect the League's role in evaluating new athletic opportunities, and I understand that member schools need information, clarity and time to consider implementation. Responsible decisions require thoughtful process.

But thoughtful process should also keep opportunity moving forward.

In just two seasons, the number of Minnesota high school girls flag football teams has more than doubled, growing from 51 teams to 104. That kind of growth tells us something important. It tells us that girls want to play. It tells us that families are showing up. It tells us that coaches, schools and communities are investing their time, energy and belief. It tells us that this sport has already captured the imagination of young people across Minnesota.

The girls have made their case on the field. Now our institutions must decide whether they will meet that momentum with the recognition and infrastructure it deserves.

Sanctioning matters because it turns opportunity into a pathway. It creates consistency, stability and legitimacy. It helps schools plan. It helps families understand what comes next. It helps coaches build programs that can last. Most importantly, it tells the girls who are already competing that their work is worthy of being taken seriously.

That message matters.

Sports shape young people in ways that reach far beyond a scoreboard. They teach discipline, teamwork, leadership

FLAG FOOTBALL, PG 6

West Fest On 7th Brings Music, History And Community Together For Expanded Weekend Celebration

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

What began as a new neighborhood festival just two year ago is evolving into something bigger this fall.



St. Stanislaus Catholic Church is hosting West Fest on 7th Sept. 12-13, combining its popular West Fest celebration with the parish's more than 40-year tradition of serving its renowned turkey dinner into a single weekend designed to celebrate both the West 7th neighborhood and the people who call it home.

The expanded format reflects both practical realities and a broader vision, being able to use the limited resources of the church more effectively while, hopefully, reaching the largest number of people.

"The main thing was volunteers. For a lot of people, these are both big commitments," organizer Dave Bredemus said. "We're trying to take the best of the two [events]." Bredemus said.

"So the slots really are street dance, turkey dinner, family fun," he added.

That three-part structure defines this year's festival. Saturday evening centers on a street dance featuring The Goombas, classic cars, food trucks, pull tabs and beverages. Sunday shifts to the church's famous turkey dinner, children's activities, history tours, bingo, live entertainment and community displays.

While the format has changed, the event's mission remains the same as when West Fest debuted in 2024: bringing together longtime residents, newcomers and neighborhood organizations.

"We wanted to reach out to the West 7th neighborhood, which demographically, really changed in the last 20 years," Bredemus said.

That community focus will be even more visible this year.



ORIGIN STORIES
page 4

VOL. 56 NO. 8

AUGUST 2026

CIRCULATION 14,000



Crowds gathered to watch live music during 2024's West Fest on 7th.



The Czech and Slovak Protective Society Hall will play a larger role, hosting Czech dancers, tours and opening its gift shop. St. Peter's Church will have a table, and organizers are working with the Fort Road Federation on a neighborhood history tour highlighting decades of improvements along West 7th Street.

"We wanted to evolve more outside agencies that could benefit from it to again, make it a community event," Bredemus said.

The neighborhood tours proved to be one of the biggest surprises during the inaugural West Fest. The 2024 walking tours attracted far more participants than organizers anticipated, prompting their return this fall.

"We wanted to take 35 on the walking tour and end up being like 50 or 60 people," Bredemus said.

This year, tours will include historic bus rides through the neighborhood, tours of CSPS Hall and a new exploration of the ethnic communities that helped build West 7th.

"One of the tours that we're doing is going to be a tour of all the ethnic groups that built West 7th, the Irish, the Italians, the Czechs and the Germans," Bredemus said.

The festival will also continue honoring

WEST FEST pg 4

St. Paul Voters Narrow The Field Before November

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

St. Paul voters have less than a month to decide which candidates will advance to the Nov. 3 general election as Minnesota's statewide primary approaches on Tuesday, Aug. 11. While many local races will not be decided until November, the primary will determine party nominees for federal and state offices and, in some jurisdictions, narrow crowded nonpartisan contests.

This year's ballot includes races ranging from the U.S. Senate to the Minnesota Legislature, along with Ramsey County Board seats.

Unlike the general election, Minnesota's primary uses separate party columns. Voters may choose candidates from only one political party for partisan offices. Voting across more than one party column causes votes in partisan races not to count. Nonpartisan contests, such as judicial races and many school board elections, are listed separately.

Early voting has been underway since June 26, giving voters multiple ways to cast a ballot before Election Day. Minnesotans may vote by mail, vote absentee in person or participate in the state's newer early in-person voting process, which began July 24 and allows ballots to be scanned immediately rather than sealed in an absentee envelope.

On Election Day, polling places across St. Paul will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Anyone in line by 8 p.m. is entitled to vote. Minnesota also continues to offer Election Day voter registration, making it possible for eligible residents who missed the advance



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

registration deadline to register and vote at their polling place with proper identification and proof of residence.

Ramsey County voters can vote early at the Ramsey County Elections Office, 90 Plato Blvd. W., throughout the absentee voting period. Additional early voting locations at the Roseville and Shoreview libraries opened July 24.

The easiest way to verify what appears on an individual ballot is through the Minnesota Secretary of State's online sample ballot tool. Because legislative districts, school board districts and judicial races vary by address, voters are encouraged to review their personalized ballot before heading to the polls. The same website also allows voters to confirm registration status, request or track an absentee ballot and locate their Election Day polling place.

What is on the ballot?

Depending on your address, your ballot may include:

FEDERAL

- U.S. Senate
- U.S. House of Rep - Congressional District 4

STATE AND LOCAL OFFICES

- Governor & Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
- Secretary of State
- State Auditor
- Ramsey County Commissioner, District 5

VOTER INFORMATION

Election Day: Tuesday, Aug. 11

Polls: 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

REGISTER TO VOTE:

- Register online in advance deadline has passed.
- Eligible voters may register at their polling place on Election Day with proof of residence.

EARLY VOTING:

June 26-Aug. 10

- Ramsey County Elections, 90 Plato Blvd. W., St. Paul
- Additional locations at Ramsey County libraries in Roseville and Shoreview beginning July 24.

FIND YOUR POLLING PLACE, SAMPLE

BALLOT OR REGISTRATION STATUS:

- Minnesota Voter Information Portal (MNvotes) pollfinder.sos.mn.gov
- Sample Ballot & Candidate Information sos.mn.gov/elections-voting/whats-on-my-ballot
- Ramsey County Elections ramseycountymn.gov/residents/elections-voting

COMMUNITY VOICES

COMMUNITY VOICES

Downtown’s Skyrocketing Small Business Growth

By Joe Spencer
Saint Paul Downtown Alliance

One of the many vitality indicators we track in downtown includes the movement of small business. The pandemic obviously crushed foot traffic in downtowns everywhere, but it also changed people’s habits and patterns. This, as we know, especially hurt small businesses and restaurants. Growing our residential population will diversify the base of customers downtown which is essential for storefront business.

Faced with this increase in storefront vacancy, we began the Grow Downtown program in 2022, which brings together building owners with vacant space and small business owners to work together supporting each other’s interests. To date, the program has worked with 18 businesses and most of them have seen success.

As we hoped, our successes helped spark natural growth in downtown. Since 2025, we have seen a kind of wellspring of small businesses come to downtown outside of this program. In early 2025, we saw Reckless Swagger, a punk and alternative clothing shop open in Wacouta Commons neighborhood. We saw the Palace Pub open in 7th Place Mall. Pino’s Pizza moved out of the skyway into 7th Place Mall and have thrived. 6ix Mears opened across from Mears Park and



Indoor Farmers Market opened at 308 Prince Street. has added night life to that area of downtown. Avalon reopened the James J. Hill library building bringing a ton of events and A’bulae bought their building in Lowertown and may consider expansion. We saw Steven D’s open when Paul Harquist Jewelers, Skyway

Mart, Holistically Yours, and B’s Barbershop relocated from the Alliance Bank building into the Town Square building. Sonder left, but Roami, another Airbnb hybrid hotel quietly moved in and began booking rooms. The Indoor Farmers Market opened at 308 Prince Street and was a fast success.

In 2026, we have seen an explosion of new businesses move into downtown and we are only halfway through the year. We kicked off the year with HepCat Coffee completing their expansion inside Osborn370 (the new Wabasha Park should be opening this fall right outside). Lucy Daisy florist opened in March. April had three grand openings. Galvan Foods & Tortilleria, which has been a staple of the Farmer’s Market for five years, now operates six days per week out of the Indoor Farmers Market as a full breakfast and lunch counter restaurant. Jenni’s Café opened in Landmark Center, led by the former head chef of Herbie’s on the Park, Joe Ruhland. Forever Young Vintage, Thrift & Gift opened inside the Wells Fargo building. LaNoire Bridal moved into a larger space in the Fitz Flats building and had their grand opening in May. By Mr. Martinez over on the edge of downtown by the arena had their grand opening in June. The Ivory Event Center, too, celebrated a grand opening in June. River Valley Coffee Company and Joey Mansion just soft-opened in July. The Stella Residencies has their grand opening planned

for this fall but are already signing leases for their new 178 apartments.

We have also seen expansions and moves within downtown. Owl’s Eye Art Collective moved into a new location and are offering co-work spaces in addition to art studios and classes. DG Pilot moved from Rice Park area to Union Depot and are having some of their best sales months. So Yen Desserts are experimenting with a dinner menu and are selling out their monthly pop-ups. And Meritage launched their new Underground space that operates a Friday night speakeasy, performances and a private club.

Aldi announced their plans for moving into downtown (fall is the anticipated opening), and there are quite a few more ‘coming soon’s’ we have heard about. They include more small businesses and more construction on office-to-residential conversion projects.

What is also exciting about these businesses I listed is that about half of them are owned by entrepreneurs of color. Downtown is doing what it should be: being a place of opportunity for new ideas, fresh energy, and diverse backgrounds to flourish.

It is easy to see that these indicators are pointing toward a new, exciting future in downtown Saint Paul. A future where people want to live, where businesses big and small thrive, and a place that generates more investment.

NOTEBOOK RECOLLECTIONS

The Boundary Waters Made Me a Better Doctor, Part 1



TIM RUMSEY
columnist

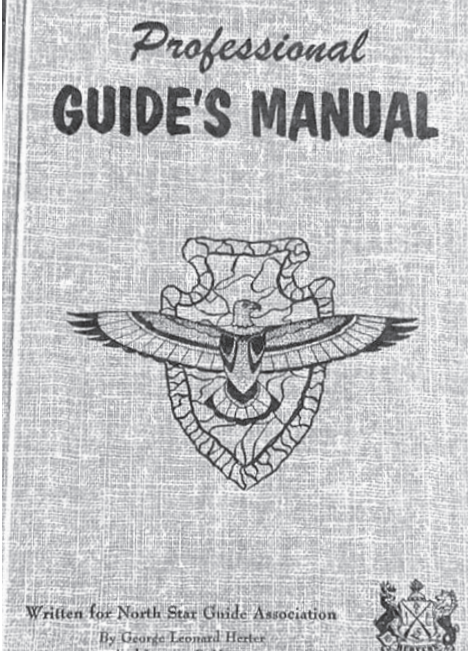
I was a guide in the Minnesota Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA) as a young adult. I was a better family doctor because of that time I spent as a guide.

In the summer of 1968 I accompanied fifteen 13 year old

Twin City boys out of a camp in McGregor, MN. Our gear and canoes were trucked up to a launch outside of Ely. We would load up the canoes and Hi-Ho it into the BWCA for 10 days.

My main goal was to get those boys 50 miles out into the wild and back safely. All fifteen of them! I counted the boys every day. 5 or 6 times a day, morning and evening!

Our days in the woods included swimming, hiking, eating and portaging our canoes. Portaging a canoe is carrying your canoe and gear packs between strips of land and the next body of water.



The North Star Guide Manual

The only way I safely accomplished these north woods adventures was following my extensive reading, outlining and underlining the “North Star Guide’s Manual, Volume II, 1961.” This was written by famed outfitters, travelers and trapper-hunters George Leonard Herter and his brother, Jacques P. Herter, who hailed from the small town of Waseca, MN. Those Herter brothers were my “North Stars!” (Not the hockey players, bless them!)

The North Star Guide Manual was my bible. A canoe trip takes an awful lot of thoughtful planning: dehydrated foods, clean water, first aid kit, maps and a compass, fire making essentials, tents and sleeping gear, Mosquito fighting weapons

Did I mention mosquito fighting? Up north the mosquitoes are the size of small birds!

Here is some of the “how to do’s” I learned from the Herters Manual.

- How to:
- Make a campfire in the rain
 - Respectfully “toilet” in the woods
 - Use a compass with a map
 - Use a compass without a map (You can’t

call home if you lose both the compass AND the map)

- Bring a dozen male teenagers 50 miles into the Boundary Waters
- Bring back those dozen male teenagers from the Boundary Waters
- Lead the boys in campfire songs they would never admit to singing back in civilization
- Live on rye krisp, cheese, soup and peanut butter for 10 days
- Swat mosquitos and paddle a canoe simultaneously
- Know that a portage is measured in rods. A rod is 16.5 feet. A 110 rod portage is 1,715 feet

And, most importantly the essentials: Respect and be awe-inspired by Mother Nature. Savor, remember, record and enjoy the BWCA.

Next month in Part II, I will share some nature stories including meeting bears face-to-face!

I remain, your devoted North Woods guide (retired!)

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Summer Pests: Helpful Information from a Pest Control Pro!



KORINNE DENNIS
columnist

Okay, neighbors, let’s have an honest conversation about the creepy crawlies that come through our windows and doors and disturb our peace. Yes, I’m talking about the flies, wasps, box elders, spiders, and garter snakes. Chills. With warmer temperatures come mosquitoes, stink bugs, and all their friends. As a first-time homeowner and just a person not generally interested in any kind of pest outside of my four-legged pups, I don’t know anything about the slithering and crawling creatures that show up when I least expect them, so I decided to interview someone who knows a lot more than I do about summertime pests and what we can or should do about them.

Daishawn, can you share a little about where you work and how you got started?

I’m proud to be part of the team at Valor Pest Solutions, a family-oriented company that truly values building relationships with the communities we serve. I realized I wasn’t intimidated by most pests and genuinely enjoy helping people. There’s something deeply rewarding about taking a situation that causes stress or anxiety and turning it into peace of mind. Whether it’s

eliminating a pest problem, identifying how pests are getting inside, or helping homeowners prevent future issues, my goal is to help people feel comfortable, confident, and safe in their own homes.

I mentioned garter snakes scare me. Why are garter snakes in St. Paul, and how can we keep them from entering our homes?

Garter snakes are one of Minnesota’s most common native snakes and are completely non-venomous. They’re actually beneficial because they feed on slugs, insects, frogs, and small rodents. They’re common in St. Paul because our yards provide ideal habitat with gardens, mulch, rock landscaping, and plenty of moisture. The best way to keep them outside is to seal foundation gaps, repair door sweeps,

eliminate brush and woodpiles near the home, and reduce rodent activity that may attract them. Seeing them in the yard is normal; finding them inside usually indicates an accessible entry point that should be sealed.

Are spiders considered the good ones? Should keep an eye out for any species?

The vast majority of spiders in Minnesota are beneficial predators that help control flies, mosquitoes, ants, and other nuisance insects. The most common house and cellar spiders are harmless. Medically significant spiders, such as black widows, are extremely uncommon in Minnesota, and brown recluse spiders are not established here. If homeowners are seeing large numbers of spiders indoors, it’s often a sign there’s

an underlying insect population providing them with a food source.

What about Box Elder and Stink Bugs? Is there an appropriate way to handle them?

Both are nuisance pests rather than health threats. Box elder bugs and brown marmorated stink bugs begin looking for overwintering sites in late summer and fall, entering homes through tiny cracks around windows, doors, siding, and rooflines. They don’t damage homes or reproduce indoors, but they can become a major annoyance. Vacuuming is the safest removal method, as crushing stink bugs releases their characteristic odor. Long-term control

PEST CONTROL, PG 7



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COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

St. Paul Plans Phased Closures Of Homeless Encampments

St. Paul will begin closing homeless encampments on a rolling basis Aug. 5, starting at Pig's Eye Park, while city, county and nonprofit teams work to connect residents with shelter, housing and other services.

City officials said an assessment found serious health and safety hazards at encampments, including fires, sexual assaults, thefts, two overdose-related deaths and risks created by propane tanks and open flames near tightly spaced tents.

The city and Ramsey County said outreach workers would be on site nearly every day before the first closure. A 10-person county team representing housing stability, financial assistance, social services and public health has also been assigned to the effort. Workers are helping people complete coordinated-entry applications, replace documents, arrange transportation and identify shelter or housing options.

The City Council authorized \$1.08 million for Ramsey County to expand shelter beds and services ahead of the Pig's Eye closure. Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities also said it has available beds after completing the first phase of an expansion at its men's campus on University Avenue.

Officials describe the plan as a graduated process of engagement, education, encouragement and, only after sustained outreach, enforcement. Temporary storage will be available for belongings, and follow-up services are expected to continue after each site closes.

A community listening forum, "Out of the Shadows" on July 28 included people experiencing homelessness, elected officials, service providers and neighborhood residents.

More information is available at stpaul.gov/encampments. Ramsey County's housing and supportive-services entry line is 651-266-1050.



Memorial for the victims of the fatal shooting inside a St. Paul apartment complex July 20.

Man Charged In Triple Killing At St. Paul Apartment Complex

A St. Paul man has been charged with three counts of second-degree murder in the fatal shooting of three people inside the leasing office of a St. Paul apartment complex.

Police identified the suspect as Tsegaab A. Binessu, who was arrested by St. Louis County deputies near Virginia, Minnesota, after the July 20 shooting. He was later transported to St. Paul police headquarters.

Officers were called about 4:10 p.m. to the 1500 block of St. Paul Avenue after receiving several reports of gunfire. They found three adults dead in the leasing office and evacuated residents while investigators secured and processed the scene.

The Ramsey County medical examiner identified the victims as Nansi G. Fuentes Zambrano, 25, of Inver Grove Heights; Dena M. Silcox, 56, of St. Paul; and Adam J. Wilwerding, 43, of Oakdale.

Charging information included with the police material alleges the shooting followed a dispute involving a parking contract. Authorities said Binessu was apprehended hours later nearly 200 miles north of St. Paul. He was reportedly driving a vehicle belonging

to one of the victims and had his passport and camping equipment with him.

The deaths were recorded as St. Paul's ninth, 10th and 11th homicides of 2026.

The case remains under investigation by the St. Paul Police Department's homicide unit, with assistance from forensic services and video investigators.

No additional suspects were identified in the material provided by police.

Joseph's Coat Seeks Volunteers

Joseph's Coat is seeking more volunteers to help operate its St. Paul free store as the demand for the services continues to grow.

The nonprofit has provided clothing, hygiene products and small household items at no cost since 1989. The organization typically serves 100 to 150 shoppers on Mondays and Wednesdays, or roughly 200 to 300 people each week. Joseph's Coat reported more than 10,000 shopping visits last year.

More than 80 volunteers help keep the store running, but additional assistance is needed. Most volunteers serve one three- to four-hour shift per week, although scheduling can be flexible.

Joseph's Coat describes its free store as a place where people can obtain essential items in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Its inventory is supplied through donations of new and gently used goods, along with financial contributions from community supporters.

People interested in volunteering or touring the store can contact Debbie Andrews at 651-377-8791 or info@josephscoatmn.org.

"Together, We Rise," a celebration and fundraiser will be held Oct. 8, 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the Church of St. Peter, 1450 Sibley Memorial Highway in Mendota. Updates will be posted at josephscoatmn.org/fundraiser.

City Council Schedules Ward Meetings On 2027 Budget

St. Paul residents will have opportunities to discuss the city's 2027 budget at a series of ward-level meetings.

The City Council said the events are intended to gather feedback before a formal budget proposal is completed. Residents, businesses and community organizations can speak with council members, city staff and

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administration representatives about services, fiscal pressures and investment priorities.

Council leaders have identified housing stability, economic development, public safety, climate resilience, parks and libraries, infrastructure maintenance, and budget transparency as shared areas of focus.

Ward 6: July 21, Hazel Park Recreation Center; **Ward 7:** Aug. 13, 5:30 to 7 p.m., Battle Creek Recreation Center; **Ward 1:** Sept. 4, 5:30 to 7 p.m. Frogtown Community Center; **Ward 5:** Sept. 10, 6 to 7:30 p.m. North End Community Center; **Ward 4:** Sept. 14, 6 to 7:30 p.m., Hancock Recreation Center. Additional ward events are included in the council's schedule.

Council President Rebecca Noecker said St. Paul faces inflation, shifting state and federal support, and pressure to preserve essential services without making the city less affordable. Budget Committee Chair Cheniqua Johnson said the meetings are meant to bring neighborhood knowledge into decisions about city spending.

Confirm dates, locations and any changes through stpaul.gov or the City Council's public meeting calendar.

Public Pianos Return To Grand Avenue

Grand Avenue visitors can make their own music this summer on five decorated public pianos installed outside neighborhood businesses and organizations.

The instruments are located at Catzen Coffee, Red Balloon Bookshop, Mischief Toy Store, Moloney's Irish Imports and Hovland Conservatory. They are available for passersby to play, turning sidewalks and storefront areas into informal performance spaces.

Hovland Conservatory of Music coordinated the project, and Keys 4/4 Kids provided the pianos. The initiative is intended to encourage spontaneous music, draw people along the avenue and create a playful neighborhood experience for residents and visitors.

Public-piano projects have become a

familiar form of placemaking in commercial districts, giving both experienced musicians and first-time players an opportunity to participate. The brightly painted instruments also function as temporary public art.

Players are asked to be considerate of businesses, pedestrians and residents. Availability may depend on business hours, weather and the condition of each instrument. The project is scheduled to remain in place for the summer.

Brake Bread Retires Its Bread Bus

Brake Bread removed its distinctive Bread Bus after concluding that the oversized gathering space was too difficult to operate in the bakery's small parking lot.

The West 7th bakery said July 25 was its final day. Outdoor seating will remain after the vehicle is gone. Brake Bread purchased the used bus in 2024 as a creative response to limited indoor seating at its shop, 1174 W. Seventh St. The bakery had converted much of its former lobby into production space during the COVID-19 pandemic and later relied on a walk-up window.

Manager and co-owner Nate Houge said the bakery considered awnings and vestibules but found them too expensive and complicated by sidewalk and permitting requirements. The business purchased the bus for about \$1,500 in Wisconsin and brought it back to St. Paul.

Workers and community members removed seats, flooring and deteriorated cushions, then began rebuilding the interior with repurposed materials. The project included tables, heaters and plans for solar power. The bus became an evolving gathering and art space and hosted events, including a graduation party.

Brake Bread said the vehicle had been a successful and enjoyable experiment and thanked artists and customers who contributed to the bus and said it expects to continue experimenting with new uses for its outdoor space. Brake Bread is open Wednesday through Sunday. Visit brakebread.com for more details.



Supporting W7th and Little Bohemia

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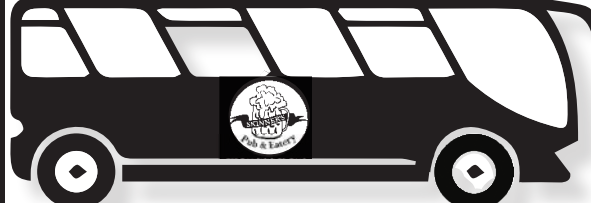






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MUSIC ON THE PATIO
TUESDAYS 7-9 PM

COMMUNITY HISTORY

ORIGIN STORIES
Part the 15th: Citizen Helpers

BY JOE LANDSBERGER

In the 1800s there was no Social Security safety net, no food shelves, no unions. It was the days of poorfarms and orphanages and catastrophic illnesses, alcoholism, abandonment. Government was no help: 2025's Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, of the 40 participating nations, only the US hasn't a universal health care system. Those less fortunate are still considered at fault by the federal government.

In the 1800s immigrant communities, benevolent societies and religious organization filled the gap. This survey is drawn from the Origin Story (2025) of our city. The focus is on healthcare by citizen helpers.

In 1851 four Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet opened St. Joseph's Academy, a boarding and day school and in 1853 staffed a temporary log cabin hospital on Bench Street (Second Street, a "shelf" in the bluff downtown) second) in the midst of a cholera epidemic. In 1854, they opened St. Joseph's Hospital in the first stone building in Saint Paul. It had private rooms, balconies, a chapel, a laundry, an assembly room and a smoking room. The hospital closed in 2022 and is now St. Mary's Health Clinics staffed by volunteers for the low-income and uninsured.

St. Joseph's German Catholic Orphan Society was formed in 1869, serving youth left parentless by the dangers of pioneer life, the Civil War and pandemic. In 1877, sisters of St. Gertrude's Benedictine Convent in Shakopee cared for orphan children in a facility at Ninth and Robert Streets that grew to 90. They moved to Ninth Street between Exchange and Fort Street near Assumption School.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd purchased 90 Wilkin Street in 1869 and five years later had 100 former prostitutes under their care. As railroads blasted below the bluff

for rails, in 1875 the Sisters sued the Saint Paul, Sioux City Railroad Company, won and sold part of the property. The rest went to the Little Sisters of the Poor for their Home for the Aged in 1884. In 1974 they opened a dental clinic as part of Helping Hand.

From 1908-1916, nearby on Wilkin was the Jewish Home for the Aged for eight "inmates"—the term then used for residents. It was the predecessor for Shalom Home on Seventh Street.

St. Luke's Hospital was organized in 1855 as the Christ Church Orphans' Home and Hospital and was managed by a "Board of Lady Managers." It closed in 1866 and reorganized as the Church Hospital and Orphans' Home. It had three successive locations, finally at Smith Avenue and Sherman Street. In 1877, the name was changed to St. Luke's. In 1972 Saint Luke's and Charles T. Miller Hospital consolidated to form United Hospital.

In the 1850s the Salvation Army was founded to preach the gospel and meet human needs without discrimination. The Sal came to Saint Paul in 1888 and West Seventh in 1958.

The Protestant Orphan Asylum purchased 698 Stewart in 1872, but in 1885 moved to larger facilities. The home and its 25 acres showcased spectacular views of the Mississippi River. From the late 1890's to 1930, the Blue Ribbon (men's) Club maintained the residence. The "ribbon" was worn by those who pledged abstinence from alcohol.

Children's Hospital was founded in 1924 at 263 Smith Avenue "to fit the child instead of molding a child to fit the hospital". Children's moved from Smith (with 16 beds) to a new, much larger, building at 311 Pleasant Avenue that was converted to condominiums in 1979 when the hospital moved to its current location at Smith and Grand Avenue.

In 1931 Lindsay School for Crippled



Childrens Hospital, 263 Smith Ave at Walnut Street.

Children was located at Pleasant and Sherman. The school's capacity was 100 children though two classrooms were added. Lindsay School was torn down in 1978 and replaced with new programs at Bridgeview and Como Park Elementary.

The United Ancient Order of Druids (UAOD), a fraternal organization, was founded in England in 1833. Its motto is United to Assist. Its first Minnesota Grove was organized in 1856 at Unity Central Hall, Seventh and St. Peter. Of six Saint Paul Groves, four were English and two German. Druids advocated "unity, peace and concord" and based their secrets upon charitable and benevolent principles. Their philosophical foundation was universality and non-denominational and practical duties to "attend the sick and dying, administer consolation to distressed and suffering, and provide for wants for those in need."

The first lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in Minnesota was chartered in Stillwater in 1849. The Capital City (Union) Lodge #048 was instituted January 21, 1875 at 156 West 9th Street with 14 members. From 1902 to 1946 the top floor of the Sauerwein Building, 265 West Seventh, was home to the expansive lodge. The Order recognized no sect or creed, neither political or sectarian or



Orphans at St. Joseph's Orphanage with Sisters Benedicta Klein (left), and Placida Heine (right).

religious; their laws commended (us) to visit the sick, care for and help the distressed; attend to the widows and orphans and bury the dead."

From 1914 to 1974 the Amherst H. Wilder Charity opened the city's first public bathing house at 319 Eagle Street in the Seven Corners neighborhood in Saint Paul. In her will, Fanny Wilder specifically asked that money from her estate be used to provide the residents of Saint Paul with a place where anyone could swim or bathe. From 1930 to 1976, the Wilder Day Nursery Number 2 served children ages one to five at 73 Leech Street.

Although 680 Stewart Avenue was built in 1885, and was the site of a neighborhood beer garden, the river bluff site has emerged to become the Hazelden Betty Ford complex in treating addiction. In 1953 it opened a halfway house at 680 Stewart for men for a sober-living residence. In 1976 they began outpatient services in partnership with a local hospital.

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

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WEST FEST, PG 1

neighborhood leaders through the Betty Moran Award, named after the long-time neighborhood advocate and last year's inaugural recipient.

Sunday remains anchored by one tradition that has been drawing crowds for decades: the church's turkey dinner.

"We've been doing it somewhere over 40 years," organizer John Murphy said of the dinner's history.

The meal features farm-fresh Iowa turkeys, homemade side dishes and St. Stan's well-known baked goods, jams and relishes. Takeout dinners will also be available while supplies last.

Families will also find plenty to do throughout Sunday, from the Teddy Bear Band and Czech dancers to face painting, children's games, police and fire demonstrations, classic cars and bingo. Organizers have also expanded the prize offerings, including two children's bicycles.

Returning favorites from 2024 include Pat Mancini's band The Goombas, whose



members have longstanding ties to St. Stanislaus and the neighborhood.

"Pat Mancini called me and said, 'I want to make sure we have that event. I want to get it on our calendar for The Goombas because my dad loves St. Stans,'" Bredemus recalled.

The festival is also expanding its fundraising efforts. Rather than the \$100 raffle tickets offered at the previous event, organizers have introduced a more accessible raffle with \$20 tickets featuring two \$5,000 grand prizes, along with additional cash prizes. An online silent auction will also run throughout the weekend.

Like many community organizations, St. Stanislaus is still looking for volunteers to make the weekend possible.

"We need a little help," Bredemus said.

Those interested can contact the church directly to volunteer.

Ultimately, organizers hope West Fest becomes more than just another neighborhood festival, but as a place to start creating community.

"It's amazing that after the pandemic, people really started to isolate themselves," Murphy



said. "We haven't returned from that."

"We want to capture the West 7th of the past," Bredemus added. "You have to plug into places that you feel comfortable."

For organizers, West Fest is one small way to help change that — one turkey dinner, history tour and street dance at a time.

IF YOU GO:
West Fest on 7th. Sept. 12-13, St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, 398 W. Superior St., St. Paul.
• Saturday: 5-9 p.m. (Street dance, food trucks, classic cars, beverages, pull tabs).
• Sunday: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. (Turkey dinner, family activities, tours, bingo, entertainment)
Information: westfeston7th.org

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COMMUNITY NOURISHMENT

GRAND AVENUE BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT
Cat aMEWsement Brings Specialty Cat Boutique To Grand Avenue

Cat owners searching for something beyond the typical pet-store aisle have a new destination on Grand Avenue.

Cat aMEWsement, a boutique devoted entirely to cats and the people who love them, moved from Lowertown to Grand Avenue in May. Owner Nikki Christopher said the shop is excited to join the corridor’s long tradition of independent businesses offering distinctive products.

“The love of cats and the fact that cat products are not prioritized at pet stores” inspired the business, Christopher said.

Cat aMEWsement specializes in products that may be difficult to find at general pet retailers, including handmade cat toys, high-quality food and water bowls, carriers, furniture and climbing systems. The store also carries cat-themed clothing, jewelry, accessories and gifts for humans.

Many of its products are locally made, including Perfect Paws Catwalls, Purnniture cat furniture, shirts and a variety of toys, according to Christopher. The store’s online inventory also includes catnip and silvervine toys, harness-and-leash sets and an extensive collection of cat-themed jewelry.

The specialized selection reflects



Cat aMEWsement, located at 619 Grand Ave, sells specially cat and cat-themed toys and items.

Christopher’s belief that cats and their owners deserve more choices than they often receive at conventional pet stores.

The move also places Cat aMEWsement

among the locally owned shops that Christopher considers one of Grand Avenue’s defining features.

Her favorite thing about the avenue, she



said, is “the small businesses specializing in unique items.”

Cat aMEWsement is a member of the Grand Avenue Business Association. Customers can learn more about the boutique and browse its products at catamewsement.com.



Sew Inviting has offered fabric, sewing needs and classes in Highland for 27 years.

HIGHLAND PARK BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT
Sew Inviting: Problem Solving with Fabric with Enthusiasm and Knowledge

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 to see more spotlights.

This month, we are featuring Sew Inviting, an independent fabric and sewing store located at 647 Snelling Ave. Learn more about what they have to offer at sewinvitingmn.com.

From Owner Laura Martell Kelly

Describe your business in Highland Park. We offer fabrics, classes, and notions and lots of encouragement for people to be creative and sew. For kids we offer after school sewing classes during the school year and Fabulous Fabric Fun Sewing camps during the summer. Adult classes are scheduled throughout the year and we host community sewing days

at least once a quarter when we sew simple projects for community organizations. We welcome customers and students of all sewing abilities including those who need to pick up thread to sew on a button. We offer the community a local shop for fabrics and notions where they can ask questions and get support and be with a community of other creative people.

When did you first start your business/efforts in Highland Park?
Sew Inviting opened in May of 2024.

What was the inspiration for the work you do?
I have sewn since I was little kid and I learned by trial and error and directions

from my mom. It was long before You Tube or Instagram tutorials. I have always been creative and I enjoy problem solving with fabric. Teaching sewing or helping people pick out fabrics for a project allows me to pass on my enthusiasm and knowledge and help build others’ confidence.

What’s your favorite thing about Highland Park?
I have lived in Highland park for 27 years and my favorite thing about the community is that I can walk to everything and I have great neighbors. I love being able to walk to my store.

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- Erin Murphy, DFL Senate Majority Leader

IN THE COMMUNITY

WESTEND HEALTHLINE

Processing The Emotions of Childbirth

By Nehemiah Olson, MD

Childbirth is often described as the most joyful moment of one’s life, and yet for many, it may also be a scary or most stressful moment. This experience of intense and seemingly contradictory emotions creates a storm of emotional experience that is often difficult to process. It is common to emphasize the important physical recovery from pregnancy and childbirth, but it is much rarer (though no less important) to emphasize the emotional recovery that is also required after such an overwhelming experience. If the space and resources for emotional recovery are not readily available, childbirth can become a source of emotional trauma that has long-lasting effects.

It is easy to talk about the “good” emotions and lean into the celebration and joy of the moment, but it is often difficult to talk about or express hard or disturbing emotions. This is especially true in the context of childbirth, when one may feel guilty for feeling sad or angry when they feel they “should” feel happy. Even in births that go “smoothly” it is not uncommon for the birthing person or their partner to think that they or someone they love are at risk of dying or being seriously injured. Such intense thoughts and experiences are enough to put one at risk of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), postpartum depression, or other mental health struggles.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists reports that new-onset mental health conditions affect at least one out of every five perinatal individuals; a number that does not include pre-existing mental health conditions. Additionally, the number of people who experience emotional struggles



surrounding childbirth is probably much larger, because not everyone is always able to access medical or professional assistance for these challenges.

Further, an often overlooked aspect of this is the fact that mental health conditions surrounding childbirth impact birthing and non-birthing parents at surprisingly similar rates. Non-birthing parents often are not able to attend follow-up visits after birth and are therefore often missed by the mental health screens that sometimes occur at these visits. Societal norms complicate things further, often making it difficult

for masculine individuals to express or process their emotional experiences while, contrarily, normalizing or “making light” of the emotional experiences of feminine individuals.

Childbirth also has a large impact on relationships: the relationship with one’s partner and the relationship with the baby. This may be especially true when one partner experiences the childbirth as traumatic while the other experiences it as a primarily joyful experience. The discordant experiences can sometimes make one parent feel isolated in their suffering, but it doesn’t always have to be that way. There have been studies that show that simple journaling about one’s emotions after a traumatic birth can reduce rates of PTSD and that non-judgmental sharing these journals with one’s partner can improve relationships and prevent relationship challenges that often occur surrounding birth.

Ultimately, emotional recovery from childbirth is just as important as physical recovery. So, if you or someone you love is welcoming a new baby, have the courage to create the space for the good and hard emotions alike. Although it is challenging, try to give yourself time and space to slow down and sit with your emotions. Share with those you trust and with professional healthcare givers. Celebrate, yes! - and leave room for all the emotions: Excitement. Worry. Fear. Joy. Elation. Sadness. Pain. Bliss. Chaos. Peace. Comfort. Discomfort. Anger. Kindness. And all the emotions that don’t have words.

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

LIBRARY UPDATE

Summer Fun for All Ages at the West 7th Library

Celebrate the last of summer at your library
Savor the final stretch of summer with fun, flavor, and festivity at Saint Paul Public Library’s Summer Celebration! We’re celebrating the reading and learning Saint Paul kids and teens have done all summer long — and everyone’s invited.

Summer Reader Celebration
Saturday, August 15 at 2 – 4 p.m.
Rondo Community Library at the Hallie Q.

Brown Community Center, 270 N Kent St.
Drop in anytime for an afternoon of arts and crafts, outdoor activities, face painting, sweet treats, and a performance by Siama’s Congo Roots. Don’t forget to pick up your free Summer Spark book to take home!

Events at West 7th Library
Playdate @ West 7th – Tuesdays, 3–5 p.m.
Family Storytime – Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m.
Find more events at sppl.org/events.



FLAG FOOTBALL, PG 1

and resilience. They teach students how to make a mistake and keep going. They teach them how to recover from failure, trust their teammates, compete under pressure and believe that effort can change what is possible.

Girls deserve full access to those lessons.

Girls flag football is especially meaningful because football holds such a powerful place in American life. It fills stadiums, defines weekends and brings communities together. It is woven into the culture of our schools, our families and our state. Yet for too long, girls have often been invited to stand near football, cheer for football and love football without being given equal opportunity to own space within it as athletes.

Girls flag football changes that. It gives girls a place in the huddle. It gives them a chance to read the field, make decisions, lead their teammates and compete with purpose. It gives younger girls watching from the sidelines a message that is simple and powerful: there is room for you here too.

That is not merely symbolic. It is real opportunity.

At a time when we are all working to support the health, confidence and well-being of young people, we should take seriously any opportunity that gives students a structured, positive and meaningful place to belong. Girls flag football does that. It gives girls another way to discover their strength. It gives them another reason to stay connected to school, community and one another. It gives them another place to practice leadership before the world asks them to lead.

Minnesota also has an opportunity to

act at an important national moment. More than 20 states already recognize girls flag football as a varsity sport. Flag football will be part of the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, and the sport is on track to crown an NCAA champion that same year. The pathway is growing at the high school, college and international levels.

Minnesota should not wait until the movement has passed us by.

Of course, implementation questions deserve serious attention. Scheduling matters. School capacity matters. Alignment with current MSHSL rules matters. Member schools deserve clarity and support as they consider what sanctioning would require.

But practical questions should be the work of progress, not the reason progress stops.

The growth of girls flag football shows that students are ready. The commitment of coaches, families, schools, the Minnesota Vikings and the Girls Football Advisory Committee shows that community support is strong. The next step is to bring that energy into a structure that can serve students across the state with fairness, consistency and care.

As a woman serving in the Minnesota House of Representatives, and as the mother of a daughter, I think about the messages we send girls about where they belong. I believe girls deserve more than encouragement. They deserve access. They deserve investment. They deserve institutions willing to recognize their talent, ambition and leadership.

When girls see other girls competing on the field, they see possibility. When they see that competition recognized by the adults and institutions around them, they see that their effort matters.

That message is bigger than one sport.

It is a statement about who we are as a state and what we believe our students deserve. It is a statement that Minnesota values opportunity not only when it is traditional, but when it is emerging. Not only when it has always existed, but when young people are helping build it in real time.

The girls who played this season are not asking us to imagine what might happen someday. They have already shown us. They have built teams. They have competed. They have led. They have recovered from mistakes. They have discovered confidence on the field and carried it with them beyond the game.

Now Minnesota should recognize them. The Minnesota State High School League should move girls flag football forward toward emerging status and full sanctioning as a varsity sport.

The girls have taken the field. It is time for Minnesota to meet them there.

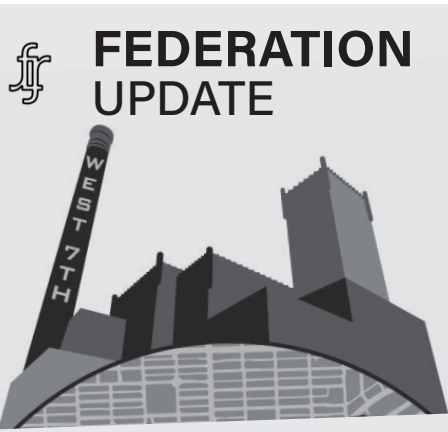


MacalesterGroveland

REGISTER FOR MAC-GROVE FEST 2026
Sept. 12, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Registration for Mac-Grove Fest is open till Aug 15. Questions about activities? Email program.mgcc@macgrove.org or visit macgrove.org/macgrovefest/.

MUSIC ON THE LAWN EVENTS
Partner with Macalester, GABA, Ambit Media and Brian Wagner. Bring friends and family, grab takeout at a local restaurant, and enjoy free live music. Info: grandave.com/events.

UPCOMING MEETINGS
Visit macgrove.org/participate for more information. No meetings in August.



FEDERATION UPDATE

REVITALIZE WEST 7TH GRANTS OPEN
Our fall grant round is open now to businesses in the West 7th neighborhood. The Fall 2026 focus is geared towards environmentally focused property improvements. This initiative is designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve stormwater management, and increase the long-term climate resilience of our community.

This program offers grants of up to \$10,000 for projects that align with climate action and sustainability goals. Applications due Aug 31.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS
• **Transportation & Land Use**, August 5, 6:30 p.m.
• **Community Engagement & Outreach**, August 25, 6:30 p.m.

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We believe our neighbors in need should have access to vital support to be self-sufficient, stable and successful. We know individuals and families in our community need access to healthy food resources.

Everyone is welcome at our free Farmers Markets. 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Roseville Covenant Church Aug. 14, Rice and Arlington Field Aug. 28 or Allianz Field Aug 21.



HIGHLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
For information, visit highlanddistrictcouncil.org

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT SNELLING AND MONTREAL
MnDOT wants input to solutions that meet the current and future transportation needs. Visit talk.dot.state.mn.us/snelling-montreal-stpaul to complete a survey and comment on the map by Wednesday, August 5.

MUSIC AT WANDERING LEAF
Aug. 23, 5:30 p.m. Live music, kids activities and food trucks at Sibley Plaza off West 7th. Sponsored by Wandering Leaf Brewing, Paster Properties, VanGo Auto. Women's drumming circle starts at 5:30 p.m. followed by music from The Space Force. Beverages and food available for purchase.

UPCOMING MEETINGS
1978 Ford Pkwy; highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar. No meetings in August.

BULLETIN BOARD



COUNTRY DIVAS DRAG BRUNCH
Aug. 16. Doors open 11 a.m.; show begins 11:30 a.m. Parlour St. Paul. Tickets required; food and drinks sold separately. Country music gets a drag makeover during a high-energy Sunday brunch performance at Parlour St. Paul. Features The Original Eve, Andre 1000, Lala Luzious, Jamie Monroe and Allison Wonderland performing numbers inspired by Dolly Parton, Shania Twain and other country favorites. Guests can expect comedy, audience interaction, glamorous costumes and performances presented close to the dining area. Info: countrydivasdragbrunchparlour.org.

CIRCUS JUVENTAS PRESENTS "WHIMSY"
Through Aug. 9, 2026. Enter a world of aerial artistry, acrobatics and confectionery magic during Circus Juventas' summer production, "Whimsy." Info: circusjuventas.showare.com

SUMMIT AVENUE WALKING TOUR
Select dates. James J. Hill House. Admission required. Explore one of the nation's most remarkable historic streets during this guided 90-minute walking tour of Summit Avenue. Info: www.mnhs.org/hillhouse

KEEP 'EM CLEAN: STENCIL ST. PAUL STORM DRAINS
Aug. 1-Oct. 15, 2026. Dates, times and locations arranged throughout St. Paul. Free. Volunteers use paint and reusable stencils to mark drains with "Keep 'em Clean — Drains to the River," reminding residents that stormwater often flows directly into local waterways without being treated. Info: fmr.org/events/stencil-st-paul-storm-drains-fmr

DEBBIE BRIGGS VINTAGE JAZZ
Aug. 2, 7 p.m. The Lexington, \$20. Info: twincitiesjazzfestival.com/jazz-pop-up-tour

SKETCHY NIGHT
August 3, 6-9 p.m. Schmidt Artist Lofts. Free. Artists of all experience levels invited to bring a sketchbook and spend a relaxed evening drawing, talking about art and connecting with St. Paul's creative community. Info: <https://bit.ly/sketchynight>

SUMMER NIGHTS IN RICE
Aug. 5, 19. 5-7 p.m. Rice Park. Free.
Aug 5: The Moonlight Serenaders of Minnesota. Aug 19: Boiled in Lead. Concerts will move into Landmark Center in the event of rain or severe weather. Info: landmarkcenter.org/summer-nights-in-rice.

CLIMB TO THE TOP
Aug. 5. 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Landmark Center. Free. Take in a rare bird's-eye view of downtown St. Paul. Info: landmarkcenter.org/climb-to-the-top-north-tower

MAC-GROVE COMMUNITY BLOOD DRIVE
Aug. 7, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Edgumbe Recreation Center. Free; appointments recommended. Appointments, call 651-497-4387 and using



ST. PAUL GET DOWN
Aug. 29, 2-10 p.m. Raspberry Island. Free. Info: <https://bit.ly/stpaulgetdown>
A full day of hip-hop performances, community activities and youth artist showcases. Emerging performers ages 14-24 will share the stage with established artists, culminating a summer mentorship program. Headliners: Chali 2na and Cut Chemist, along with performances by Juice Lord, Big Zach and other local acts. Bring a chair or blanket and celebrate the next generation of St. Paul musicians.

FOR MORE CALENDAR EVENTS, VISIT
COMMUNITYREPORTER.ORG/EVENTS

PEST CONTROL, PG 2

focuses on sealing entry points and applying preventive exterior treatments before they move indoors.

How does Valor Pest Solutions help neighbors identify and seal areas to prevent invasions?
Every service begins with a detailed inspection of the home's exterior to identify conditions and entry points that allow pests inside. We routinely locate gaps around utility penetrations, foundation cracks, damaged door sweeps, garage door seals, rooflines, vents, and other vulnerable areas. When possible, we perform minor exclusion work during the visit and provide recommendations for larger repairs. Pairing exclusion with targeted preventative treatments creates a long-term solution by stopping pests before they enter the home.

Finally, let's talk about mosquitoes. I often feel personally attacked by them. What solutions does Valor offer for mosquito care?
Mosquitoes are drawn to standing

water, dense vegetation, shade, and even a person's body heat and carbon dioxide. Effective control requires more than simply spraying the yard. At Valor, we combine habitat reduction, which means eliminating breeding sites where possible, with targeted treatments of shaded resting areas where adult mosquitoes spend the day. Seasonal treatments throughout the summer dramatically reduce mosquito populations, so that you can finally enjoy that patio you've worked hard to build.

How can my neighbors get in touch with you to find out more about your services and pest control?
If you have any questions about pest prevention or are interested in our services, we'd be happy to help. Please contact Valor Pest Solutions at 763-762-9241 to schedule an inspection or speak with a member of our team.

Well, there you have it, neighbors! Best of luck to everyone in disinventing these unwanted guests.

FILM REVIEW

"Disclosure Day" Feels Like An Extension Of Spielberg's Past

By Zach Murphy
Cybersecurity. Government conspiracies. Mind reading. Aliens. Blockbuster extraordinaire Steven Spielberg's latest sci-fi thriller, the aptly titled "Disclosure Day," has it all. The film is a strange, intense, and riveting experience that asks some big questions with elusive answers.

The spiderweb of a plot zeros in on Daniel (Josh O'Connor), a cybersecurity specialist who has obtained highly sensitive data that includes 80 years of secrets. He feels compelled to reveal them to the world, but doing so is a dangerous mission, especially when an entire corporation led by a ruthless boss (Colin Firth) is on your trail. Meanwhile, a local meteorologist named Margaret (Emily Blunt) discovers a supernatural ability that plays a key role in the grand scheme of it all. That's one heck of a premise.

What I really appreciate about this film is that it doesn't hold our hand or overexplain the unfolding events. We're yanked into this chaotic story from the get-go, and Spielberg trusts us as an audience to stick with it. You might find yourself asking, "What's going on?" throughout the duration, and that's all part of the point. In fact, the characters themselves often ask the same thing, making us feel as if we're in the same boat. It's a film that certainly keeps you on your toes, and the mysteriousness of it all makes the eventual reveals even more potent.

And as you'd expect from a Spielberg blockbuster, this thing is complete with

fancy camerawork, a booming score, and lots of exhilarating, carefully choreographed action sequences, from twisty car chases to a breathtaking set piece involving an escape onto a moving train. Josh O'Connor is great in this role playing a relatively normal guy who literally has world-changing information in his hands and has found himself caught in perilous circumstances. Emily Blunt is also impressive, giving a highly emotional performance — there's a particular scene where she's overcome with anxiety and she makes it look incredibly believable. Colin Firth gets his villain on here, and he does it well.

Disclosure Day very much feels like an extension of Spielberg's past alien-themed flicks like Close Encounters of the Third Kind and E.T. the Extraterrestrial for the modern times. And for a high-concept blockbuster, it's got a lot of lofty thoughts on the brain. It's all about our immense need for the truth, and how we deal with not having it. How would the world react if everything it has ever known was upended? How far would you go to benefit the greater good? There's also a spiritual element presented. Would the existence of aliens throw your faith into doubt, or can they both comfortably coexist?

These questions don't have easy conclusions, but they sure do make for a fascinating film.

"Disclosure Day" is available to rent or buy on all major streaming platforms.



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