

Find expanded local news coverage at stpaulpublishing.com

# The St. Paul



School Choice Guide Page 6

Volume 59 | Number 1

Your Community News & Information Source

January 2025

# Here comes

St. Paul Winter Carnival returns January 23

Tim Spitzack

Snow or no snow, you can always expect winter fun to arrive in late January with the annual St. Paul Winter Carnival. Dating to 1886, the Carnival is the oldest winter festival in the United States and annually provides a pleasant diversion in the heart of winter. The frosty fun begins January 23 and continues through February 2. Events are free or low cost and held in St. Paul, unless noted. Event information was accurate as of press time. For the most current information, visit wintercarnival.com.

#### New for 2025

Ice Park - Rice Park has long been home to the ice carving competitions, and that will continue but with some other attractions added. In addition to the masterpieces created by team and individual competitors, the Ice Park will also have a variety of additional frozen sculptures created by pros and amateurs alike. The competitions begin at 7 p.m., January 23, and the ice sculptures can be viewed throughout the duration of the car-

Grande Day Parade on Grand Winter Carnival / Page 2

### Major improvements slated for Smith-Dodd intersection

Jake Spitzack Staff Writer

fter years of study and planning, one of Awest St. Paul's most dangerous intersections will finally be revamped in 2025.

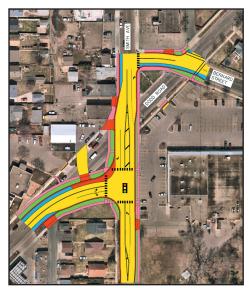
The infamous intersection at Smith and Dodd currently has an X-shaped alignment, which creates poor sightlines for drivers and unsafe crosswalks for pedestrians. A 4-year study ending in 2022 gave the intersection a crash rating index 2.5 times higher than the national average.

Proposed changes include realigning Dodd Road to create two separate "T" intersections - one at Smith Avenue and one at Bernard Street. The new intersection at Dodd and Smith will have traffic lights and the one at Smith and Bernard will have a stop sign. Plans also call for utility work, creating new sidewalks and bus stops, and an expanded

A final design for improvements is being finalized, with construction expected to begin this summer. The City of West St. Paul has partnered with MnDOT and received a federal grant to fund the \$2.3 million project.

### Park design options

The roadway reconfigurations will open space to expand Albert Park, which was recognized by Ripley's "Believe It or Not" as the "smallest dedicated park in the USA." The city is considering two possibilities, and each has an expanded version that's contingent on the adjacent Doddway shopping center being redeveloped into a mixed-use build-



Proposed changes include realigning Dodd Road to create two separate "T" intersections – one at Smith Avenue and one at Bernard Street.

ing, which is under consideration according to the City.

The first option would add trees, gardens, a seating wall, fixed tables and chairs, heavy but movable Adirondack chairs and a walking path. The expanded version has more green space and wall seating, as well as sculptural art.

The second plan features a three-tiered seating wall, pergola, gardens, and a colorful "WSP" sign. The expanded version has additional seating, public art and a small space

Smith-Dodd / Page 5

### **New CRAFT Thrift Store** supports educators

Jake Spitzack Staff Writer

veteran of early childhood edu-Acation has switched careers but is still holding true to her passion for education. In mid-November, Angela Kapp opened CRAFT Thrift Store in the former Mattress Liquidator space at 1253 S. Robert St. The name stands for Creating Resources and Funding for Teachers and the space is already brimming with toys, clothes, furniture, décor, movies, records and much more. Each month a portion of proceeds will support an aspiring teacher seeking a child development associate (CDA) certificate.

Kapp is a former CDA specialist, accreditation assessor for the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and director, manager and owner of several childcare centers in the metro area. In addition to opening CRAFT, she owns Edulink, which trains teachers in a wide variety of skills. She also works part-time as a coach for the Minnesota-based Center for Inclusive Child Care.

A year ago, she and her husband Keith transferred ownership of their childcare center, The Learning Garden in Maplewood, to their daughter Ashley and began seeking a home for CRAFT. Angela, an avid thrift

CRAFT / Page 4

### Optimist Club of St. Paul celebrates centennial

helping youth facing hardships

> Jake Spitzack Staff Writer

 $\Gamma^{
m or\ more\ than\ half\ of\ the}_{
m storied\ history\ of\ Min-}$ nesota's capital city, the Optimist Club of St. Paul has been a beacon of light for people facing challenges big and small. In early December, it celebrated its centenways to keep achieving its youth in need. mission.

One of the club's primary goals is to support youth in the community through sponsorships, scholarships and more. Speaking at the club's anniversary gala was Na Eng, who was one of the first recipients of the club's college scholarships at Johnson High School on

Has a long history of nial anniversary, sharing St. Paul's East Side years ago. Daisy Soros Fellowship for past accomplishments and Her story exemplifies the New Americans to fund her eagerly looking ahead at club's mission to support graduate studies. She has

Eng immigrated to Minnesota at age 5 with her mother and six siblings, as refugees escaping the Khmer Rouge and forcedlabor camps in Cambodia. After receiving the Club's scholarship, she went on to study filmmaking at Columbia University in New York, earning the Paul and worked as a journalist and TV news producer for NBC, PBS and CNBC, winning many awards including an Edward R. Murrow Award, a Fulbright Fellowship and an Emmy Award. Currently she is the Chief Communications Officer for People for the American Way, a

> Optimist Club / Page 3



Na Eng

### Winter Carnival

from page 1

Avenue - The Grande Day Parade is moving to Grand Avenue this year. It begins at 2 p.m., January 25 at the intersection of Grand and Dale and travels to Lexington Avenue. It will feature dozens of units, floats and the newly crowned King Boreas and his Royal Family.

Slow Snow Glow - A winter bike ride begins at 4 p.m., January 25 at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, 270 N. Kent St. Participants can enjoy music, food, fire pits, and a vibrant display of culture and community warmth that pays homage to the rich legacy of Black culture in the historic Rondo neighborhood. Riders will be provided with bike lights. Bicycles are available for use.

Walk-Up Snowboarding - Visit Battle Creek Regional Park 11 a.m.-4 p.m., January 26 for free lessons and demonstrations from professional snowboarders.

Jigsaw Puzzle Competition - An extra day has been added to the popular jigsaw puzzle competition, billed as the biggest puzzle competi-

tion in the country. Competitors will be hard at work January 25-26 at Union Depot. New competitions this year are the 500-Piece Solo and 500-Piece Teams Open contests.

Winter Play Day - The inaugural Winter Play Day will be held 10 a.m.-2 p.m., January 25 at Crosby Farm Regional Park, 2595 Crosby Farm Rd. This free, all-ages event features the chance to participate in dozens of outdoor activities – equipment provided – including crosscountry skiing, snowshoeing, guided hikes, outdoor photography, s'mores with Smokey Bear, and more.

Around the World in a Day Kids & Family Day, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., February 1 at Landmark Center. Entertaining performances by local cultural groups, educational presentations, arts and crafts, storytelling and other activities for all ages. Vendors will also be selling their wares and food.

Pre-carnival events Klondike Kate contest



Heather Friedli is the winner of this year's button design contest. She has a long history with the Winter Carnival as part of an all-female team that competes annually in the Minnesota State Snow Sculpting Competition at Vulcan Snow Park. Buttons may be purchased for \$5 for one and \$19 for the collector's pack of all four at Cub Foods, Blaze Credit Union, City and County Credit Union, local retailers, or online at wintercarnival.com.

- Contestants seeking to become the next Mistress of Song and Merriment will bring their musical and performance talents to the Inwood Oakes Event Center on January 8. The contest begins at 6:30 p.m. and the next "Kate" will be named that evening.

Vulcan Snow Park Snow Stomp, beginning at 10 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 18 at the State Fairgrounds. Volunteers will create giant blocks for the snow sculpting competition by literally stomping and packing snow

within special forms.

Ice Castles, January 1-February 2 at Minnesota State Fairgrounds. Ice Castles is an awe-inspiring winter phenomenon that brings fairy tales to life. Escape into a world of ice caves, frozen waterfalls, and glaciers formed into archways, caverns, slides and tunnels. Order tickets at icecastles.com.

### Signature events

Ice Carving Competitions in Ice Park, January 23-26. Artists will carve 300-pound blocks of ice dur-

ing the first weekend of the Carnival. The multi-block teams will have 48 hours to finish their masterpieces with 20 blocks of ice. On Sunday, artists will have five hours to carve in the single block competition.

Vulcan Snow Park and the Minnesota State Snow Sculpting Competition, January 24-February 2 at the State Fairgrounds. The competition begins on Friday and culminates with the awards on Vulcan Fun Day on Sunday. The snow park features other family-friend-

ly activities as well.

Vulcan Victory Torchlight Parade, February 1. The parade starts at 5:15 p.m., at Smith Avenue and West Seventh and ends at Rice Park. Following the parade, the 2025 Krewe will gather at the steps of the George Latimer Central Library for the ever-dramatic overthrow of King Boreas. A fireworks show will follow.

#### Other events

**Ice Fishing Contest**, January 5-February 2. People from across the state are



## Calling Saint Paul home since 1886!

Yep, you betcha, the Saint Paul Area Association of REALTORS® and the Saint Paul Winter Carnival were both founded in 1886, and have been celebrating and supporting communities ever since!

SPAAR is a proud sponsor of the 2025 King Boreas Grande Day Parade!



BETTER AGENTS • BETTER COMMUNITIES
SAINT PAUL AREA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®





encouraged to participate in this month-long digital ice fishing tournament through the FishDonkey Mobile App. Prizes will be awarded. \$20 participation fee.

Pioneer Press Treasure Hunt, beginning January 19. The winning hunter(s) could get a prize package valued at \$10,000 – \$2,500 if they find the medallion, \$2,500 if they have all the clues, and \$5,000 more if they have the 2025 Pioneer Press Treasure Hunt medallion patch. Clues will be released daily in the print edition of the Pioneer Press and on TwinCities.com until the medallion is found.

Klondike Kate's Red Feather Saloon Cabaret & Casino Night, 6-11 p.m., January 23 at Landmark Center. Order tickets at klondikekates.org. The Kate's will also perform 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m., January 21 at The Camp Bar, 490 Robert St. N. Tickets are \$40 and include lunch.

**Springboard on Ice**, fire-and-ice-winter-run.

1-4 p.m., January 25 at Springboard for the Arts, 262 University Ave. W. See performances, participate in Learn to Skate workshops at the mini ice rink, see artist vendors and more. Skates are available at no cost.

Saintly City Cat Show, January 25-26. The 48th Annual Championship & Household Pet Cat Show is held at RiverCentre. For more information, visit saintlycitycatclub.org.

50th Anniversary Winter Carnival Orchid Show, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., January 25-26 at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory at Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, 1225 Estabrook Dr. For tickets, visit orchidsocietyof minnesota.org.

Fire & Ice Run/Walk, January 26. Runners and walkers of all ages may participate in the 5K, 10K, 15K, 20K, NoK, or the Kid's Run at the State Fairgrounds, beginning at 8 a.m. Register at wintercarnival.com/event/ fire-and-ice-winter-run.



Ice carver Trevor Pearson

Hot & Cool Classics, 2 p.m., January 26. The St. Paul Civic Symphony will present a free hour-long concert at the Landmark Center. They'll perform pieces using the theme "Planes, Trains & Automobiles" in honor

of the 100th anniversary of

the opening of the Ford Mo-

tor Co. assembly plant in St.

Paul.

Vulcan vs Royal Guard Food Shelf Benefit Hockey Classic, 5:30-7:30 p.m., January 26 at Doug Woog Arena, 141 6th Street S., South St. Paul. One of the oldest Winter Carnival Legend traditions, this hockey battle raises money and food for local food banks. Mone-

tary and non-perishable food donations accepted.

Frozen Family Fun Night, 5:30-7:30 p.m., January 28 at the Landmark Center. Join this evening of all things "Frozen," including a singalong, story time, and visits with "stars" from the beloved film and characters from the Winter Carnival Legend.

St. Paul Brewing Steak Out, 5:30-9 p.m., January 30 at St. Paul Brewing, 688 Minnehaha Ave. E. Enjoy entertainment from DJ Shannon Blowtorch, balloon art by Silly Miss Tilly, mascot appearances, Winter Carnival merchandise for sale and more.

Winter Carnival Day of Good, January 31. Look for the Titan Truck outside the Landmark Center to make your donation of non-perishable food items, cold weather wear and blankets. All items will be donated to the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, 270 N. Kent St.

BEAR'ly Open Golf on

Ice, 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m., February 1. Play on two custom-designed, 9-hole courses along the shores of White Bear Lake and help raise money for the White Bear Area Food Shelf. For tickets, visit bearlyopen.org.

Union Depot's Doggie Depot, beginning at 10 a.m., February 1. Includes the crowning of the Canine King & Queen, giveaways, marketplace, and visits with pet experts.

Vulcan Victory Dance, 7:30 p.m., February 1 at the InterContinental St. Paul Riverfront, 11 Kellogg Blvd. E. Rhino will play a wide range of tunes from funk to R&B to retro-pop and current chart-topping singles. For tickets, visit vulcanvictorydance.com.

Berners in the Park, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., February 1 at Rice Park, 109 4th St. W. Meet the friendly pooches of the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of the Greater Twin Cities.

### Optimist Club

from page 1

progressive advocacy organization founded to defend freedom, justice and democracy.

In a recent interview, she reflected on how recognition from the Club helped steer her to success despite the chips being stacked against her.

"I was delighted and absolutely grateful for the dollar amount because my family definitely needed assistance to afford college, but more so than that, I was really heartened by the strong show of support from the community," she said. "It helped to build my confidence. I just really appreciated the goodwill in which people who didn't know me wanted to support the next genera-

ion "

As a refugee, she said she's always felt a responsibility to pay forward the support that she found in the United States and do whatever she can to "play a small role in trying to make the world a better place."

Eng has also held leadership positions for philanthropic and humanitarian organizations including ARC (now Alight), Mercy Corps and the McKnight Foundation, and serves on the board of directors for the NAACP Foundation. Earlier this year, she was the first Asian-American inducted into the Johnson High School Hall of Fame. "I think in our society it's

tempting to tell a story about a hero and how great that individual is, but the message I really want to share is that it takes a village to raise a child," she said. "It takes a whole community to ensure the success of our children and allow them to thrive and pursue their aspirations and be their best selves. I just feel so blessed to have received that gift and I hope to be able to extend that to the next generation as well."

Whether as an adolescent or adult, Eng said she's been fueled to work hard and stay optimistic through life's challenges by keeping a spirit of gratitude, focusing on what she has control over and connecting with other people, including her son and other family members. A former volunteer for the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library board of directors,

she also loves getting lost in a good book every now and then.

Since 1924, the Optimist Club of St. Paul has contributed to countless stories similar to Eng's. It has provided more than \$650,000 in scholarships to high school seniors who have overcome significant obstacles in their young lives, honored and rewarded dozens of students in its annual essay and oratory contests and contests for the deaf and hard of hearing, served hundreds of meals for families at Jeremiah Program in St. Paul, donated essential items to at-risk youth at Safe Zone in St. Paul and more. Most recently, it helped raise funds for Neighborhood House, an organization on the West Side that helps refugees, immigrants and others meet basic needs, from food to housing and family

coaching to education programming.

"From the beginning in 1924 to today, our members have never lost focus of the Club's mission to bring out the best in our St. Paul youth, our community and ourselves," said Karl Olson, a member of the Optimist Club of St. Paul since 1976, in a press release. "Every year, we find numerous ways to support the youth of our community and provide them with opportunities to advance."

The 65-member Optimist Club meets at Joseph's Grill on the West Side twice a month. Its mission is "To promote an active interest in good government and civic affairs; To inspire respect for the law; To promote patriotism and work for international

accord and friendship among all people; To aid and encourage the development of youth, in the belief that the giving of one's self in service to others will advance the well-being of humankind, community life and the world."

"They [the Club] need to be thanked and recognized and applauded," said Eng. "Sometimes when you write a check, you don't really know who it goes to or what becomes of that investment. I have a philosophy that helping those in need is always a good investment. You may not always know exactly what ends up becoming of the person you supported but it is an act of kindness and affirmation that can be really transformative."

To get involved, visit www.stpauloptimists.org.



### St. Paul Publishing Co.

1643 So. Robert St., Ste, 60B West St. Paul, MN 55118 info@stpaulpublishing.com stpaulpublishing.com 651-457-1177 **The St. Paul Voice** is published monthly by the St. Paul Publishing Company **Circulation:** 17,750 print + online. Home delivery to St. Paul's West Side, West St. Paul and Mendota Heights. **Sister publications:** La Voz Latina, the Downtown St. Paul Voice and South St. Paul Voice.

#### Story ideas welcome:

To submit story ideas or letters to the editor, contact Tim at tim@stpaulpublishing.com

### Advertising:

Our media group reaches 80,000 people in print & online. Learn more at stpaulpublishing. com/advertising, 651-457-1177.

#### **Publisher & Editor:**

Tim Spitzack tim@stpaulpublishing.com

**Copy Editor:** Leslie Martin

### Media & Marketing Manager:

Jake Spitzack jake@stpaulpublishing.com

#### **Contributors:**

Leonor Villasuso Rustad
Peter Majerle
William Gustavo Franklin Torres
José William Castellanos
Roger Fuller
Carrie Classon
Joe Atkins
Dawn Wambeke

The St. Paul Voice assumes no responsibility for the opinions expressed by contributors and for the validity of claims or items reported. Copyright St. Paul Voice 2025.

All rights reserved in compliance of Federal Copyright Act of 1978. No content may be reproduced without the express written premission of the publisher.

Member of the Minnesota Newspaper Association.



shopper, was inspired to shake up her career after 30 years of working with kids.

"Yet, my passion was still early childhood, so how could I mix the two?" she recalled wondering.

Fast-forward to August this year and she and her husband were signing the lease for the store location, which has enough square footage for displaying the retail goods and to create a room for upcycling and crafting.

They expect to build out the room by the end of January. Educators and do-ityourself enthusiasts alike will be able to use it for repurposing items purchased onsite. Throughout her career, Kapp has seen cookie sheets made into magnet boards, storage bins become drums and bubble wrap transformed into paintbrushes. She said used or crafted items can be big hits with kids just for their novelty. Aside from toys, CRAFT will offer supplies to make classroom learning tools such as daily schedules with visual elements.

"A lot of teachers use their

**INDOOR** 

**HEATED** 

CLIMATE

CONTROLLED

through 3/31/25

for any off dock units 10'x14' or smaller

FREE DISC LOCK WITH ANY RENTAL!

New rentals only. Not valid with other offers. Expires 3/31/25.

1200 North Concord St. • www.minikahda.com

Call 651-450-1202

own funds to purchase materials because [childcare] centers are stretched thin,' she said. "I want them to think really hard about what would enhance their classroom and what would be best for the children in their care."

In addition to providing a monthly scholarship to an aspiring teacher, CRAFT will highlight a teacher of the month and provide them with some free store credit. They also hope to eventually open some shelf space for local potters, quilters and other crafters in the community to sell their goods.

"Eventually we would like to support teachers to expand their classroom," she added. "Maybe they want to add some more technology to their classroom, or





Owners Keith and Angela Kapp

they really want to increase social and emotional support and get some materials that support that, like books and posters and puppets."

> Angela is a Minnesota native and began working with children right out of high school as an intern for a childcare program at a homeless shelter. She has a bachelor's degree from Metropolitan State University and a master's from Concordia University in St. Paul.

> Most of the products at CRAFT are sourced from storage auctions, although

Kapp is looking into making the business a nonprofit so people are more encouraged to donate. She tests all electronic items to ensure they are working properly before putting them on the floor.

"We've really enjoyed our time out here in West St. Paul, and everybody who's come in has been fabulous," she said. "We already have some repeat customers.... I've had people come in that are helping the homeless that we're going to partner with because we have a lot of extra

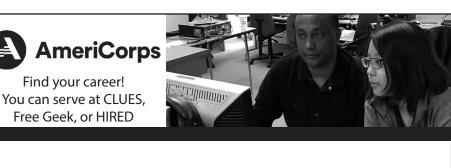
blankets and hats and personal care items that might not sell. We're also working with Dakota County to look at ways where we can partner for recycling. It just seems like there's a lot of great opportunities to be part of the West St. Paul community."

CRAFT is open daily 9 a.m.-6 p.m., with hours expected to extend to 8 p.m. in the summer. For more information, or to apply for a scholarship or nominate a teacher, visit craftindustries.





www.HometownTireAndService.net



- \* Teach digital literacy at CLUES, HIRED, or Free Geek
- \* Earn up to \$1,925 per month before taxes
- \* Earn up to \$7,395 to pay off your Federal student loans or go to school!
- \* Health insurance
- \* Assistance with transportation, child care, energy bills and more!
- \* Professional development training all year long

**APPLY NOW!** 



www.spnn.org/ctep/position-descriptions 550 Vandalia Street· Suite 170·Saint Paul, MN 55101

### Wishing you a Happy & Healthy New Year!

Let the Back in Balance team help get you back on track to better health. We use the most advanced techniques to diagnose and treat a wide variety of injuries and ailments.







Dr. Scott A. Mooring Owner & Clinic Director

Back in Balance 1525 Livingston Ave. West St. Paul 651-455-5264

Call today to schedule a FREE CONSULTATION Back Pain | Neck Pain | Headaches Shoulder Pain | Tennis Elbow Shin Splints | Sciatica | Plantar Fasciitis Knee Problems | Much More







Page 4 - St. Paul Voice - January 2025

### ews Briefs

#### **TPAC**

Unless noted, all activities take place at Thompson Park Activity Center, 1200 Stassen Lane, West St. Paul. Events are for ages 55 and older. To register, call 651-403-8300.

Tech-Savvy Survival in 60 minutes: Essential Skills for Everyday Life, noon-1 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 7. Equip yourself with the critical tech skills needed for everyday life. Registration required.

Tai Chi Chih for Health, 9:15-10 a.m., Jan. 8-Feb. 26. Tai Chi Chih is a meditation with 19 easy-to-learn movements. Register by Jan. 3. \$49 for 8 sessions.

Conversational Spanish for Absolute Beginners-**Level 1**, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Jan. 8-Feb. 26. Learn greetings, practical phrases, numbers, family, food, hobbies and more. Ideal for newcomers; no prior Spanish

**SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY SATURDAY FRIDAY** 

CALENDAR

experience required. The instructor ensures a stress-free, immersive experience using gestures and visuals for easy learning. Join this enjoyable language journey. Register by Jan. 3. \$48 for 8 sessions.

Conversational Spanish **Level 2**, 10:45-11:45 a.m., Jan. 8-April 30. This course delves deeper into greetings, practical phrases, numbers, family, food, hobbies, and more complex interactions. Registration required. \$96 for 16 sessions.

Soup and Scoop with Joe Atkins, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 9. Dakota County Commissioner Joe

Atkins will share the 10 Most Surprising Events in Dakota County history. Registration required. \$8.

Out in the Cold: Animal Behaviors in Winter, 1-2:15 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 28. Learn how feathers, fur and animal behavior play a part in winter survival. Register by Jan. 21. \$10.

Prairie Potluck Band, 1-2 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 15. The band's musicians will share their love of music and instruments, from traditional bluegrass to contemporary country, guitar, mandolin, banjo, bass, fiddle, dobro and ukelele. \$10. Dessert included. Register by Jan. 8.

David Dyer-Bennet:

Words Over Windows, 1-2 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 29. In May 2020, after George Floyd's murder, plywood protecting windows quickly became canvases for expressions of layered pain, disbelief, hope and calls for social justice - and symbols of hope. Registration required.

Rise to the Challenge: A Memoir of Politics, Leadership, and Love, 1-2 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 30. Marlene M. Johnson, Minnesota's first female lieutenant governor, will share stories from her memoir, "Rise to the Challenge." \$5.

Nesting Dolls: The Matryoshka Doll in Russian Crafts, 10-11 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 30. Discover the rich folk tradition of Russian wood carving and the history and cultural significance of the beloved Matryoshka

Men's Topics & Toast, 9-10 a.m., Monday, Jan. 27. \$10 annually.

Hand and Foot cards, 9:30 a.m.-12:15 p.m. each Wednesday, January-April. \$15 annually.

Cribbage, 1-3 p.m. each Wednesday, January-April. \$15 annually.

Mah Jongg, each Thursday, January-April. \$15.

Winter clothing drive, Jan. 6-31. Bring new and gently used hats, gloves, socks, coats, sweatshirts and blankets to Thompson Park

Activity Center Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Donations will go to the Friday Night Street Team for those experiencing homelessness.

### **Robert Street** meetings

MnDOT is hosting new monthly "office hours" on the planned reconstruction of Robert Street on the West Side. This series offers a chance to meet with Project Manager Chris Bower at a local coffee shop to learn more about the project and ask questions. The plan calls for significant improvements to Robert Street between Annapolis Street and Fillmore Avenue, likely occurring in 2026-2028. The new design is focused on calming traffic, improving pedestrian and bike access, and creating a safer environment for walking, bicycling, using transit and driving. Meeting dates, more information and future events will be posted at dot. state.mn.us/metro/projects/ robertstreet/index.html.

### Smith-Dodd from page 1

for performances. The park will also be used

for a permanent memorial for Mendota Heights Police Officer Scott Patrick, who was murdered at the intersection in 2014 during a routine traffic stop.

MERRIAM PARK FREE PAINTING BIDS

Now booking interior jobs

Call Ed. 651.224.3660 www.mppainting.com

The City has worked with the Patrick family to create two design concepts. Park improvements are slated for 2026. For more information, visit wspmn.gov and search "Smith Dodd."



### **HANDYMAN MR. LARRY FOR HIRE**

I do painting, repairs & cleaning of homes and apartments

**Window Washing Gutter Cleaning** and Repairs Insured

651-399-4304



901 N. Concord South St. Paul v.vikingexteriors.com









## **School Choice Guide**

### Understanding your options when choosing a school



### **National School Choice Week is** January 26-February 1

ooking for a new school ences among them so you 

 for your student? Registration deadlines for the next school year are fast approaching, so now is the time to do your homework. Families have many choices: public, magnet, parochial or charter schools, as well as homeschooling. Post-high school choices include trade schools, two-year and fouryear colleges and universities. This primer will help you understand the differ-

can select the best option for your child.

### **Open enrollment**

Minnesota has open enrollment, which means families may choose a school that is not within their resident district. State applications are used for open enrollment, and nonresident districts must receive applications by January 15 for the following fall, with some exceptions. Families that apply to a school not assigned to them are responsible for their own transportation.

#### **Public schools**

Public schools are funded through taxes and operated by local school districts and a board of education. Each student is guaranteed enrollment and is assigned a school near where they live. Busing is free for those outside of walking distance. When selecting a public school, families may want to consider class sizes, student-



Stock photo: Metro Creative Graphics



- · Bilingual Program: Spanish and English
- Dedicated to the development of the academic and socio-emotional identity of our students.
- · Personalized approach to learning
- · Based on state standards
- · Adapted to a bilingual perspective
- · Middle School Sports
- · Transportation for students
- · Free after school and summer school program
  - o Folkloric Dance
  - Aztec Dance
  - o Mariachi
- Uniform Mandatory









### **Elective Classes in Middle School:**

- · Intro to Art
- · Science: Learn by Doing It
- Intro to Coding
- Choir
- Band
- Music Exploration
- · Debate & Public Speaking
- · Personal Wellness
- Building Leaders
- · Intro to Spoken Word Poetry

Academia Cesar Chavez accepts students of any race, color, creed, religion and ethnic origin or nationality. Pre-Enroll online: accepting PreK - 8th grade applications

www.cesarchavezschool.com

1801 Lacrosse Ave, St. Paul, MN 55119 More information: Mrs. Lupita at 651-443-8735 or Ms. Laura at 651-983-8772

Charter School Authorizer: St.Thomas





Admissions@StCroixLutheran.org

**Christ-Centered.** 

Academic Excellence.

Global Community.

1200 Oakdale Avenue, West St. Paul, MN 55118 • (651) 455-1521

The Choice is Simple!

Learn why at our **Open House** 

Sun, Apr 13, 2:00-4:00p Register for our open house at StCroixLutheran.org/Choice Gr. 6-12 Enroll Now!



teacher ratios, academic progress and extra-curricular activities.

#### Magnet schools

A magnet school is part of the public school system but has a curriculum focus that is used in all classes, such as environmental or STEM (science, technology, engineering and math). Families should ask about the school's focus, transportation options and if there are additional fees for field trips or supplies.

#### **Charter schools**

Private groups can get a charter to operate a school that uses alternative teaching methods and innovative curriculum. These schools typically have a smaller student population and a lower student-teacher ratio. Charter schools do not charge admission, nor do they have admission requirements to enroll students. They employ licensed teachers and offer services to special needs students. Charter school students are required to take state and national assessments. If the school does not meet academic performance requirements, the charter is revoked and the school is closed. Parents should inquire about the teaching methodology used, how academic progress is measured, if there are any special enrollment requirements or fees, and if the site is the school's permanent location.

### Parochial schools

Parochial schools are operated by a church or religious organization and have a curriculum that includes religious instruction. Class sizes and student-teacher ratio are usually small but tuition can be high. Parents should ask about tuition, scholarships, transportation, religious requirements or expectations, and if there are any additional expenses for uniforms or supplies.

#### Online learning

While online learning became standard during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, it is not a new model. Prior to the pandemic, some schools offered a full online program. Today, some school districts have added an online option as well.

#### Tips for choosing a K-12 school

National School Choice Week is Jan. 26-Feb. 1. The following seven steps will help you make an informed decision on choosing the best school for your child. The information is summarized from Andrew Campanella's book, "The School Choice Roadmap: 7 Steps to Finding the Right School for Your Child." Campanella is president of National School Choice Week.

Step 1: Think back to your own time in school. How you perceive education will help inform your school search for your children. Write down what you learned the most, liked the most, and who taught you the most. Also, write down the things you didn't like, then put those experiences in perspective and remember that your child may have different experiences.

Step 2: Identify your goals for your child. You know more about your child than anyone else, which is why you are more qualified than anyone else to choose your child's education. Take a few minutes to think about your hopes, dreams and goals for your child, and your child's strengths and weaknesses.

Step 3: Decide what you need and want from a school or learning environment. What does that learning environment look like? Are there specific things you know your child will need, such as different instructional strategies or curricula? Maybe there's a specific theme or subject that motivates your child, or perhaps your child thrives in a smaller school setting. Write all of these things down.

Step 4: Make a list and research schools. To choose the right school or learning environment for your child, you need to know what options are available. Research school choice policies in your state. A free guide to school choice in Minnesota is available at schoolchoiceweek. com. Start making a list of schools in your area using the Schools Near Me tool. Don't eliminate any schools because you think they may be hard to get in to or be too expensive. Next, look up information about these schools online so you can get a sense of what they offer. Don't forget to consider homeschooling and online schools, too. Start narrowing your list down to develop an initial short list of schools to

Step 5: Visit schools. School tours are important. Ask as many questions as possible, take detailed notes and visit classrooms, if possible. Look around to get a sense of the school, the teachers, and the school's values, approach and culture. Throughout your tour, ask yourself: "Is this a learning environment where I can see my child learning, succeeding, being respected, being safe and being happy?" If you're considering online schools, schedule a phone interview to ask questions. If you're considering homeschooling, take this time to research your state's homeschooling rules, policies and

Step 6: Evaluate schools. After your tours, look at the notes you took before you started your visits, and your notes from those visits. Which schools or learning environments best meet your child's needs? Narrow your list to two or three finalists.

Step 7: Choose the school or learning environment that meets your **child's needs.** Sit down as a family and choose the school or learning environment that works best for your child. This is a very personal decision, and every family will pursue this step in a different way. After you've decided, it's time to apply, submit applications, fill out paperwork, and get your child ready for their first day of school.

### Colleges

The nonprofit College Board offers the following to consider when choosing a college.

Two-year or four-year school: At a two-year college, students can earn

> School Choice / Page 10

### **Dodge Nature Preschool**

1715 Charlton St. • West St. Paul, MN 55118

"A place for early childhood environmental education." Dodge Nature Preschool uses the inherent wonder,

complexity and beauty of the natural world as a catalyst for children's growth and development.

- Half-day classes for ages 3 to 5
- · Option for extended day care
- · Discover prairies, ponds and woodland trails
- · Visit chickens, pigs and goats at the farm
- 4-star Parent Aware rated and NAEYC accredited
- Partial tuition scholarships available

#### Join us for a preschool tour:

Jan. 15th - 9:30 a.m. Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> - 10:00 a.m.

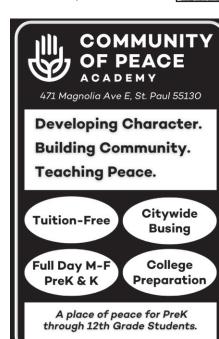
Jan. 30th - 9:30 a.m.

Apply online. Priority application period ends January 31st

DODGE

651-455-4555 www.dodgenaturecenter.org/preschool

WONDER  $\cdot$  DISCOVER  $\cdot$  EXPERIENCE





651-280-4587 (English) 651-280-4545 (Hmoob)

651-289-3742 (Español) 651-280-4591 (Karen)







### Children's Museum

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

"Curious George: Let's Get Curious!" through January 5. Get up close with the most curious little monkey and follow his lead as you engage in math, science and engineering activities modeled after Curious George's own adventures.

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 January 5.

### **History Center**

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

"Girlhood (It's complicated)," through June 1, 2025. This exhibit from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History features more than 100 objects that explore how young women have influenced politics, education, work, health and fashion.

"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. Admission and parking are free on Thursdays, 4-8 p.m.

### **History Theatre**

30 E. 10th St. St. Paul 651-292-4323 Historytheatre.com "I Am Betty," through

Cinch World's Toughest Rodeo comes to the Xcel Center Jan. 31-Feb. 1.

#### look at the fictional Betty **Landmark Center** Crocker and the lives of

Jan. 25-Feb. 23. Discover

the story of the indomitable

Dorothy Molter, the last le-

gal non-indigenous resident

of the Boundary Waters. The

story reflects the beauty and

hardships of Molter's solitary

yet satisfying life. From \$25.

75 5th St. W. women and society through-St. Paul out the past 100 years. From 651-292-3225 landmarkcenter.ora "The Root Beer Lady,"

Courtroom 317 Concerts, all are free and held noon-1 p.m. Clara Osowski, mezzo-soprano, noon-1 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 2; Copper Street Brass, Thursday, Jan. 9; Brian Krinke and Laura Sewell, noon-1 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 16.

Minnesota Boy Choir,

1-3:30 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 5. Free.

Schubert Club KidsJam: Copper Street Brass, 10:30-11:30 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 9. Free.

Schubert Club Family-Jam: Copper Street Brass, 10-11 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 11. Free.

Urban Expedition: India, 1-3 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 12. Authentic music, food, dance and crafts. Free.



December 29. A musical Downtown St. Paul's Independent Bookstore Satisfy your curiosity! New Releases | Timeless Classics | Author Readings Shop in store or order for pick-up or delivery. Gift cards available.

Open Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun. noon- 5 p.m.

**SUBTEXT BOOKS** 

6 West Fifth Street, St. Paul 651-493-2791 subtextbooks.com





### **Monarchs and Milkweed:** A Story of Survival

Opens January 25, 2025

Journey into the world of butterflies and plants in Monarchs and Milkweed: A Story of Survival. Travel through the seasons of a calendar year as you learn how the survival of these two species has been shaped over time by one another.

Plan your visit today: z.umn.edu/visit-bell-museum

### $\mathbb{S}_{\mathsf{ample}}$ St. Paul

Woodturning demonstration, 1-4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 19 in the AAW Gallery of Wood Art. Free.

**St. Paul Civic Symphony concert**, 2-4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 26. Free. "Hot and Cool Classics" with the theme "Planes, Trains & Automobiles."

**Public Building Tour**, 12:30-1:15 p.m., every Sunday. Learn about the building's history, gangster connections and restoration.

### MN Museum of American Art

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

"Hilo de la Sangre (Thread of the Blood)," through January 15. Organized with Grupo Soap del Corazón, this exhibition brings together Latino 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.

"Here, Now," through May 2027. Discover 150 artworks across media from historically significant and notable new artists. All are in the M's permanent collection. 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

"The Little Mermaid," through Dec. 29. In a magical kingdom beneath

318 W. Water St., St. Paul

651.227.1549

Mon.-Fri. 8-4

Bring us

one item or

a houseful...

WE ACCEPT IT ALL!

Sat. 8-1 Sun. closed

Twin City Refuse &

Recycling Transfer Station

the sea, the beautiful young mermaid Ariel longs to leave her ocean home to live in the world above. Based on one of Hans Christian Andersen's most beloved stories and the classic animated film, Disney's "The Little Mermaid." From \$46.50.

The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra concerts: Roman Rabinovich plays Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20, January 17-19. Haydn's Fire Symphony, Jan. 31-Feb. 1. Both from \$16.

International Artist Series: Emmanuel Pahud, flute, and Alessio Bax, piano, 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 22. From \$36.

### **RiverCentre**

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

Land O'Lakes Kennel Club Dog Show, January 2-5.

Minnesota Roller Derby, 6 p.m., Jan., 11. Roller Vortex vs. Wednesday Warnings and Bodies of Water vs. Maul Rats. From \$17.

**St. Paul RV Supershow**, January 16-19.

### Science Museum of Minnesota

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

Mental Health: Mind Matters, through February 2, 2025. Unravel the layers of mental health, using empathy and understanding to analyze the specific challenges and triumphs associated with mental well-being.

We Support

Virtual Reality Transporter, through December 2026. 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.

Museum Nights, 5-8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Explore museum galleries, check out special Science Live performances, enjoy food and drink, then catch an Omnitheater show.

#### Omnitheater films:

"Ancient Caves," through 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," through April 13, 2025. The film unravels how plants and animals would not exist without mushrooms, molds, yeasts and toadstools.

"Secrets of the Sea," through April 14, 2025. From the smallest krill to the largest whales, explore how ocean ecosystems depend on biodiversity and a surprising level of animal cooperation.

"Stellar Tours: A Star is Born," Wednesday-Sunday. Follow the life cycle of a star

through this live digital telescope show.

Tickets are \$34.95 for adults and \$24.95 for ages 4-17, and include an Omnitheatre show.

#### **Xcel Center**

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

Cinch World's Toughest Rodeo, 7:30 p.m., Jan. 31-Feb. 1. The world's toughest cowboys compete in bull riding, saddle bronc riding and bareback riding, and the thrilling winner-takes-all showdown round and women's barrel racing. The rodeo opens at 6 p.m. each night for a pre-show event "down on the dirt," pony rides, the chance to meet the cowboys and more. From \$27.

### Other events

Portraits of Indigenous Authors and Artists, through June 30, at 3rd Floor Exhibit Gallery at the Minnesota State Capitol, 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Now featured is a collection of fine art photography by John Ratzloff. This project started when Ratzloff was invited to photograph the life and natural beauty of White Earth Na-

tion. His photography honors the voices and legacies of Indigenous leaders, offering a unique visual narrative that celebrates their contributions to art, culture and advocacy. Open weekdays 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Free.

Camp Bar and Cabaret, 490 Robert St. N., will host comedian Steve Gillespie Jan. 3-4 and A.J. Wilderson Jan. 17-18.

The St. Paul Farmers Market at Fourth and Wall streets is open 9 a.m.-1 p.m. on Saturdays during the winter. It has cooking classes, infrared heaters, and fire pits for roasting hot dogs and marshmallows.

Metronome Brewery, 385 Broadway, will host the following bands in January. All performances are 7-9 p.m. unless noted. The Argyle Street Trio, Saturday,

Community

Lutheran Social Service of

MN is seeks volunteers

age 55 or over in your

mentor school-age

children. Volunteers

hours for a tax-free

stipend and mileage

area to provide compan-

ionship to older adults or

commit to regular weekly

reimbursement. Contact

Issmn.org for more infor-

mation and to make an

impact in your

community.

us at 888.205.3770, or

AmericorpsSeniors@

Jan. 4; Red Planet Jazz Trio, Tuesday, Jan. 7; Stablemates, Thursday, Jan. 9; Red Hot Django Peppers, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 19; Mill City Caravan, 7-8:30 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 29.

The skyway walking group meets at 9 a.m. on Tuesdays at US Bank, 101 5th St. E. The group travels a mile and a half through the skyways at a casual pace.

### Chair Re-glue

Repair and re-glue wooden furniture. Since 1960.

Cilek Furniture Repair 651-699-4022



### Volunteer In Your Follow us!



Ticket Giveaways Event Reminders Expanded Coverage

St. Paul Publishing Co.

### Insurance

STATE FARM StateFarm
Stremski Agency

1560 Livingston Ave. Suite 101, West St. Paul

Home, Auto, Business, Financial Services 651-457-6348



### so wash

### Now Accepting Applications

School-year Positions Available

**Paraprofessional** - Work with students in a classroom assisting teachers, before/after-school child care OR supervise groups of students. Full-time or part-time. Starting base wage \$21.50/hr. (DOQ).

**Bus Drivers** - Safely transport students to and from school. Paid training & CDL certification. Starting wage \$27.00/hr (DOO)

**Nutrition Services** - Prepare and serve breakfast and lunch for students. Starting base wage \$21.25/hr. **Custodian** - Perform cleaning, event set-up/cleanup, and ensure safety of buildings. Full-time starting base wage \$23.31/hr. Part-time and seasonal starting base wage \$20/hr. (DOQ).

**Kids Club Supervisor** - Lead a school-age child care program in one of our elementary buildings and supervise paraprofessional staff. Full-time, 12-month. Starting base wage \$21.93/hr. (DOQ).

For more information and to apply: sowashco.org/careers





Haul your own & SAVE!

Demolition and Construction Waste | Trash & Lawn Debris

Furniture & Appliances | Tires and much more

We do not accept hazardous waste

We will drop off a container or dumpster for you and haul it away once it's filled. If you prefer to save money, you can haul your

trash to our refuse and recycling station. We accept all items

containers: 10, 15, 30 and 30 cubic yard boxes.

Reasonable Rates!

Roll Off Boxes for Large Jobs

One Time Pickup Available

in large or small quantities. We also offer many sizes of roll off

### POSTSCRIPT

#### **Little Luxuries**

I am quick to criticize other people's luxuries.

"Buying a latte every day? What a waste!" I say.

But, of course, I have my husband Peter making me coffee, and I can have it exactly the way I like it. (Lots of milk, not too much cof-

I think sailboats and horses are crazy expensive, but campers and RVs make sense – because that's what I grew up with.

"Economics don't count when you are talking about



Carrie Classon CarrieClasson.com

campers," my father has repeatedly told me. My father is a frugal man. He lives simply and has no luxurious habits but he has a very nice RV and he has traded it several times for slightly nicer models.

"This is the last one we will buy," he tells me, in a voice that makes it sound as if he means it. But then my parents see a new model that has some really nice features,

My husband started flying business class when he turned 70. He said it was his gift to himself when he went on Social Security. He claims that shopping around as he does, he pays only a little more for business than he would for coach.

I am not yet 70, so I don't know that I deserve this special treatment but I confess I've gotten used to being able to go into the club between flights and get a free cup of coffee exactly the way I like it (Lots of milk, not too much coffee). Peter stretches out his long legs and enjoys every minute of it.

I cannot believe how much people spend on new clothes. I buy all my clothes used but I don't want to tell you how many dresses I own – and I can't because I have no idea. I have far more dresses than any one person can reasonably wear.

But just when I say I need to stop buying dresses, I see a sleeveless burgundy number with a swathe of velvet down the front and an asymmetrical hemline for less than \$30

(used, of course) and the next thing I know, I'm having it shipped because, well, I cannot let it go.

Every week, I buy flowers for my desk. I could buy quite a few lattes with what I spend on them. I justify the expense by saying that because I sit here all day writing, I need something pleasant to rest my eyes on between sentences. I say it's something I need – and that is how all our luxuries are, I expect.

I know I'm unfair to the people who need to go sailing and ride horses. I'm unfair to the people whose day only starts out right when they have a pleasant professional prepare them a latte,

although I still say Peter's is every bit as good, and just the way I like it.

I know there are people who would say that having a closet full of dresses (however beautiful and deeply discounted) is ridiculous and buying fresh flowers is wasteful. I would say they're being unreasonable. But I suspect we are all a little unsympathetic to what others perceive as a need.

We all need a few luxuries, big or small, to make us feel we're treating ourselves well. I'm going to try to enjoy my little luxuries without too much guilt and allow evervone else to enjoy theirs.

Till next time.



Neighbors, Inc.

Dawn Wambeke President & CEO



### **Year In Review**

As we step into a new year, we wish to extend our deepest gratitude to our community for supporting Neighbors as a beacon of hope for those in need. From our highly dedicated 325-plus volunteers who double our staffing capacity daily, to our amazing staff, board of directors and incredible donors and partners, you bring our

mission of neighbors helping neighbors to life every day.

Reflecting on this past year, we have been humbled by the rising need for services. For example, our Hunger Relief programming has expanded more than 400% since 2019, and we have not yet met the need. Thanks to your contributions, we were able to expand our basic needs services while signifi-

cantly deepening our impact in our financial empowerment programming. From July 2023 to June 2024, Neighbors achieved the following outcomes.

Our Hunger Relief services distributed more than 1 million pounds of healthy and nutritious food through 31,850 appointments with households, doubled our capacity to fill the critical gap in food insecurity between monthly food shelf appointments, delivered food to and partnered with eight low-income apartment complexes, and provided home food delivery to people who have transportation barriers or are experiencing medical issues.

Our Financial Empowerment programming experienced great strides. We hired a bilingual (Spanish language) financial and employment coach, added work readiness and employment placement services, built partnerships with area businesses to help connect candidates to their employment needs, and assisted with financial education including savings, credit, debt reduction and asset building.

Through our Community Support services, our Clothes Closet Thrift Store provided 360 families with clothing/household vouchers totaling \$18,941 in merchandise and provided 61,366 affordable clothing and household items. Our Holiday Gift program provided 848 children and 98 seniors with holiday gifts.

As we look forward to 2025, we are filled with hope and determination. Our goals for the coming year include expanding our food distribution to reach even more families, partnering with local businesses to create more job opportunities, broadening our financial education initiatives, increasing our ability to connect the community to services such as childcare, transportation and housing through partnerships with human services organizations, providing tuition assistance for training in industries in high demand, and exploring opportunities to expand our Thrift Store in a second community location while offering a free Clothes Closet at Neighbors.

We wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to our community. Without the dedication and kindness of our volunteers, donors, and

community partners, Neighbors would not be able to meet the critical immediate basic needs of our community and help people achieve financial stability. Your support has been the cornerstone of our success and we are deeply grateful for your continued commitment.

As we embark on this new year, we invite you to join us in making 2025 a year of growth, compassion and positive change. Together, we can build a stronger, more resilient community. As always, I'd love to connect. You can reach me at dawn@neighborsmn.org or 651-272-1135. For our latest updates, visit neighborsmn.org.

Wishing you and your loved ones a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

### School Choice

four-year college, students two-year college then transcan earn a bachelor's degree. fer to a four-year college.

an associate degree. At a Many students begin at a

Public or private: Many students exclude private colleges because they think they're too expensive. However, financial aid can sometimes make private colleges as affordable as public colleges.

**Location:** The distance to home should be considered. Does your student want to be close enough for meals and laundry, and to visit on weekends, or will they only come home on school

Campus setting: Many students say that campus size and feel was a big part of their college choice. Visiting a college and talking to students is a great way to get to know a campus. Do most students stay on campus or do they commute to school? Does the campus exude school spirit?

**Cost:** For many families,

cost is a big concern. To offset the price of college, students should apply for financial aid and scholarships. Most students get some financial help from the government or the college itself.

Majors: Students often think they must choose their major before they start college. This isn't true. In fact, many students change their major more than once. However, for the undecided, the school should have several majors of interest to the student.



If you are 15-24 years old and have not completed your high school diploma, enroll in GAP School today! Participants can earn up to \$2,400 while attending school. Gain career skills in healthcare or construction while earning your diploma!

**GET PAID TO COMPLETE YOUR** 

**HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA!** 

### **ALL STUDENTS RECEIVE:**

FREE LAPTOP (TO KEEP!)

FREE ACCESS TO DRIVER'S ED

FREE BREAKFAST & LUNCH

FREE BUS & GAS CARDS FOR TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOL

SUPPORT IN TRANSITION TO CAREER OR COLLEGE

### **LEARN MORE** & ENROLL

Call 651-262-5801 381 Robie Street E. St. Paul, MN 55107





1326 Energy Park Dr., St. Paul | (651) 305-2780 | greatriverschool.org



### Community

### Dakota County: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

One year ago, I was elected chair of the Dakota County Board of Commissioners and outlined several key objectives for 2024. Below is an update on our progress toward achieving those goals.

Remained debt-free - Dakota County maintained its position as one of the few counties in the nation with zero debt. Although this may not continue indefinitely, a decade of being debt-free has saved our county and taxpayers millions of dollars in interest payments.

Nationwide recognition - Dakota County became the only county in the U.S. to receive top national awards in four distinct areas: public safety, public health, infrastructure, and transportation services. These accolades, awarded by the National Association of Counties, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, and two prominent national publications, reflect our continued commitment



Joe Atkins Dakota County Commissioner

to excellence.

**Enhanced Public Safety Protection** - Dakota County worked to improve public safety. We maintained operations at the county jail and partnered with local cities on initiatives like Dakota911, our Electronic Crimes Unit, SWAT, and the Drug Task Force. We also handled felony prosecutions for all cities and towns within the county. Our collaboration with West St. Paul and South St. Paul police officers – pairing social workers with law enforcement to address mental health crises - marked its fifth successful year, enhancing safety for all involved.

Community services that work - Dakota County constructed the grant-funded Crisis and Recovery Center next to the Northern Service Center in West St. Paul. This new facility opens next month and will provide essential support to individuals and families facing mental health challenges. Additionally, we strengthened our efforts to transition people from homelessness to housing stability and launched a new grant-funded substanceabuse prevention effort, saving lives and reducing longterm costs.

Lowest county property tax rate in the state - While Dakota County provides high-quality services, we also pride ourselves on keeping costs low. On a per capita basis, the county's share of property taxes on a medianvalue home is now the lowest of any county in Minnesota. In fact, Dakota County residents pay \$1,000 less annually for the county portion of their property taxes on a median value home than

homeowners in neighboring Ramsey County.

Elections that ensured accuracy - Our election officials successfully coordinated multiple elections across the county, including the presidential election, while ensuring security and efficiency. Comprehensive audits, including hand counts in several precincts, confirmed 100 percent accuracy.

Historic energy savings

Dakota County reached a major milestone with the completion of upgraded turbines at our county hydroelectric dam. Together with enhanced conservation efforts, we became the first county in the U.S. to generate more renewable energy than our county buildings and facilities consume. In fact, we will produce twice as much electricity as we use, generating \$1 million annually in revenue to help fund county services and reduce property taxes. Additional grant-funded energy projects will save the county more than \$8 million over the next 20 years while cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 4.57 million pounds annually.

Enhanced library accessibility - Dakota County's libraries were named the best in Minnesota in 2024, drawing more visits per capita than any other metro county library system. In the last year, over two million visitors borrowed more than four million materials. Our new Kaposia Library in South St. Paul, which opened in February 2024, added significantly improved services and accessibility, with half of its construction funding coming from outside grants.

Improved parks and trails - Thanks to the support of volunteers and outside grants, Dakota County made several enhancements to Thompson County Park in West St. Paul. We also completed the 27-mile Mississippi River Greenway, which stretches from South St. Paul to Hastings, and added accessible trailheads to the River to River Greenway, which runs from South St. Paul through West St. Paul

to Mendota Heights and Mendota.

Putting more service in service centers - Innovation remained a cornerstone of our service centers, with new conveniences like license plate tab kiosks and digitized property records, making it easier for residents to access services.

Transportation and pedestrian safety - We completed more than a dozen transportation projects to improve county highways, bridges and key intersections, enhancing both motorist and pedestrian safety. We also continued our focus on safety near schools.

**Next month** - We will turn our attention to opportunities and challenges for the year ahead.

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

### Optimist essay contest

The Optimist Club of West St. Paul is accepting submissions for its annual essay contest. High school students are invited to write an essay of 700-800 words on "How Optimism Has Paved My Road to Success." Submissions must be emailed to optimistcheryl@ gmail.com by January 14, to be eligible for prizes from the local club as well as a \$2,500 scholarship from the districtwide Optimist organization. The winner of the local contest will receive a gold medallion and a \$100 cash prize, and their essay will be sent to the district level. The club will also award the second and third-place winners with medallions and prizes. View the application at optimist.org/Documents/2025/ programs/24-25\_Essay\_Application.pdf.

### Holiday lights recycling

The City of West St. Paul is accepting unwanted string lights and electric cords for recycling. Drop them off at the collection box at City Hall, 1616 Humboldt Ave. through January 31. Cord adapters, battery packs, CFL bulbs and rope lights are not accepted.

### WSCO seeks input

The West Side Community Organization (WSCO) is seeking input from residents on several initiatives that will impact the West Side, including the West Side 10 Year Community Plan, Robert Street redesign and revitalization, Baker Park and Prospect Park play area improvements, public works road and safety improvements, George Street mill and overlay, Southport Safe Exit and the Southport Industrial District pollution, West Side Cultural Corridor, and West Side Flats Master Plan zoning amendment. To learn more or get involved, visit wsco.org or attend the Land Use Action Circle meeting at 6 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 22 at the WSCO office, 209 Page St. W.

### Metro Transit lowering fares

Metro Transit is lowering fares, effective January 1. Non-express buses and light rail will be \$2 all day, every day. Youth, seniors and Medicare recipients can ride for \$1 all day, every day. All-day passes will be \$2-\$4 and 7-day passes \$20. More than 926,000 additional rides are expected as the result of the fare changes, offsetting some of the cost associated with lowering fares.

### **Grant for books**

ISD 197 received a \$500 grant from the national association Daughters of the American Revolution to purchase a total of 64 books with patriotic themes for the district's two middle school libraries. The Association's 250 Celebration Grant program was established to commemorate the 250th year birthday of the United States, in 2026.

### DARTS seeks Blizzard Buddies

DARTS is seeking volunteers for its Blizzard Buddy program to help senior homeowners clear snow off their driveway and sidewalk when two or more inches fall within 24 hours. To volunteer, contact Lindy at volunteer@darts1.org or 651-455-1560.







### SAINT PAUL COLLEGE

A member of Minnesota State

# Spring into college now.

Why wait to take the next step?

Choose us for an inclusive community, expert faculty, and a wide range of program options!

Classes start January 13, 2025.

Discover your future at saintpaul.edu/Spring!

## 3 easy ways to support your community newspaper



Our publishing company exists to foster a sense of community through informative news articles, interesting and inspiring feature articles, and valuable advertising. We ask for your support in helping us achieve our mission. Here are three ways you can support your family-owned community newspaper.

- 1. Subscribe to our FREE e-editions for expanded coverage. When you request our FREE e-editions, you will receive one email a month with a link to our four different publications. We won't contact you more than that, and your information will not be sold or shared with third parties. Request our e-editions at info@stpaulpublishing.com. This is an easy, no-cost way to show you care about community journalism.
- **2. Subscribe to our printed editions.** Get every issue mailed to your home or business for just \$30/year per publication. To subscribe, mail your check to St. Paul Publishing Co., 1643 S. Robert St., Suite 60B, West St. Paul, MN 55118, or call 651-457-1177 with your credit card number. Please include the full name and mailing address for delivery, as well as your phone number.
- **3. Make a voluntary contribution.** Join the many loyal readers who have made a voluntary contribution of \$10 to \$100 or more to help us achieve our purpose. Thank you for your support!

St. Paul Voice | La Voz Latina | Downtown St. Paul Voice | South St. Paul Voice | St. Paul Publishing Co. | 651-457-1177 | stpaulpublishing.com

# Wordhip Guide

### Augustana Lutheran 1400 Robert St. S.

West St. Paul 651-457-3373 augustana.com

### **Beth Jacob Congregation**

1179 Victoria Curve Mendota Heights 651-452-2226 beth-jacob.org

### **Cherokee Park United**

371 Baker St. W., St. Paul 651-227-4275 cherokeeparkunited.org

### Community Christ the Redeemer

110 Crusader Ave. W. West St. Paul 651-451-6123 ccredeemer.org

### **Crown of Life Lutheran**

115 Crusader Avenue W. West St. Paul 651-451-3832 colwsp.org

### **Holy Family Maronite**

1960 Lexington Ave. S. Mendota Heights 651-291-1116 HolyFamilyEvents.org

### La Puerta Abierta UMC

690 Livingston Ave. St. Paul 651-558-1896

#### Mizpah River Ministries

1530 Oakdale Ave. West St. Paul 651-399-5783

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

401 Concord St., St. Paul 651-228-0506 olgcatholic.org

### **Restoration Hope Church**

121 Butler Ave. W. (Heritage Middle School) West St. Paul, 612-254-480 restorationhopechurch.com

### **Riverview Baptist**

14 Moreland Ave. E. West St. Paul 651-457-3831 riverviewbaptist.net

### Salem Lutheran

11 Bernard St., West St. Paul 651-457-6661 salemluth.org

### **Spirit of Hope Catholic**

2035 Charlton Road Sunfish Lake 651-760-8353 spiritofhopemn.org

### St. Elizabeth Orthodox

125 Congress St. E. St. Paul 651-424-0814 seocc.org

### St. George Antiochian Orthodox

1250 Oakdale Ave. West St. Paul 651-457-0854 saintgeorge-church.org

### St. Matthew Catholic

490 Hall Avenue St. Paul 651-224-9793 st-matts.org

### St. James Lutheran

460 Annapolis St. W. West St. Paul 651-457-9232 saintjameslutheran.com

### St. Joseph's Catholic

1154 Seminole Ave. West St. Paul 651-457-2781 churchofstjoseph.org

### St. Paul's United Methodist

700 Wesley Lane Mendota Heights 651-452-5683 stpaulsmn.org

### St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship

371 Baker St. W. St. Paul saintpaulmennonite.org

### St. Stephen's Lutheran

1575 Charlton St. West St. Paul 651-457-6541 ststephenswsp.org