Lion House now sober house for women in recovery

By Scott Carlson

It’s called The Lion House, a mammoth 107-year-old mansion on Midway Parkway in the Como neighborhood. Built in 1914 for $17,000 by Thomas Franksoon, a real estate developer and one-time Minnesota lieutenant governor; the house originally sat on 120-acres of platted farmland called Franksoon’s Como Park Addition. The mansion boasted more than dozen rooms, a workshop, a carriage house for up to seven cars, glazed porcelain tile brick, a green tile roof, 120 windows and massive stone lions standing guard at the front walk (thus the name The Lion House).

Once home to a dance studio, the three-story mansion Lion House today is a sober house for women recovering from chemical dependency. At any given time, the house, with its eight bedrooms and bathrooms, can accommodate 14 women.

Patrick Flanagan, a former financial services bond trader and a recovering alcoholic, bought the Lion House in 2019 with his business partner Tom Rothstein for $820,000 with the goal of making it in a great, safe neighborhood, “an amazing sober living house online and thought it would be the place The Lion House).

“Flanagan knows all too well the dark side of chemical dependency—and the price. A heavy drinker since his college days, Flanagan found alcohol taking control of him in his early 40s; I wanted the guests to be proud of their sober living. They feel excited to live here, it’s not further punishment.”

“Once word got out through referrals, it’s been amazing,” Flanagan said. “We have 14 beds and we are full with a waiting list.”

For all of its success, however, the sober house also has faced challenges. For example, starting up during the pandemic hasn’t been easy.

“We’re taking precautions with cleaning and masks,” Flanagan said. “We don’t allow many people inside who don’t live here or don’t have a purpose in terms of recovery or maintenance.”

Because the house is 7,200 square feet, the residents have plenty of space to spread out for living and setting up home offices, a rarity for sober homes, Flanagan said.

One drawback during Covid: Having AA meetings close down.

“Thank God Zoom became what it did for the recovery community,” Flanagan said. “It’s been huge. It has saved a lot of lives. A recovery model of recovery for the women who stay with us.

COVID-19 takes its toll on local care facilities

By Cigale Ahlquist

In the year since the first COVID-19 cases were reported in the United States in March 2020, more than 28 million people had tested positive for the virus and more than 500,000 had died, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control.

In Minnesota, there had been more than $525,000 coronavirus cases and more than 6,500 deaths during that period, the state Department of Health reported.

Residents of senior living facilities were among the most affected.

Locally, there were 150 COVID-19 cases and 49 COVID deaths in the past year, as of March 2, among residents of Lyngblomsten’s Care Center, which is licensed to house up to 225 people, Sam Petre, the facility’s communications director, said in an email. An additional seven cases of COVID-19 infections and two deaths were reported among residents of Lyngblomsten’s 165 senior apartments.

Meanwhile, St. Anthony Park Home, an 84-bed skilled nursing facility that had 70 residents in mid-March, recorded 26 COVID-19 cases and five COVID deaths among its residents during the past year, administrator John Barker reported in an email. The pandemic also affected employees of both facilities. Lyngblomsten—which employs a staff of 426, including 368 in the Care Center—had 170 COVID cases among staffs in the year up to March 2, while St. Anthony Park Home had 40 cases among its staff of 140 during the same period.

Neither reported a staff death due to COVID in the past year.
District 10 Community Council

Como outreach to homeless neighbors

During the coldest weekend of the winter season, Como residents showed they don’t take warmth for granted.

Responding to a call from the Como Community Council, individuals, families and church groups nearly filled a U-Haul with gloves, mittens, socks, blankets, quilts, hats, scarves, sweaters, coats and other winter gear. To make all those donations happen, more than 20 volunteers stood out in below-zero cold on Feb. 13 and 14 to collect contributions. All donations went to the former Bethesda Hospital, where Ramsey County is operating a temporary homeless shelter for people previously living on the streets.

The Community Council also collected more than $2,600 in donations from more than 50 local residents. Those funds will help Ramsey County’s Housing Stability program provide additional supplies to serve homeless neighbors.

Community matters more than ever

Want to have a greater voice in decisions that affect your neighborhood? Consider running for the board. Much of the openings on the volunteer board do not have an incumbent running.

Any community member in District 10, age 16 or older, is eligible to run. Simple truth: We do better as a community when the board reflects the full strength of Como renters, homeowners, local institutions, businesses and neighbors of all kinds—regardless of color, age, ethnicity, income, gender, faith or how deep your roots are in the neighborhood or in Saint Paul.

Board seats up for election this year include chair person, secretary, one representative from each of the neighborhoods’ four sub-districts and three representatives from the neighborhood at large. These positions are two-year terms, through April 2023.

For further information or to get on the ballot, apply now at www.district10comopark.org/candidate.html. The filing deadline is Sunday, April 14.

Voting in District 10 elections

Request your ballot now to vote in the April board elections for the Como Community Council. District 10 community members can vote online, or by returning a paper ballot through the mail. (Because of current restrictions on public gatherings, there will be no in-person voting.)

To request a ballot: Fill out the registration form at www.district10comopark.org/ballot.html. We’ll send ballots beginning Friday, April 9.

• If you intend to vote online, we need your request by Tuesday, April 20, at 5 p.m.

• If you want a paper ballot, we need your request by Wednesday, April 14.

People eligible to vote are: Renters, homeowners and other residents of District 10 who are at least 16 years old. Also eligible are representatives from business, nonprofits or other organizations with a physical presence in District 10. If you have questions, email district10@district10comopark.org.

Old media navigate new era

As more people get their information (and misinformation) from social media sites, and as daily, weekly and monthly local newspapers scale back or fold altogether, what’s the future of local news? The Como Community Council’s Sunday Series features a panel discussion with Teisha Christensen from the Minotaur, Scott Carlson from the Park Bugle and Kelly Smith from the Star Tribune.

The online presentation is scheduled for 1 to 2:30 p.m. Sunday, May 2. It will include time for Q&A. To attend via phone or Zoom, email district10@district10comopark.org. We’ll send you access information.

Free food Fridays continue

The Como Community Council and Sanneh Foundation will continue distributing free food boxes every Friday through the end of April.

The food is available to Ramsey County residents dealing with financial hardships because of Covid-19. Food will be distributed from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. (or until supplies run out). The location is the north parking lot of Niem Phat Buddhist Temple, at Dale Street and Front Avenue. The dates are March 26 and April 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30.

Reservations are recommended. To reserve a box, fill out the form at www.district10comopark.org/mealbox.html. The boxes typically contain meat, fresh produce and dairy.

District 10 meetings

Pandemic or not, renters, homeowners and other community members are always welcome to participate in District 10’s board and committee meetings. You can join either by video conference or by phone.

To obtain links, phone numbers, or other access information, send a request by email to: district10@district10comopark.org. Or, call 651-644-3889. Upcoming meetings:

• Anti-Racism Work Group: Wednesday, March 31

• Neighborhood Relations: Tuesday, April 6

• Land Use: Wednesday, April 7

• Environment: Wednesday, April 14

• Board meeting (and annual meeting): Tuesday, April 20

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Financing woes stall Lauderdale senior apartment project

By Anne Holzman

The city of Lauderdale has had to wait until July to see if state affordable housing financing is available to assist developers in building a proposed senior apartment complex at the former Launderdale School site, 1795 Eustis St.

Major construction work won’t start until affordable housing financing is in place possibly from early to mid-July, according to Greg Flanagan, city administrator.

Meanwhile, the city recently authorized Bauer Brothers, of Minneapolis, to begin salvaging items of interest from the old school and then putting them up for sale through City Hall.

Salvage items may include wooden trim, railings, doors, flooring, cabinetry, bathroom fixtures, drinking fountains, emergency signage, windows, lighting, chalkboards and a hearing and cooling unit.

The developer, Real Estate Equities, has planned 104 senior apartments for the site, designated as “affordable housing,” in the range of 75 percent to 100 percent eligibility bracket of Area Median Income under federal, state and Metropolitan Council rules.

The units would be available for income eligible renters ages 55 and up.

Lauderdale Mayor Mary Gaasch said funding shortage for affordable housing is a perennial topic among Twin Cities mayors when they gather to discuss issues affecting their cities.

“The frustrating part is the (state) Office of Management and Budget has changed the criteria for priority,” Gaasch said, referring to the way in which applications are approved.

Further complicating the cities’ efforts is the authority of counties to prioritize distribution of funds, she said. “One part of the puzzle is that some counties have chosen to prioritize 30 percent (of AMI),” Gaasch said, referring to the income eligibility guidelines for renters.

Gaasch said larger cities have an edge in meeting the various targets because they have old buildings available for renovation, which are less expensive than new construction.

“In the suburbs,” she said, “we have to build something new.”

Gaasch said she doesn’t question the need for public funding assistance in order to carry out the project.

“The developers aren’t making a whole lot of money; they have tiny margins,” Gaasch said. “The problem is marred to the cost of construction.”

Some utility and street work already has been done to prepare for the senior apartment complex.

City administrator Heather Butkowski said work also continues behind the scenes to line up other financing and take care of other aspects of the project.

She said that while senior housing has been a priority in surveys of residents over the years, it also would open up affordable housing for families as seniors vacate their single-family homes.

“When seniors can move out of their homes to places better suited to aging, they open up housing opportunities for families,” Butkowski said. “We can’t build our way out of the (affordable housing) problem because new home construction is so expensive compared to existing housing stock.”

Whatever the pace to get new housing construction underway, longtime Lauderdale resident Kathy Bernstein Lefald has been compiling memorabilia from school albums to produce a commemorative book about the former Lauderdale school.

She said a recent announcement that salvaged keepsakes will be put up for sale seems to have spurred renewed interest in the project.

“We have been submitting a lot of class photos,” Lefald said, as well as programs, report cards and other documents. “It’s been an amazing amount.”

Lefald said the working title to her commemorative book is “History and Memories of Lauderdale School.” She said anyone who wants to lend or donate materials should call City Hall at 651-792-7650 to arrange submissions.

Anne Holzman covers Falcon Heights and Lauderdale government news for the Bugle.
The violence in our streets and remembering Philando Castile

By Michael Kleber-Diggs

Like many gains in the American struggle for civil rights for everyone, the recent decision of the Falcon Heights City Council to name a portion of Larpenteur Avenue “Philando Castile Memorial Avenue” tastes bittersweet. The ideal outcome—man not pulled over by police for having a broad nose, man continues companionate work in schools—is not available to Philando Castile. What’s left for all of us is to work toward better.

I commented the City Council for its vote, I commend them for all the work they have done since Mr. Castile was killed. While we work for lasting change, I begrudgingly favor some recognition over none, ground gained over ground lost, remembering for forgetting, symbolic gestures over apathy, cramps over starvation.

I was born 11 days after Martin Luther King was assassinated. In my almost 53 years in America, I’ve learned a lot about its appre- ciation for destruction. The Black experience here, the experience of indigenous peoples, of Latinx people, of Asian people, of Middle Eastern people, of immigrants, is a centuries-long experience of injus- tice, violence, backlash in response to progress and erasure. The sad reality is, in America, people of color too often end up enduring recognition because of a tragedy.

Mr. Castile is worthy of our recognition; he always was. A St. Paul High School Central grad, a longtime employee of our public schools, beloved among students he knew by name, enduring now through his family and friends. Mr. Castile has a scholarship bear- ing his name at Central, and the Philando Castile Relief Founda- tion continues his effort to keep kids from going hungry at school.

We are right to remember Mr. Castile and how he died. Because we cannot change the past, remembering is among the things we have left.

As I write this, the trial for one of the four Minneapolis Police of- ficers who are accused of killing George Floyd is about to begin. I won’t guess at the outcome except to say I expect it will be bitter- sweet too.

Whatever decision is reached, it will not be accompanied by the policy changes that are needed to end the long history of institu- tional violence against people of color.

When I heard about Philando Castile Memorial Avenue, I did something I should have done years ago. I looked up the name- sake for Larpenteur Avenue, Au- guste Louis Larpenteur. Larpenteur arrived in this area in 1843, 15 years before Minnesota became a state. He is remembered as a settler and fur trader. He also worked in real estate. I don’t know enough to disparage the man, but I have, over the years, come to see “settler” as a near-perfect repre- sentation of how we whitenwash history in America. It almost sounds like a comple- ment, a noble thing, but behind the appellation there lies tremen- dous violence. The same is true of “fur trader.”

I’ve learned to be wary of men who worked in “real estate” in the 19th century, men who arrived at a place where people already lived and “acquired” ownership of land. As I read about Larpenteur, I found myself wondering less about what we honor when we create Philando Castile Memorial Avenue and more about what we honor on the rest of our streets.

I found myself thinking about America’s quieter, more hidden violence, and what fester when we forget our history. ■ Michael Kleber-Diggs, who lives in Como Park, is a poet, essayist and literary critic.

Upcoming Bugle deadlines
Here are our Bugle deadlines for the next three issues. As always, we appreciate when readers submit their articles early. Aside from breaking news, most articles can be submitted ahead of the scheduled deadlines.

Please note our publication dates represent when the newspa- pers go out for delivery. Mail distribution of the paper may take up to several business days. Mean- while, bulk drop-offs of the paper around town are completed in two to three days after publication.

SAP Area Seniors adapts to COVID challenges

By Dave Heady

During the pandemic, people have been doing a lot of pivot- ing, finding new ways to carry on activities.

Like many nonprofits, St. An- thony Park Area Seniors has also pivoted during the past year. Ac- cording to Board Chairwoman Margie Avoles, SAPAS moved in-person exercise classes and a care givers support group online. They added activities to their e-newsletter, website and Facebook page that people can do at home.

SAPAS also added new services and activities. Hello Ser- vice enables a family member or caregiver to set up wellness checks for a senior by calling the SAPAS office (651-642-9052) and negoti- ating a contract. SAPAS staff then make regular calls to check on the senior’s welfare. Also, Zoom po- rtesy classes provided a supportive environment for participants to share their literary works. The or- ganization serves upwards of 330 senior citizens annually.

SAPAS also adapted virtual activities, held virtual happy hour, bingo and virtual book club. The group will also hold an in-person bingo event as a fundraiser for the organization.

SAPAS has put safety measures in place to comply with state guidelines. Staff check in with seniors, oversee activities, staff check in with seniors, oversee activities and schedule regular calls.

So far, the group has had a strong year despite the challenges of the pandemic. By the time this issue of the Bugle hits your mailbox or shows up in your email inbox, SAPAS will have celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Michael Kleber-Diggs, who lives in Como Park, is a poet, essayist and literary critic.

From the Desk of the Editor

By Scott Carlson

Light at the end of the tunnel

By the time this issue of the Bugle hits your mailbox or shows up around town at various bulk distri- bution sites, I will have received my second coronavirus vaccine.

Frankly, I sometimes doubted whether this day was ever going to come. Not just for myself but for our nation, as a whole, as we long- ingly look forward to returning to a normal world.

At various times during the past year, the situation was over- whelmingly dire. Millions of people infected, millions more people dead from this scourge.

Hospitals at or beyond the break- ing point from caring for sick and dying patients. First responders under siege. Families and friends often at odds on how to respond to the pandemic.

I hope that all of you have or will be able to soon get the vac- cine be it Pfizer, Moderna or John- son & Johnson. What our doctors, medical researchers and pharma- ceutical companies accomplished in coming up with vaccines in such a brief period of time is noth- ing short of miraculous.

And if you have gotten vacci- nated, you are among those bless- ed to have made it to this point, who have escaped serious illness and, in the worst case scenario, the Covid Grim Reaper.

In this issue of the Bugle, free- text news coverage can struggle for civil rights for Mr. Castile and how he died. Because we cannot change the past, remembering is among the things we have left.

As I write this, the trial for one of the four Minneapolis Police of- ficers who are accused of killing George Floyd is about to begin. I won’t guess at the outcome except to say I expect it will be bitter- sweet too.

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Michael Kleber-Diggs, who lives in Como Park, is a poet, essayist and literary critic.

Considering the board are: Josh Becerra, Rosannah Cahill, Liz Danielson, Beth Hames, Gabrielle Lawrence, Beth Magistad, Steve Plagens, Merry Remdahl, Kristin Wiersma

E D I T O R I A L

C O M M E N T A R Y

Issue Copy and ad deadlines Publication
Issue Copy and ad deadlines Publication
May 2021 (Home & Garden) Apr. 14 Apr. 27
May 2021 May 12 May 25
June 2021 June 16 June 29
July 2021

APA Area Seniors to p. 13

PARK BUGLE n APRIL 2021

St. Anthony Park
Como Park

Park Press, Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit
obituary

Currently serving on the board are: Liz Danielson, Barb Hawes, Paula Mielke, Mary Mergenthaler, Sonia Ellis, Paula Mielke, Mary Mergenthaler, Sonia Ellis

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Michael Kleber-Diggs, who lives in Como Park, is a poet, essayist and literary critic.
The case for a St. Paul rent stabilization ordinance

By Joe Krivit

In 2015, a powerful area real estate developer purchased an apartment complex in Richfield. The new owner rebranded the property, “Concierge,” raised rents and instituted income- and credit-score requirements for new tenants. For—at the time—current tenants of the building, this meant eviction. Nearly 670 households were displaced as a result of this “up-marketing.” One hundred ninety-five of the tenants filed a class-action lawsuit and eventually won a $605,000 settlement in federal court. In reality, this amounted to about $1,600 in recovery per tenant, at legal fees were distributed. That was little more than the current monthly rent at the Concierge apartments for a one-bedroom apartment. (The apartment complex is now owned by a California-based holding company.)

Under a proposed rent stabilization ballot initiative by the group Housing Equity Now Saint Paul (or HENS as they colloquially call themselves), the egregious example of gentrification at the Concierge would not have occurred.

HENS is seeking to garner enough petition signatures to place the initiative in front of St. Paul voters in the 2021 municipal election in November that would cap rent increases at 3 to 5 percent year-over-year for all St. Paul properties (the organization is still deciding what the exact percentage will be). To place the rent stabilization issue on the ballot, HENS will need the endorsement of 8 percent of the number of registered St. Paul voters who voted in the previous mayoral election, or about 3,000 people. If the petition is successful and voters approve the ballot initiative in November, it would be the most progressive protection against the displacement caused by “free market” housing in the state of Minnesota. It would put St. Paul on par with peers like New York City, Los Angeles, Oakland and Washington, D.C.

Critics of the initiative—and you can bet there will be plenty who are backed by the city’s powerful real estate developers—will cite the “bad economics” of price controls that they say will limit supply and lead to urban blight.

One need not look farther than our current housing crisis to see that it is not market controls that are the problem but the free market for housing itself. Their error comes from believing that the housing market operates as a single, monolithic market, when in fact it operates as a handful of markets with different price brackets.

While the national and regional housing market has been booming for high-rent and high-margin luxury apartments that are suitable for middle class renters and families, the supply of housing that is 30 percent or less of income for a working class renter or family has shrunk considerably.

The 2019 Minnesota State of the State’s Housing Report found that 25 percent of renters in Ramsey County were severely housing burdened, paying more than 50 percent of their income in rent. The same report showed that while rent has increased an average of 9 percent in the country from 2010 to 2017, renters’ incomes have actually decreased by 10 percent during the same period.

The consequences of this have never been more apparent than in the shameful rise in the number of homeless encampments in the Twin Cities, whose residents are disproportionately people of color and the disabled.

However, critics will further insist that such a rent stabilization policy will discourage future real estate investments in St. Paul.

Another way to think about this proposed ordinance is that it will clear out the city of price gouging landlords who are placing their bottom lines ahead of the livelihoods of their tenants and the health of our communities. A 3 to 5 percent increase in rents still allows for a landlord to profit, but it asks for that profitability to be balanced with the affordability of the essential human right of housing.

But for our money to go where our mouths are, we must vote “yes” on rent stabilization in November.

Joe Krivit, a secondary social studies teacher for an international school, is a St. Anthony Park resident.

Bugle annual fund drive keeps growing!

By Scott Carlson

As of March 10, several hundred individual and numerous business donors and foundations have contributed $58,670 to the Bugle’s annual fall fundraiser, further smashing our campaign goal of $45,550.

We are very grateful for your outpouring of generosity and thank all of our financial supporters for your confidence as the Bugle strives to produce great journalism that informs readers and supports the communities of St. Anthony Park, Como Park, Falcon Heights and Lauderdale.

While the fall fund drive is over, you can always make a donation any time during the year. You can give online at www.parkbugle.org or with a check, sent to The Park Bugle, P.O. Box 8126, St. Paul, MN 55108. Every gift matters!

Now here is a list of our latest donors, from the period of Feb. 10 to March 10:

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The Bugle is possible because of your support. Give to support the Bugle now!

Donate online: www.parkbugle.org or send a check to: Park Bugle, P.O. Box 8126 St. Paul, MN 55108

FOOD DRIVE
April 23–30

It’s been a tough year and food shelves need support to keep up. Keystone Community Services provides food shelves and programs that improve the lives of youth, families and seniors.

Please drop off non-perishable items for Keystone at Healing Elements, 2290 Como Avenue and receive a $10 Healing Elements voucher to use toward classes or services.

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APRIL 2021 • PARK BUGLE
News around the schools

By Sarah CR Clark

Murray Middle School
On-Site Support program

Murray Middle School’s On-Site Support program, which began Feb. 22, is designed to provide in-person connections to school while classes are being held remotely. Each student is assigned one day per week for a morning session of academic and/or social-emotional on-site support from licensed teachers. The program is offered to all students and the vast majority of students are participating, according to Principal Jamin McKenzie.

“We were so very excited to be welcoming our Pilots as they entered our door for the first time this year, and many of them for the first time ever,” McKenzie said. “As class supports got off schedule, you could just feel the positive energy coming from our Murray teachers.”

Classroom partners

Murray Middle School and the University of Minnesota have joined forces to create a new program called Classroom Partners. Currently, more than 60 U of M students—and a few staff members—are joining classrooms (virtually, at the time of the Bugle’s press deadline) to academically support middle school students. Ideally, every classroom will be able to host a classroom partner, McKenzie said.

Cheryl Olman, an associate psychology professor at the University of Minnesota and a St. Anthony Park resident, tutored Murray’s Pilot One-on-One program, which no longer exists for Murray’s Pilot One-on-One program, which no longer exists due to a loss of funding. Olman then took on five fifth graders. (In-person classes resumed on Feb. 1 for kindergarten to second graders and Feb. 15 for third to fifth graders.)

“We had a huge crew of people standing on corners outside in the dark to help direct traffic on foot and in vehicles, helping everyone get to school safely. It has been a joy to have students back in the building. We have about 365 students here in person and 160 still in online classes.”

St. Anthony Park Elementary School

A special thank you!

A personal note from Principal Karen Duke: “A huge thank you to all of the families and community members who volunteered to help out with our return to school. (In-person class returned on May 4 for kindergarten to second graders and May 15 for third to fifth graders.)”

“With a huge crew of people standing on corners outside in the dark to help direct traffic on foot and in vehicles, helping everyone get to school safely. It has been a joy to have students back in the building. We have about 365 students here in person and 160 still in online classes.”

St. Anthony Park School Association

During this unusual school year, the St. Anthony Park School Association has found new ways to support its school community, hosting community-building virtual even and service projects.

One recent service project benefited the local organization My Very Own Bed, which provides new beds and linens to children whose families have recently secured housing. SAPSA collected 37 homemade fleece-tie blankets.

“One of the unique challenges of the moment has been to keep the school community together now that there are some students (studying) in person while others are schooling remotely,” association president Bryn Manion said. “SAPSA has hosted virtual bingo games, geocaching scavenger hunts and crafting times for students and their families.

“Looking forward, we will be helping our students connect as pen pals with each other (matching re- more learners with in-person learners) this spring,” Manion added.

SAPSA plant sale

The annual SAPSA plant sale is scheduled for May 4 to 6 at Langford Park, 30 Langford Park. Pre-ordered plants can be picked up on May 4. The walk-up plant sale will be May 5 and 6. Patrons can preorder their plants from March 24 to April 7 (Visit www.sapsamn.org for links and directions).

Sarah CR Clark lives in St. Anthony Park and is a regular freelance contributor to the Bugle.
By Sarah CR Clark

Falcon Heights resident Peter Mercer-Taylor is a professor of musicology at the University of California, Berkeley, where he earned master’s and doctorate degrees in musicology.

In 2001, Mercer-Taylor joined the University of Minnesota faculty and moved to Falcon Heights. “Every state needs a few dozen musicologists,” he explained, laughing. His wife, and college sweetheart, Beth (a former Falcon Heights councilwoman) have made Falcon Heights their home where they raised now three, grown children—David, Robin and Andrew.

Mercer-Taylor’s recent work on “Gems of Exquisite Beauty” was called a “herculean task” by Classical MPR. The project involved many days in the dusty archive rooms of numerous states organizing what he describes as “disorderly piles of stuff”; tunebooks, hymnals and other books. “As the son of two clergy parents, Mercer-Taylor’s childhood was steeped in church music, but not classical music—or so he thought. “I was raised in the (Methodist) church. By the time I was 4 or 5 I knew several pieces of classical music—several hymns based on classical music—by heart, one from Haydn, one from Schumann, one from Handel. There were just these tunes in the Methodist hymnal that I grew up with and that, in fact, I did have this very early exposure to classical music.”

In retrospect, Mercer-Taylor said he realized his story paralleled the story of classical music in America. “We don’t tend to think of hymns and classical music and pop songs as the same thing at all. But there was this really interesting couple decades back before the Civil War in the United States when they were the same thing. They all converged in this weird tradition. And that’s sort of what the book is about.”

When asked what music he turns to again and again for pleasure and comfort, Mercer-Taylor identified Mendelssohn’s “Italian Symphony,” which he listens to “every few weeks.” But his appreciation of music is deep and wide. “I listen to a lot more disco than you would expect,” he admitted, as well as “a certain amount of country. I find I am nourished by music that is both happy and sad at the same time.”

Sarah CR Clark lives in St. Anthony Park and is a regular freelance contributor to the Bugle.

Got an idea for a commentary? Submit it to: editor@parkbugle.org

### City Files from p. 2

All meetings begin at 7 p.m. Whenever possible, agenda and other relevant documents are posted in advance in the “Board News” section of District 10’s website: www.district10como.org. Submitted by Michael Kuchta, District 10 Community Council executive director.

**District 12 Community Council**

District council meetings

The District 10 Como Community Council and District 12 St. Anthony Park Community Council are hiring a community organizer. The initial focus of this role is to build community connections and activities in support of anti-racism and inclusion goals of both St. Paul district councils. The position averages 30 hours per week.

Initial review of candidates will begin March 31. For a full job description, see the District 10 website (www.district10como.org) or visit sapcc.org (home/com/page-for-us/).

SAPCC March meetings

- **Land Use Committee:** 7 p.m., Thursday, April 1
- **Board Meetings:** 7 p.m., Thursday, April 8
- **Environment Committee:** 7 p.m., Wednesday, April 28
- **Equity Committee:** 5:30 p.m., Monday, April 26
- **Transportation Committee:** 7 p.m., Tuesday, April 27

All meetings are hosted via Zoom. Meeting times are subject to change. If you want to attend a meeting or have questions about joining a committee, please contact kathryn@sapcc.org or emily@sapcc.org.

Submitted by Kathryn Murray, District 12 executive director.

### Saint Anthony Park Area Seniors

**THANK YOU**

**ST. ANTHONY PARK AREA SENIORS VOLUNTEERS**

for supporting our neighborhood seniors with rides, delivering groceries, shopping, making meals, taking and yard clean up, exercise and poetry classes and more during the pandemic.

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Eat your greens and shoots, but find them first

By Pat Thompson

As the ground thaws each spring, edible perennial plants wake up and are there for the taking if you know where and how to look. Perennials come up from their roots each year, unlike annuals, which have to be replanted from seeds. Perennials have deep roots, which also means they’re seques-tering carbon and improving the soil.

Some perennial edibles are grown on purpose, like asparagus and artichokes. But others are forageable from plants most people think of as weeds. Or they are weeds. Or sometimes they’re ornamental weeds. Or even lawns. Or other land, plant nut or fruit trees and shrubs or perennial edibles. Note: Don’t spread invasive species. Japanese knotweed* and Solomon’s seal. These plants emerge from the ground as green spears, and during that week or two, they can be used like asparagus. (Later, hosta flowerbuds and flowers are also edible.)

The good news is the best tast- ing hostas are the boring green ones. Find a patch that you’re sure are hosta. When the spears are 6 to 10 inches tall cut them off near the ground with kitchen shears. They’ll grow back! Or you can limit yourself to a third of the spears from a single plant. For recipe ideas check out the website http://backforager.com.

Fiddlehead ferns: This native plant (Ostrich fern, Matteuccia struthioperis) is easy to find in your friends’ yards here. But fiddlehead season is short, so make sure they’re still tightly curled. Remove any brown papery skin (soaking in cool water helps). First boil for 15 minutes (or steam for 10 to 12 minutes), then sauté in olive oil or butter with garlic and salt. . . or use them in a recipe as you would asparagus.

Greens: Look for the young leaves of dandelions, nettles, lamb’s quarters, oxalis, purslane, garlic mustard*, chickweed and amaranth. Each has its own flavor—some are better with cooking, while others are great raw in a salad. Look them up to see what’s recommended. To remove the sting from vita- min-rich nettles, boil or steam briefly, or just direct-cook into a casserole or quiche.

Mint: It’s probably not possible to harvest too much of an established patch. The leaves are best before the plant flowers.

Onion family: Chives and ramps. You may find garden-escaped chives growing wild (especially garlic chives, identifiable by smell). If you find ramps, cut off only one leaf per plant and leave the grow- ing part in the soil.

Summer and fall

As summer starts, you’ll find June-berry (Amelanchier), then later mulberries, chokecherries (Aronia), elderberries, wild grapes and wild plums. You may see some garden-escaped Egyptian walking onions and morel onions. Into fall, the nuts come along—acorns, black walnuts, hazelnuts, ginkgo nuts—and fruits like crabapples, highbush cranberries, red-fruited sumac (tasty lemonade), and rose hips (vitamin C tea). Later, sun-choke tubers are ready to dig after the first frost.

A note about mushrooms: With the possibility of finding poison-ous varieties, mushroom foraging can be dangerous. To be safe, join a group like the Minnesota My- cological Society or do a lot of re- search before you sample anything!

Planting more

If you have a spot for planting, consider these for future years.

Hazel nuts: Look for the native species (American and beaked) of these 10- to-12-foot-tall shrubs, both with edible nuts.

Chestnuts: These nuts could be- come a staple grain-like crop, pro- viding food resiliency as we face climate change. New varieties re- sult the blight that mostly wiped out the American chestnut in the 20th century and are also more cold tolerant.

Ramps: In the spring produce aisle, you may find whole ramp plants with short roots intact. If so, you can plant them and they will probably grow (I’ve done it).

Sunchokes: These native sun- flowers (Helianthus tuberosus) have tasty tubers to dig late fall or early spring, good for uses similar to potatoes. They’re high in inu- lin, though, and in large quanti- ties can cause digestive problems for some people, so read up and experiment first.

Resources

Need more information? Here are some resources to check out:

BackYardForager.com/roasted -hosta-shoots-recipe (lots of oth- er recipes, too)
FourSeasonForaging.com (Minnesota forager/teacher) MinnesotaMycolologicalSociety.org (local mushroom experts)
wiki.buildsoil.net (An effort to re- seed the American chestnut in the wild)

* http://backforager.com/roasted-hosta-shoots-recipe

All photos by Creative Common photographers except for: 1 (hosta) by Ellen Zachos, the Backyard Forager whose link is in the resources and 12 and 13 (hazelnuts) by Josh Feecta, joshfeecta.com. Other photos: 2 by Ancatdubh43, 3 by Swale Crouch, 4 by Knipsaaz, 5 by Zoorani, 6 by JP Hamon, 7 by KENPEI, 8 by Nathan Martineau, 9 by I. Sáček senior, 10 by FabioGagliani, 11 by Dave Whetking and 14 by Mom the Gorn.
SCHOOL NEWS

Como High classes coming back into school

By Eric Erickson

Students across St. Paul public high schools are scheduled to return to their buildings for in-person instruction beginning on April 14 for the fourth quarter academic grading period.

So far, Como High and all other high schools in the St. Paul School District have been offering on-site academic support to students in need of it since the last week of February. For most Como students, distance learning has been the standard method of instruction for more than a year.

Students and families choosing to remain exclusively in distance learning will be able to do so while keeping their current teachers. In-person instruction will run on a modified schedule from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays. Early mornings and Fridays are reserved for teachers providing online support to those students in distance learning, while all students have available asynchronous learning time.

Bilingual proficiency testing

Dozens of graduating Como seniors are pursuing the state’s Seal of Bilingual Proficiency in April. Students passing a comprehensive test in Ojibwe, Himong, Karen, Somali, Oromo, Arabic, Hebrew or one of 15 additional languages earn credit at any Minnesota state college or university.

Advanced drawing

Art students in Meghann Miller’s Advanced Drawing class have been producing illustrations using modern art concepts. To apply the concept of appropriation, students altered a cartoon character to create a modern look.

Castillo is also an activist, one of the founders of the Undocumented Poets Campaign that successfully worked to remove the citizenship requirement from certain poetry awards. An educator as well as a writer, he continues to teach poetry to incarcerated young people and works with the Ashland State Low Residence MFA program.

Author Castillo to lead online book discussion

By Judy Woodward

What does it feel like to stand between two worlds, not fully at home in either, yet drawn by countless ties of affection, culture and language to both? To navigate a new and unwelcoming life that simultaneously dazzles you with its promise and rebuffs you with its reality? To come of age in a psychological border state that dissolves and renews you with its reality? To dazzle you with its promise and to rebuff you with its reality? To come of age in a psychological border state that dissolves and renews you with its reality? To dazzle you with its promise and to rebuff you with its reality?

That's the experience that award-winning author Marcelo Hernandez Castillo portrays in his 2020 memoir of growing up undocumented at the border at the age of 5. He grew up in California and, after earning a bachelor of arts degree from Sacramento State, he became the first undocumented person to graduate with an masters of fine arts degree from the prestigious Helen Zell Writers Program at the University of Michigan.

As a poet, Castillo has won several awards for his collection, “Cenzontle,” (New Poets of America, 2018).

Castillo is also an activist, one of the founders of the Undocumented Poets Campaign that successfully worked to remove the citizenship requirement from certain poetry awards. An educator as well as a writer, he continues to teach poetry to incarcerated young people and works with the Ashland State Low Residence MFA program.

Judy Woodward is a St. Anthony Park resident and regular contributor to the Bugle.
Nan joins Como Zoo
New to Como Zoo: Nan, a 26-year-old female polar bear.

After completing a mandatory quarantine period, Nan was slowly introduced in February behind-the-scenes to Neil, Como’s 25-year-old polar bear, becoming acclimated to her new home at Como’s Polar Bear Odyssey habitat.

Nan, short for the Inupiaq word Naunataaq, which means young of a bear, was orphaned and discovered under a house in Barrow, Alaska.

After wildlife authorities determined she was too young to survive in the wild on her own, Nan went to the Alaska Zoo in June 2012 by 30 percent by 2050.

In January, a Como Friends donor provided the funding for Como Zoo officials.

After wildlife authorities determined she was too young to survive in the wild on her own, Nan was placed under human care at Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium in Tacoma, Wash., where she resided for nearly five years, according to Como Zoo officials.

Later, she transferred to the Toledo Zoo for 16 years and the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago for 4 years.

In January, a Como Friends donor provided the funding for Como’s zookeepers to travel and transport Nan to Como Park Zoo & Conservatory.

Although Neil and Nan are not a breeding couple, they will provide each other company, according to Como Zoo officials.

"Nan is an important ambassador for her threatened species," Como Zoo Director Michelle Fuerer said. "When people see and learn more about polar bears, it brings awareness of their plight in the wild."

In 2008, the polar bear became the first species to be listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened primarily due to climate change. There are an estimated 22,000 to 31,000 polar bears in the wild, and polar bear numbers are projected to decline by 30 percent by 2050.

Besides visiting the Como Zoo, people can see video of Nan on Como’s Polar Bear Odyssey website. For further details on registering for the lunch sessions, please call the seniors office at 651-642-9052.

Tuesday Scholars talks
The Ramsey County Library’s virtual Tuesday Scholars talks continue in April with all programs running from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Join local academic and experts as they share their knowledge on a variety of topics.

To register for any or all of these online Tuesday Scholar talks, visit the Ramsey County’s Library website here or call 651-724-6001. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Here is the lineup of speakers:

March 30
The Strategies of White Supremacists
Lisa K. Waldner, an associate dean and sociology professor at St. Thomas University, will discuss the techniques of white supremacist groups in Minnesota and around the nation.

April 6
The Supreme Court and the Theater of Judicial Politics
Teresa Collett, a professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law, will explore the evolution of confirmation hearings and judicial appointments to the U.S. Supreme Court.

April 13
The Demographics of Democracy
Michael D. Minta, an associate professor in political science at the University of St. Thomas, will discuss the characteristics of American voters from the 2020 Presidential election and what they mean for our national political future.

April 20
The Booth Girls
Kim Heikkila, author of "Booth Girls: Pregnancy, Adoption, and the Secrets We Kept," will discuss her research into the history of the Salvation Army’s Booth Memorial Hospital in St. Paul from half a century ago, a facility that was a home for unwed mothers.

April 27
Paul Wellstone: Minnesota Populist
Jeff Blodgett, a Minnesota DFL political strategist who helped run Paul Wellstone’s three U.S. Senate races, will offer a retrospective look at Wellstone, his political times and his legacy for our own era.

Virtual sessions on US presidency
Popular local historian J.B. Anderson will continue his virtual weekly series on “The Presidency: Campaigns and Crises” from March 31 through April 14. The sessions, offered by the Ramsey County Library, are:

March 31—“Third Parties and the Rise of the Secret Ballot”
April 7—“The Secret Greens”
April 14—“The Stain that Haunts US: Racism and the Presidency”

For more information about the library’s website or calling at 651-724-6001.

About Kendall’s Hardware
Kendall’s Hardware, at 978 Dale Street, 651-489-3210, 840 Payne Avenue, 651-776-6996, www.kendallshardware.com, is the cut that counts!

Kendall’s Hardware is a proud sponsor of this issue of Park Bugle.

For more information, please visit www.kendallshardware.com or call 651-729-9003.

About the Haiku poetry contest
Transition Town-ASAP will hold an open mic haiku reading invitation at 7 p.m. on April 12. See www.transitionasap.org for Zoom link info and other details on the challenge.

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Thoughtful poems mark Bugle contest

By Michael Kleber-Diggs
Bugle poetry judge

This year the Park Bugle invited its readers to submit poems on the themes of adversity, challenge, change, endurance or perseverance. Sixteen thoughtful poems were submitted, and they explored the themes in their own unique ways. The Bugle asked me to serve as contest judge. There is a poem about the weight of grief, a poem where beauty in nature is invaded by pandemic concerns, a lovely piece about childhood imagination and a tight consideration of white privilege.

I read a tight, meditative poem about weather and earth and possibility, a prose poem and a haiku stanza poem. The pandemic and the possibility of escape is seen in the months of the year and as seasons pass, widows converse while a flower is pressed, a familiar avenue is offered as a way to view a life and time.

There’s a thoughtful and insightful poem about Minnesota history and God, and a musical and sonic suggestion about how best to live. In the order I read them, the submissions ended with a smart prose poem featuring Frederick Douglass and an inventive visual metaphor for the circular nature of memory.

After a few reads through, six or so poems stood out for me. I had a difficult time picking a winner among them and even more difficulty picking which poems would finish second and third and which ones would be left outside the top three. I find myself grateful for every poem shared and for all the ideas and possibilities they advance.

First place—“Gaia Speaks: How to Stand with Me”

By Mimi Jennings

“Gaia Speaks: How to Stand with Me”

First place winner, Mimi Jennings, will receive $50.

From among 16 submissions, Kleber-Diggs chose “Gaia Speaks: How to Stand with Me” for first place. The first-place winner, Mimi Jennings, will receive $50.

Michael Kleber-Diggs, a poet and literary critic from Como Park, served as judge of the Bugle Poetry contest winners.

Second place—“Every Day of Our Pandemic”

By Alice Duggan

every day the flame on the stove —

oatmeal swells in the pan

every morning the windows burst with green —

snug around our lungs

upstairs an extra bed, someone could isolate there

I plant the parade of color, under the window a zing of white

but we could both be sick at once

white lifts the purples and blues those ground weavers —

you look frail to me and still

pole beans will climb the trellis tomatoes bloom and bear fruit

I hear myself renewing old vows it’s you — I choose you —

weariness pulls at me it’s critical to plant every seed

zinnias to glow beside the gentle yellow of lilies their green hearts

Second place goes to Alice Duggan who wrote “Every Day of Our Pandemic.” And third place goes to Renée Gaither who wrote “Yurt of Memory.”

The top three poems are printed below in this issue of the Bugle. Meanwhile, the Bugle will post all poetry submissions on the Park Bugle website at http://parkbugle.org.

Michael Kleber-Diggs, a poet and literary critic from Como Park, served as judge of the Bugle Poetry contest winners.

First place—“Gaia Speaks: How to Stand with Me”

by Mimi Jennings

Croak at dawn.

Drum. Trumpet, bellow, thunder, be my voice.

Whinny, whistle, breathe

Drum. Trumpet, bellow, thunder, be my voice.

Croak at dawn.

by Mimi Jennings

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Croak at dawn.
What A Blessing
by Jude Breen

When I reflect on the 2020 football season, I always find myself
self-concurring with the word gratitude.

Every day at practice, Coach Scull would have us take a min-
ute. We would sit there in perfect silence and bask in the opportu-
nity and blessing that we were given in being able to have a season.
Not only because it was nice to be doing something normal, but
also for the chance to build these lifelong friendships and memories
that we will all still think back on decades down the road.

I am constantly thinking back to our game against Johnson.
Como hasn’t beat Johnson in football for over 10 years and Johnson
likes to let us know that. There was a lot of pressure going into the
game. We knew we were a good team with many weapons, but we
really had to prove ourselves in this matchup.

The game was on a Saturday morning, and it was the first real
cold day we had all year. The type of day that makes you believe
that winter is really over. It was a beautiful day, and everyone
was excited to be back on our beautiful turf, again.

The next Monday we were back. The adrenaline running through
my body made me want to do everything I could to help our team
win. I knew that every play I made would make all the difference.
It was our chance to prove ourselves.

The defense stood strong all game and only allowed one touchdown.
The offense clicked and produced 3 touchdowns. The game was won
in the fourth quarter with a defensive player blocking a punt.

Scull did his victory dance in our end zone, and we all
just stood there and appreciated the moment.

A Little Bit of Happiness
by Keira Schumacher

Quarantine has been a hard, bor-
ing, long and tiring event for every-
one. Being stuck in the same place
day after day has made every mo-
moment feel the same. It’s almost
been a year now since the quarantine
started, so I’m sure that everyone
has felt this repetition of days just
like I have.

By now it’s very hard to find
something that can separate the days
for me to make them different or
unique. I have hobbies that I can
do at home. I draw and paint, play
video games. But at some point you
got sick of those too.

After months of everything being
the same, I knew I had to do
something to make my time in
quarantine a little bit better. I
didn’t think that doing little things,
like cleaning my room, walking my
dogs, or even just taking
time to listen to music
would make such an impact on my
days.

Taking time for yourself and
doing something solely for you
and no one else have made my
days a little better. When your
days start to meld together
out of being able to separate them,
you can get stuck in a rut without
being able to get out. That’s hap-
pened to me a few times this season.

Hard work truly does pay off,
and I have unconditional gratitude for my brothers on my team, and
the role model I found in the coach-
ing staff.

Struggles with online learning
by Logan Becker

Onerous and loneliness are two
words I would use to describe the
past nine months each and every
one of us has experienced. Our
main issue, and quite frankly the
most obvious one, would be the
Coronavirus.

It’s been exceptionally difficult
on most of us, and the days feel
as if they just keep getting worse and worse. Hearing about a vac-
cine was a light and a very hopeful sign that everything will turn
out okay.

But, social distancing at this point has been nothing but repet-
tive. I fully understand it’s a safety precaution to keep everyone safe
from this pandemic, but it still hurts to know I’m unable to see
my friends daily.

I go through my day expect-
ing the same thing consistently
over and over again through this
pandemic. It’s literally the same:
Wake up, brush my teeth, take
a shower, eat some breakfast,
feed my dogs, check in on my little brother, take out the trash,
mow the lawn, do the dishes, do my
laundry, spend time with fami-
ly and go to sleep. It seems as if
spending time at home has been
time consuming than my regular
day life before the pan-
demic. And it’s not entirely easy
using my precious free time to fo-
cus on school.

Online schooling is more dis-
tracting than one might think,
surrounded by things you love to
do, and having to ignore it to get
the things more important done.
I’ve always had a difficulty during
normal school to get my home-
work done when I get home from
school because I get distracted and
it’s really my only time during the
day to do what I want to do. But
it seems as if that’s how my daily
routine has wound up to be. It’s
unfortunate to say the least, and
overall has been stressful.

I’ve talked with other students
about this over Google meets, and
we’ve all come to the concen-
sus that we lack tons of motivation
when doing school at home.
Additionally, I think I have no
time to step away from this and
haven’t given myself much time to
just relax and enjoy myself without
the weight of school on my chest.
. . . I’m quite fully sure there are
hundreds of more students who
have dealt with this monstrous dif-
culty, and it’s been a very strenu-
ous position to be in.
The tenacious, mighty merlin

On a recent morning outing with my newly adopted pup, Rocky, I saw Tamara and her dog, Marshall, approaching from down the street.

As the two dogs were getting acquainted, Tamara told me there was a bird in a nearby tree eating another bird! She offered to show me. No persuasion necessary!

We walked our dogs to the foot of the tree, maybe 50 feet away. And up in the tree, on a big limb, was a dark bird working on what looked like a mourning dove, pulling feathers off and letting them drift down. I looked at the feathers collecting below the tree and confirmed they looked like mourning dove feathers.

I told Tamara that I thought that the bird doing the eating was a merlin. I had seen one just less than a month earlier at the tip-top of another tree across the alley. I was able to get my binoculars on that one and identified it as a merlin. That was the first merlin I’d seen in the neighborhood.

I saw what I thought was the same tenacious bird about two weeks later sitting on a telephone wire in the alley behind my house. The thin white bands on the tail were clearly visible. I judged it to be a female, who had her back toward me.

Tamara noted the merlin didn’t seem to be at all affected by us and our dogs standing around under the tree. Merlins seem to be quite tolerant of humans until one starts climbing their nesting tree.

Merlins are in the falcon family, just slightly larger than the American kestrel. Merlins are from 9½ to 12½ inches long with a wingspan of 21 to 29 inches. By comparison, the American robin is about 10 inches long with a wingspan of 17 inches. Female merlins are larger than males.

Merlins have long, hooked talons and feed on small birds and rodents. They usually attack their prey in flight, knocking it out of the air at 30 mph, then dropping down on it to finish it off with a bite on the neck. There’s a hint of Tarsyvulania there.

My Friend Val witnessed a bird-on-bird attack near her home in the Como Park area. She was standing in the street with a neighbor.

“The snow the night before had reduced the morning traffic. Across the street, in the park’s woods, there was a mobbing going on; not people, but birds were harassing some predator. There were blue jays, crows, chickadees and others, all in a loud rage.

Suddenly a dark-eyed junco flew out of the woods. Immediately another bird flew after it, hit it and knocked the junco to the street. The attacker settled down on it and knocked the junco to the street. The attacker settled down on the junco, spent a few moments getting its grip, then squeezed it, picked it up and headed away. Val had time to see that it wasn’t an accipiter (a genus of birds of prey), like a Cooper’s or sharp-shinned hawk. She identified it as a merlin. She had never seen one in the neighborhood before.

Merlins don’t always eat their prey right away. They sometimes cache the victim for later consumption. But according to the Birds of the World website, merlins don’t always remember where they stashed it!

During nesting, the male will bring up to three birds a day to the female while she’s incubating the eggs and over nine birds a day once they have nestlings. If she doesn’t take the food on his arrival, he’ll cache it. And, if he doesn’t deliver some morning, she’ll go retrieve the cached food herself.

Like owls, merlins can (i.e. “spit up”) pellets of feathers and skeletal remains from the previous day’s meals.

Merlins nest in northern Minnesota and in the metropolitan area. Most of them prefer the cooler, northern ranges of the globe. They breed in Alaska, across Canada and from Iceland to eastern Siberia. They’re what’s known as a Holarctic species (habitants of the northern continents).

Merlins usually use nests that were built by hawks or crows. They have to fend off predation by crows, peregrine falcons, great horned owls, Cooper’s and red-tailed hawks. They tend to select nest sites with a good view of the surrounding terrain, but rarely use the same nest two years in a row.

Merlins are rare winter visitors to Minnesota. Most have migrated to the south-central United States or northern Mexico. But some find shelter in conifers in residential areas, school yards, parks and cemeteries. And there’s high prey abundance in cities (think house sparrows!). I think the merlin I saw in December and January was the same bird, wintering over somewhere near our neighborhood. Maybe in the Como Woods over by Val. It was an intrepid bird to take on a Minnesota winter when the rest of her kind had high tailed it to southern climes. I’ll watch for her next year.

Clay Christensen lives and writes in Lauderdale.
A former University of Minnesota medical professor and 100-year-old former resident of St. Anthony Park are among the people we remember in this edition of “Lives Lived.”

John Doherty
John W. Doherty, 71, died Feb. 4, 2021. John was a 50-year member of Steamfitters-Pipefitters Local 455. He was a lifelong resident of Como Park and member of St. Andrew/Maternity of Mary parishes. John was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed hunting, fishing and golfing.

He was preceded in death by his parents Arthur and Dolores Doherty, and brother James. He is survived by his wife Arlene; children William and Dorothy Doherty; seven great-grandchildren. He is also survived by siblings Lucille (Kevin); nine grandchildren; and 12 step-grandchildren.

Marriott hired Sorenson, then an attorney in Washington, to the company in 1996. Sorenson later became a senior executive in business development and then chief financial officer.

When Sorenson succeeded Marriott as CEO, he became just the third leader in company history. Marriott’s father, J. Willard Marriott, started the firm in 1927 and led it until 1972.

Sorenson said, “We want very much to be an example of something different, where everybody is welcome to our company to be an associate with us. Everybody is welcome to be a guest in our hotels.”

One of Sorenson’s classmates at the U of Minnesota was his older sister; they received their degrees in 1983. “I’ve lost not only a dear brother but a dear friend,” said his sister Mary Ranam, partner and former chairwoman of Fredrikson & Byron in Minneapolis.

“He was, like our father, able to connect with people in a way that reflected his concern and caring for them,” Ranam said. “People are attracted to somebody like that. He had the skills that you need to be a leader in a complex business. All of that made him an outstanding leader.”

In addition to his role at Marriott, Sorenson served on the boards of Microsoft Corp., the Brookings Institution, Business Roundtable and Special Olympics.

Sorenson is survived by his wife, Ruth, and four children, his sister Mary, and brothers Robert and Michael.
But then she joined our board that SAPAS wasn't meant for who said she always assumed biostatistics. and ultimately a doctorate in bachelor's and master's degrees, life. Vernon graduated from the which he continued to attend a church he joined in 1955 and he would give as a professor.

Vernon Weckwerth, 89, Lives Lived from p. 14

Vernon Weckwerth, Dr. Vernon Ervin Weckwerth, 89, professor emeritus of the University of Minnesota, and a longtime resident of the Como Park neighborhood and of 1666 Coffman Senior Condos, died Feb. 25, 2021.

In six of the eight years Vernon attended elementary school in Colorado and Minnesota, he was the only child in his class. It was the Depression, few children were born, and many didn’t have the luxury of attending school. In high school, he was captain of the football team and won state super-

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After graduating from U of M, he worked for the American Hospital Association (AHA) in Chicago before returning to the U of M as a professor of hospital administration in the School of Public Health, where he taught and advised graduate students in maner’s and doctoral programs.

In 1969, Vernon developed the Independent Study Program to serve rural populations. It was an off-site learning program that was an early example of remote learning opportunities common today. The program also appealed to executives already running hospital associations.

From 1969 to 2011, more than 3,000 healthcare executives enrolled in ISP. They ran hospitals providing public healthcare to millions of people in 45 countries around the world, including places like Hong Kong and Bahrain.

As even as he led ISP, Weckwerth also taught statistics to students in six U of M colleges: Nursing, Medical, Pharmacy, Humphrey Public Affairs, Public Health, and Dentistry.

Beyond his work life, the things that mattered most to Ver-

He is survived by his five children: Vicki Kennedy, Marsha (Lee) Ohl, Debra (Vincent) Fe-

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Dave Holy lives in St. Anthony Park and is a former editor of the Park Bugle.

Send your ad to classifieds@parkbugle.org or P.O.Box 8126, St. Paul, MN 55108. Ads are $1 per word. Phone numbers, email addresses and websites are considered two words. Add a box or art for $10 each. Next deadlines: Apr. 14, 2021.

APRIL 2021 • PARK BUGLE
By Eric Erickson
Sports analysis

Academics come first. For the Como Park girls basketball team, it’s more than a mantra. It’s a way of life. Academic check-ins with their coach and academic advisor and study sessions fueled by the players are daily routines completed each afternoon before the team takes the court for practice at 6 p.m.

That priority has produced statistics that make the Cougars an inspiring force, on and off the court.

High school sports fans in St. Paul and the basketball community in Minnesota know of the Como girls team’s on-court success: a 72-game conference winning streak stretching back to 2015 and a No. 4 ranking in the 2021 final state polls.

Less publicized but also very important are the players’ academic achievements, which include a 4.3 weighted team grade point average. With most players in the program taking accelerated coursework and earning grades on the A and B honor rolls, the emphasis on “academics first” is laying a foundation for future college success.

Higher education is a goal for every girl in the program. Preparing for college is the standard as set forth by the coaching staff and modeled by alumni.

Senior captain Demya Riley knows the message well after four years of Como basketball. “We know that colleges aren’t going to just look at our basketball,” Riley said. “They’re going to see our grades and what’s going to really count is what we do off the court.”

Coach Olonda England holds each player accountable for their assignments and grades. Failure to keep up has consequences including extra conditioning and individual’s missing games when necessary. With expectations well established and grades so high, those disciplinary actions are rare.

Coach England and Academic Advisor Ms. Kristy Pierce communicate with the team via group chat daily during distance learning, providing reminders and encouragement. The group chat is also fueled by the student athletes who offer help and set up study groups for classes they share.

“We’re always there for each other,” said junior Shakyla White. “We lean on each other, support each other and we push each other to do our best in all our work.”

At 4:15 every afternoon, Pierce greets the girls who need in-person academic support. Study hall is quite literal for Como Park girls basketball as they set up tables and chairs to study in the hallway outside the gym before practice. “Ms. Pierce is always on us. Even though we hate it, we love it because she believes in us,” Riley said. “She knows that if we do bad on something that we can do better, and she pushes us and helps us out a lot.”

The Cougars have a well-earned reputation for tenacious play on the court. They are known for their hustle and work ethic, and those same characteristics transfer to their academic studies. It’s a winning mindset with those characteristics becoming much more than a team.

“It’s a winning mindset with those characteristics becoming much more than a team.”

Laughter has been important during the challenging times of the global pandemic. The last year has made learning harder. The Como girls have stayed strong during distance learning, but it hasn’t been easy or without stress.

Basketball has been an opportunity for the physical release of energy, and a support network for the ambitious, forward-looking, talented student athletes who wrapped up their program’s seventh consecutive St. Paul City Conference Championship.

The accomplishments on the court are secondary. Academics come first.

And with the shared values of pursuing excellence on and off the court, the student athletes of Como Park girls basketball have become much more than a team.

“We’re sisters,” Walker said. “We’re family. We’re all here for each other at one.”

Eric Erickson is a social studies teacher at Como Park High School and a longtime coach of school and youth sports in St. Paul.

“Everyone was so open and welcoming when I came in. Everyone just gives it their all and it’s good to be surrounded by that and I appreciate it.”

The team’s starters have been playing together for years. The fact that new faces have blended in so quickly is a testament to the positive chemistry.


Coach England’s staff also includes assistants Ronnie Smith, Andre Tellis and Jeff Dmytruk.

The combination of ages and personalities keeps things fresh and fun.

Junior captain Porter said, “It’s comedy every day. Our coaches are funny. There’s always something that makes us laugh and we can make fun of each other.”

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