

## Congratulations Sunisa Lee!

Steve Trimble

By now most of you already know that local American Hmong athlete Sunisa Lee won a gold, a silver, and a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics and she was the first Hmong to ever participate. However, here there may be some items that are not so well-known and some additional local history.

A large number of people were cheering at MSP Airport Thursday afternoon for the victorious return of Team USA Olympic gymnasts and Minnesota natives Sunisa Lee and Grace McCallum, along with their coaches.

Her three medals, including a gold for overall champion, were a historic event for the first Hmong American to participate in the Olympics. It took her and her family's persistence to make it happen. Her parents, John Lee and Yeev Thoj, were refugees from Laos and struggled to become successful in Minnesota. There were some trying times when her father fell from a tree and was paralyzed below the chest just before the U.S. Championships. Sunisa wanted to stay with him, but her father convinced her to attend. Then, last January she injured her ankle, and they weren't sure it would heal before the Olympics.

The day after Sunisa's arrival back at her East Side home, Mayor Melvin Carter released a declaration saying, "Whereas, we join members of our Hmong American community, along with all those in St. Paul, throughout the state of Minnesota, across our nation, and around the world in celebrating Sunisa Lee, and in thanking her for inspiring all of us". July 30, 2021, became "Sunisa Lee Day in the City of St. Paul."

The following Sunday there was a parade on White Bear Avenue, stretching through streets filled with hundreds of people lining the route from Arlington Street to the Aldrich Arena where there was an outside program that included speeches and a talk from Lee.

Sunisa was raised on the East Side of St. Paul. Sunisa got into gymnastics as a young child, after watching YouTube videos of Olympian competitions. "Once I started, I just couldn't stop," she told a newspaper. "It looked so fun, and I wanted to try it myself." Her father taught her how to do flips on the bed. She was almost addicted to doing backflips; her father said she would start flipping outdoors at the parks. When Sunisa was around eight or nine, she would go to a school gym to practice, but there was no balance beam there. The family didn't have the money for one, but her dad built one that still stands in their back yard.

She told the *Pioneer Press*, "I was al-

ways jumping on the bed or having my dad spot me while I was doing backflips. Finally, my mom got tired of it." Her parents agreed that she needed a safer place to practice her skills, and her mother was friends with someone at Midwest Gymnastics in Little Canada. Sunisa immediately caught the attention of coach Jess Graba.

At the time, she attended the nearby Battle Creek Elementary School on the East Side. After graduation she would leave schooling in St. Paul and started going to South St. Paul High School. She may have decided to go there because one of the coaches at Midwest Gymnastics Center is a teacher there. Sometimes if Sunisa didn't want to eat in the school cafeteria she would eat meals with that teacher.

Here are a few interesting items about Sunisa. She began participating in gymnastics in 2009 and once said because "It was fun, and I liked to do flips" and her favorite event is the beam. Her favorite things about gymnastics are "friends and fun."

Outside of the gym, her favorite school classes are science, she likes pop music, relishes pasta, likes pizza, enjoys Harry Potter books, liked the movie *Finding Nemo* and watching *Fuller House* on TV until it stopped in 2020. Two of Sunisa's favorite activities enjoyed are fishing and camping, and around 300 people attend her family's annual camping trip.

When Lee was just 14 years old, she told Auburn University she wanted to go there for college. "Being committed to Auburn has been one of my biggest dreams for a long time," she told *The Auburn Plainsman*. "I knew that if I made it to college, my life would be safe." Perhaps this decision was partly because her Minnesota coach's twin brother, Jeff Graba, is Auburn's gymnastics coach.

Unlike many of the elite gymnasts who turn pro and skip college, Sunisa is excited about having a more normal life. "I think I just wanted to have a real college experience and to be able to have fun," she said. She wasn't saying that she didn't currently have fun, "but being an elite gymnast it's so limited because you're always in the gym, and that's all I focus on. I'm already not, like, a normal teenager; I don't go to football games and all that stuff. But when I get to college, it feels like it's going to be so much more fun, I guess, and like, free."

For those who might want to purchase a Sunisa Lee tee shirt, they can contact Circle of Apparel at 1219 Arcade. They can be reached at [circleofapparel@gmail.com](mailto:circleofapparel@gmail.com) or 651-774-1443

**Photos in the left column taken by Mike Yungers. Photos in the right column taken by Steve Trimble.**



## Dayton's Bluff Take a Hike

On the second Saturday of most months, the Dayton's Bluff Take-a-Hike will begin at Indian Mounds Park, located at Earl Street and Mounds Boulevard. The hike is approximately one and a half to two hours long and will end at Swede Hollow Park or East Side Heritage Park, depending on the desire of the hikers. Share and learn a little history along the way.

Due to COVID-19, hikes are canceled. Please check back for more information at a later date.

If you have any questions email [karindupaul@comcast.net](mailto:karindupaul@comcast.net)

## Friends of Swede Hollow

Friends of Swede Hollow watch over, restore, and celebrate the history of Swede Hollow Park. Join the Swede Hollow community at their monthly meetings.

Our next meeting will be on **September 21** starting at **6:30 p.m.** on the front porch at 668 Greenbrier Street. Anyone interested in Swede Hollow is welcome to attend. Discussion will include Art in the Hollow, the Swede Hollow woodland gardens, and other items.

For more information, email [karindupaul@comcast.net](mailto:karindupaul@comcast.net) or call 651-776-0550 for more information and the meeting's location.

## Dayton's Bluff District Forum Board Meeting

The *Forum* is seeking writers and help with online content, idea generation, and ad sales – join us at our next meeting on **Thursday, September 2 at 11:00 a.m.** If you'd like to attend, call 651-776-0550 or email [daytons-bluffdistrictforum@gmail.com](mailto:daytons-bluffdistrictforum@gmail.com) for more information. We are currently meeting at the Cambic, in the meeting room.

## Police Community Meetings

The Eastern District Saint Paul Police hosts their monthly meetings for community members at the Eastern District Police Office at 722 Payne Avenue, on the corner of Payne and Minnehaha Avenues.

The meetings are intended as a time to learn, listen, and address people's concerns about crime and other issues on the East Side. Policing meetings are held at **9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.** on the third Tuesday of each month. Bring your neighbors!

Call or email Robyn at 651-266-5580 or [robyn.brewin@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:robyn.brewin@ci.stpaul.mn.us) to ensure September's meetings have not been canceled.

## SNAP Food Program at CLUES (Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio)

¿Necesita más comida saludable para la familia? El programa SNAP le puede

ayudar. SNAP proporciona fondos para alimentos que benefician a familias de escasos recursos.

Aún si no es ciudadano, si tiene hijos nacidos en este país ellos podrían calificar. Participar en el programa SNAP no afectará su estatus migratorio.

¡Llame a CLUES para saber si califica! 612-746-3500. Nuestro personal bilingüe puede facilitar el proceso para usted y su familia.

Need healthy food for your family? The SNAP program provides funds for low-income families to buy food. Even if you are not a citizen, your children born in this country could qualify. Participation in the SNAP program won't affect their immigration status.

Call CLUES to find out if you qualify at 612-746-3500. Our bilingual staff can facilitate the process for your family.

## Twin Cities Mobile Market

The Twin Cities Mobile Market is a grocery store on wheels that brings affordable, healthy food directly into neighborhoods. The Mobile Market stops at Parkway Gardens Apartments, located at 1145 Hudson Road, on **Wednesdays, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.**



THE HISTORIC  
MOUNDS  
THEATRE

Due to the COVID-19 virus, the Historic Mounds Theatre is temporarily closed and all events have either been canceled or postponed to a later date. Please visit our website at [moundstheatre.org](http://moundstheatre.org) for more information regarding the re-opening and upcoming events.

The Historic Mounds Theatre is located at 1029 Hudson Road, St. Paul, MN 55106; 651-772-2253; [historic-moundstheatre@gmail.com](mailto:historic-moundstheatre@gmail.com)

## Free Human and Health Services

United Way 2-1-1 provides *free and confidential* health and human services information for people in Minnesota, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, connecting you with the resources and information you need: Alcohol & Drug Abuse; Child Care; Consumer Regulation; Financial Assistance Programs; Healthcare; Money Management; Transportation; Animal Services; Criminal Justice & Legal Services; Employment; Food/Housing/Shelter; Tax Organizations & Services; Utilities (includes phones); Mental Health.

When calling 2-1-1 you will need to enter your ZIP code and then will hear a menu of services. Be patient, please. With COVID-19 lines are busy. You may be given options to waiting on the line.

## COVID Saliva Tests Available

Minnesota is offering at-home COVID-19 saliva testing for any person with or without symptoms, at no cost.

When you take the test, you will log in to access the the Vault virtual waiting room and do a video visit with a Vault test supervisor. You will then send the test to the lab in Oakdale, MN, using the

prepaid package. Once it arrives at the lab, you will get your results by email in 24 to 48 hours.

This saliva test is available at no cost for every Minnesotan.

Go to [learn.vaulthealth.com/state-of-minnesota/](http://learn.vaulthealth.com/state-of-minnesota/) or [health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome.html](http://health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome.html) to learn more

## Business Classes

The Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Microentrepreneur Class program helps startup and young businesses on the East Side. All East Side entrepreneurs are welcome. Class training lasts eight weeks and includes topics such as: operations management, marketing, financial management, one-on-one assistance with creating a successful business, and preparing a business plan, plus eight hours of one-on-one time with the instructor.

Those who successfully complete the course and locate their businesses in target neighborhoods are eligible for ongoing business support services. Some examples of businesses started by people who have previously taken this course include graphics, landscaping, photography, food service, restoration of wood furniture, art, custom floral design, and exterior and interior painting. The course is sponsored by the Dayton's Bluff Community Council and the Neighborhood Development Center. There is a small registration fee based on a sliding scale. Class sizes are limited, so enroll now. Please call 651-379-8432 for a current application.

## Helpful Phone Numbers

Social Security Admin: 1-800-772-1213 — Service available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on business days. Call to provide notification of death or to inquire about survivor benefits.

U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA): 1-800-827-1000 — Call for survivor benefits, burial benefits, or to provide notification of death.

United Way: 2-1-1 and Metro: 2-1-1 or 651-291-0211

Free, confidential, multi-lingual information is offered 24 hours every day. United Way 2-1-1 is a unique community information and referral service. Call if you need to know where to turn for help.

## Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program

Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program (FHPAP) funds can help single folks, too.

Here is a list of agencies that help with deposit and/or rent assistance through FHPAP:

Neighborhood House: 651-789-2500  
MN Community Care: 651-266-1290  
American Indian Family Center: 651-793-3803

CLUES: 612-746-3550  
YMCA: 763-493-3052  
Face to Face: 651-224-9644

## Xcel Phone Numbers

Gas Leak: 800-895-2999. Power Outage: 800-895-1999.

Call 811 Before You Dig: Before starting that roto-tiller or heaving that shovel into the ground for *anything*, call 811. At no charge, Xcel will have someone check the area on your property or on the boulevard to be sure there are no wires, pipes, other hidden surprises in the designated digging area. Usually, someone checks within a day (allowing a couple days is helpful), marking the 'no-dig' area with painted lines...and everyone is safe!

## Need Groceries?

If you are 60 or older, you may be eligible to receive a box of nutritious food every month from Second Harvest.

This box is part of a program called NAPS, and we can help you apply!

Give us a call at 651-683-2326 and someone will assist you with your application.

Help the Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging provide one-on-one counseling to Medicare beneficiaries at community partner sites.

Make a difference in your community by becoming a State Health Insurance Assistance Program certified Medicare Counselor. Help people understand their Medicare options. Visit [Metroaging.org/volunteer](http://Metroaging.org/volunteer) to learn more.

## Financial Assistance

Increased financial assistance is available for Ramsey County residents who lost income due to COVID-19 and need help paying for housing costs.

Residents may be eligible for Emergency Assistance that can help pay for past due rent/mortgage, a damage deposit, or prevent utilities including water, electricity, and heat from being disconnected.

Go to [ramseycounty.us/EmergencyAssistance](http://ramseycounty.us/EmergencyAssistance) an application or call the Emergency Assistance hotline at 651-266-4884.

## ESLC Seeking Volunteer Tutors

East Side Learning Center is seeking a virtual volunteer tutor to be part of their literacy program.

If you're interested, call Shoua Khang, the volunteer coordinator, at 651-808-8107.

## Free Legal Services for Low-Income People

Call Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services at 1-888-575-2954 or go to [smrls.org](http://smrls.org) to see if you qualify for free legal assistance with: family law, government benefits, housing, education, seniors, immigration, and farm workers. Other: behind on your bills, having problems with credit or creditors, or have other civil legal issues, etc.

If an interpreter is needed, SMRL will provide one.

Hours: **Monday through Friday, 9 to 11:45 a.m.; 1 to 3 p.m.**

# Swede Hollow, A Series

## History Tours

*Karin DuPaul*

Swede Hollow Park has been a popular history tour location here in Saint Paul over the years. Some of the tours have been led by former residents like Mike and Joe Sanchelli or historians such as Steve Trimble, Jim Sazevich, Marilyn McGriff, Peter Radcliff and others. Community education classes about Saint Paul and its neighborhoods' history have also been held in Swede Hollow.

The Sanchellis loved talking about being children and growing up in, and in later years, near Phalen Creek. Years ago, Mike Sanchelli gave two talks at Metropolitan State University about Swede Hollow which we recorded on videocassettes. Now I need to find a place that we put them on CDs. Over the years other former residents have shared their stories about living along Phalen Creek.

Today's Swede Hollow Park was called by many who lived over the year names like The Creek, The Hole, The Hollow, etc. and the mailing address was like 11 North Phalen Creek.

Swede Hollow Park has such an interesting history; it is always exciting to learn new things about the hollow and its people.



Karin DuPaul

The top photo shows a large group on a Swede Hollow history tour in 1996. The photo below it shows Mike Sanchelli leading a group in 1988, telling them about growing up and living in Swede Hollow.

### *You got somethin' to say? Say it here!*

The *Dayton's Bluff District Forum* welcomes all opinions and neighborhood anecdotes – send yours to:

[daytonsbuffdistrictforum@gmail.com](mailto:daytonsbuffdistrictforum@gmail.com)

Opinions expressed in contributed articles may not represent the views of the *Forum*.

**Deadline for the October edition of the *Forum* is September 10, 2021.**

### [provenance]

*violetta n.*

Part I.

It wasn't because the boat crashed into it.  
 After all — the dock had welcomed it —  
 Welcomed them all —  
 The fishermen who gut their catch,  
 Chumming the water beneath it.  
 Young lovers that lean on its pillars,  
 Admiring the moonlight that sloshes against it  
 Like fresh milk in a tin pail.  
 Children who dangle their feet in the water during high tide.  
 Their mothers running behind them.  
 Old men strolling slowly  
 Hands roving through their pockets for loose crackers  
 For the seagulls or the fish.

A dock does not call out to be used.  
 It does not ask for company.  
 Nor is it chosen or deliberated upon  
 By fishermen, or lovers, or passersby.  
 Or boats.  
 It simply — is.

Part II.

Cruisers.  
 Dinghys.  
 Bowriders and trawlers.

It had moored many before the boat.

So it wasn't that the boat crashed into it.  
 It wasn't that the dock watched parts of itself  
 Wash away,  
 Pulled toward the horizon by the current  
 And lapped obscenely against the shore.  
 It wasn't that the fishermen found other places to fish,  
 And lovers — other places to kiss,  
 And children- other places to play.  
 Or that passersby walked ahead without a second glance.  
 It wasn't that no one thought to fix it, even,  
 Once the devastation was complete.

It was that seconds before the boat crashed into it,  
 The dock called out for it.  
 It called out for the boat.

## Upcoming Art in the Hollow Events

*Benjamin Mason*

Art in the Hollow is back for 2021 and will be part of the Solidarity Weekend on **September 25**. Artists and performers will set up in Sweet Hollow Park once again for the East Side's longest running art festival.

The Harvest Parade will run down Payne Avenue through the Solidarity Street Gallery at the same time, making it easy for East Siders to take part in multiple East Side arts and cultural events on **Saturday the 25**.

This year, you can begin your festival experience at St Paul Brewing, where you can find parking and make your way down into Swede Hollow Park. Come prepared to experience the East Side's great convergence of art, nature, history, and community!

You can visit the festival's website for more information: [artinthehollow.org](http://artinthehollow.org).



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 816 East 7th Street, Saint Paul, MN 651-793-4912



Steve Trimble

Pictured above are photos of the Dari-Ette's 70th anniversary party they held for the public July 31st.

## Some St. Paul Trivia

Congratulations to our three winners for getting the answers right! MaryKay Ashton, John Jordan, and Carolyn Drohner.

The answers are in bold below for those who do not know them. Stay tuned for more questions!

On the third floor hall in the City Courthouse there is a brass bell sitting as a memorial. Where was it used in the past?

- A. A bell from a horse-drawn fire truck
- B. A bell from the U.S.S. St. Paul, a ship**
- C. A bell from the old First Methodist Church
- D. A bell from Harriet Bishop's first school house

Ken Freiberg was a Saint Paul fire captain who often cooked food for the station. People liked his offering, so he had a State Fair stand and later opened a successful business. What was the product that Captain Ken sold? **Baked beans**

On May 27, 1930 Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing in Saint Paul received a patent for transparent cellophane tape. What is it known as? **Scotch tape**

## Dayton's Bluff District Forum

668 Greenbrier St., St. Paul, MN 55106  
**Phone:** 651-776-0550 **E-mail:**  
**daytonsbluffdistrictforum@gmail.com**

Monthly circulation: 7,000; also available online at **daytonsbluffdistrictforum.org**. This publication of Hopewell Communications, Inc., a nonprofit organization, is intended to provide a forum for the ideas and opinions of its readers and to be an instrument for developing community awareness and pride. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the *Forum*. Material from this paper may be republished if it is attributed to the *Dayton's Bluff District Forum* and to the author, if any. Articles and letters to the editor are welcome and may be emailed to **daytonsbluffdistrictforum@gmail.com**, or mailed to the address above. The *Dayton's Bluff District Forum* is delivered to every home and business in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood when the budget permits. We are currently online only. Outside this area, subscriptions cost \$15 per year and may be arranged by calling 651-776-0550.

Board of Directors: Greg Cosimini, Karin DuPaul, Jennifer Gascoigne, Sage Holben, Steve Trimble

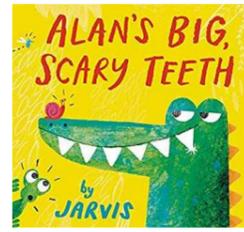
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## Kids Corner

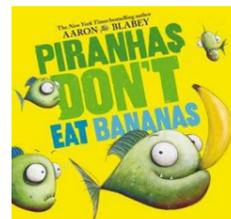
*Vio Nikitina*  
 Dayton's Bluff Library Children's Specialist

*Alan's Big, Scary Teeth* by Jarvis.



Alan comes from a long line of very scary alligators. His favorite thing in the world is scaring all of the jungle animals with his big, scary teeth. But Alan has a secret! One that eventually makes him get creative and use his skills in more constructive ways. This is a fun book to read aloud with bright, humorous illustrations. This is your chance to you get goofy with your voices!

*Piranhas Don't Eat Bananas* by Aaron Blabey



Brian, a fruit-loving piranha, tries to convince his friends to try various fruits and veggies — to no avail! His increasingly grumpy friends grow exasperated. “Well, how about some silverbeet?” asks Brian. “Are you serious, Brian? We eat feet.” Simple, but hilarious, illustrations accompany a fun rhyme scheme and humorous story.

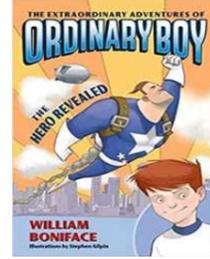
*The Extraordinary Adventures of Ordinary Boy* by William Boniface.

In Superopolis everyone has a super-

power! Well...almost everyone. Meet Ordinary Boy.

In a town where everyone is a superhero, what if you were the only person with no superpowers at all?

Welcome to the life of Ordinary Boy. He's...well, he's pretty much exactly as



his name suggests. But things are not so super in Superopolis these days, with the evil Professor Brain-Drain on the loose. To make matters worse, Ordinary Boy and his friends are thrown into the middle of a baffling mystery. Forget superheroes. In a city where everyone is extraordinary, this just might be a job for...Ordinary Boy! This youth novel has great illustrations and is a hilarious read.

*Race to the Sun* by Rebecca Roanhorse



Lately, seventh grader Nizhoni Begay has been able to detect monsters, like that man in the fancy suit who was in the bleachers at her basketball game. Turns out he's Mr.

Charles, her dad's new boss at the oil and gas company, and he's alarmingly interested in Nizhoni and her brother, Mac, their Navajo heritage, and the legend of the Hero Twins. Nizhoni knows he's a threat, but her father won't believe her. Timeless themes such as the importance of family and respect for the land resonate in this funny, fast-paced, and exciting quest adventure novel for young people.

**Join us!**  
 As we return to in-person worship:  
**September 12**  
**at 10:30am**  
 1049 Euclid St., St Paul  
 55106



**Mounds Park United Methodist Church**  
 Sharing the love of Christ with our community • [moundsparkumc.org](http://moundsparkumc.org)



Mike Yungers

Pictured above is one of the many signs that businesses decorated to celebrate Sunisa Lee.

## View From My Porch: Do You Live in a Healthy Neighborhood?

*Sage Holben*

What would a healthy neighborhood look like to you? Some residents focus on healthy food availability vs. a food desert. You might consider medical care equity of cost and quality. Gun violence might be a major factor in your daily life. A quiet, mundane area might focus on a manicured lawn and well-trimmed shrubbery—imagine.

Recently I heard the phrase 'human infrastructure'. I was both intrigued and hopeful as to its meaning. Intrigued, simply because I thought serious attention might be directed on services that actually work directly and holistically with individuals and family systems, not just piecemeal fixes - an occasional box of food, minimal attention to a child in crisis, allotments of money without budgeting knowledge. Families steeped in unstable, low-income jobs too often don't have the privilege of spending hours (yes, many times, *hours*) finding the help their families need. Needs may concern domestic abuse, medical needs, school problems, or child care. Children and adults alike, may benefit by consistent, comprehensive mentoring. This is what 'human infrastructure' means to me. Each stable family, whatever its makeup, becomes a working unit of a healthy neighborhood.

Excessive noise of vehicles with missing or rusted exhaust systems or missing catalytic converters added to vehicles speeding through four-way stops, blaring horns, kids outside until 11pm, howling like wolves with their echoes bouncing between the closely spaced houses, and our local melt-down princess who yells, screams, and punches her boyfriend as they live out of their car in front of his mother's house. It's no joy waking up to her four times a day screaming. Sad, too, to see their relationship as she punches at him and he, mellow and soft spoken, has perfected his ducking reflex as she takes a swing at him. This, a breakdown in a healthy neighborhood, and an added stressor to those who must view the daily scene and hear the ongoing yelling.

This is a daily occurrence similarly experienced in too many Saint Paul neighborhoods. One of the side symptoms is hypervigilance. Whether a car crash or waiting to hear if the loud voices are 'just' conversations or of young men or women ready to 'face down' and physically fight. Hypervigilance stresses the body after a person en-

joys the first moments of calm and absence of chaos, then finds itself adjusting to the anxious expectation of waiting for the body-reverberating 'woofer' car, the ear-shattering exhaust system, the 65 mph speeder (hope/hope not another car meets them in the intersection). There must be some thrill in stepping on the gas pedal at the bottom of 4th Street, hitting 45 to 70 mph up the hill, playing the game of 'chicken' or Russian roulette at the intersection. We residents wait for the inevitable crash of an intersecting vehicle or a careless, oblivious pedestrian, biker, or child hit by a speeding vehicle and spiraling 30 feet into the air, only to be slammed against a building, impaled on a fence, or thud to the ground like a bag of wet cement.

This last week I have felt exhausted from all the extreme human, electronic, and motorized noise levels. I do embrace and cherish my neighborhood, but like a marriage, especially an abusive one, the hypervigilance and the expectant waiting during the honeymoon stage of waiting for the blow to fall, take their toll on a person's mental and emotional health.

What is a *healthy* neighborhood? Some common factors include: individual, personal wellness; access to shared resources; social justice; connectedness to others in the neighborhood; diversity in all forms; active participation and collaboration within the neighborhood; and self-awareness as part of the community. Trust, connectedness, collaboration, and participation all contribute to the *physical health and strength* and to the *moral wellness* of a neighborhood.

A healthy neighborhood means a higher level of mental, emotional, and physical health for its residents. We can't close our streets off from the offending vehicles and drivers who cut through; we can't shield our ears from the many air flights to and from the Saint Paul airport; we dare confront only so many screamers and group arguments in our streets.

My neighborhood *is* strong. Outside tensions and influences enter; occasional disruptions are diffused through collaboration and problem-solving. Like a family, some ties within a neighborhood are stronger or more daily than others; we all have different strengths, and, I think, a respect and trust for our individual strengths. Unlike 60 or 90 years ago, most neighborhoods no longer are glued together or share a common thread of attending the same church, working at the same factory, or attending the same schools. We do have social and psychological threads of common desires: social justice, equitable access to economics, education, and health care, collaboration, and a peaceful coexistence.

Like many urban neighborhoods, ours is one in almost constant transition. It surprises me how many people, renters and owners alike, live among others with little self-awareness of what impact their lives have on others. As a neighborhood, as a community of diverse individuals, we collaborate, share resources — both physical and knowledge. We communicate face to face and electronically, ideas, information, joys, stress, and sadness. We consciously try to be respectfully present for each other without being intrusive; self-awareness is key.

**DELLWOOD  
GARDENS**

*Assisted Living and Memory Care*

To learn more about our community or to schedule a tour, please contact Lindsay Schmidt, Director of Marketing and Hospitality at 651-444-5716 or [LSchmidt@DellwoodGardens.com](mailto:LSchmidt@DellwoodGardens.com) Ask about our move-in specials!

## Happening at the Dayton's Bluff Library

**Storytime** at the Library is back! Family storytimes are on Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. in the Children's Area of the library! Join us for a lively event where we'll read stories, sing songs, learn rhymes, dance, and practice ASL. There will be bubbles! Storytime is indoors and masks should be worn.

Did you know that Dayton's Bluff Library offers notary services? Please call ahead at 651-793-1699 to confirm that a Notary Public will be available on the day you need service. The fee for notary public services is \$1.00 cash for each notarial act and you must provide a current government-issued ID. *Please note that staff cannot notarize wills, or birth, death, or marriage certificates. Saint Paul Public Library staff may not give legal advice or accept fees for legal advice. A Notary Public is authorized only to notarize signatures on documents and not the documents themselves.*

**Reading Together** is beginning October 4. Students and trained mentors meet weekly at a regular time, one-on-one, to work on grade-level reading skills. To participate in the program, students must be in grades one through five, read below grade level, and live or attend school in Saint Paul. The online application opens in mid-September at [sppl.org/reading-together/](http://sppl.org/reading-together/). Once an application is received, library staff will work to partner a student with a mentor.

**Volunteers Wanted!** Volunteers are integral part of the work we do, and we have a wide range of opportunities for you to get involved. Reading mentors, tech assistants, teen mentors, playing games, using artistic talent are a few ways you can support your neighborhood libraries. We invite you to be a part of our team as we connect, learn, discover, and grow with the communities we serve. Learn more and find applications at [sppl.org/volunteer/](http://sppl.org/volunteer/).

**Dayton's Bluff Micro Gallery!** Are you an artist? Do you create crafts? Are you a collector? Would you like to display your work to your community? Our Micro Gallery is a lit, locked, glass display case here at Dayton's Bluff Library where you can show off your work! Items can be no larger than 12" w X 15" d X 15" h and there are four shelves available. We rotate out displays monthly. Please keep content suitable for the general public. Artists of all ages and talents wanted! Submit a photo of what you would like to display to [daytonsbuff@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:daytonsbuff@ci.stpaul.mn.us) or call 651-793-1699 for more information.

All Saint Paul Public Library locations will be closed Saturday, September 4 through Monday, September 6 in observance of Labor Day.

Dayton's Bluff Library Hours: **Mondays & Wednesdays 12 p.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesdays & Thursdays 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Fridays 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturdays 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

The outdoor book drop is open all the time. Current hours are available online at [sppl.org/locations/DB/](http://sppl.org/locations/DB/) or call 651-793-1699.



Dayton's Bluff Library

Pictured above is the Micro Gallery on display at the Dayton's Bluff Library. The library is looking for artists of all ages to display their artwork.

The median SOLD price of single family homes in Dayton's Bluff in July 2021 was \$225,000. I represented the sellers in the sale of these homes.



SOLD 654 4th Street East \$325,000

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## Paved Paradise

Mandy Okonek

Unless there is divine intervention, in the fall of 2021, Dayton's Bluff Community Garden will become a parking lot. The city-owned space that became a beloved garden for many community members is being sold to local business owner Ted LaFave, the current owner of the Stutsman Building. The words of Joni Mitchell's hit song "Big Yellow Taxi," have become my earworm. "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot."

I have known about the plans for the parking lot for a year now; choosing purposely not to inform the families about the garden until the actual sale of the city-owned lot began to materialize and that day is approaching. I hoped that if the garden could become an asset for our community perhaps the city would not sell the lot. It doesn't feel right to take away community green space, a pollinator habitat, a place for families to reconnect with food, an outdoor art gallery, and most importantly a space that facilitates community building.

As the volunteer caretaker of this garden for the last three years, I feel that the community needs to have all the details about the impending sale of the lot its history. Our neighborhood is a shining example of another song that motivates me to speak my truth, "People have the Power." Thanks, Patti Smith.

When I moved to North Street as a renter in 2005, 683 North Street was a vacant lot overgrown with weeds and tall grasses. The remnants of the concrete foundation (which is now a mural celebrating Saint Paul's cultural history) contained the stories of a problem property that was a mecca for drugs and violence that terrorized families for years. It was these same families, determined to raise their children in a community with less crime that worked tirelessly with the SPPD to get this home's illegal enterprises shut down. One neighbor remembers walking past the property daily with her stroller packed with her two young boys, armed with a pen and paper to record license plates of suspicious vehicles. I can thank this tenacious young mother for her dedication to the safety of our small street. The transformation of 683 North Street from a problem property to a vacant lot was cause for celebration for all the neighbors who dedicated their time to helping SPPD remove the drug dealers.



of car traffic and pollution. It's not like LaFave is a giant corporation; he's a small business owner, and he did make an effort to create a paved paradise, but his offer of collaboration felt wrong.

Perhaps an answer to LaFave's valid need for parking involves a different collaboration with local Metro State University who has a brand new, barely filled parking garage across the street. Maybe there is an opportunity to

In 2018, a resident of Cambric Senior Living and complete badass, Milan Mockovak, envisioned a garden in that lot and made his dream come true. I took over management of the Cambric senior garden in fall of 2019 and expanded its membership to include children and their families, changing the name to Dayton's Bluff Community Garden. Many of the original elder gardeners stayed, excited to teach and learn from the next generation of dirt aficionados. The land, which once housed people profiting off the sale of poison, now grows food for families in our community and gives back portions of our harvest to those in need.

The Stutsman Building also has a history of neighbors standing up to crime, drug dealers, and slumlords. The neighborhood group that formed to revitalize this historic piece of architectural history went by The Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood Association (USHNA). USHNA has since disbanded, but we have them to thank for the Swede Hollow Café, one of the businesses that will benefit from the garden parking lot, as they have recently expanded their hours.

I met with Jane Prince and Ted LaFave to discuss a possible partnership between the garden and the parking lot early in the garden season and we didn't see a way forward. LaFave wanted to keep garden elements in his new parking lot plan and I couldn't visualize gardening even with raised beds in a space filled with vehicle traffic and exhaust. I couldn't fathom our elder and children gardeners growing food in the midst

use the vacant lot recently purchased by Neighborhood Housing Services that is already a parking lot.

I'm very aware that the lot at 683 North Street filled with food for low-income families, adorned with art painted by a crew of all-women Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) artists, that hosts family-friendly events free for our community is a city-owned space. The garden was never meant to be permanent. Nothing is. What makes this transition so complicated is that the parking lot will support a beloved local business run by amazing people.

The garden is not mine and the decision to pave it is something I cannot control. I have the utmost respect for tenants of the Stutsman building and the owners of Swede Hollow Café and understand their desire for convenient parking. I'm sure it will be a beautiful parking lot and bring in more tax revenue for the city. The current lease for the garden is through the Dayton's Bluff District Council who pays next to nothing for our use of this space and the future parking lot will be more profitable for the city than the garden whose wealth of food and community building does not radiate dollar signs.

As a homeowner with my own space to garden in, I am privileged with the green real estate to continue growing. It is the renters who garden at 683 North Street who are at a loss. Many do not have garden space in their apartments and will lose this access to their food.

Councilmember Jane Prince has expressed interest in helping us find a new home for our garden but supports the parking lot, as do many other neighbors. I think our community garden is an asset to our entire neighborhood and feel backed into a corner with an "us versus them" scenario. When everyone has access to healthy food and green spaces to enjoy with their families, we all win. The tax money generated from the future parking lot will indeed benefit Saint Paul, a portion of which will directly support Saint Paul Public Schools, however it is unclear how this extra money generated from the parking lot will directly benefit Dayton's Bluff.

I am now reaching out to our East Side community and asking for help. We are looking for a new space to move our garden and a few good people to lend us some Bobcats for the day. You will be paid in gratitude and fresh vegetables. Bonus points if you are a musician willing to donate your skills to provide the soundtrack to our garden's swan song. I can be reached via email at [mandyokonek@gmail.com](mailto:mandyokonek@gmail.com).

*The photo is Milan Mockovak, founder of Dayton's Bluff Community Garden, provided by Mandy Okonek.*

# The Bright Light of the Conway Recreation Center

Mark Gallagher

There is a light that shines bright through the Sun Ray/Battle Creek community of St. Paul. The Conway Recreation Center, which was established in 1989, is that light and has been illuminating the way for many youth since that time. It is named after Charles R. Conway, who was one of the first writers of the paper that is considered to be the predecessor to the *Pioneer Press*

Just a little northeast of the Interstate 94 and Ruth Street junction, there was a distinct need for the youth to have a place where they could go and recreate in the late 1980s. The youth wanted a place to play basketball, football, hockey, other sports, and do some activities. "Conway Park was primarily used for hockey," said Brandon Griffin, Senior VP of Operations at the Sanneh Foundation, "and it originally began as a park that just had an ice rink and a small chalet you'd come into and warm up. They built the recreation center with a warming house and access to the rink in order to grow that presence and expand to other activities for year-round use."

"In 2008, the economy took a turn for the worse, and for several years the city had a hard time maintaining their recreation centers. In 2013, they reached out to see about public and private partnerships of nonprofits. Many centers were forced to close unless they were operated by community-based nonprofit organizations. Over the years, there's been some debate to determine which ones needed to be shuttered and which ones needed to be run by fellow nonprofit organizations like ours, The Sanneh Foundation."

The Conway Recreation Center was taken over in 2013-2014, and they've grown as a nonprofit since that time. A lot of people in the community were concerned about the public/private partnership because they didn't want to give away their park space to an organization they weren't familiar with. The Sanneh Foundation, at that time, wasn't administrating in this part of town.

They were in the Grand Ave. area offic-

ing out of some apartment units. They were just a small nonprofit with a couple of staff and were focused on providing free summer camps for kids, working in their "Dreamline" programs, and arranging mentorship opportunities for kids. The Sanneh Foundation had never run a public park before, and they needed the space because they were expanding, and it was an opportunity for the Conway Recreation Center to stay open because the city was going to close the space.

"The Conway Recreation Center is an incubator space for us to do our mission, as the Sanneh Foundation," Griffin said. "It's there to provide a safe place for the community's youth, to mentor them, and be a safe haven for the community. But for the Sanneh Foundation, the Conway Recreation Center is used to empower, to improve, and unite those individuals."

The Sanneh Foundation works to address the social determinates of health, so they believe in providing access to food, safe places to play, work, athletics, a positive caring mentor, and in keeping the mind and body active. When they have access to those social determinates, studies show that people remain productive and live longer and healthier lives by removing barriers to help them become more self-sufficient.

"We raise all of our own money for operations and programming," Griffin said, "and the Parks Department helps maintain the space. The city helps us with maintaining the park's infrastructure, so we can do our work for the community. They are better equipped with the resources and expertise to sustain the facilities and ultimately own them. The Parks Department is generally inundated with work orders around the city, so they are often stretched very thin, and we pitch in where we can."

"Given our ability to be creative in raising our own resources and diverse income streams, we are able to relieve the burden to the taxpayers by being at Conway and operating a publicly accessible park. We have quite a few local neighbors who come to the recreation center to volunteer in whatever capacity is needed."

The Conway Recreation Center serves thousands of adults and youth each year. They facilitate a "Youthprise" food distribution, and that's targeted towards families with youth in the St. Paul School District. Youthprise is a nonprofit organization based in Minneapolis whose mission is to increase equity with and for indigenous, low-income, and racially diverse youth. The Conway Center does food dis-

tribution through a drive-through and client choice models. People drive up and can point to what they want on the tables because they are still getting out of that COVID bubble. Different meal services are available throughout the week.

"We serve very diverse families: Karen, Latino, Hmong (especially on this side of town), and African American," Griffin said. "Karen is a Southeast Asian (Thailand-Burma) community, and it's an emerging population that's really come about in the last eight years on the East Side of St. Paul and still growing. We partner with several Karen organizations on a variety of activities at the community center, as well as employ many Karen youth in the community. We provide a lot of Futsal (indoor, modified soccer), outdoor soccer, and volleyball. The ball in futsal is different, and the way the game is played is different than in soccer, but it's really popular to those populations."

"We serve about 2000 families/households a week with just food resources, and we pop up at different locations around the Twin Cities metro each week as well. We also do our "Summer Splash" program here for kids; 40 to 60 kids from each community come in every day. We serve them three square meals a day plus snacks, and they tend to spend all day at the center (8 a.m. to 6 p.m.). We provide a safe place for them to come and enjoy doing activities with other kids their age all summer long."

The "summer slide" is more prevalent since COVID, in which programs like The Sanneh Foundation's "Dreamline" helps address these gaps during the school year, as staff are inside the school, mentoring hundreds of kids that aren't obtaining their educational outcomes for whatever reason. It could be a family situation, access to transportation, or another barrier, but The Sanneh Foundation navigates those barriers through relationship building and social, emotional learning.

"I would say," Griffin said, "that our Dreamline program has been able to demonstrate such a high level of success due to our ability to recruit and retain young professionals and mentors of color that reflect the students we serve. These mentors create authentic relationships with our youth, which is the bedrock to success."

The Conway Recreation Center has free summer camps for kids — and that's as many as 10,000 kids every year. They are actually sports camps, like soccer, football, track, and basketball. The youth go

to different parks all around the area; The Sanneh Foundation and Conway Recreation Center have contracts with several different cities to provide these services. Soccer is a popular sport that the kids really enjoy, and the Conway Recreation Center and The Sanneh Foundation are known for it, primarily because their CEO is a former world cup soccer star. Tony Sanneh played in the late 1990s through the 2000s, and he retired in 2008. He is an East Side of St. Paul guy, and played for team USA and in Germany. He played in the World Cup and played for the LA Galaxy; he's played all over the world.

"I would like to talk a little bit about the fire," Griffin said. "It was a suspected arson event and it happened in the early hours of June 20<sup>th</sup>, the day after the Juneteenth celebration. Early Sunday morning about 3 a.m., someone set fire to the building. They piled pallets, accelerant, cardboard, and lit it on fire at the west entrance. The police responded; the parks responded; they closed up the community center and did an awesome job. The security cameras show that when the alarms went off, the police responded very quickly and put out the fire. Fortunately, we had just invested in some security access systems and sensors in the building, so that helped out in the quick response time and limited the damage."

"We don't know who started the fire; there are no leads on it, but we are still out there looking to see if we can figure out who did it. It doesn't matter what the motivation was, but it displaced our programs for about three weeks, and we are still reeling from it. We're still trying to go through the insurance process. The Conway Recreation Center is currently open at a limited capacity; we're just opening by reservation and by program. We are not open for public drop-in due to capacity limitation since we have one less emergency exit on the west side of the building at this time. That part of the building is needed, so it limits the amount of people we can allow into that space, which is frustrating."

The Conway Recreation Center address is: 2090 Conway St., St. Paul, MN. You can reach them at 651-690-4855.

-Mark Gallagher

Mark Gallagher is the associate editor of the *Dayton's Bluff District Forum* and a graduate of the Metropolitan State University. Mark can be reached at [refineditorial@gmail.com](mailto:refineditorial@gmail.com)



The Sanneh Foundation

Here is a picture of the gym at Conway Recreation Center, and a great picture, on the gym wall of Tony Sanneh and a youth, and some mentors at work.



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# Remembering the East Side Explosion

Terri Taray

The day is July 21...It's a warm summer evening and I'm sitting on my deck. I'm still taken aback and heartbroken, as I reflect on the events of July 22,1993 — to many lifelong East Siders — this date is hard to forget. This was the date there was a massive explosion in the Dayton's Bluff area of the East Side.

I met with some community members of this neighborhood this past week who offered to see if we could devise a plan for a permanent marker on the corner of East 3rd Street and Maria to honor those heroes of that day and those who lost their lives in this tragic event.

I was asked that day if I'd be interested in writing an article for the Dayton's Bluff paper about that day.

That day is STILL quite emotional for me — ALL these years later! I dug out the old *Pioneer Press* newspaper articles I'd saved, AND — just sort of fell apart!

That day comes back to me in these horrible flashes! I think it was the first time in my life I experienced SHOCK.

It was shortly after 9 a.m., I was barely 20 years old back then and had been out the night before...The explosion, itself BLEW me out of a deep sleep AND out of my BED! Even a good five blocks away — on 6th Street and Bates Ave. where I'd grown up and lived.

My Mom, an employee at Saint Paul Ramsey Hospital, Now Regions, getting a call about an "Orange Alert."

Then finding out that my good friend Donna Guthrie, who lived in the apartments on 3rd and Maria was home instead of at the Subway sandwich shop we both worked at!

As I re-read these old newspaper clippings, I was left a little confused. I'd always been told Donna had aided Ali Artoli — the Phoenix grocery store owner in getting folks out of the building, but these old articles say different.

I am still sickened when I read that she was found in the hot rubble by two neighbors, who pulled her out and dragged her away from the hot ash!

When I first moved back into the Dayton's Bluff area, it was the 25th anniversary of the explosion, and I tried to contact someone about a memorial then but didn't get anywhere. I honestly feel these people were heroes and this event is memorable and that there should be a permanent marker or memorial on this site. This day was life alerting for many folks in this community at that time, and I'm sure I'm not the only one this day haunts.

I'd like to mention that Donna Guthrie was a rare and unique person, who mentored the teens of the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood — keeping their minds on the positive and life's bigger picture. She was SO FULL of LIFE!

In closing, I'd like to pay tribute to Ali Artoli the grocery store owner who ran up into the apartments to warn the tenants to the oncoming danger.

To the gentlemen who risked their own lives when they dug Donna out of the hot debris — Dusty Niederer and Kevin Murphy — you gentlemen are amazing.

Finally, to Gordon Raths, Howard Husnik, and Donna Guthrie, who lost their lives that day; in this Dayton's Bluff community, in my heart, and in many others, you will NEVER be forgotten!

I'd also like to add if anyone knows the right city officials who could be contacted about a permanent memorial marker or if you have any updates on those in this article I'd appreciate knowing about them. You could email me at luckterri13@gmail.com.



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Many thanks to our Friends of the Forum 2021 donors:

- Maureen Anderson
- Anonymous Donor
- Carol Carey
- Greg Cosimini
- Carol Carey



Mike Yungers

Pictured above is Sunisa Lee's family (left to right: sisters, brother, mother and father) on the stage outside of Aldrich Arena during the program that followed the parade on White Bear Ave.



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@Dayton's Bluff District Forum

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The Dayton's Bluff District Forum has been a volunteer-run newspaper since the 1980s and has always operated on a minimal budget. Each issue costs around \$1,900 to produce and mail, per month.

For the past three years we have been soliciting donations through our Friends of the Forum program. Thanks to the donations from readers like you, we have been able to keep the paper up and running.

If you value this community source of information, please consider filling out the form below. Any amount is appreciated; you may also make memorial donations, or include the Forum in your legacy planning.

If you have been our Friend in the past, please renew your membership with a donation in 2021. Our goal for 2021 is \$18,000; thanks to readers like you, we've raised \$1,815 to date – will you help us reach our goal in 2021?

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Thank you for your support!