



Tact Coffee shop

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Star of the stage

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Park Bugle

St. Anthony Park / Como Park
Falcon Heights / Lauderdale

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May 2026

New business Any Lab Test Now

By Booker Tate

A new business that allows customers to get medical lab tests done on the spot recently opened in Falcon Heights.

This healthcare company, Any Lab Test Now, with more than 200 locations across the U.S., offers a wide variety of clinical tests and specialty services.

Located at Larpenteur and Snelling avenues, the Falcon Heights franchise is family owned and operated by Faiza and Mir Ali, a married couple with a passion for community outreach. The pair opened for business in November, 2025 after deciding to pursue a career change.

Faiza Ali, who taught at a charter school for five years, said she wanted to do something positive for her neighbors after she decided to leave teaching.

"I really wanted to do something useful and helpful for the community," Faiza Ali said. "This is a place where people can come to explore and find something out about themselves. For people who have issues with doctors not ordering the tests they want, or not even offering them, they can come here for those answers."

Any Lab Test Now offers a variety of lab tests, including an annual checkup, DNA and paternity testing, diabetes monitoring, thyroid and hormone tests, STD panels, on-site drug testing and much more. Any Lab Test Now has also partnered with Arcpoint Labs, a business that offers lab testing on a larger scale to corporations.



Any Lab Test Now has opened in Falcon Heights. Photo by Booker Tate.

While Any Lab Test Now does not accept insurance, it also doesn't require a doctor's order to run the test you need. According to Ali, they offer reasonable prices and accept multiple forms of payment, such as credit, debit, cash and payments through a Health Savings Account (HSA) or Flexible Spending Account (FSA).

"A lot of insurance companies don't cover labs or annual check-ups," Ali said. "Your doctor may not order the test that you want because insurance doesn't cover it. I think we are the solution for that."

Open Monday through Saturday with extended hours and rapid test results, Any Lab Test Now accepts appointments or walk-ins. It is a

convenient way to get a test result fast, Ali said.

"We always take walk-ins and have rapid results," Ali said. "We want to be a convenient location for those that need it for a reasonable price. Our customers are in charge of their own health and their own results and it's giving them more freedom."

Despite only being open for four months, the Falcon Heights location of Any Lab Test Now has received more than 40 online reviews, garnering a rating of 4.9 out of 5 stars on Google. Ali attributes this to her respectful staff and family.

"We really try to give respect to every customer who's coming in," Ali said. "Whether they're coming to get a test or to get the information, we want to be friendly, approachable and local people who are there to help them." ■

Booker Tate is a senior journalism student at the University of Minnesota.

On the road with Gigi Becerra

By Sarah CR Clark

Gigi Becerra grew up in St. Anthony Park, but since graduating from Como Park High School in 2024, she's been exploring far and wide. Traveling and living out of a decommissioned ambulance, Becerra has embraced the freedom of "van life."

Gigi said she didn't have a clear plan for life after graduation, but that uncertainty ultimately opened the door to her dream of traveling.

"I bought the ambulance four months before graduating from high school and decided I wasn't going to go to college straight away," Becerra shared. "I have always dreamed of travelling. But I didn't know how or when or where."

Fortunately, Becerra's parents (Josh Becerra and Sonia Ellis) have been supportive of her journey.

"My dad is my favorite guy. He was really the one who pushed me when I needed it. And my mom is a big support. She keeps me updated and sends me cards supporting me on my journeys."

Becerra's dad found the decommissioned ambulance (currently referred to as "Claudia") that she ultimately purchased from Facebook Marketplace for a little over \$5,000. "From that day on, every day after



Gigi Becerra poses mid-journey with her travel essentials; her ambulance-converted-camper and her camera. Her faithful dog Bonnie has also accompanied her on the journey. Photo courtesy of Gigi Becerra.

school, we tore out the ambulance's original layout and retrofitted it into my perfect home on wheels," she remembered.

"Claudia" required months of work, which Gigi and her dad did together. When asked how they learned the skills required to retrofit an ambulance, she laughed and said, "YouTube University!"

Today, "Claudia" boasts luxuries like a full-sized bed, a shower, and a multi-functioning microwave-air fryer-convection oven.

Another one of Becerra's favorite "Claudia" upgrades is for her beloved dog, Bonnie.

"I made a little dog house under my bed," Gigi said. "She loves it down there. It's her safe space."

Bonnie, a 3-year-old shepherd-terrier mix, is Becerra's best traveling companion. "She is my rock throughout my travels."

Besides her best canine friend, Becerra has met some great people on the road.

"Everyone has each other's backs out there. There are mechanics, artists, musicians, tattoo artists, locksmiths, DJs, chefs, photographers and more. Being a part of the community, you learn how fast

Gigi Becerra travels to p. 18

CITY FILES

St. Anthony Park and Como community councils news

District 10 Community Council

New Front Avenue Community Crawl

The Como Community Council is hosting a new event this spring. Whether you come with neighbors or come to meet new ones. We'd love to see you there!

Details are still coming together, but District 10 is planning to activate several spaces around the Front/Chatsworth street intersection on Saturday, May 16, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Enjoy family activities, connect with local organizations, and join your neighbors for fun and games. This free event is open to all. For updates, visit District10ComoPark.org/SD4Event.

Community garage sale coming

District 10 is again coordinating a communitywide garage sale from Thursday, May 14, to Sunday, May 17.

Please sign up by May 11 if you wish to be included in District 10's map of its community-wide garage sale locations. For further information and to sign up, visit District10ComoPark.org/GarageSale.

Participating for District 10

Did you miss your chance to join the District 10 board in April? Good news — there are plenty of other ways to get involved.

District 10 has made a concerted effort over the last few years to

knock down the barriers to participating with us in meaningful ways.

Many of District 10's most recognizable initiatives — lake cleanups, Know Your Como stories, Como Community Garden and the Neighborhood History project — were championed, if not entirely run, by folks who aren't on our board of directors.

You don't need to wait for our next annual election to jump into one of our initiatives, help us plan our community events or, if you're willing to put in the leg-work, champion your own initiative.

To learn more about getting involved in the Como community, please contact District 10 staff at info@district10comopark.org, or attend a monthly board meeting.

Upcoming District 10 meetings

District 10 meetings are hybrid on Zoom and at the Como Streetcar Station, 1224 Lexington Parkway. You can find meeting details at District10ComoPark.org.

- District 10 Como community meetings: 7 p.m. on Wednesdays, May 6 and 20
- Social, nonbusiness meeting at Half-Time Rec: 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13

All D10 community meetings are open to the public and include time for community members to bring topics up for discussion.

Submitted by District 10 executive director Shevek McKee.

District 12 Community Council

HealthPartners Como clinic project

A major redevelopment project is moving forward at one of St. Anthony Park's most recognizable sites, and neighbors will have a chance to learn more and share feedback.

HealthPartners is planning a new Como clinic across the street from its current location at Como Avenue and Eustis Street.

The project would replace the existing clinic, which has served the community since 1957 and has long been a cornerstone of care in the neighborhood.

The proposed new clinic is part of a broader effort to modernize the facility and address long-standing limitations with the current building. The structure would be located on land HealthPartners purchased in 2016, with a redesigned layout intended to improve patient flow and access.

HealthPartners representatives are expected to attend District 12's Land Use Committee meeting at 7 p.m. on May 7 to share initial details of the proposed project and answer questions from the community. The meeting will be held at the District 12 office, 2171 University Ave. W. A Zoom option will also be available, email info@sapcc.org for the link.

Based on initial materials submitted to the city of St. Paul, the project includes a new clinic build-

ing along with expanded parking to better serve patients and staff.

HealthPartners' early plans include approximately 250 parking spaces, with design options that explore how parking is integrated into the site — including the potential for a structured parking deck. The building itself is expected to shift from the current triangular layout to a more navigable square design.

The project is currently in the city's site plan review process, with an anticipated construction to begin in the second half of 2026. This early stage gives community members a chance to learn more and share feedback as plans take shape.

Good Neighbor Fund projects across SAP

The District 12 Community Council is grateful to the University of Minnesota for its continued investment in neighborhood projects through the Good Neighbor Fund.

Each year, the fund supports community-driven efforts that strengthen neighborhoods around the Twin Cities campus — enhancing public spaces, supporting local businesses and connecting neighbors.

This year, District 12 partnered with the U on several initiatives that reflect the creativity and collaboration across St. Anthony Park.

One of the funded projects will support continued improvements at Westgate Commons Park.

Building on earlier work, SAPCC's Environment Committee will lead ongoing planting and maintenance efforts, including re-establishing native plantings in areas impacted by drought and heavy use. These improvements are designed to strengthen the long-term health of the park while making the space more welcoming and resilient for everyday use.

District 12 is also partnering with Dogwood Coffee Company on a public art installation featuring textile panels by Native artist Maggie Thompson of Makwa Studio.

Located along University Avenue, the installation will highlight Indigenous artistry while con-

tributing to a space used daily by neighbors, students and workers.

In addition, the District 12 Equity Committee is leading several community-centered efforts this year. Those include installing accessible raised garden beds at the SAP Community Garden, expanding participation for neighbors with mobility limitations and creating more opportunities for people to engage with the space.

The Equity Committee is also organizing a free, family-friendly movie night at Hampden Park on Aug. 14.

SAPCC also partnered with the Creative Enterprise Zone to support the continued stewardship and transition of the 100 Trees Initiative. This work includes care and coordination for trees planted across south St. Anthony Park and surrounding corridors such as Raymond Avenue, Vandalia Street and Energy Park Drive, helping ensure long-term canopy health and neighborhood vitality.

Vince Netz, chair of the University of Minnesota Good Neighbor Fund, emphasized the value of these partnerships. "The University is committed to supporting strong, connected communities," he said. "St. Anthony Park consistently brings forward thoughtful, high-impact ideas, and it's exciting to see them take shape."

Upcoming District 12 meetings

District 12 encourages neighbors to attend monthly committee meetings, available in-person and online. Learn more at sapcc.org.

- Land Use Committee: 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 7
- District 12 Board: 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 14
- Equity Committee: 6:30 p.m. on Monday, May 25
- Transportation Committee: 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26
- Environment Committee: 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 27

Submitted by District 12 executive director Zev Radziwill.

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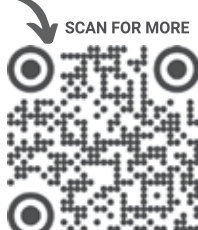
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Tact Coffee comes to south St. Anthony Park

By Connor Zielinski

In February, south St. Anthony Park residents Hayden and Moriah Harpole-Walter opened the doors to Tact Coffee in the former Roundtable Coffee Works space.

The married couple are no strangers to coffee, having worked for many years at Misfit Coffee in Minneapolis. Both were regulars at Roundtable, and when that owner asked if they would be interested in taking over the space, they couldn't pass up the opportunity.

"We've been talking about it for as long as we've been together," Moriah said. Both were excited to open their own coffee shop in the neighborhood they call home.

Tact stands for "Tea And Coffee Thoughtfully" and is located at 2386 Territorial Road, near Raymond Avenue. Coffee prices range from \$3 to \$6.50 per cup.



Tact: Tea And Coffee Thoughtfully

For Hayden and Moriah, Tact means taking a sensible approach to enhance the coffee experience for farmers and producers at origin and customers visiting the shop space. Central to Tact's philosophy, the pair work meticulously to responsibly source their coffee beans. "We want the brand to be every-

one that is helping make the product possible," Hayden said. On the menu at Tact is intentionally sourced coffee with playful specialty drinks and delicious vegan pastries from Front Porch Pies. "The space, as we intended it to be, is a place for people to gather and for community to take place,"

Hayden said. "It is not necessarily for us to dictate how that occurs, but rather just to provide the space for it to occur." Tact also offers local bicycle delivery for most online orders placed from Minneapolis and St. Paul. As spring and summer take hold, Hayden and Moriah are looking forward to tending to the rain garden outside of the shop. They are also hoping to host community events at their shop and in the adjacent parking lot.

Since opening Tact, Hayden said, "We wanted to take a simplistic approach that recalls the profound feeling you get when you discover a joyful experience, like a tasty coffee, for the first time." To explore their coffee offerings, or check their current hours, visit tact.coffee. ■ Connor Zielinski lives in south St. Anthony Park and serves on the board of the St. Anthony Park District 12 Community Council.

Falcon Heights, Lauderdale join coalition

By Anne Holzman

Falcon Heights and Lauderdale have joined Cities for Safe and Stable Communities, a coalition of Minnesota local governments responding to recent federal actions. The coalition seeks to "return to the stability our residents and businesses deserve."

Officials gathered at the state Capitol on Feb. 19 to press for state aid to cities and school districts facing increased costs from the surge of federal immigration enforcement in recent months. The coalition also called on the Legislature to strengthen protections in case of further federal incursions, including restricting law

enforcement use of masks, creating "sensitive" areas in hospitals and schools and ending civil arrests at courthouses. ■ Anne Holzman is a Twin Cities writer who covers local government for the Bugle.





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EDITORIAL

From the desk of the editor

By Scott Carlson

Finding your St. Anthony Park roots

“Does anyone know anything about St. Anthony Park’s namesake, St. Anthony of Padua?”

That’s what Christopher Rogers, rector of St. Matthew’s Church in St. Anthony Park, recently wondered.

“We didn’t (know the answer) either, and we are the leaders of the churches here in the Park,” he admitted.

Rogers said it took some internet sleuthing before determining the Park was named after a 13th-century Franciscan friar, who was known for his service to the poor and sick, and for his simple eloquence.

“It turns out he (St. Anthony) was Father Louis Hennepin’s patron, after whom he named the falls in 1680,” Rogers said.

These days, the leaders of five St. Anthony Park churches plan to pay homage to the former Franciscan with a special procession. The participating churches are SAP Lutheran, SAP UCC, Centennial Methodist, St. Matthew’s Episcopal and St. Cecilia’s Catholic, along with the SAP Community Council and Interfaith Action of Greater St. Paul.

Rogers said representatives of these five leading SAP churches have been meeting every month for a few years now, and are used to working together on a range of projects, including housing asylum seekers with Interfaith Action, Buy Nothing Day and marching together on July 4.

“We’ve also been keen to celebrate our friendship and our local community by having a procession between our churches,” Rogers added.

“This year, we will be doing that

in celebration of St. Anthony on May 31,” Rogers said. “We will begin at SAP Lutheran on Como Avenue at 11:45 a.m., before walking with a band and singing past all of our churches, finishing up at St. Cecilia’s in south St. Anthony, where we will enjoy a potluck picnic in the park outside.”

Rogers encourages everyone, whether or not you consider yourself a person of faith, to help celebrate the roots of St. Anthony Park. For further information, please contact Rogers at rector@stmatthewsmn.org.

Bugle “Happenings” are coming

Coming soon to Bugle readers is a new social media feature we are calling “Happenings.”

Find out more about this endeavor from Bugle social media specialist Laura Adrian.

“On the second Tuesday of each month, we’ll share a curated list of

upcoming events — concerts, poetry readings, festivals and more,” Laura says. “It’s an easy way to stay connected to what’s happening around Bugleland. You can find these on our Facebook, Instagram and X pages. From small gatherings to larger events, we look forward to highlighting the many ways people come together in our community.”

Among the entertainment-rich venues in Bugleland is the Finnish Bistro. It regularly showcases small acoustic groups and individual performers along with regular opportunities for up-and-comers to perform on open mic nights.

Among the performers appearing in May at Finnish Bistro is Minnesota folk singer Eric Hans King. He is scheduled to sing from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on May 9. ■

Scott Carlson is the managing editor of the Bugle.

Your neighborhood is full of happenings

By Laura Adrian

Looking for things to do in your neighborhood? Here’s where to learn about them.

This spring, we’re launching a new Bugle social media feature: Happenings.

On the second Tuesday of each month, we’ll share a curated list of upcoming events — concerts, poetry readings, festivals and more.

It’s an easy way to stay connected to what’s happening around Bugleland. You can find these on our Facebook, Instagram and X pages. From small gatherings to larger events, we look forward to highlighting the many ways people come together in our community.

In addition, the Bugle will feature one highlighted event each month for our print edition. This may include a short video from

an event host or footage captured on-site.

We’ll be gathering events from across the community — and we’d love your help. If you’re involved in an upcoming event or know of something worth sharing, you can submit it through a form on our website or social media pages.

For full consideration, submit your event by the first of the month.

Please note that submitting an event does not guarantee it will be featured. But we aim to highlight a diverse range of activities each month. ■

Laura Adrian is the social media specialist for the Park Bugle.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Support Safe Homes St. Paul ballot initiative

I am writing in to voice my support for the renter right to repair ballot initiative dubbed Safe Homes St. Paul. It is a clear and necessary policy that reflects St. Paul’s values by improving living conditions throughout the city.

The Safe Homes St. Paul ballot initiative is similar to the renter right to repair law recently passed in Duluth. It allows renters to address basic household repairs after 14 days of inaction by their landlord. The cost of these repairs can then be deducted from ten-

ants’ rent up to \$500 or half of one month’s rent.

The initiative’s concept is simple, and there is a self-sorting efficiency to the 14-day waiting period following landlord notification. Responsible landlords will not be affected by the ballot initiative because they are already getting repairs done in a timely manner. Whereas landlords who are less responsive to their tenants’ needs will have their buildings repaired for them. This law would have a positive impact on all parties involved outside of landlords looking to collect rent on derelict housing.

These repairs are crucial in a city where the median age of residential units is 76 years old. St. Paul renters need a way to ensure they have simple necessities like hot water, heat and sanitation when landlords fail to provide the bare minimum. We, as a city, can provide that safety and peace of mind.

Safe Homes St. Paul is a commonsense ballot initiative that will improve our city.

I encourage readers to visit safehomessaintpaul.org to learn more about this matter.

Trevor Vernon,
St. Paul

Bugle deadlines

Here are our Bugle deadlines for the next three issues. We appreciate when writers and readers submit articles early.

Please note that publication dates reflect when papers go out for delivery; mail delivery may take several business days.

Bulk drop-offs of the paper are usually completed two to three days after publication.

June: SAP Arts Festival

Copy/ad deadline: May 13

Publication: May 26

July: Graduation

Copy/ad deadline: June 10

Publication: June 23

August:

Copy/ad deadline: July 8

Publication: July 21

Story guidelines

Want to send an article to the Bugle for print consideration?

Send your submission to editor@parkbugle.org. Your article, story or letter should be sent in Times New Roman, 16-point font. Articles are subject to space availability.

Please include your name and phone number in case we have any questions on your submission. Thank you.



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COMMENTARY

Another look at the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024

By Terry Hokenson

In its March issue, the Bugle carried a commentary extolling the alternative energy virtues of the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024.

I heartily agree that wind and solar energy together with storage technologies are top priority for a rational energy policy in the face of deepening climate crisis.

However, the EPRA, as the Bugle story in March insinuated, does not serve to advance wind and solar. The opposite is true.

Note first who is sponsoring this bill — none other than fossil fuel industry advocate U.S. Senator Joe Manchin. While an internet search turns up many fossil fuel-backed

EPRA proponents, there are also analyses from sources of distinction leaning the other way.

Friends of the Earth (FOE) states that “the legislation is a sweeping giveaway to the fossil fuel industry at a time when a swift and equitable transition to a clean energy economy is needed.”

Climate Justice Alliance also takes a critical look at EPRA: “The bill threatens to dismantle critical environmental safeguards like the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), putting communities at greater risk of harmful pollution and health hazards.

Under the guise of accelerating clean energy projects, EPRA prioritizes corporate profits over the health and safety of vulnera-

ble communities, and locks in the continuation of dirty energy.”

A group of energy and environmental law scholars wrote to leaders in the U.S. House and Senate, “Some of the EPRA provisions may help to accelerate the clean energy transition in the United States.... Other provisions would have the opposite effect, increasing greenhouse gas emissions by promoting leasing and extraction of fossil fuels on federal public lands and removing or lowering barriers to other fossil fuel infrastructure.”

The letter added, “We are also concerned that, in its current incarnation, the EPRA may undermine efforts to advance environmental justice because it may result in significant additional environmental

harms in communities that already experience disproportionate burdens (such as low-income communities and communities of color).”

Finally, a group of U.S. scientists wrote to express “substantial concerns regarding the Energy Permitting Reform Act (“EPRA”) of 2024. We are now in a time of record-breaking temperatures year over year, with new science suggesting that limiting warming to 1.5°C is increasingly out of reach.

Legislation that further acceler-

ates global fossil fuel development and global emissions, the key driver of climate devastation, will only result in even more severe climate impacts.”

EPRA is, in other words, a Trojan horse. ■

Terry Hokenson is a retired attorney, semi-retired carpenter and life-long clean energy advocate. He lives in walking distance from Hampden Park Co-op, where he buys 95% of his groceries.

Velair proposal for apartments approved

By Anne Holzman

A new proposal for a 110-unit senior apartment building west of Amber Union has been approved by Falcon Heights, under the new name of Fairway Commons.

The site is at 1644 Larpenteur Ave. W. and is expected to open to renters in 2027.

The Falcon Heights Planning Commission held a public hearing on March 24 about the proposal from Velair developers, which has proposed a building largely similar to the previous plan by Buhl Investors and sought a few mi-

nor tweaks to the existing zoning agreement.

Velair plans a mix of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments at affordable rental rates for seniors age 55 and older.

The Planning Commission gave unanimous approval to the plan, recommending that the City Council approve the revised zoning request with added conditions concerning trees, snow removal, open space on the lot and electric vehicle charging stations.

City staff advised requiring a parking lot maintenance agreement with adjacent Amber Union.

City Administrator Jack Linehan said Velair was still closing some financing gaps this spring but had secured major grants from the state, Ramsey County and the Metropolitan Council, which he said should be enough to carry the project through. Velair has not requested tax-increment financing for the Fairway Commons project.

Velair’s schedule calls for starting construction this summer and opening in September 2027. ■

Anne Holzman is a Twin Cities freelance local government writer for the Bugle.

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Playing with Purpose Children's Therapy opens

By Janet Wight

Milton Square, St. Anthony Park's historic commercial and residential landmark, is home to a unique new therapy practice.

Playing with Purpose, which opened in March, allows children to express themselves and heal through play. Owner Lily Ferreira is a licensed independent clinical social worker and an experienced therapist.

Prior to opening Playing with Purpose, Ferreira was a therapist in a group practice in the Highland Park neighborhood for three years. Content with her position, she had not considered venturing out on her own.

However, Ferreira's mindset shifted after her daughter was born in 2024. At that point, Ferreira realized how much she valued flexibility in her work schedule. She also wanted the ability to make decisions in her clients' best interests.

"I can advocate for my clients without the barrier of getting permission from anyone," she explained. "I want my daughter to feel that confidence as she grows up, to start her own business if she chooses."

As a fan of Finnish Bistro, the popular restaurant located across from Milton Square, Ferreira had often admired the charming complex. When she looked for office rentals and saw an opening at Milton Square, Ferreira knew it was "meant to be," so she took the leap into business ownership.

Ferreira's new office, tucked away on Milton Square's upper level, provides a private setting for therapy sessions. The space features a welcoming playroom stocked with toys and games as well as a comfortable lounge for older clients and families.



Lily Ferreira is the owner of Playing with Purpose Therapy practice in St. Anthony Park's Milton Square. Photo by Janet Wight.

Ferreira was able to retain many clients from her previous role. New families learn about her therapy practice primarily through word of mouth.

Ferreira offers a free 30-minute screening call for prospective clients. The cost of a 60-minute intake assessment is \$225. Additional 50-minute sessions for children are \$175, while 50-minute sessions for adults are priced at \$195.

Ferreira is a firm believer in face-to-face therapy for children, she explained, but she also offers virtual sessions for tweens, teens and adults.

Although Playing with Purpose is an out-of-network provider, it is possible that a client may be able to receive reimbursement by submitting an insurance claim. However, Ferreira stressed that this is not guaranteed.

Instead, many families opt to use flexible spending or health savings accounts to pay for these services, she said.

Additionally, Ferreira belongs to Foster Adopt Minnesota, a network of providers who offer therapy to foster and adoptive families, funded by stipends provided by the organization.

Ferreira was raised in Salt Lake City and attended the University of Utah for her undergraduate and graduate degrees. In Utah, she worked for three years as a school social worker, at both the elementary and middle school levels.

Once the pandemic happened in 2020, Ferreira and her husband were ready for an adventure. They

made a list of places they would consider to reside in and Minnesota was one of the options, she said. They decided to visit in the heart of winter to test it out and then made the move to St. Paul in 2022, where they live with their toddler and two cats, Alfie and Amelia Bedelia.

After moving, Ferreira served as an elementary school social worker for one year. She then decided to seek training to become certified as a registered play therapist, a designation that allows her to support children and families.

The Association for Play Therapy, a national professional society established in 1982, is an organization that supports the growing field of play therapy.

According to its website, the organization was established to "foster contact among mental health professionals interested in ... applying the therapeutic power of play to communicate with and treat clients, particularly children."

Ferreira's training took place at Bethel University as well as through a variety of independent studies that provided additional learning opportunities, she said. There are many reasons that par-

ents seek therapy for their children. These include the children's unwillingness to go to school, battles surrounding food or other daily tasks, ADHD and anxiety or depression. "A big part of my job is having kids and parents find new ways of relating to each other," she explained.

Ferreira said she is passionate about play therapy. "Play is inherently healing for kids," she said. "I am on a mission to advocate for this. Talk therapy with little kids doesn't work. When they play it is amazing how quickly they are able to feel better."

Additional information about Playing with Purpose is available on Ferreira's website. Visit playingwithpurposechildtherapy.com to learn more.

Playing with Purpose is the latest of several new tenants to join Milton Square. Others since the start of 2026 include Present Company, Mind's Eye Comics and The Acorn Bookshop. ■

Janet Wight lives in the Como neighborhood and is a regular freelance writer for the Bugle.

Falcon Heights buying drycleaning site

By Anne Holzman

The Falcon Heights City Council has negotiated the purchase of the Get Pressed dry-cleaning site at 1407 Larpenteur Ave. with the intent to clean it up and sell it to a developer.

The council agreed at its April 8 meeting to spend about \$300,000 plus fees to acquire the two adjacent parcels, which have sat unused for many years and have become a nuisance due to dumping and graffiti.

Before it was used for dry cleaning, the site was a fuel station, and underground tanks remain. The city has been working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to test soil and plan a cleanup process.

The property would likely be eligible for housing, but the city has not determined a use for it.

An assessor valued it at \$670,000, but it likely needs about \$370,000 invested in cleanup, so the city arrived at a purchase agreement at the "as is" value of \$300,000.

The city has 60 days from the date of approval to execute a purchase agreement. ■

Anne Holzman covers Falcon Heights and Lauderdale city government news for the Bugle.



Long-vacant dry cleaners at Larpenteur Avenue and Albert Street. Photo by Bill Brady

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LIBRARY CORNER

SAP conservation biologist pens book of nature essays

By Scott Carlson

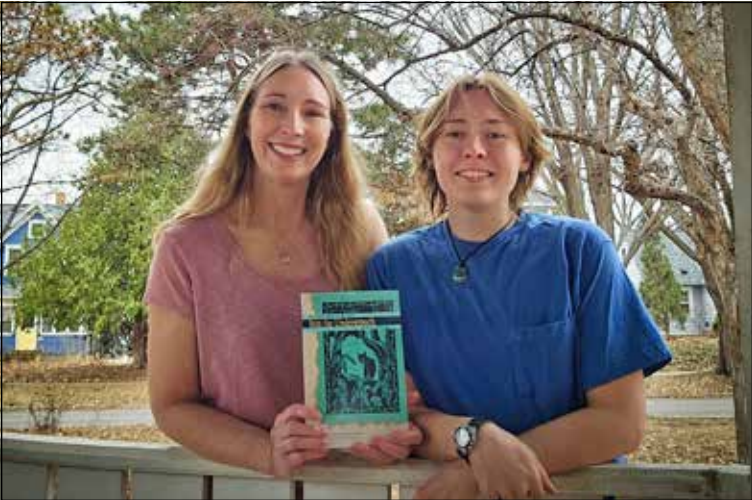
Dawn Tanner, of St. Anthony Park, this spring has released a book that features 20 nature essays from her local and global experiences as a conservation biologist.

Titled “Into the Undergrowth,” Tanner’s book follows her journey as a young, aspiring academic and outdoors person to a researcher and professor. Her 188-page tome includes photographs from the places and species featured in the essays.

Highlights include lemurs, tortoises, prairie chickens, orangutans, and more, she said. The book also includes seven woodblock prints done by her adult child Zosh Tanner. The combination of story, music and art are woven throughout the stories shared in the essays.

Tanner said she was inspired to assemble her own collection of essays after reading a collection of Henry David Thoreau essays and recently reading Robin Wall Kimmerer’s “Braiding Sweet Grass.”

“I enjoyed both of them so much and started thinking about writing my own collection of essays to share



Dawn and Zosh Tanner with a copy of “Into the Undergrowth” in the Alden Square gazebo. Photo courtesy of Dawn Tanner.

memorable conservation stories and experiences in nature,” she said.

An avid kayaker, Dawn said that one of her goals has been to paddle all of Minnesota’s paddling routes.

“In doing that multi-year journey, I had many memorable experiences,” Dawn said. “It was fun to share some of them in this collection of essays.

“I’ve written many scientific ar-

cles, both as part of research and for local newspapers,” said Tanner, who did her master’s research in the Galapagos Islands and taught a study away class in Malaysian Borneo.

“So, writing a collection of essays was an extension of these kinds of writing projects, with a much more personal and reflective component.”

Besides her interest in conservation biology and writing, Tanner is also an avid musician.

“Music and conservation are both important themes in the book,” said Dawn, who plays in a blues/folk duo called Kismet Rendezvous, with Lonesome Dan Kase. “We play around the Midwest including Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and a little bit in the Dakotas. We play often around the metro, at places like our neighborhood Finnish Bistro, Dusty’s Bar in NE Minneapolis, the Aster Café, farmers’ markets and others.

In the weeks ahead this summer and fall, Tanner said she will be doing other events in the neighborhood, including playing music and sharing the book at Art-a-Whirl in Minneapolis on May 17, book signings at the new Acorn Book Shop in Milton Square and a mu-

sic-book gig on Oct. 9 at the Finnish Bistro.

Asked what she hopes readers take away from her book, Tanner said, “Spending extended time in nature allows the opportunity for immersion, reflection, surprises and awe-inspiring experiences.

“The more time we spend in nature, the more likely we are to catch a glimpse of something magical, like a fox dashing by, otters tumbling and sliding on a riverbank, or a wild koala dozing in a tree in the rain,” Dawn said. “The beauty is in the journey. We can all find space in nature, whether it’s close to home or in a far-flung location somewhere across the globe.” ■

Scott Carlson is managing editor of the Bugle.

St. Anthony Park Library events

Compiled by Kathy Henderson

You’ll find familiar favorites and special events on the May calendar at the St. Anthony Park Library, 2245 Como Ave.

The library will be closed on Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day and on Friday, May 29, for staff training.

2026 Book Sale Fundraiser

Book sale hours are 1 to 4 p.m. on Friday, June 5, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, June 6.

Book donations are accepted through May 22 during regular library hours. Bring donations to the cart on the lower level. Do not place donations in the book drop or leave outside the library.

Drive-up drop-off assistance will be available between 5:30–7:30 p.m. on Monday, May 11 and 3–5 p.m. on Saturday, May 16.

More details at sapbla.org/calendar/booksale2026.

Special Event

Spring crafts for Mother’s Day
3 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 9. Drop-in session for youth ages 7-11 to make flowers and greeting card gifts. Supplies and snacks provided.

Familiar Favorites

Shake Your Sillies Out!
10:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Fridays, May 1, 8, 15 and 22 and on Saturdays, May 2, 9, 23 and 30. Playtime for children ages 5 and under that includes stories, stretching and movement.

Family Storytime

10:15 to 10:45 a.m., repeated from 11:15 to 11:45 a.m. on Tuesday, May 5. Stories, songs, rhymes and puppets in the library’s auditorium for children age 5 and younger, their caregivers and siblings.

Teen Crochet Corner

4:30 to 5:30 p.m. on Thursdays, May 7, 14, 21 and 28. Hands on lessons to make anything crochet related. No prior knowledge needed. Supplies provided.

Art Salad

3 to 5 p.m. on Friday, May 8. Experiment with a variety of media and follow random creative prompts to create an original piece of art. Materials provided. All skill levels welcome. Instructor: Marjorie Schalles. Class size limited to 10; registration required.

Handiwork @ Your Library

10 a.m. to noon on Thursday, May 14. Knit, crochet, embroider and socialize with your neighbors. All ages welcome. Bring your own supplies. Co-hosted by SPPL and the St. Anthony Park Area Seniors.

SAPBLA forum:
My Life with Birds

6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 14. Ornithologist Tom Will shares stories of bird encounters and profiles a facet of avian evolution. Co-hosted by the SAP Library and the St. Anthony Park Branch Library Association.

Literary Bridges

10 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 16. This month featuring Joshua Davies, Sook Jin Ong, and Okwudili Nebeolisa, a 2026 Minnesota Book Award nominee for poetry.

DND Adventure

1 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 16. Wyldwolf Games hosts a one-shot Dungeons & Dragons adventure session for sixth to 12th graders. The program is designed for both experienced and new players. Sponsored by the SAPBLA.

Mystery Loves Company Book Club

6:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 20. Read any book in the monthly theme category and talk about it with the group. Readers just looking for reading inspiration are welcome, too.

Art Salad II: Still Life

3 to 5 p.m. on Friday, May 22. Create a still life using a variety of media. Subject and materials provided. All skill levels welcome. Class size limited to 10; registration is required.

Changing Times Book Group

3 to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 23. Open to all. Books focus on climate, social and environmental justice. Co-hosted by Transition Town-All St. Anthony Park and the St. Paul Public Library. ■

Compiled from the library website by Kathy Henderson.

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SAPBLA

St. Anthony Park Branch Library Association presents

Tom Will: My Life with Birds

 Birds have shaped Tom Will’s life. As an ornithologist, he has studied them in the Galápagos, Mexico, and Central America. After a 20-year career as a conservation biologist with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, he travels the world in search of birds.

Tom will share some of his most intimate bird encounters. He can’t imagine a world without birds — and after tonight, he hopes you won’t either.

Sign up for a bird walk with Tom at the Forum!

In partnership with the Saint Anthony Park Library 

Thursday, May 14, 6:30–7:30 pm
Library Auditorium | 2245 Como Ave.
More information at sapbla.org



Home & Garden Guide



The plots thicken: why does one block in Falcon Heights have mammoth backyards?

By Bill Brady
Commentary

My wife and I live on a block in Falcon Heights that is unusual in that all the homes have lot sizes of up to half an acre.

This contrasts with an average size of about a quarter-acre elsewhere in the city. The thing is, you'd never guess we have so much land by just looking at the house from the front.

Each property is about as wide as any typical Falcon Heights layout. The difference is depth — the backyards reach far deeper than is evident from a curbside view.

The block is bordered by Garden Street on the north, Hamline Ave-

nue on the east, Larpenteur on the south and Albert on the west. On a map, it looks like they could have laid out another street between Hamline and Albert.

Indeed, two blocks to our north there is a street where you'd expect to find it on ours (Sheldon), and said street picks up again a few blocks south.

We alone are blessed (or cursed, depending on how much you like mowing) with way more yard than you'd expect.

Which leads to two questions: What's the history behind the unusual street layout? And how do those who live on the double-deep block use their extra space?

The second question is the easier and more fun to answer.

Corn, courts, coops and clotheslines

Our next-door neighbors, for example, often grow several rows of corn on their lower 40. Years ago, when their kids were younger, they combined with the homeowners on the other side to create football and baseball fields that were darn near as big as the real thing.

A few doors to the north on Hamline, Chris and Cherry Komarek have a sizable back deck that leads to a cozy gazebo, that leads to a chicken coop-turned-children's playhouse, that leads to a lengthy clothes line, that leads to an oversized raspberry patch, with plenty of room in between for a year's worth of split logs for their wood-burning stove.

"It's like moving to the country for a guy who grew up in St. Paul," Chris said.

The Albert Street side of the block features a couple of paved basketball courts.

"This was our first home, and I remember thinking, 'Wow, that's a lot of lawn to mow,'" said Todd Thune, who moved to the corner of Albert and Garden with his wife, Marsha Keppel, in 1991.

"When our girls got older and



Ryan and Stephanie Skarolid's chicken coop backs up to a very large summer vegetable garden. Their white house on Albert Street is visible in the distance. Photo by Bill Brady.

started playing sports, we put in the basketball court." This cut down on the mowing, though Marsha added dryly, "I can probably count on one hand how many times they played on it."

Two doors down, Dan and Maryanna Schaefer installed a court for their own three children. They also revamped their garage and added a patio.

"We used to live on Arona Street," Dan recalls, "and we'd take walks down Albert, thinking it would be

cool to score one of these homes. This one went on sale in 2001. There was a bidding war and we won."

Next door to the Schaefers are Ryan and Stephanie Skarolid, who boast a large chicken coop backed by a vegetable garden plot the size of some small towns. While the Skarolids did not set out looking for an extra-sized lot, "the large backyard has paid huge dividends over the years with ample space for activities and hobbies," Ryan said.

Mammoth backyards to p. 9

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Home & Garden Guide



Mammoth backyards from p. 8

Several doors down from there is the home of former Falcon Heights mayor Tom Baldwin and wife Kathy. When they moved in 50 years ago, “it looked like a forest back there,” Tom said. “That really fit our lifestyle — smaller house, bigger yard. We are outdoor people.”

Nowadays Kathy, a retired microbiologist, oversees two vegetable gardens, one for vine plants like tomatoes, the other for ground plants like zucchini and pumpkins. There’s room left over for two rock gardens.

After the summer of 1988, one of the hottest on record, they added an above-ground pool. What followed in 1989 was one of the coldest summers ever, which was a bit of a downer, but in the decades since they’ve made ample use of it.

At least two other homeowners on the block have installed in-ground swimming pools, including the people who sold us our home on Hamline. That was also done in that hot summer of ’88. The pool takes up about half of what we are told had been an apple orchard as recently as the 1960s.

The mystery continues

Which leads me to my other question: How did this block end up having double-deep lots? The answer is somewhat elusive, as there seems to be little or nothing written about it in historical sources.



Dan Schaefer shoots hoops on the basketball court he and his wife, Maryanna, built on their Albert Street property when their children were younger. *Photo by Bill Brady.*

“What an interesting neighborhood quirk!” said Anna Olson of the Ramsey County Historical Society, who could shed no light on how it happened. Nor could any of the sources we viewed.

What we do know, thanks to the Ramsey County Recorder’s Office, is that the block was originally “platted” (mapped out with proposed lots) in 1925 and given the name Larpenteur Villas. Falcon Heights did not exist yet; at that time it belonged to Rose Township.

Tom Baldwin remembers asking about it during his tenure as mayor (1986-95). Near as learned, by the time Falcon Heights incorporated in 1949, the number of established

properties on the block and to the immediate south made adding a street down the middle too expensive and disruptive.

“Someone did approach the city at one point with the idea to make a long cul-de-sac,” he recalled. “But fire departments hate cul-de-sacs, so it was never pursued.”

If any of our readers know more about the mystery of Larpenteur Villas, we’d love to hear about it. In the meantime, we lucky residents will continue to enjoy our “interesting neighborhood quirk” to the fullest. ■

Bill Brady lives in Falcon Heights and is a copy editor for the Bugle.



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Home & Garden Guide



The trials of basement remodeling

By John Horchner

The previous owners of our house had a folder system that categorized all the various systems of the house, from heating to windows to landscaping to gutters, and inside each folder were invoices of the work that had already been done.

Their maintenance records enabled my wife and I to know what things around the house needed our attention.

In our basement, there was a particularly annoying pipe that stuck up a half inch above the floor. It came out from the corner, ran a short distance and disappeared into the concrete near the middle of the room. It did not seem to do anything.

I bought self-leveling cement and poured it carefully around the pipe, hoping to bury the problem under a smooth new surface.

Instead, I made a mess.

The cement cured unevenly, and the gray scar around the pipe drew more attention to it than before.

Later, my wife and I covered the area with carpet tiles from

Menards and added an extra inch of padding. You could still feel the pipe when you walked over it.

The pipe was only one uncomfortable symptom of what was wrong in the basement.

The real problem was larger: The structures and equipment feeding the house's major energy systems — like its pipes, wires, walls and floor — dated back to the early 1900s, not the 21st century. Our house was built in about 1915.

All the wiring in the basement was knob-and-tube, technology first introduced in the 1880s and ubiquitous by 1940. Those systems don't mix well with home improvements because of fire risk, a risk that insurance companies will not underwrite.

In addition, there was plaster and lath covering around the ceiling of the basement so you couldn't see it. Like many people, I sat and waited for a magical solution, frozen by fear.

"As long as we don't make things worse," I told my wife.

Our home's 50-year-old boiler (furnace) was another problem.

Before replacing it, I wanted to tighten the house so the next furnace could be a lot smaller.

My fear of getting started on a project like this was heightened by the fact that I was once certified as a residential building analyst when I worked on a home energy efficiency program in Pittsburgh.

This made me acutely aware of all the contributing parts of our home's energy system that would need to be added or modernized: its envelope, heating and cooling, and maybe later, solar.

And yes, the floor that hid the protruding pipe was part of the house's envelope system. It was leaky and uninsulated. It was dangerous because radon was diagnosed in the house. If we took up the floor I could fix the radon, insulate and even use a new boiler (or someday, heat pump boiler) to heat the floor by running hydronic tubing throughout.

I started to gather information. My brother-in-law Norman, an engineer, gave the kind of advice he always gives: practical.

"Don't take up the floor," Norm said. "Save your money for the ceiling. You can put the heating panels up there."

Another neighbor, Phillip, who was a building engineer, saw the floor differently. He contended a



John Horchner surveys the basement flooring under construction.
Photo by Nadine Horchner.

new floor with hydronic heating tubes would work great even at lower water temperatures and store heat in the concrete slab.

"Don't skip that step," he advised.

Derk, another neighbor, an architect, settled it. "You will love the feel of that floor when you come down in your socks," he said.

After demolition, I had to plan what came next.

The concrete contractor was unexpectedly open to new ideas. I was developing a chatbot through the "Microsoft for Startups" program aimed at making home retrofits logical and understandable. I'd worked with Microsoft in another

era, back when the internet still felt new, and knew the drill: learn the tools, commit to the platform, and try to build something useful.

The concrete contractor and I traded more than a dozen emails as I sorted out the layers of the floor assembly. It would need to carry more than the tubing for the heat. It would need to hold my grandmother Ethylene's mammoth 1929 Mason & Hamlin grand piano.

Through all of the steps of contractor work, I continued to build the app. Over time my work has become an app called the Green

Basement remodel to p. 11

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Home & Garden Guide



Home & gardening events

Compiled by Kathy Henderson

With the arrival of May, this is the season of springing into home and garden activities. The following is a roundup of, among other things, spring flower shows, plant sales and school fundraisers across the area.

Como Park Zoo & Conservatory
1225 Estabrook Dr. | Open daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free; a voluntary donation of \$4 per adult and \$2 per child. comozooconservatory.org.

Spring flower show: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from May 1 to June 7 at Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, 1225 Estabrook Drive. Free. A voluntary donation of \$4 per adult and \$2 per child is appreciated.

Mother's Day Bonsai Show: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, May 9, and Sunday, May 10. View miniature masterpieces and chat with Minnesota Bonsai Society experts.

St. Anthony Park Garden Club
Guest speaker Holly Johnson presents "Minnesota Irises" on Tuesday, May 5.

Business meeting 6:30 p.m., refreshments 7 p.m.; and program 7:30 p.m. at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, 2323 Como Ave. Enter from the Como Avenue front door.

The meeting is also broadcast over Zoom. Non-members may request the link by emailing sapgardenclub@gmail.com at least eight hours before the meeting.

Garden Club programs are scheduled to resume Tuesday, Sept. 8, when guest speaker Bob Downs presents "Japanese Gardens."

Find information about upcoming events at stanthonyparkgardenclub.com.

Gibbs Farm
History Revealed — Organic gardening: 4 to 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, at 2097 Larpenteur Ave. W. Falcon Heights. A conversation

on organic gardening methods and history with gardening expert Bob Dahm of Earthwise Organic Consulting, followed by a walking Q&A session around the homestead. \$10. rchs.com/event/history-revealed-organic-gardening.

Plant sales
Ramsey County Volunteers in Corrections and Ramsey County Volunteer Gardeners: Fundraiser opens Thursday, April 30, and continues Thursdays-Sundays for six weeks at various hours through May 31 at the Ramsey County Correctional Facility greenhouse, 297 Century Ave. S., Maplewood.

Hours: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sundays. Also open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, May 20. Closed Memorial Day weekend (Friday-Sunday). High-quality, locally grown plants.

Proceeds help Volunteers in

Corrections provide programming and scholarships for current and former Ramsey County Correctional Facility residents. ramseycountymn.gov/news/dont-miss-largest-volunteers-corrections-plant-sale-yet.

Friends School of Minnesota: Fundraiser at the Minnesota State Fair Grandstand, 1265 Snelling Ave. N., features more than 2,000 plant varieties at affordable prices. 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, May 8; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, May 9; and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, May 10. Sale map, free parking information, and other details at friendsschoolplantsale.com/about.

St. Anthony Park Elementary School Association: Fundraiser from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, and Thursday, May 14, in the tent sale location at Langford Park, 30 Langford Park. Wide variety of plants that are grown free of

neonicotinoids at two greenhouses. Profits support multiple school programs and needs. More details at apsaplants.square.site.

Ramsey County Master Gardeners: Fundraiser from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 16, at Aldrich Arena, 1850 White Bear Ave., Maplewood. Large selection of favorites and unique varieties, quality garden gloves and other great items to get your garden growing strong. Funds raised support Master Gardener community and youth education programs in Ramsey County. Cash, checks and credit cards accepted. Ample free parking. More details at ramseymastergardeners.org/plantsale. ■

Kathy Henderson lives in St. Paul and is a freelance writer for the Park Bugle.

Basement remodel from p. 10



The finished basement. Photo by John Horchner.

Home Predictor, a tool that can take an energy audit and turn it into a plan. It does not spare anyone the mess, cost or judgment involved. But it can reduce homeowner's confusion.

Only one contractor really rebelled against my "tool," and even that may be too strong a word. Jo-

seph Timm, the owner of Better Builds, had done enough basement retrofits to know where he trusted his experience more than my AI-generated layers of planning.

Basements are unforgiving where moisture is concerned, and we had to do enough research to know that the walls — and espe-

cially the rim joists — would handle the new layer of insulation after we air sealed.

Like every good contractor, Joseph was busy, and there were limits to how much discussion his schedule could bear. Suffice it to say, his work turned out great.

I won't bore you with the rest of the work: all new electric, piping, trim, wood-like flooring over the slab and even an energy recovery ventilator for fresh air. All of the remodeling resulted in a 40% modeled energy use reduction from when we began the project.

But like many home maintenance projects, there's more work to be done. Our next step will be adding that air-to-water heat pump and going electric for a 90% energy savings from where we started. Stayed tuned! ■

John Horchner is writer, entrepreneur and founder of Green Home Club. He lives in St. Anthony Park.



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Home & Garden Guide



Community garden blooming



By Sue Conner

For more than 40 years, the St. Anthony Park Community Garden, owned by the SAP Community Council, has been a colorful enhancement to our neighborhood.

Totally managed and funded by volunteers, the community garden provides plots for gardeners, a prairie area of native flowers and grasses, a native plum grove for foraging and a colorful flower border along Robbins Street.

In cooperation with the District 12 Equity Committee, there are three plots set aside where we grow produce for people living at Seal Hi-Rise. The garden, as a whole, is a buffer between the railroad yards and the residences across Robbins Street.

Here are some new things in the works for 2026:

Plum grove: Early in spring, some neighbors did a heavy pruning of the native plum grove. Pruning should help improve fruit production and prevent disease.

Plans are to continue with a renovation of that area.

Prairie: There will be a burn and reseeded of the prairie area. Burns are a natural part of prairie ecosystems. A burn will remove accumulated dead plant material, thus returning nutrients to the soil. It will also help kill woody plants that would shade out the native prairie plantings.

Raised beds: Sometime this season, a few raised beds will be installed in the main garden area for use by gardeners who need that adaptation. This is in collaboration with the Equity Committee.

Habitat: The biggest change and biggest challenge is a project that has been started on the east end, behind the gardens and in front of the railroad tracks. Many large, old and decaying trees have been removed there.

Volunteers are creating a native plant orchard and habitat improvement area for birds and pollinators. The plan includes serviceberries, elderberries, native plums, native cherries and more.



The St. Anthony Park Community Garden has been located on Robbins Street west of Raymond Avenue for more than 40 years. *Submitted photo from the St. Anthony Park Community Garden. Story from Transition Town-All St. Anthony Park.*

All this will be available for foraging by creatures, humans included. This long-term project is well underway; walk over and take a look.

There is a lot happening along Robbins Street this year! We could use volunteer help from neighbors who enjoy this beautiful addition to the city.

If you are interested in being

part of it, by helping with the plots that serve the food shelf, the prairie, the old plum grove or the whole new orchard, contact sue.conner@comcast.net or seagles@softwarecpr.com. ■

Sue Conner is a long-time volunteer and co-manager of the St. Anthony Park Community Garden.

Changing Times book group to read 'Soil'



At the center of "Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden" is author Camille Dungy's "prairie project" to diversify the landscape around her home in Fort Collins, Colorado.

But "Soil" encompasses more than gardening. Dungy digs into the challenges of being a Black woman in America, especially in a mostly white town, and of mothering through the tumult of the 2016 election and the COVID-19 pandemic.

She contemplates wilderness and weeds and weaves them into reflections on how dynamics of power and dominance disrupt relationships between people and between humanity and our ecosystems.

Join the Changing Times Book group for a discussion of "Soil" at the St. Anthony Park Library from 3 to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 23. Light refreshments will be served.

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Home & Garden Guide



MINNESOTA NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH: Wild Ginger

By Dina Kountoupes
and Abby Fenton

Wild Ginger

Scientific name:
Asarum canadense

Anishinaabe name:
Namepin



Wild Ginger as ground cover.
Photo courtesy Katy Chayka, MinnesotaWildflowers.info.

Wild ginger springs up from the ground first thing as the seasons shift from winter's cold to sunnier, warmer days. Underneath layers of floating green hearts, maroon flowers emerge like tiny cups adorned with delicate petals.

Wild ginger is one of the first native perennials to bloom in early spring, along with other native "spring ephemerals" that blanket the forest floor. Native to maple-basswood forests, it favors moist, shaded sites with humus-rich soil. The flowers are fleeting, but the dark green curving leaves persist in color and shape throughout the summer.

Because of its early spring arrival, wild ginger is important in pollinator gardens. It acts like a beacon to native bees and beetles at a time when other pollen sources are limited and serves as a host plant for the pipevine swallowtail butterfly.

Acting as a living mulch, wild ginger makes an elegant, low-maintenance native ground cover, creating a low carpet on the north side of buildings or under trees and larger plantings. It pairs well with bloodroot, trillium, ferns, Virginia bluebells, woodland phlox and other shade-loving natives.

The many beneficial qualities of wild ginger make it an ideal native plant to integrate into a permaculture garden. "Permaculture," short for permanent agriculture, is just a fancy term for gardening sustainably by mimicking nature and tapping into self-sustaining cycles that already exist in nature.

Nature is full of mutual benefit, layering and diversity, along with the constant cycling of nutrients,

water and energy. Each plant has multiple "services" that impact the greater system. Wild ginger's "services" include ground cover, erosion protection, water retention, weed suppression, wildlife habitat and rabbit and deer resistance.

Wild ginger also has a long culinary and medicinal history. While not closely related to the ginger commonly found at the store, the rhizomes of wild ginger are said to offer a similar, yet more pungent, floral flavor.

According to the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, traditional Anishinaabe uses of wild ginger (namepin) include cooking the root to aid digestion, applying it to inflammations and bruises, and combining it with oth-

er herbs as a strengthening agent and appetite stimulant.* The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, however, warns against consumption as the plant is nephrotoxic and contains aristolochic acid.

Wild ginger is a wonderful addition to the garden — offering beauty, ease and myriad benefits. It can be grown from seed, but transplants and cuttings planted in spring or fall are the easiest ways to establish this woodland gem. ■

Dina Kountoupes is a permaculture practitioner and owner of Harvest Moon Edible Landscapes.

Abby Fenton is a naturalist and seed librarian at Lake Country School.

Both live in St. Anthony Park.



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Home & Garden Guide



Starting north St. Anthony Park: The Virginia Investors

By Mary Mergenthal

The final St. Anthony Park history presentation of the season will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 12, at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, 2323 Como Ave. Local historian Kristin Anderson will explore connections between the southern and northern parts of the neighborhood.

Beyond the St. Paul real estate speculators William Marshall and Nathaniel Langford, the early investments for the St. Anthony Park neighborhood came from outside the city.

Men from Menomonie, Wisconsin, and Minneapolis provided substantial funds for the 1870s plans and for the 1885 south part of St. Anthony Park, while the north St. Anthony Park area was first developed and funded by investors from the state of Virginia.

Although these investors were mostly out of the picture by the mid-1890s, they left their mark in the use of charming English place-names — and some of their own surnames — for the neighborhood's streets.

As always, Anderson, architectural historian and longtime SAP

resident, will share her expertise. All are welcome. Presentations remain free, but donations help offset program costs (live and online tip jars available).

Anyone unable to attend in person can watch the presentation live online, with a recording available for one week after May 12 on the SAPLC YouTube channel at bit.ly/Sap-history. The channel can also be accessed from saplc.org via the Worship tab and livestream link. ■

Mary Mergenthal is a former editor of the Bugle and lives in St. Anthony Park.



J. Royall McMurran house (1887) above Langford Park on Dooley (Commonwealth) Avenue. Photo from Northwest Magazine, April 1887

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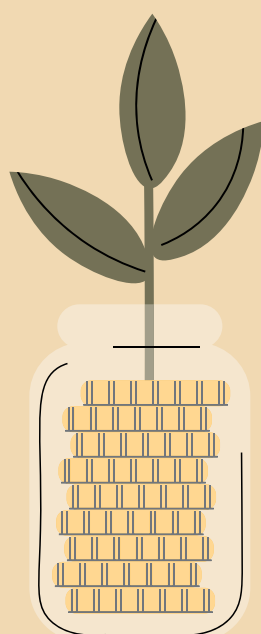
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EVENTS AND MORE

Compiled by Kathy Henderson

boréal Art Loft
“One Love, Many Forms,” works by Bebe Keith of St. Paul and Shona Dockter of Roseville, runs from May 1 to 30 at boréal Gifts and Goods, 2276 Como Ave, during regular business hours. Opening reception from 5 to 8 p.m. on Friday, May 8.

Undercroft Gallery
33rd Annual Art Show of works by the University of Minnesota Women’s Club — Art Section continues through May 24 at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, 2136 Carter Ave. Open during regular office hours from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays and from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Sundays.

Sundays at Landmark
St. Paul Civic Symphony Mother’s Day Concert from 1 to 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 10, at 75 Fifth St. W. Free.

Como Park Farmers Market
2 to 6 p.m. on Thursdays from May 14 through Oct. 29 at the Como Park Lutheran Church parking lot, 1545 Hamline Ave.

Como Park Zoo & Conservatory
1225 Estabrook Dr. Open daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free; a voluntary donation of \$4 per adult and \$2 per child. comozooconservatory.org.

Senior strolls: 9 to 10 a.m. on Tuesdays, May 12 and 19. Time reserved for adults ages 55+. The 4:30 p.m. strolls resume in September.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Register online for a time slot between 9 a.m. and 2:45 p.m. on Thursday, May 21. redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=comozoo.

Women’s Drum Center
Hand drum jam from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Friday, May 15, at 2242 University Ave. W. Designed for all-gender teens and adults. Drums provided. No experience necessary. \$15. Register at womensdrumcenter.org.

Bell Museum
2088 Larpenteur Ave. W., Falcon Heights. See website for regular museum hours, planetarium schedule, admission charges and registration: bellmuseum.umn.edu.

Outsider Animals: 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 14. At 7 p.m. Marlene Zuk will discuss her new book “Outsider Animals: How the Creatures at the Margins of Our Lives Have the Most to Teach Us,” followed by conversation, audience Q&A and book signing. Free; registration requested.

Star Party: A drop-in evening of astronomical celebration, exploration and fun from 9:30 to 11 p.m. on Friday, May 22. Telescopes viewing is weather dependent. Free; registration requested.

Community sing
Join pianist, storyteller and vocalist Dan Chouinard and singer-songwriter Ann Reed for a free community sing-along at 7 p.m. on Monday, May 18, at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, 2136 Carter Ave.

Gibbs Farm
An ice cream social from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 23, celebrates the seasonal opening of the Gibbs Farm: Pathways to Dakota and Pioneer Life historical site at 2097 Larpenteur Ave. W., Falcon Heights. Admission \$10-\$5. Free for children 3 and under, RCHS members, and Dakota and Indigenous visitors. rchs.com/gibbs-farm.

Como Lakeside Pavilion
The Dock and Paddle’s summer music and events are now underway at 1360 Lexington Parkway N. dockandpaddle.com.

- **Lost Evidence**, rock band. Friday, May 8, 6 to 8 p.m.
- **Side of Sarcasm**, rock cover band playing a mix of ’90s to today’s rock/alt/pop punk music. Saturday, May 9, 6 to 8 p.m.
- **2 Timothy band with Forrest Guptill**, music that inspires faith. Sunday, May 10, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- **Daddy Squeeze & Elizabeth** (Elizabeth Rowan), fun mix of lively tunes on accordion, percussion and vocals. Friday, May 15, 7 to 9 p.m.
- **Sawyer’s Dream**, a modern take on the classic rock of the ’60s and ’70s. Sunday, May 17, noon to 2 p.m.

- **TCA May Band** (Twin Cities Academy, St. Paul). Tuesday, May 19, 6 to 8 p.m.
 - **Minneapolis Police Band**. Thursday, May 21, 7 to 9 p.m.
 - **The Smallweeds**, original songs in the folk/singer-songwriter tradition along with some favorite covers. Friday, May 22, 7 to 9 p.m.
 - **Lake Country Jazz Collective**, 17-piece jazz big band. Saturday, May 23, 7 to 9 p.m.
 - **Keane Sense of Rhythm** presents National Tap Dance Day. Monday, May 25, 1 to 4 p.m.
 - **Minnesota State Band**. Monday, May 25, 7 to 9 p.m.
 - **St. Paul Police Band**. Tuesday, May 26, 7 to 9 p.m.
 - **Northeast Community Band**. Wednesday, May 28, 7 to 9 p.m.
 - **Erik Brandt and the Urban Hillbilly Quartet**. Friday, May 29, 6 to 8 p.m.
 - **Westwind Swing Band**, 17-piece ensemble delivering authentic big-band rhythms. Saturday, May 30, 6 to 8 p.m.
 - **Zoe Says Go**, Americana and rock. Sunday, May 31, 3 to 5 p.m.
- Next Chapter Bookseller**
Book signings from 6 to 7 p.m. at 38 Snelling Ave. S.
- Wednesday, May 6
Author Gary Brueggemann, “Saints and Sinners: The Pioneers of Saint Paul.”
 - Thursday, May 14
Author Julie Schumacher, “Patient, Female: Stories,” a collection of wryly funny stories about ordinary women.
 - Thursday, May 21
Authors Audrey Thayer and Colette A. Hyman, “Weaving Community: Indigenous Women and Leadership in St. Paul.” A compelling history of two dozen Dakota, Anishinaabe and Ho-Chunk women who displayed the cultural values of strong female leadership while taking action to strengthen the bonds within and among their urban Twin Cities communities.

Senior activities
St. Anthony Park Area Seniors offers a variety of activities. Unless noted, programs are at Centennial United Methodist Church, 2200 Hillside Ave. W. No registration required unless noted. For more information, call 651-642-9052 or email sc@sapaseniors.org.

Game Day: board games. 10 to 11:45 a.m. on Friday, May 1.

Legacy journaling: Visual art journaling. 9:15 to 11:15 a.m. on Tuesdays, May 5, 12, 19 and 26. Limited space; register.

Pound Fit: Full-body movements with drumsticks set to music. 10 to 11 a.m. on Tuesdays, May 5, 12, 19 and 26. Limited space; register.

Handiwork Group: 10 a.m. to noon on Thursday, May 14, at St. Anthony Park Library, 2245 Como Ave.

Poetry Group: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. on Friday, May 15.

Walk With Ease: 10 to 11 a.m. on Tuesday, May 5, 12, 19 and 26, and on Thursdays, May 7, 14, 21 and 28

at Como Lakeside Pavilion, 1360 Lexington Parkway N. Limited space; register.

SAIL: Stay Active and Independent for Life: Fitness for balance, strength and flexibility. 10 to 11 a.m. on Mondays, May 11 and 18, and on Wednesdays, May 13, 20 and 27. Register.

Equal Portions: Noon to 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 21, at St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, 2136 Carter Ave. \$15. Free if you bring your own lunch. Register by Wednesday, May 13.

Sweet celebration: An ice cream social and volunteer and community appreciation event from 2 to 4 p.m. on Wednesday, May 27.

Virtual:

Chair Yoga: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. on Fridays, May 1, 8, 22 and 29. Limited space; register for Zoom link.

Lunch Bunch: Noon to 1 p.m. on Wednesday, May 6. Socializing and bingo; call or email for Zoom link. ■

St. Anthony Park Area Seniors

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Sharon Brennan

Sharon K. Brennan, 79, Isanti, died March 5, 2026. Sharon led a life of dedicated service in education and volunteer ministry at Holy Childhood School and Parish in Como Park, other Catholic schools and parishes, and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Sharon is survived by her husband of 50 years, Michael; daughters, Colleen Brennan, Kathryn (Jeff) Blanchard, Megan (Joe) Hinrichs, Erin (Kevin) Jack; three grandchildren; and siblings, Pat Fahey (Bob), Colleen (Ron) Patterson, Karen Sinclair and Bill Faheys.

Memorials to St. Joseph's School (give.stjo.org) or the National Kidney Foundation (kidneytribute.rallybound.org/sharonbrennan).

Thor Gustafson

Thor Guy Gustafson, 60, Como Park, died March 30, 2026. He was born in Watertown, Minn.

Thor earned a bachelor of arts in electrical engineering from the University of Minnesota and served as an automation and robotics specialist, bringing innovative solutions to previously unautomated processes.

He is survived by his wife of 27 years, Lori Gustafson; children, Roland and Liv Gustafson; his mother and her husband, Margene and Jim Siems; siblings, Tyr, Temujin, Toke, Tina, Trajan and half-sister Tiamet.

Patrick Jastrow

Patrick "Pat" Jastrow, 85, New Brighton, died Dec. 17, 2025. He was born March 25, 1940, grew up in the Como area, and graduated from Cretin High School. He proudly served in the U.S. Army. He and his wife operated a plumbing company.

He was predeceased by his parents, Ray and Dorothy Jastrow. Pat is survived by his wife of 61 years,

Susan; children, Teresa (Steve) Glasser, Jill (Mitch) Holmes, Pat Jastrow, and Nancy (Brian) Gross; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and his sisters, Carol Schlundt, Mary Kay Witek, and Joann Thompson.

Daniel Hill

Daniel George Hill, Mounds View, died March 22, 2026. He was born in Minneapolis on April 21, 1936, to Marjorie and George Hill.

He was the oldest of four children and grew up in St. Anthony Park. He attended Murray High School and studied agronomy and accounting at the University of Minnesota.

Dan served as a sergeant in the Army National Guard and was an avid fly fisherman, reader and lover of music.

Dan was preceded in death by his parents, sister Marj Perry, and brother John Hill. He is survived by his wife Joann, brother Thomas, son Stephen, daughter Kristen (Cortney LeNeave), three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Karen Larsen

Karen Benedicte Larsen, 60, St. Anthony Park, died unexpectedly March 9, 2026.

Karen was born in Zurich, Switzerland, on Jan. 4, 1966, to Karl and Ellen Larsen, both from Norway. Soon after her birth, the family moved to the United States. It would be the first of many moves in Karen's early life as her father's engineering career took her family to cities across the country and eventually back to Switzerland.

Karen returned to the U.S. from Switzerland in 1983 and later attended the University of Minnesota, where she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology. She graduated with a medical degree from the University of Minnesota in 1997,

specializing in hematology during her residency.

Karen loved the arts and appreciated beauty, both natural and human-made. As she pursued her career as a pathologist and raised her children, Alex, Fiona and Ian, she devoted her spare time to crafts and gardening.

Many who walk by her home stop to admire her rock garden of native plants and flowers.

Karen was preceded in death by her mother. Besides her children and father, she is survived by her husband, David; her sister, Henriette; brothers Chris (Debbie), Erik, and Morten; and numerous relatives in Norway.

Gaye Larson

Ten years ago, Gaye was diagnosed with Posterior Cortical Atrophy. She lived with this disease with the same grace and quiet strength that defined her life, supported by the love of her family, friends, and her Beyond Hospice team.

Gaye was preceded in death by her parents, Russell and Dorothy McDonough, and her brother, Terry McDonough. She is survived by her husband, Daniel Larson; her brother Michael McDonough; five children, Kim (Thomas) Holman, Aaron (Cheryl) Larson, Joshua Larson, Kajsa (Andrew Saunders) Larson, and Shestin (Leif) Czaplowski; 11 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held May 2 at 11 a.m. at St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ, with visitation one hour prior and a lunch to follow. The service will also be available via Zoom at sapucc.org (select the worship Zoom link). Memorials may be made to St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ, Children's Home Society's Adoption Support Fund, or donor's choice.

John Smith

John Henry "Jack" Smith, 90, Falcon Heights, died March 13, 2026. He was born July 22, 1935, in Clinton, Mo., to William Carroll and Ellen May Smith.

Jack will be remembered for his kindness, humor and dedication to his family. Jack served his country in the Army from 1953 to 1955. Following his service, Jack earned a bachelor's degree in pharmacy from the University of Iowa in 1960 and became a pharmacist.

Jack married Judith Bodin on Sept. 11, 1965. He is survived by Ju-

dith and his children Joseph (Leia) Smith, Matthew Smith, Sarah (Charlie) Cauthorn and Andrew (Chandelyn) Smith; and six grandchildren. Jack is also survived by his sister, Martha Payne.

Jack will be buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. Memorials to Marjorie McNeely Conservatory at Como Park.

Gary Spooner

Gary Spooner, 87, Cottage Grove, died March 23, 2026. He grew up in south St. Anthony Park and graduated from Murray High School in 1956. He attended Hamline University, studying business.

While active in newspaper work, Gary was perhaps best known as "Santa Gary," a role he relished playing for more than 50 years in Cottage Grove. He had white hair by age 40 and was a member of the Minnesota North Star Real-Bearded Santas, International Order of Real-Bearded Santas, and Direct Descendants of Santa Claus.

Spooner was predeceased by his wife Judy. He is survived by his daughters Margie Williams and Laura Booth.

Betty Swanson: Celebration of Life

The life of Betty Swanson, who died Oct. 28, 2025, at age 82, will be held at the Como Conservatory on Sun., May 31. The gathering will be from 6:30–9 p.m. in the Ordway Gardens, with shared words and music at 7:30. Please reach out to Christina (Betty's daughter) at (651) 341-1173 if you plan to attend. *Editor's note: Betty's obituary ran in our December 2025 issue.*

David Thomas

David William Thomas, 93, died March 11, 2026. He was born Dec. 12, 1932. He was a graduate of Cretin High School and lived most of his life in Como Park.

Five years after a stint in the Army during the Korean War and graduation from St. Cloud State University, he and Jeanne Lang wed in 1956. Dave was an accountant for most of the time they raised their five children.

Later, he and two friends struck out on their own. They successfully ran Pasquales and Mickey's restaurants. Dave's best project was starting and growing a bottle factory in Moorhead. Dave was a backyard beekeeper, a hobby cattle rancher and a bird watcher who loved nature in almost all its forms.

Dave enjoyed his cabin on 50 acres in Wisconsin, but was hap-

piest when amidst his family and friends. It was a family with a lot of love to share.

After losing his beloved wife in 2005, his constant companions for the next 20 years were his golden retrievers. He was able to stay in his home of more than 60 years, where he died in his sleep.

Dave was also preceded in death by parents Valentine and Mary Thomas; sisters Jewel Parsons, Rose (Joe) Schwiertz, Joan (Bill) Grun, Val (Pete) Parranto; and one grandson. He is survived by brother-in-law, Jon Lang; children Rob (Cyndi) Thomas, Tim (Geri) Thomas, Mike (Susan) Thomas, Jeanne (Don) Rylander, Lisa (Mike) Arcand; 16 grandchildren; and 17 great-grandchildren.

Funeral has been held at Holy Childhood Catholic Church, with interment at Roselawn Cemetery.

Dr. Sharon Wilsnack

Dr. Sharon Carlson Wilsnack, 82, Falcon Heights, died unexpectedly Dec. 5, 2025. She was born July 31, 1943. Sharon attended Kansas State University in Manhattan, and completed a doctorate in clinical psychology at Harvard University in 1972.

At Harvard, Sharon met Richard Wilsnack. They began their married life in Cambridge, Mass. During this time, Sharon decided to focus her career on studying how women use and are affected by alcohol.

In 1978, she and Richard accepted offers from the University of North Dakota and moved to Grand Forks, their home for the next four decades.

Over those years, Sharon became a leader of a national longitudinal study of drinking among U.S. women, and a multinational study of how gender and culture affect drinking behavior.

Sharon's reputation in the field of women and alcohol led to national and international acclaim, as well as speaking engagements, including being a guest speaker on the Oprah Winfrey Show.

While Sharon's work was important to her and her accolades were numerous and impressive, she often said her greatest accomplishment was being a mother to her five children and "Nana" to her six grandchildren.

Sharon was a light in a very tumultuous world. Her professional work and her love for family, friends and colleagues will be remembered by many.

Sharon was preceded in death by her parents. She is survived by her husband, Richard, her children Joel (Priya Sharma), Brian, Peter, Kirsten (William Robinson), Jonathan, and six grandchildren. Sharon is also survived by sister Linda (John) Armstrong.

A memorial was held at the McNamara Alumni Center at the University of Minnesota. Memorials in Sharon's memory may be made to Habitat for Humanity (habitat.org) or Covenant House (covenanthouse.org). ■



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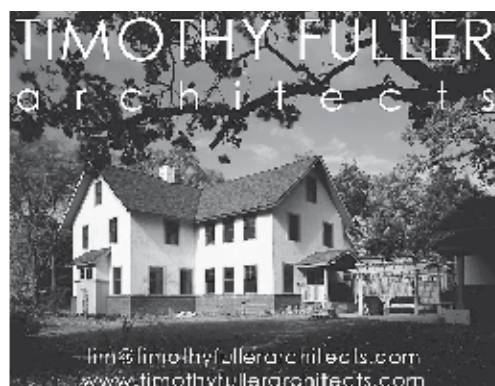
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SCHOOL NEWS

School news around the town

Compiled by Janet Wight

Murray Middle School

Submitted by Principal Jamin McKenzie and Parent Involvement Coordinator Stefanie Folkema

The Regional History Day contest was held on March 28 at Harding High School. Thirty-four students advanced to the State History Day competition, which was held on April 19 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Sixteen students received honorable mention.

Murray students competed in either individual or group entries. Categories included exhibits, documentaries, websites and performances.

History subjects covered included the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Act, Lego bricks, Steamboat Willie, suffragist Inez Milholland and refrigerated trucking.

Shiprah Dutta and Mabel Hango, who collaborated on a group exhibit about the Boston Tea Party, won the award for Murray's most outstanding project.



Thirty-four Murray Middle School students recently advanced to the regionals of the State History Day competition. Submitted photo.

Murray's debate team participated in the Minnesota Urban Debate League Middle School City Championship on March 26 at Central High School.

Murray debaters competed in rookie, junior varsity and varsity partnership divisions and had top 10 finishers in each division. Rookie Malik Cheeks (debating solo) took fifth place and second overall speaker.

The junior varsity duo of Finn Murch-Gordon and Ikeah Hakanson earned ninth place while varsity participants Mariya Adam and Petra Mueller finished in seventh place.

Top 10 finishers in the speaker awards included rookie Malik Cheeks (second place) and junior varsity team members Ikeah Hakanson (sixth place) and Finn Murch-Gordon (ninth place).

Charlotte Washington, student debate coach at Murray and varsity debater at Central High School, earned the Student Coach of the Year award. Washington has brought wisdom and experience to Murray debaters and has also been a great role model, mentoring the Murray students in perseverance and positive team culture.

Falcon Heights Elementary School

Submitted by Principal Beth Behnke

Falcon Heights Elementary School has received a Tree Trust grant sponsored by Delta Air Lines. These funds have enabled members of the school community to plant trees, create a reading hammock forest and establish environmental learning areas.

In late March, the students were able to learn more about trees and their environmental impact through a traveling exhibit.



Traveling tree exhibit. Photo submitted by Falcon Heights Elementary School.

Chelsea Heights Elementary School

Submitted by Principal Guillermo Maldonado Pérez

Thanks to the efforts of speech-language pathologist Barbara Henry, Chelsea Heights had the opportunity in March to host a concert by the Brass Solidarity Band.

To prepare for the concert, students learned about solidarity and how it applies to many different situations, including supporting one another and working together when challenges arise.

In addition, music teacher Molly VanAlst reviewed songs featured in the concert with students.

Spring concerts for grades K-5 were held on April 30 under the direction of VanAlst. Families gathered to enjoy an evening of music and celebration. ■

Janet Wight lives in the Como neighborhood and is a regular freelance writer for the Bugle.

Como Park High School News

By Eric Erickson

Theater department performs 'The Late Bus'

The Como Theater Department recently presented four performances of "The Late Bus" for the annual spring play.

In the spirit of the classic teen film "The Breakfast Club," the play follows high school students as they reveal their adolescent challenges through conversations at a bus stop.

A committed cast of both veteran actors and newcomers shined with their well-rehearsed dialogue and brought the dramedy to life. A dedicated crew constructed a set design that was functional and enhanced the performance, along with effective lighting and sound.

The play was directed by Como teacher Michael Youle and Como choir director Huy Tran, assisted by student director Charlie Ernst.

Stage managers were Lila Kopp and Clara Dunne. Amelia Larsen was costume lead, Linnea Common

was light lead, and Ollie Grotzke was sound lead. Additional tech crew were: Maja Johnson, Laura King, Sofia Mortensen, Sarah Paw, Julia Rentmeester, Scout Taylor-Marino and Helena Towle.

The cast in order of appearance featured Yasmina Banat, Tylenea Davis, Zachary Prince, Nayomi Gates, Ethan Imbertson, Mitch Pelzer, Sofia Gonzalez, Amethyst Gibson, Danaya Evans, Vance Ethan, Janya Williams, Kiziah Davis, Ayesha Syeda, William Fabel, Xzarín Beaulieu and Nijja Wheeler.

Advanced Placement Exams

The national AP exams will be administered from May 4 to 15 to hundreds of Como students who have completed coursework in their Advanced Placement classes.

Como High School offers 14 different AP courses, several accelerated pre-AP courses, as well as five dual enrollment courses in partnership with the University of Minnesota or St. Paul College.

Spring traditions

Milestone events on the spring academic and social calendar include prom on May 15 at the Wabasha Caves, Senior Honors Night at school on May 21 and graduation on June 3 at Roy Wilkins Auditorium.

The senior class and the Como Park Booster Club are bringing back the Senior All-Night Graduation Party at school following the ceremony. It has been absent since COVID, but student leaders advocated for a return of the tradition.

Community members willing and able to financially support the safe and fun celebration may email comoparkboosterclub@gmail.com on how to donate. ■

Eric Erickson is a social studies teacher at Como Park Senior High School and writes for the Bugle.



Seniors from the cast and crew of The Late Bus were honored on the stage after the performance in the Como Auditorium on Senior Night. Photo by Eric Erickson.

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Are you a bona fide St. Anthony Park resident?

By Tom Ososki

Have you ever wondered if you make the cut as a bona fide SAP resident?

Let's find out. First off, there are three types of automatic qualifiers: (1) Previous winners of the Michael Brasel Spirit of the Park award. (2) Children who grew up in SAP and moved back as an adult. (3) Children who never left!

For all others, read the 13 questions below and award yourself a point for each one answered affirmatively.

1. Have you spent a full winter season volunteering at the Langford hockey rinks shoveling off the ice shavings at 10 p.m?
2. Have you participated in the 4th of July Parade at least 10 times? Sorry, this does not include following the fire truck afterwards to Langford Park.
3. Do you know the significance of Horace W.S. Cleveland?
4. Do you know one good story about each of the previous two owners of your current place of residence?
5. Have you been to see a show in the Art Deco theater at Murray Middle School? (If not, go!)
6. If someone asks you the differences among north St. Anthony Park, south St. Anthony Park, St. Paul District 12, the original St. Anthony, St. Anthony Main and the Village of St. Anthony, can you answer them succinctly?
7. Do you know the first name of a staff person at five of our brick-and-mortar businesses or institutions?
8. If someone asks if you have David Lanegran's book, "St. Anthony Park: Portrait of a Community," do you not only have it, but know exactly where it is for reference?
9. Do you know the name of Father Louis Hennepin's patron saint and where that saint dwelt?
10. Do you know a person who graduated from Murray High School?
11. Have you been a sturdy volunteer at one of our many organizations in the neighborhood?
12. Have you attended a minimum of 10 progressive dinners?
13. Have you lived in the same residence for 40 years or more?
- 6-9: You are lingering in the middle. So, what are you going to do about it? Seriously, are you going to live here 40 years?
- 10-11: You are almost there, neighbor!
- 12: Call your best friend and have them nominate you for the Michael Brasel Spirit of the Park award. You deserve it!
- 13: You are perfect, but humble, and would never announce you got a perfect score. If you did announce you got a perfect score, then you receive the dreaded asterisk. ■

The grades:

- Zero: You are, figuratively and literally, a place-holder, but welcome to the neighborhood!
- 1-2: You have your foot in the ground, but are you stuck in the mud or just getting started?
- 3-5: You are an up and comer.

Tom Ososki is an SAP resident. He scored eight on his own test.

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Gigi Becerra travels from p. 1

strangers can turn into family. You could meet someone one day and then end up traveling with them for the next two months."

One of Becerra's happiest travelling moments happened over her birthday week. Her family, including her grandmother, flew to Oregon to celebrate. After the family's festivities, Becerra's grandma accompanied her to Utah to meet Becerra's "road family."

"It was amazing," Gigi recalled. "I was surprised with a cake that my friends had made for me. I introduced Grandma to everyone. We all played games, shared stories. I was the happiest I could have been, showing my grandma a glimpse of the life I had been living. My friends all started calling



Gigi Becerra and her dog, Bonnie, take in sweeping views not far from Capitol Reef National Park in Utah. Photo courtesy of Gigi Becerra.

her 'Grammie.' She loved every second of it."

Since starting her travels in the summer of 2024, Becerra has logged more than 10,000 miles on her van while travelling extensively around the western U.S.

Asked about the most beautiful place she's visited, Becerra quickly said, "Moonscape Overlook in Utah."

And her least favorite place to travel? California, because, she said, gas was extremely expensive and the winding coastal roads were tricky to maneuver in a larger vehicle.

"But the coast has such beautiful views," Becerra added, saying she's glad she managed the trip, anyway.

Becerra often used the app iOverlander to help her locate good places to camp or where to fill up her water tank. However, one time she accidentally filled her water tank with unsafe, non-potable water.

"There was no sign at the water fill indicating it wasn't drinkable," she recalled. "I then drank, cooked with, and used that water for a week straight. I quickly realized because I became very sick."

But even the worst days can have a silver lining.

The process of sanitizing her water system took several hours of tedious work and multiple stops at the same gas station for clean water. As the sun was going down,

still hard at work and not feeling well yet, Becerra wasn't alone.

"The gas station manager walked out with a slushie for me and said I could stay the night," Gigi said. "Even at my lowest point, there was still some way a nice stranger could make it one of my highest."

Talking to strangers is one of the best things a traveler can do, Becerra stated. "One major lesson I learned is to put myself out there. Talk to strangers. Seek community, don't be scared of it."

Asked what comes next, she explained, "I am seeking a little bit of stability before I hit the road again. Being on the road is the dream but if I want to fully fulfill my dream, I have to jump through the hurdles. "I got sick of being on the road for six months and then working for six months. I'm currently looking for some type of full-time remote job to do while travelling. I am reaching for my dream to its full extent."

"And I really want to head to the Carolinas. It seems so pretty, very beachy, and I've never been there."

Readers can follow Becerra's journeys via @Gigibtravels on all social media and YouTube. She also invites readers to share ideas on a new name for "Claudia." ■

Sarah CR Clark lives in St. Anthony Park and is a regular writer for the Bugle.

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COMO PARK HIGH SCHOOL FEATURE

Spencer, Como High's star of stage and school

By Eric Erickson,

Como Park High School senior Harriet Spencer will walk across the stage of the Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul with her classmates on June 3. Her weighted grade point average of 4.59 from Advanced Placement and college courses ranks eighth out of a class of 256.

Those academic credentials are impressive enough on their own. But combine that with 20 to 30 hours a week of acting and singing and her accomplishments are even more amazing.

Between April 21 and June 14, Spencer will be starring on the stage of the Children's Theatre Company (CTC) in Minneapolis for 40 performances as Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz."

After a month of 25-hour-a-week rehearsals, followed by two even more intense tech weeks, Spencer will perform five times a week once the show is running.

Earlier in her senior year, as well as her junior year, she played the prominent role of Max the dog in the CTC production of "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas."

As previously reported by the Bugle in 2024, the role of Max required a high level of physical acting. One show-stopping scene featured Max running and catching toys the Grinch threw at the dog from all directions — an athletic display.



Como Park senior Harriet Spencer is currently playing the role of Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz" at the Children's Theatre Company. Photo courtesy of Children's Theatre Company.

Spencer was well suited for that component of the role, having played youth basketball including her freshman year at Como. One memory from that season recalled by fans and teammates was Spencer competing in the junior varsity game, then picking up the microphone to sing the national anthem at center court for the varsity game. It was a pitch-perfect a cappella rendition.

Fast forward to April 3, 2026, and Spencer was singing the national anthem at another sporting

event. This time it was at Target Field for the Minnesota Twins home opener.

The upgrade in venue was both a fun experience and a responsibility tied to her role as Dorothy in promoting the upcoming run of shows.

Playing a leading role at the nationally renowned Children's Theatre is a dream come true for Spencer. Her parents were professional dancers and active in the arts but didn't push theater.

Spencer loved the artistic community she experienced through her parents' circles, and she began auditioning for plays at CTC during middle school.

Harriet received a few callbacks but didn't land any roles. Meanwhile, the Murray Middle School theater program was inactive during COVID and distance learning.

Spencer participated in a class at CTC in the summer before high school and acted in Como's production of "The Unusual Suspects" as a freshman. The CTC class, taught by Autumn Ness, inspired Spencer to analyze and appreciate acting through a new lens. Spencer emerged from it with her own mantra: "Acting is the physical realization of empathy."

With hard work and purpose, Spencer's breakthrough into a CTC production came in 2023 when she earned an understudy role for "Corduroy."

Landing one role at CTC is not

a guarantee of future roles. But Spencer was thrilled to have her foot in the door and loved working with the adult actors. She observed their techniques, asked questions, soaked up their knowledge, and put in the work to learn and improve her craft.

"I am always thrilled when I get a chance to work with Harriet," said Dean Holt, a 30-year veteran in the CTC acting company. "I have directed and performed alongside her several times and find her to be an open, eager and generous performer. She connects not only with the material, but with her fellow actors and the audience. She brings genuine heart to her work while striving to strengthen each moment within her performance."

Seeing the multi-generational talent perform on stage at the Children's Theatre is a celebration of the arts in our community. For show times and ticket information,

visit childrenstheatre.org/oz where you can also find bios for Spencer and the entire cast.

"All I ever wanted was to be in the room at CTC," Spencer said. "But now to be playing these roles in my senior year, and to do it with people who I respect so much and have been so kind to me — it's so beyond what I could have hoped for. It's so rewarding."

As for life after high school, Spencer has been accepted into several theater programs that excite her. She will need to make that difficult choice by College Decision Day on May 1 — in between her academic studies at Como and her performances on the CTC stage where she has developed her passion. ■

Eric Erickson is a social studies teacher at Como Park Senior High School and a regular contributor to the Bugle.

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ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY MASS

THE CATHOLIC
CEMETERIES

MONDAY, MAY 25, 2026

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Mass at 10:00 AM

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more information, or scan the QR
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Calvary Cemetery

753 Front Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55103

Gethsemane Cemetery

8151 42nd Ave. N
New Hope, MN 55427

Resurrection Cemetery

2101 Lexington Ave. S
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

St. Mary's Cemetery

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