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# South St. Paul Voice



Fall Home Improvement  
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Volume 21 | Number 9

Your Community News & Information Source

September 2024

## Local baker dishes out artful desserts

Jake Spitzack  
Staff Writer

Anyone with a sweet tooth will be thrilled to learn of the delectable cheesecakes and pies being concocted by South St. Paul resident John Miller. The longtime baker opened a shop called Forever Cheesecakes and Pies on August 1. But wait, there's no brick-and-mortar location quite yet. Those looking for his sweet treats must call or email to place an order and he'll deliver them to your home.

Apple streusel, chocolate ganache and banana pudding are just a few of the popular New-York style cheesecakes on the menu. Each is decorated with different toppings, such as caramel drizzle or glazed fruit, and it all sits on tender crusts of either vanilla wafer or graham cracker. Other flavors include turtle, blueberry, Oreo, Cap'n Crunch Berry and the gluten-free Fruity Pebbles.

As the name suggests, a wide assortment of pies is available as well. You'll find Key lime, lemon meringue and sweet potato, as well as mini cheesecakes, cheesecake bites and cake pops. Miller plans to offer cakes, cookies, muffins, bread and more in the future. A handful of the ingredients are grown in his large backyard garden.

"I'm not buying the cheapest thing [ingredients] I can get to sell and that's what separates me from a lot of people," said Miller, who noted that his creations are best enjoyed within a few days and that he can

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## School district launches new academic strategic plan

Jake Spitzack  
Staff Writer



South St. Paul Public Schools is launching a new K-12 academic strategic plan designed to increase the number of students meeting grade level standards in core subjects and give students more freedom to choose elective classes. It's called Pathway to Packer Promise and it's replacing the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years and Primary Years programs, which have served grades K-10 since 2008. Students in grades 11 and 12 still have the option to take IB courses and obtain an IB Diploma, which can earn them college credits.

Each grade will see changes this year under the new model. In elementary, children will have science class as part of

their regular schedule. Spanish class has been pushed to sixth grade. Extra before- and after-school activities, such as math masters and art club, are also expected to kick off to help supplement school day programming. In middle school, students will get their first brush with the four career "pathways," which are computer science and business, transportation and trades, health and human services, and 4-year college/IB Diploma. They will be able to sample classes for a trimester at a time to help determine where their interests and strengths lie.

"The hard thing with the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program (MYP) was there were so many restrictions on what we had to do, like how

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## City council takes action on PFAS

Jake Spitzack  
Staff Writer

In mid-August, the South St. Paul City Council approved paying the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) \$1.2 million to evaluate and create options for reducing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as "forever chemicals," in the city's public drinking water. It's estimated that seven of the city's eight wells currently fail new drinking water standards set in April by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The limit is 4 parts per trillion. The MPCA is expected to complete well monitoring and create plans within three years. The city has five years to fix the problem.

This is not an emergency situation in South St. Paul, according to city officials, so there is no need to seek an alternative source of water or boil water. If you have specific health concerns, it is recommended that you consult with your doctor or health-care provider.

PFAS are prevalent in the environment and have been used since the 1940s in products such as nonstick cookware, stain-resistant clothing and firefighting foam. Exposure to certain PFAS over a long period of time can cause cancer and other illnesses, and exposure during pregnancy or early childhood can result in adverse health effects. For more information on PFAS and the new drinking water standard, visit [epa.gov](http://epa.gov).

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## SSP and Dakota County join forces to fight fentanyl crisis

Jake Spitzack  
Staff Writer

A new program dedicated to halting the terrible trend of young adults dying from overdoses of illegal fentanyl is in the works for West St. Paul and South St. Paul. The cities are among the hardest hit by the fentanyl crisis in Dakota County.

The cities have partnered with Gateway Recovery Services to apply for two

grants to kickstart a Community Opioid Response and Education program, which would be housed at the South Metro Fire Department. The grants would cover costs for a community EMT, certified peer recovery specialist, and a licensed drug and alcohol counselor. The staff would work with at-risk individuals and likely join first responders on cases involving drug overdoses.

The cities expect to hear by the end of October

whether they will receive the \$1.3 million federal grant or the \$700,000 state grant; they only need one to come through to launch the program. This is the second year the cities have applied for grants to start the program. They were denied funding last year and if they're turned down again this year, they will explore using funds recently received from Dakota County to launch a smaller scale pilot program.

According to the Minne-

sota Department of Health, fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 50 times more potent than heroin, is involved in 92% of all opioid-involved deaths. Health officials say 6 out of 10 pills contain a lethal dose. Likewise, many other drugs are now being laced with fentanyl to make them more addicting and cheaper to produce and therefore Fentanyl is involved in 62% of all overdose deaths in Minnesota, according to 2022 data. West St. Paul

and South St. Paul, have had 1,037 overdose incidents since 2020; 60% of them in ages 40 and under.

The State of Minnesota received more than \$300 million in a settlement payout early this year as part of several multi-state lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors – total settlement amount to all states combined exceeded \$46 billion. Every county in the state is getting a portion of that funding, which will

be doled out annually over the next 18 years to combat the crisis. Cities with populations over 30,000 will receive additional funds. While South St. Paul and West St. Paul are among the most impacted by opioid overdoses, their populations were too small to warrant direct funding. However, Dakota County already received its 2024 portion – \$2.42 million – and

**Drug task force / Page 12**

# New bakery

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make any kind of cheesecake a customer requests.

Miller is a Chicago native and Navy veteran who discovered his love for baking while attending Madison Area Technical College in Wisconsin. After receiving a culinary degree he eventually founded a baking education program in Madison, which he operated for two years. It still functions today as Just-Dane. In 2015, he moved to Minnesota to help care for elderly family.

"I wanted to open a bakery when I first moved here but I didn't know where I was going to do it and I didn't know a lot of people

here," he said. "It was always on my mind."

After a brief stint in construction, he decided to go for it earlier this year but had no luck finding a suitable location in South St. Paul. Fortunately, the owner of East Side Pizzeria in St. Paul, which he frequents, was willing to build a new kitchen for him next door to his location and allow him to rent it.

Miller's wife Sara, a registered nurse and a cheese specialist at Lunds & Byerlys in downtown St. Paul, was going to be his primary bakery assistant but she sustained

severe injuries in a recent car accident while commuting to work and is unable to work at this time. Miller is seeking another committed baker to join his team for the long term, and he's willing to impart his knowledge on how to craft finicky desserts.

He would one day like to open a storefront in South St. Paul but even then may only continue to make his treats-to-order. Currently, orders must be placed 24-48 hours in advance. Cheesecakes go for \$50 and pies \$35.

"The bakery I had in Madison used to sell to churches and businesses and I want to get back into that," said Miller. "I was going to three

or four churches a week. I would fill my van all the way up.... I can make 48-96 mini cheesecakes at a time and they're great for events like graduation parties."

He is working on getting a refrigerated truck so he can carry more products for longer periods. Until he gets a truck he'll continue delivering in his turbocharged Audi SUV. He's also continually experimenting with new kinds of desserts, much to the pleasure of his 10 grandkids.

For more information or to place an order, call 608-212-7764 or visit foreverpies.com. Orders can also be picked up at his commercial kitchen at 1048 Payne Ave., St. Paul.



Miller is a Chicago native and Navy veteran who discovered his love for baking while attending college in Wisconsin.

## Local author receives gold medal award

South St. Paul author Margaret A. Blenkush's debut novel "The Doctor of Bellechester" won a gold medal in the Religious Fiction category in the 2024 Next Generation Indie Book

Awards, the world's largest book awards program for independent publishers and self-published authors. "Welcome to Bellechester," the second book in her Dr. M.E. Senty series, was a finalist and received a silver medal in the same category.

The Next Generation Indie Book Awards are judged

by leaders of the independent book publishing industry, including many with long careers at major publishing houses. To help indie authors and publishers reach a broader audience, the winning books in the 80-plus categories will be reviewed by a New York literary agent for possible representation.

"The Doctor of Bellechester" was published in 2022 by Pond Reads Press. It was a finalist in the 2023 Wishing Shelf Awards - London, received an honorable mention in the Catholic Fiction and Best Cover Art categories from the 2023 Catholic Media Book Awards, and received 5-star reviews from

Readers View and Reader's Favorite. "Welcome to Bellechester" was published in 2024 by Pond Reads Press and earned 5-star reviews from Reader Views and Reader's Favorite. For more information on the books and their author, visit margaretablenkush.com.

## Student notes

**University of Dallas dean's list:** Maximilian Hastreiter

**St. Lawrence University:** Cameron Buhl earned All-Academic honors in hockey in the Eastern Conference Athletic Conference

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**The South St. Paul Voice** is published monthly and distributed to 8,500 homes and high traffic businesses in South St. Paul.

<b>Publisher &amp; Editor:</b> Tim Spitzack	<b>Marketing Manger:</b> Jake Spitzack
<b>Copy Editor:</b> Leslie Martin	<b>Contributors:</b> Carrie Classon Joe Atkins Dawn Wambeke
<b>Staff Writer:</b> Jake Spitzack	

For questions regarding news or advertising, call 651-457-1177

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1643 So. Robert St., West St. Paul, MN 55118  
651-457-1177 | [info@stpaulpublishing.com](mailto:info@stpaulpublishing.com) | [www.stpaulpublishing.com](http://www.stpaulpublishing.com)

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# Curriculum

from page 1

often we could offer a course, how long we could offer a course, and what courses we could offer," said South St. Paul Public Schools Communications Manager Lisa Brandecker. "Students didn't have a whole lot of choice in their classes. By doing away with MYP, and opening up this pathway, students really have a larger voice in their educational experience, which is pretty exciting."

High school students will meet more often with school counselors and staff to discuss which electives to take and whether they need more support or more challenges in specific subjects, and to make plans for after graduation. Also starting this fall, students will be able to receive high school and college credit by taking college-level courses through Inver Hills Community College.

The classes will be taught by high school teachers at the high school.

The district is also working to add a course on agriculture, natural resources and sustainability to its TriDistrict Centers for Advanced Professional Studies (CAPS) program, which gives students opportunities to obtain work experience. The course is still in its planning stages but is expected to begin this school year. Other CAPS courses include healthcare and medicine, transportation business and

technologies, business and entrepreneurship, information technology/computer science and urban education.

Also new this year is what the district is calling a "talent development program," to provide opportunities for more advanced learning for students K-12 who are already doing well in school. In addition, said Brandecker, the district will provide more support for students who are struggling.

Much of the new plan was guided by community feedback received by the district's

advisory committee over the past year. Special School District 6, like many others, is still rebounding from the adverse effects the pandemic had on learning. Last year, statewide graduation rates and math, reading and science scores were all down compared to 2019. In South St. Paul, graduation rates and science scores improved from 2019, but math and reading scores were down from 32% to 26% and 45% to 35%, respectively.

On a separate note, South St. Paul Public Schools is in

its first year of working with the I Love You Guys Foundation, which provides staff training for emergency situations such as lock downs and evacuations. In June, more than 90 staff across all positions received training.

The South St. Paul Police Department still has two community service officers in the school to help maintain safety.

For more information about the new academic strategic plan, visit [sspps.org/academics/packer-pathway](http://sspps.org/academics/packer-pathway).



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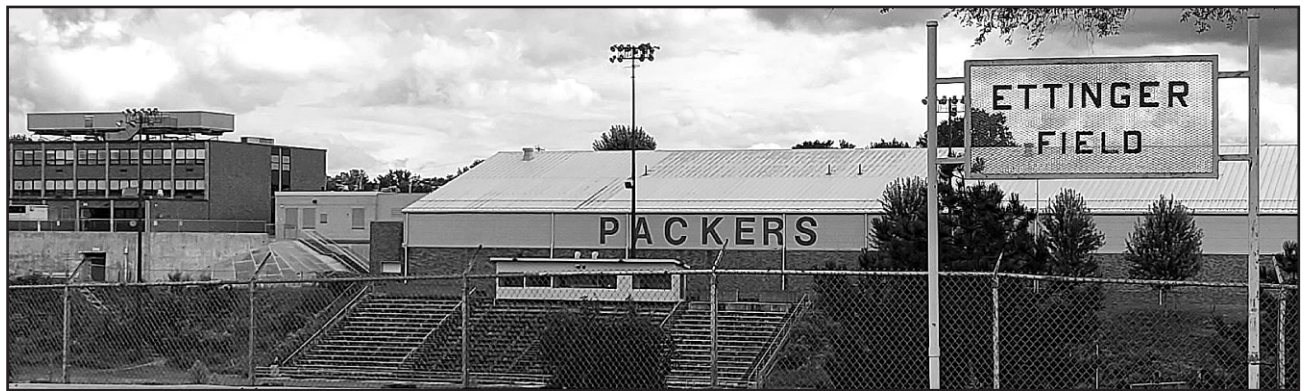
# Ettinger Field supports a century-old tradition

**Tim Spitzack**  
Editor

As the sun begins to melt into the late-summer sky on Friday, Sept. 7, a group of chiseled young men will be milling about a locker room dreaming of greatness on the gridiron. Butterflies will flutter within as each looks inward to visualize the battle that stands before them. Some will be getting athletic tape tightly wrapped around their wrists, ankles or other joints, while others may smear on face paint or go through some private pre-game ritual. Minutes before the season's home opener begins, they'll lace up their cleats, strap on shoulder pads, pull a maroon and white jersey over top and get ready to sprint out onto Ettinger Field to carry on a century-old school tradition.

The playing field once was a cornfield and potato patch owned by the Mahoney family. It was Sam Ettinger who convinced the school to purchase the property, which sits in a natural bowl and is today one of the region's most iconic high school sporting fields.

Ettinger came to South St. Paul in 1922 as the school's athletic director. He was young, ambitious and fresh out of teachers' college. He took over the sports programs – baseball and basketball – and quickly recruited 14 student athletes to form the school's first football team. It was a rough and tumble sport in those days. Athletes played on both offense and defense, wore padded leather skullcaps without facemasks and practiced at Vets Field ballpark on Ninth Avenue North until the new field was created in 1930.



Ettinger coached until 1940 and remained athletic director until his retirement in 1968. During his coaching tenure he led three teams to the state tournament. In football, he topped a 70% winning average (61-22-3), won three conference titles and coached gridiron great Stan Kostka, who was an All American on the 1934 University of Minnesota team that won the national championship, and who played for one year in the National

Football League (NFL). In 1977, the playing field was named in Ettinger's honor.

Over the years, the South St. Paul football team has garnered 17 conference/district championships, been to the state tournament nine times, and captured the state championship in 1950 under Coach John Kulbitski. Two additional alumni played in the NFL.

Jim LeClair had the longest NFL career. He was selected in the third round

of the 1972 draft by the Cincinnati Bengals and played linebacker for the team for 12 seasons. He was named to the Pro Bowl in 1976, and played in Super Bowl XVI in 1982, which the Bengals lost to the San Francisco 49ers, 26-21. He finished his football career playing two seasons (1984-1985) with the New Jersey Generals in the United States Football League.

Jim Carter was a legendary running back for the South

St. Paul Packers and found success years later with a team that shared a name with his high school. After graduation, Carter excelled as a fullback at the University of Minnesota, and in 1970 was drafted as a linebacker by the Green Bay Packers in the third round of the NFL draft. He played nine seasons for the Packers, was defensive captain 1973-79 and made the Pro Bowl in 1973.

## Cross Country

**Friday, Aug. 30**, 8 a.m., at Rosemount High School  
**Tuesday, Sept. 10**, 5 p.m., at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park  
**Sat., Sept. 14**, 5:30 p.m. at Flying Cloud Fields, Eden Prairie  
**Thurs., Sept. 26**, 5 p.m. at Levi P. Dodge Middle School, Farmington  
**Sat., Oct. 5**, 9 a.m., at Simley  
**Tues., Oct. 15**, 3 p.m., at St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park (varsity conference championships)

## Football

**Fri., Aug. 30**, 7 p.m., at St. Croix Lutheran Academy  
**Fri., Sept. 6**, 7 p.m., vs. Blake  
**Fri., Sept. 13**, 6 p.m., at Minneapolis North  
**Fri., Sept. 20**, 7 p.m., vs. North St. Paul  
**Fri., Sept. 27**, 7 p.m., at Simley  
**Fri., Oct. 4**, 7 p.m., at Hill-Murray  
**Fri., Oct. 11**, 7 p.m., vs. St. Anthony Village (Homecoming)  
**Wed., Oct. 16**, 7 p.m. vs. Byron

## Soccer, boys

**Tues., Aug. 27**, 5 p.m., vs. Jordan  
**Tues., Sept. 3**, 7 p.m., vs. St. Paul Humboldt  
**Thurs., Sept. 5**, 7 p.m., vs. Mahtomedi



## Fall Sport Schedules

**Sat., Sept. 7**, noon, vs. Highland Park  
**Mon., Sept. 9**, 5 p.m., at North St. Paul  
**Wed., Sept. 11**, 7 p.m., at St. Thomas Academy  
**Tues., Sept. 17**, 7 p.m., at Byron  
**Thurs., Sept. 19**, 5 p.m., vs. Two Rivers  
**Sat., Sept. 21**, 7 p.m., at Richfield  
**Tues., Sept. 24**, 7 p.m., at Tartan  
**Thurs., Sept. 26**, 5 p.m., vs. Simley  
**Tues., Oct. 1**, 7 p.m., vs. Hastings  
**Thurs., Oct. 3**, 7 p.m., at Hill-Murray  
**Fri., Oct. 4**, 4:30 p.m., at St. Paul Johnson

## Soccer, girls

**Wed., Aug. 28**, 7 p.m., at Cretin-Derham Hall  
**Tues., Sept. 3**, 5 p.m., vs. St. Paul Johnson  
**Thurs., Sept. 5**, 5 p.m., vs. Mahtomedi  
**Mon., Sept. 9**, 7 p.m., at North St. Paul  
**Wed., Sept. 11**, 7 p.m., vs. St. Croix Prep  
**Tues., Sept. 17**, 7 p.m., at Academy of Holy Angels  
**Thurs., Sept. 19**, 7 p.m., vs. Two Rivers  
**Sat., Sept. 21**, 5 p.m., at Richfield  
**Tues., Sept. 24**, 5 p.m., at Tartan  
**Thurs., Sept. 26**, 7 p.m., vs. Simley  
**Tues., Oct. 1**, 5 p.m., vs. Hastings  
**Thurs., Oct. 3**, 5 p.m., at Hill-Murray  
**Sat., Oct. 5**, noon, vs. Duluth East

## Swimming and Diving

**Thurs., Aug. 29**, 6 p.m., vs. Simley  
**Thurs., Sept. 5**, 6 p.m., at Two Rivers  
**Thurs., Sept. 12**, 6 p.m., vs. North St. Paul  
**Sat., Sept. 14**, 1 p.m., at Spring Lake Park  
**Tues., Sept. 17**, 6 p.m., vs. Park  
**Thurs., Sept. 19**, 6 p.m., at Tartan  
**Tues., Sept. 24**, 6 p.m., vs. Columbia Heights  
**Thurs., Sept. 26**, 6 p.m., at Hastings  
**Thurs., Oct. 3**, 6 p.m., vs. Hill-Murray  
**Thursday, Oct. 10**, 6 p.m., vs. Mahtomedi  
**Fri., Oct. 25**, 6 p.m., at Hastings (conference meet)

## Tennis

**Thurs., Sept. 5**, 3:30 p.m., vs. Hastings  
**Sat., Sept. 7**, 8:30 a.m., at Roseville (quadrangular)  
**Tues., Sept. 10**, 3:30 p.m., vs. Two Rivers  
**Wed., Sept. 11**, 4 p.m., at Burnsville  
**Thurs., Sept. 12**, 4 p.m., vs. Simley  
**Sat., Sept. 14**, 8:30 p.m., at East Ridge (invitational)  
**Mon., Sept. 16**, 4 p.m., at Park  
**Tues., Sept. 17**, 3:30 p.m., at North St. Paul  
**Thurs., Sept. 19**, 3:30 p.m., at Hill-Murray  
**Tues., Sept. 24**, 3:30 p.m., at Tartan  
**Thurs., Sept. 26**, 3:30 p.m., at Mahtomedi

## Volleyball

**Mon., Aug. 26**, 6:30 p.m., vs. Cretin-Derham Hall  
**Wed., Aug. 28**, 6:30 p.m., vs. St. Anthony Village  
**Thurs., Sept. 5**, 6:30 p.m., at Roosevelt  
**Tues., Sept. 10**, 6:30 p.m., vs. Bloomington Kennedy  
**Thurs., Sept. 12**, 6:30 p.m., at Two Rivers  
**Fri., Sept. 13**, 5 p.m., at Heritage Christian Academy (invitational)  
**Sat., Sept. 14**, 8 a.m., at Heritage Christian Academy (invitational)  
**Tues., Sept. 17**, 6:30 p.m., at Mahtomedi  
**Thurs., Sept. 19**, 6:30 p.m., vs. Tartan  
**Thurs., Sept. 26**, 6:30 p.m., at Hill-Murray  
**Sat., Sept. 28**, 8 a.m., at Park (tournament)  
**Tues., Oct. 1**, 7 p.m., at St. Paul Highland Park  
**Wed., Oct. 2**, 6:30 p.m., at North St. Paul  
**Tues., Oct. 8**, 7 p.m., at Como Park  
**Thurs., Oct. 10**, 6:30 p.m., vs. Simley  
**Tues., Oct. 15**, 6:30 p.m., vs. Hastings

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# City council

from page 1

gov and search "PFAS." The funding came from a one-time grant from the State of Minnesota.

## City library building

The City of South St. Paul recently hired the Minneapolis-based firm New History to complete a feasibility study determining three or more options for the repurposing of the former city library building. The \$150,000 project is being covered by a \$175,000

grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), which was secured this year after a minor delay due to unclear language used in the grant. The options are expected to be presented to the city council in late spring 2025. It should be noted that a previous study found it would cost \$4.42 million to address deferred maintenance items at the property through 2032, including \$1.82 million in critical deferred maintenance items

that are recommended for replacement by 2026. Big ticket items include boiler and roof replacement, and significant exterior brick restoration.

## Wakota Crossing

Capital Partners Development recently ended its preliminary development agreement with the City of South St. Paul for the redevelopment of 15 acres zoned for light industrial south of I-494, dubbed Wakota Crossing. The agreement had been in place since late 2022 but the developer backed out because of rising costs for soil remedia-

tion and poor access to the site. The city's community gardens are in this area and will remain put for now.

## South Concord Corridor Study

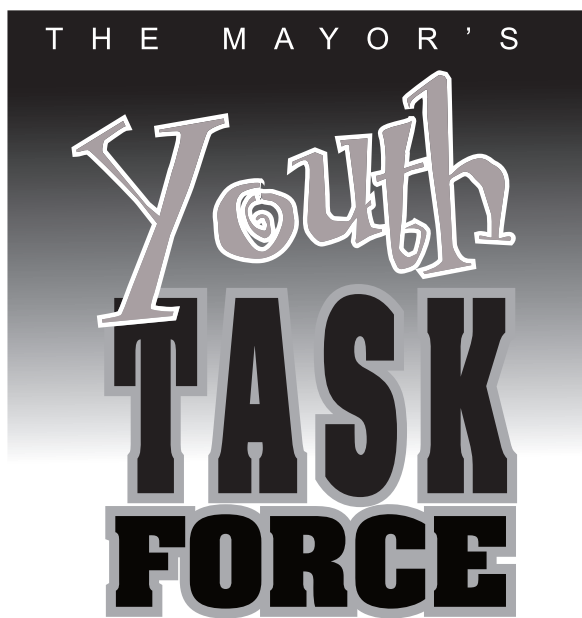
The South St. Paul City Council recently hired Swanson Haskamp Consulting to complete a market study of the South Concord Corridor and develop a long-term plan for its development. The corridor is in the southeastern corner of South St. Paul between Interstate 494 and the community's southern border with Inver Grove Heights. The project was called for in

the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, adopted in October 2020, and satisfies action steps in the city's land use, economic development and transportation plans. The city is using \$35,000 from the economic development authority's redevelopment fund and \$25,000 from a redevelopment incentive grant from Dakota County to fund the work. Swanson Haskamp Consulting is partnering with Michael Lamb Consulting to undertake the project. These two companies partnered in 2021 to assist the city with the North Concord Mixed-Use Zoning District Update,

a smaller corridor study that addressed zoning challenges on Concord Street north of Wentworth Avenue.

## Primary election results

The August 12 Primary Election narrowed down mayoral candidates for the General Election held November 5. More than 12,000 residents were registered to vote, and 1,867 cast a ballot. Mark Westpfahl received the majority of votes at 49.33%, and incumbent Jimmy Francis received 46.06%. Eddie Wu received 4.61% and will not be on the ballot for the General Election.



It's hard to believe that in just a few days South St. Paul youth will be heading back to school. Some will return to a familiar setting and others to a new location. We wish all students a great start to the school year.

September is a great month to join the Mayor's Youth Task Force. It's open to anyone in grades 4-12 who is looking for ways to give back to the community, has ideas for the youth in the community, or is looking to earn community service hours.

To let youth know of opportunities that exist with

the task force and how to get involved, we're hosting an information fair 5-6:30 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 17 at Angelo's Italian Restaurant, 1203 Southview Blvd. Pizza will be served and the event is free. For more information or to RSVP, contact Deb Griffith at 651-554-3230 or deb.griffith@southstpaul.org. If you cannot attend, contact Deb to find out how to get involved.

Throughout the year, the task force heads up the Annual Community Food Drive, DISCO Bingo, Kaposia Days Kiddie Parade, Fill the Backpack campaign, The

Great Halloween Get Together, SSP CommUNITY Grams, the Senior Citizens' Thanksgiving Dinner and the Annual Tree Lighting event and helps with pumpkin recycling after Halloween. New this year, we will partner with Neighbors, Inc. on a fun community project. Details will be released soon.

Thanks to everyone who contributed school supplies and money to the 2024 Fill the Backpack campaign. With your help, we filled the needed number of backpacks and even supplied items for classrooms within the district. Task force members

spent time in August collecting, sorting and filling backpacks for students in need at South St. Paul schools. If you have a student in the South St. Paul School District who needs a filled backpack or school supplies, contact the administration office of the school your child is attending this fall.



**Metzen Realty and Associates Co.**  
412 Southview Blvd.  
651-455-2214  
metzenrealty.com

The following events are held at Kaposia Library, 115 7th Ave. N., South St Paul. For more information, visit [itco.dakota.mn.us/libraries](http://itco.dakota.mn.us/libraries) or call 651-480-0900.

**Storytime for ages 2-6**, 10:30-11 a.m., Thursday, Sept. 12, 19 and 26.

**Storytime for babies**, 10:30-11 a.m., Friday, Sept. 13, 20 and 27.

**Kaposia Book Club**, 7-8 p.m., Monday, Sept. 9. The Title is "Of Women and

Salt" by Gabriela Garcia. New members welcome.

**Skateboard Art**, 2:30-4:30 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 17. Each participant will receive a skateboard deck without wheels to design. Registration required. Ages 12-18.

**Fix-it Clinic**, 3-6 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 18. Bring up to three items and receive free help with repair (small household electronics, clothing, jewelry, etc.).

**Lego Stamping**, 1:30-

3:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 23. Create a unique art piece using Lego blocks, stamp pads and paint. Ages 6 and older.

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**V**  
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**N**  
**T**  
**S**

Call 651-480-0900 or visit [www.dakota.mn.us/libraries](http://www.dakota.mn.us/libraries)

## Sanimax USA fined for air permit violations at SSP facility

Sanimax USA LLC was fined \$55,000 for air permit violations at its animal products rendering facility in South St. Paul. According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the company failed to seek a required major air permit amendment and conduct air emissions modeling prior to making changes to its pollution control equipment systems. An MPCA staff inspection in May 2023 confirmed that the company had taken a piece of pollution control

equipment required by the permit to control emissions out of service. The company routed the emissions to a different type of control equipment that was not permitted and had no enforceable conditions. Sanimax also failed to conduct air quality modeling before making these changes in 2019.

Other violations included failing to consistently conduct daily visible emissions checks and failing to report excessive deviations of

pressure drop and water flow rate readings for pollution control equipment.

In addition to the \$55,000 civil penalty, Sanimax has been required to complete a series of corrective actions including:

- Putting required pollution control equipment back into operation and ensuring emissions from their process are controlled by permitted equipment. This occurred in September 2023.
- Submitting a plan to

ensure future projects and plans will be evaluated so modeling requirements will be completed when needed.

- Submitting a plan to ensure that daily monitoring is conducted and pollution control equipment operates within permitted limits.

When calculating penalties, the MPCA considers how seriously the violations affected or could have affected the environment, and whether they were first-time or repeat violations.

## IMMEDIATE OPENING

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Looking for a heavy equipment technician to service the Inver Grove Heights area. Hydraulics experience required. Must be able to obtain a 1-year DOT Medical Card. Must have valid driver's license. Class B CDL preferred.

To apply, contact  
**Charles Turner**  
[Charles.Turner@hiab.com](mailto:Charles.Turner@hiab.com)

**419-764-8514**

# Arts & Entertainment

## Children's Museum

10 7th St. W.  
St. Paul  
651-225-6000  
mcm.org

**Monsters on Summer Vacation**, through September 2. Monsters of all shapes and sizes are spending their summer vacation at the museum. Maneuver through the monster obstacle course, show off your best moves at the monster disco, feed the giant monster and more.

**Exhibits and activities** include "The Scramble," "The Studio," "Creativity Jam," "Sprouts," "Our World," "Forces at Play," "Shipwreck Adventures" and "Imaginopolis." Tickets are \$17 on weekdays and \$19 on weekends. Admission is free the first Sunday of each month; reservations are required, and tickets are

limited. The next free date is September 1.

## History Center

345 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul  
651-259-3000  
mnhs.org

**"Reframing our Stories"** is featured through October 2025. The exhibit was created from a decades-old box of photographs simply labeled "Indians." Inside the box were dozens of pictures of Native community members, organizations, activities, and events that are relevant today.

**"Our Home: Native Minnesota"** features historic and contemporary photographs, maps, and artifacts that show how Minnesota's native communities have retained cultural practices, teachings and values.

**Other exhibits** include

"Minnesota's Greatest Generation," "Then Now Wow," "Grainland" and "Weather Permitting." Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors and college students, and \$8 for children ages five to 17.

## History Theatre

30 E. 10th St.  
St. Paul

651-292-4323

Historytheatre.com

**"Behind the Sun,"** September 21-October 13. Obie Kipper has finally found the house of his dreams, but there's one problem: it's 1956 and Obie's dream for the future of his family lies outside his redlined neighborhood, in an all-white neighborhood. With help from an old friend and co-worker, Obie puts in motion a sensational scheme to purchase the house. This may either land him in jail



Summer Nights in Rice, a free outdoor concert series, concludes Sept. 12 with a performance by the Everett Smithson Band, 5-7 p.m.

or help chart the future for his family and all of Minneapolis. Tickets start at \$25.

## Landmark Center

75 5th St. W.  
St. Paul

651-292-3225

landmarkcenter.org

**Woodturning demonstration** in the American Gallery of Wood Art, 1-4 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 15. Free.

**Human/Nature: Photographs from Western National Parks & Monuments** is on display in the North Gallery through September 3. It's a collection of black and white photographs made between 1992 and 2019 in western national parks and monuments that explore the conflict between preservation and development.

## MN Museum of American Art

350 Robert St. N.  
St. Paul  
651-797-2571  
mmaa.org

**"Together,"** is a new exhibit on view through October 13. It consists of mixed media artwork created by 10 Minnesota artists with the help of their children.

**"Hilo de la Sangre (Thread of the Blood),"**

**guild**

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through December 1. Organized with Grupo Soap del Corazón, this exhibition brings together Latine visual artists to consider the significance of blood as the most essential component of life. The museum is open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Thursday-Sunday. Admission is free.

**Ordway Center**

345 Washington St.  
St. Paul  
651-224-4222  
ordway.org

**"Listen!"** 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 7. St. Paul Almanac and Walker|West Music Academy unite to present an evening of poetry and music. From \$39.

**Samara Joy**, 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 12. A live concert from the Grammy Award-winning jazz sensation. From \$45.

**MN Opera GlamJam benefit concert**, 7 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 28. From \$75.

**RiverCentre**

175 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul  
651-265-4800  
rivercentre.org

**Sturgill Simpson** concert

with special guest Johnny Blue Skies, 8 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 25. Ticket prices unavailable at press time.

**Science Museum of Minnesota**

120 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul  
651-221-9444  
smm.org

**"Maya: Hidden Worlds Revealed"** is on display through September 4. Presented in English and Spanish, it features more than 200 authentic artifacts, hands-on activities, lifelike simulations and more.

**Virtual Reality Transporter** - Use the VRT to hurtle through the cosmos at fantastic speeds, scuba dive into prehistoric seas, and join the astronauts of Apollo 11 as they moonwalk for the first time. \$9.95.

**Omnitheater films:** "Deep Sky," through October 31. Uncover the universe as never seen before through the awe-inspiring images of the James Webb Space Telescope.

"Ancient Caves," August 1-February 14, 2025. Join scientists and cave divers to

explore vast underground worlds and elaborate rock foundations in search of geologic clues about the planet's climate history.

"Fungi Web of Life," 7 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays. The film unravels how plants and animals would not exist without mushrooms, molds, yeasts and toadstools.

"Stellar Tours: A Star is Born," Wednesday-Sunday. Follow the life cycle of a star through this live digital telescope show.

Omnitheater tickets are \$9.95. Free for children ages 3 and under. Museum tickets are \$29.95 for adults and \$19.95 for ages 4-17.

**Union Depot**

214 4th St. E., St. Paul  
uniondepot.org

**Free yoga classes** are offered 5:30-6:30 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, and 9-10 a.m., Saturdays.

**Games galore**, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. each Wednesday. Giant-size games are available or bring your own. Free. All ages.

**Red Cross Blood Drive**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 19.

**Xcel Center**

199 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul  
651-726-8240  
xcelenergycenter.com

**Weezer** with special guests The Flaming Lips and Dinosaur Jr., 7 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 4. From \$39.

**Outdoor events**

**Summer Nights in Rice** are free concerts held 5-7 p.m. on select Thursdays in Rice Park, 109 W. 4th St. Performers are Turn, Turn, Turn on Aug. 29 and Everett Smithson Band on Sept. 12.

**The City of Mendota Heights** will present Teddy Bear Band and The Resistors 6-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 4 at Market Square Park, 720 Main St. Free.

**Patio Thursdays**, noon-12:30 p.m., September 19

on Kellogg Mall Plaza by the Science Museum of Minnesota. A lunchtime talk about the Mississippi River with a National Park Service ranger. Bring a picnic or shop the food cart. Free.

**370 Sets**, 4-6 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 26. This free happy hour event on the patio at Osborn370 in downtown St. Paul will feature live music and complimentary drinks.



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Guest Editorial

# South St. Paul: A Case Study in Local Governance

**Ryan Garcia**  
South St. Paul City  
Administrator

In the arena of local governance in Minnesota, home-rule charter cities play a crucial role in shaping local policies and steering the operation, growth and development of their communities. These cities, endowed with greater autonomy and flexibility compared to statutory cities, derive their powers from a charter – a sort of local constitution – that outlines the structure of government, provides formation for certain governmental processes and actions, and articulates the distribution of authority among various local offices.

South St. Paul operates under a home-rule charter (<https://www.southstpaul.org/DocumentCenter/View/1119>), which delineates the roles and responsibilities of key governmental offices, notably the mayor, city council and the city administrator. Understanding how these entities interact and collaborate is essential

to grasping the dynamics of local governance in South St. Paul.

## The role of mayor and city council

The mayor and city council in South St. Paul collectively constitute the legislative body responsible for setting policies, passing ordinances and resolutions, and taking action on issues and opportunities that affect the city's present and future. Comprised of seven part-time members elected by residents of the city, the city council operates under the guidelines specified in the charter, which includes rules on how meetings are conducted, how votes are taken, and the powers vested in the office of the mayor as well as the city council.

In South St. Paul, the mayor presides over city council meetings and serves as the ceremonial head of the city. Beyond these ceremonial duties, the mayor's role involves significant leadership in developing consensus around policymaking and long-term planning. Together with the city council,

the mayor participates in public discussions that shape the city's trajectory over the next decade or more, considering factors such as economic development, infrastructure improvements, and local quality of life.

## Decision-making and policy formation

One of the fundamental aspects governed by the charter is the requirement for a majority vote by the city council to pass ordinances, resolutions and motions. This ensures that official actions and decisions of the city council reflect a consensus among the elected representatives, promoting democratic governance and accountability to the community. Each member of the city council brings unique perspectives and priorities, contributing to thoughtful and comprehensive debates that inform policy outcomes.

The policymaking process in South St. Paul is not limited to immediate issues exclusively but extends to strategic planning aimed at anticipating future chal-

lenges and opportunities. This forward-thinking approach is vital for sustainable growth and resilience in the face of evolving social, cultural, political and economic landscapes.

## Role of the city administrator

While the mayor and city council focus on policymaking and long-term planning, oversight of the day-to-day operations of the city are delegated by the city council to the city administrator. Acting as the chief administrative officer under the authority of the charter, the city administrator translates policies set by the city council into action through various city departments, guides and supervises department heads, communicates and coordinates with county, state, and federal governmental bodies and agencies on issues impacting the city, and ensures that public services are provided by the city in a cost-effective, efficient manner.

The city administrator role is pivotal in maintaining continuity and professional-

ism in city governance, fostering collaboration across departments, and providing expertise on administrative matters.

## Challenges and opportunities

Like many local governments, South St. Paul faces a range of challenges and opportunities as it navigates an increasingly complex urban environment. Issues such as infrastructure maintenance and replacement, economic revitalization, environmental sustainability, and community engagement require proactive leadership and effective governance.

The mayor and city council, guided by the home rule charter, must balance competing interests, engage stakeholders, and make decisions that advance the best interests of all residents. Public input and transparency in decision-making processes are crucial to maintaining trust and accountability, ensuring that policies enacted today contribute positively to the city's well-being into the future.

## Looking ahead

As South St. Paul continues to evolve, the role of its elected officials and administrative leaders will remain pivotal in shaping its destiny. As a home-rule charter city, the City can adapt to changing circumstances, seize opportunities for growth, and uphold its commitment to serving the community effectively and accountably.

In conclusion, home-rule charter cities like South St. Paul exemplify local governance at its most dynamic and responsive. Through the collaborative efforts of the mayor, city council, and city administrator, South St. Paul strives to navigate the complexities of modern local governance while safeguarding the interests and aspirations of our residents. By adhering to the principles of accountability, transparency and forward-thinking leadership, South St. Paul and similar municipalities can build a sustainable future grounded in democratic principles and community engagement.

### Luther Memorial Church

315 15th Ave. N.  
651-451-2400  
luther-memorial.com

### St. Augustine's Catholic Church

408 3rd St. N.  
651-455-1302  
holytrinitysspnmn.org

### First Presbyterian

535 20th Ave. N.  
651-451-6223  
fpcssp.org

### Woodbury Lutheran

Wakota Ridge Campus  
255 W. Douglas St.  
651-739-5144  
woodburylutheran.org

### South St. Paul Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist

140 6th Ave. N.  
651-455-0777

### Grace Lutheran Church

149 8th Ave. S.  
651-451-1035  
grace-ssp.org

### Holy Trinity Catholic Church

Catholic church  
749 6th Ave. S.  
651-455-1302  
holytrinitysspnmn.org

### Clark Grace United Church

779 15th Ave. N.  
651-451-7278  
clarkgraceucc.org

### St. Sava Serbian Orthodox church

357 2nd Ave. S.  
651-451-0775  
www.stsavamn.org

### Saint John Vianney Catholic Church

789 17th Ave. N.  
651-451-1863  
info@sjvssp.org

### Sf. Stefan Romanian Orthodox Church

350 5th Ave. N.  
651-451-3462  
sfantulstefan.org

### St Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church

501 6th Ave. S.  
651-455-8947  
stmarymn.org

# Worship Guide



In this column last September, I talked about Neighbors' upcoming strategic plan to ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and justice (DEIBJ) would continue to live vibrantly throughout our daily work. Since then, we have continued to move the needle forward in

our commitment. We are excited to share that we will be launching a task force to help develop and implement DEIBJ throughout all core aspects of our organization.

The communities served by Neighbors have continued to be diverse, with 65% of our participants iden-

tifying as BIPOC (38% Latine/Hispanic, 16% Black or African American, 8% multiracial, 2% American Indian, 1% Asian, and 35% White). Neighbors' strategic plan includes the following goals: developing shared DEIBJ language, metrics and annual goals, continuing to prioritize the hire and promotion of BIPOC-identifying and bilingual staff; diversifying organizational outreach initiatives and increasing program offerings/communications for those whose first language is not English; and diversifying the representation of lived experience and communities served in Neighbors' board of directors.

Neighbors continues to

ensure that our programming and services incorporate the core principles of DEIBJ. For example, our food shelf has worked hard to diversify its food selection. Meals are a powerful community connector and an important component in honoring and celebrating culture. Today, we carry an array of culturally specific foods, made possible through partnership with local culturally specific grocery stores, donations and purchasing culturally specific foods.

We understand the importance of providing services in an individual's first language. Our newest positions have required candidates to be bilingual in English and Spanish.

Andrés is bilingual in English and Spanish, was raised in South St. Paul, and after some time in Nebraska is back to help serve his community in our expanding Financial Empowerment Center (jobs, training and financial education). Ana has served Neighbors for several years as a custodian and has accepted a promotion to assist our Resiliency Department in the scheduling of food shelf appointments for our Spanish-speaking clients, as well as assisting the community to connect to critical area resources. To ensure that Neighbors provides services in a person's first language, we also use the Language Line, which provides live

interpreters in more than 240 languages, including American Sign Language. Neighbors is currently looking to fill our bilingual (Spanish/English) Hunger Program Helper and General Building Custodian to start immediately. If you know of anyone who might be a great fit, please have them contact us for an application.

Neighbors is committed to DEIBJ, and we look forward to continuing to develop an organizational culture and practices that embody this commitment. As always, I'd love to connect. You may reach me at dawn@neighborsmn.org, 651-272-1135 or by visiting Neighbors.

## POSTSCRIPT

### Tiny Tent

I haven't gone camping in a tent in a long time.

I grew up camping, and for much of that time it was in a tent. My parents would take my sister and me to the Boundary Waters between Minnesota and Canada for about a week. We paddled our canoes from one lake to the next and listened to the loons at night. We built fires and ate dried food, which miraculously tasted better the farther we paddled from civilization, and drank water right out of the lake, before we needed expensive filters.



**Carrie Classon**  
*CarrieClasson.com*

We even used the latrine deep in the woods and I still vividly remember the time I felt flies landing on my behind – only to look down into the

latrine and see a whiskered woodchuck looking up at me!

When I was a teenager, I went camping with a group of girlfriends. We called ourselves the "Future Old Maids of America," or FOMA for short, and had T-shirts made. (None of us remained very loyal to our cause.)

Much later, when I became a 50-year-old graduate student, I splurged on a nice one-person tent and a lightweight air mattress and a compact, fold-up chair. (I've noticed that with both camping gear and lingerie, the less material there is, the more it costs.) I loved camping in my tiny tent, as I drove from the Southwest to the Midwest and back, listening to coyotes and sur-

living the occasional thunderstorm.

So, when an opportunity to go tent camping came up, of course I was tempted.

My first cousins on my mother's side are having a reunion on Lake Ontario, east of Toronto. It's quite far away, and my husband Peter and I had ruled it out because he has to attend an important condo board meeting that weekend.

I wasn't going to go without Peter, but several of my cousins had decided to go without their spouses. As I got thinking about it, I wasn't sure how many more of these opportunities would happen in my lifetime. I am one of the youngest of my original 34 cousins on my

mother's side. Several cousins have died, and none of them live close together. So, this chance to drive to Canada and see a lot of my cousins in one place seemed like it might be important.

I wrote to my Canadian cousin, "Is it too late for me to tell you I'm coming?"

"Of course not!" she said.

I called up my sister. "Do you have room for me in your car?" I asked.

"Of course!" she said.

Her husband is a pastor and does not get much vacation, but my niece and nephew will be coming. And now, so will I. We will camp all the way up and stay in tents while we are there.

Now I'm digging my fancy little tent out of the closet.

I'm airing out my sleeping bag. I'm checking to see if my air mattress still holds air. I'm trying to remember how to assemble my complicated little chair, and I'm pulling together all the things I will need in my tiny tent at night: a flashlight, bottle of water, a puff jacket for the cold.

It will be fun to see all my cousins. I know that.

But right now, I am looking forward to being in my tent again – sensing the changes in the weather, hearing the animals move around at night, feeling that I am entirely outdoors with nothing but a thin layer of polyester between me and the great open sky.

Till next time.

### Dakota County: by the numbers

I am a numbers geek who combs closely through County financial, performance and population data. While some folks might find this sleep-inducing, I find that figures frequently tell me more about the health and future of Dakota County than words ever could.

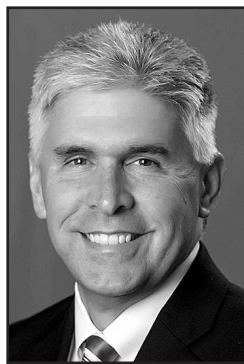
Below are numbers that provide a fuller view of Dakota County and the services we provide.

#### Population

- Dakota County's population of 443,341 makes us the state's third-largest county. Our most rapidly growing cities are Lakeville, Rosemount and West St. Paul.

- The median age is 39.

- Diversity is growing, with 25% of residents identifying themselves as members of a racial minority



**Joe Atkins**  
Dakota County Commissioner

group.

- 96% of the adult population has a high school degree or higher; 46% have a bachelor's degree or higher. This far exceeds national averages.

- About 6% of the population falls below the federal poverty level. The national poverty rate is 12%, and 10% in Minnesota.

- The median household income is \$101,360.

#### Safety net services

- Dakota County provided social services to 26,313 households in 2023.

- Collected and distributed \$38 million in child support in 2023.

- Assisted 96,500 people in qualifying for health insurance.

#### Transportation

- We maintain 1,050 lane miles of county roads and inspect 164 bridges. Motorists travel nearly a billion miles on county roads annually.

- We maintain a total of 808 vehicles and pieces of equipment, with the largest being 27 tandem snowplow trucks.

#### Parks

- We have protected and restored 12,000 acres of natural areas, woodlands and lakes since 2003. The most recent area permanently protected is eight acres of ma-

ture oaks in West St. Paul near Highway 52 and the South St. Paul border.

- Our six parks and seven regional greenways comprise 5,508 acres.

- 2.9 million people visited the county park system in 2023.

- 8,000 annually rent equipment (canoes, kayaks, skis, snowshoes, etc.).

#### Libraries

- 1.2 million people visited the county library system last year.

- 4.1 million items are checked out annually among the 10 branch library locations.

#### Environmental safety

- 500,000 tons of waste are generated in Dakota County annually, with 55% of it being recycled or composted.

- Dakota County oper-

ates the 116-year-old Lake Byllesby Dam, which creates a 1,054-acre recreational lake and generates \$1 million in renewable energy annually.

- We will increase our energy efficiency this year by installing a total of 875 kilowatts of solar panels at three county locations.

- Indoor lighting at 14 county buildings is being upgraded from fluorescent to much more efficient LED bulbs this year, resulting in significant operational savings each year.

#### Public safety

- Adult felony cases in the county dropped from 2,183 in 2022 to 1,829 in 2023.

- There were 9,126 bookings in the county jail last year.

#### Efficient government

- The average county portion of property taxes paid

by owners of a median value home in Dakota County is \$1,001 less than a similarly valued home in neighboring Ramsey County.

- About 20% of a homeowner's total property tax bill goes for county services. The remainder goes to fund local schools, cities and other taxing jurisdictions.

- Nearly 3,400 volunteers donated more than 28,517 hours in 2023. The combined volunteer efforts saved taxpayers more than \$906,840.

*Joe Atkins represents District 2 on the Dakota County Board, which includes South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Inver Grove Heights. Elected Chair of the Board in 2024, he welcomes feedback. To share comments, concerns or questions, contact him at Joe. Atkins@co.dakota.mn.us or call 651-438-4430.*

## Must-do fall home maintenance projects

As summer winds down and the days get shorter, it's time to turn your attention to some projects that will ensure your home survives the winter and that you don't have any unwelcome surprises in the spring. Here are projects that should be done each fall. There are plenty of videos on YouTube and other online resources to help with the easier projects. For complicated projects, hire a licensed contractor and be sure to check referrals and get contracts in writing, including any change orders.

**Roof, siding and gutters** - Walk around your home and inspect your roof, siding and gutters. Shingles or siding that are damaged should be replaced to prevent water from entering your home and creating an even bigger problem. Gutters should be cleaned thoroughly. For your safety, this should be done from a ladder, not sitting on top of the roof and leaning over. You might consider installing gutter covers at this time to prevent debris from entering the gutters in the future. If your home's exterior, doors or window frames



have peeling paint, scrape it, prime it and repaint now. Now is a good time to clean your windows and siding as well.

**Windows and doors** - Inspect windows for cracks and replace damaged weather stripping or caulk around windows and doors. Check for drafts. If you feel air coming through, especially on windy days, it might be time to start saving for new windows. While it's a big upfront investment, energy efficient windows will save you money on your energy bills.

**Outdoor water faucets** - Never leave a garden hose connected to a faucet in the late fall and winter when temperatures drop near or below freezing. This could lead to a pipe bursting. Some

older homes have faucets that need to be drained each fall. This is done by closing the shut-off valve inside the house and opening the faucet to drain the water. Turn off the faucet and repeat the process for each exterior faucet. Drain and store hoses. If you have an in-ground sprinkler system, it, too, must be drained. On some older homes, it's a good idea to wrap insulation around outdoor faucets and pipes in unheated garages.

**Appliances and fireplaces** - Grass clippings and leaves can accumulate around central air conditioning units. Clean out the debris and rinse off the screens of the unit with water. If your furnace is old or exhibiting erratic behavior, it should be professionally inspected. If you have a wood burning fireplace, it should be professionally cleaned every three years, or sooner if it is heavily used. Older fireplaces should also be inspected for cracks and damaged flues. Check for frayed cords and wires



on appliances, and clean lint from the dryer vent.

**Cement and asphalt** - If your driveway and sidewalk are showing their age, fill the cracks to prevent further damage. Consider sealcoating your driveway to extend its life.

**Decks and patios** - Clean and stain or seal your deck in the fall, and clean patios

and repair damaged bricks or pavers.

**Lawn** - Leaves should be raked, and the lawn mowed before winter. Fall is the best

time to aerate the lawn. Apply grass seed to bare spots or overseed the entire lawn before the first snowfall for a lush lawn in the spring.

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# Drug task force

from page 1

allocated \$195,000 combined to the cities of South St. Paul, West St. Paul, Mendota Heights, Farmington, Rosemount and Hastings to be used over the next two years. Based on the severity of the issue in each city, West St. Paul received \$35,926, Mendota Heights \$15,451, and South St. Paul \$66,858.

One of the problems in dealing with the opioid crisis, according to West St. Paul City Manager Nate Burkett, is that the county and state systems are hard to navigate. In addition, people who need help are reluctant to reach out for fear of being arrested or having child protection services step in.

“What we are trying to do is...remove barriers and improve the odds that a person with opioid use disorder can recover and reach their highest possible level of wellness,” Burkett said.

According to South St. Paul City Administrator Ryan Garcia, the city is currently combating the opioid crisis by enforcing controlled

substance laws, as well as through public education about the drug’s potentially fatal effects.

“Our embedded team of a Dakota County Social Worker and South St. Paul Police Officer currently follow up on all non-fatal overdoses and provide education and resources in an effort to break the cycle of use and overdose,” Garcia said.

Dakota County will use the remainder of this year’s allocation to create a strategic plan to combat the opioid crisis. It will focus on prevention, treatment and recovery, harm reduction, and criminal legal enforcement, and is expected to be complete by spring 2025. This fall, the county will also accept requests for \$390,000 in community-designated funds. To date, it has used settlement funding to hire an opioid response coordinator, expand opioid use disorder services in its jail treatment program and add Naloxone pick-up points at public health offices, library

ies and schools. Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose if administered in time. The settlement fund has also paid for a contract with Steve Rumler Hope Network to provide Naloxone training across the county.



Photo: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

## A lethal dose of fentanyl

Dakota County also operates a drug task force, a cooperative effort among all county law enforcement agencies focusing on halting the sale, distribution and use of narcotics, and investigating gang and violent offender crimes. The Dakota County Sheriff’s Office has

three investigators assigned to it and they work closely with an investigator with the Drug Enforcement Administration. Those found in possession of fentanyl are subject to be arrested, jailed, and charged for possession of a schedule II controlled substance. Those found selling it are subject to the same punishments and also may be held accountable if their sale of the drug resulted in the death of another person.

Dakota County has several major thoroughfares connecting large cities so it’s not surprising to law enforcement officials that illegal



Photo: U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

## 30 mg counterfeit fentanyl

drugs come through. In late 2023, local law enforcement in Dakota, Ramsey and Washington counties launched a joint investigation that led to the biggest drug bust in Minnesota’s history according to federal investigators: 280,000 pills with a total street value of about \$2.2 million were confiscated. The Arizona-based trafficking operation that was mailing the drug here in toy stuffed animals was broken up.

According to the task force, overdoses are up since February in Dakota County and show an increased presence of fentanyl in the drug supply, specifically in powder cocaine.

## Recovery is possible

According to the U. S. Centers for Disease Control,

fentanyl claimed the lives of an estimated 74,702 Americans in 2023. In Minnesota, opioid-involved overdose deaths increased 43% from 2020 to 2022.

The number of medically prescribed opioids, however, has been decreasing since 2017, down 30% between 2017 and 2022 alone. Many people who abuse the drugs began using them first in prescription form.

Anyone experiencing opioid addiction is strongly urged to get help. Recovery resources can be found by visiting [fasttrackermn.org](http://fasttrackermn.org). Additionally, fentanyl test strips and Naloxone are available over the counter. For immediate mental health and emotional support, call 988, or text “MN” to the crisis text line at 741741. For emergencies, call 911.

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