By Christie Vogt

The stress of a divorce, the pandemic and career transition had left Nikki Christopher depleted in more ways than one.

After 30 years as a professional harpist and private music teacher, she knew that she wouldn’t be able to support herself post-divorce as a musician.

“I knew I was making a new start,” Christopher said, “and I decided to do something that absolutely ridiculous, silly and fun … I get to start over. What do I want to do?”

For this longtime lover of felines, launching a cat-themed boutique was the answer.

In September, Cat aMEWsement opened in St. Anthony Park’s Milton Square but Christopher’s unexpected path to business ownership began years earlier at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

In 2019, Christopher’s cat Stitchies became the first cat to join the airport’s Animal Ambassadors program. As a therapy cat in a field dominated by dogs, Stitches captured the attention of media outlets around the world and delighted travelers passing through Terminal 1.

Once COVID hit, Christopher stopped bringing Stitches to the airport but continued to assist travelers as a Go Guide volunteer. Now well-known by airport employees as “the cat lady,” it was during this period that staff suggested she open a kiosk featuring cat gifts. Christopher liked the idea and also hoped to bring Minnesota-made cat products to the airport.

In preparation, Christopher enrolled in business classes, worked with a small business mentor and got certified through the Metropolitan Airports Commission’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program. Inventory was piling up in her home when Christopher got a call in December 2021 that the kiosk program was ending.

Disappointed but still determined, Christopher took her goods to the Minneapolis Holiday Gift Boutique to get feedback about her business.

“People were really excited about it,” Christopher said, so she continued participating in other events like a cat show and the Walk for Animals. The sales results encouraged her to push forward with opening her business.

“People were buying armloads of stuff … so I was like, I have to do this,” Christopher said.

Christopher started looking for a storefront in January but had trouble finding a landlord who would grant her a lease without three years of business history. This limited track record also made getting a loan unachievable.

“It was like, you can’t start because you haven’t been there already,” Christopher recalled.

But then an opportunity arose in Milton Square: Studio Karlor, a boutique and gift shop, was looking for a sublet tenant and owner Karlie Schraufnagel offered the space to Cat aMEWsement.

“I keep telling Karlie that she made this happen,” Christopher said. “She’s excited that something fun is in there and that she’s helping a woman start a small business.”

Cat aMEWsement is like “the cat version of Patina,” Christopher said, referring to the Twin Cities chain of gift shops. It features unique handmade items for cats but also carries cat-themed goods for humans like jewelry, art, mugs and greeting cards.

Christopher buys directly from artisan designers when possible and said the store’s wool toys and artisan designed cat-themed apparel. Photo by Lou Michaels.

Cat aMEWsement carries cat-themed goods for humans like jewelry, art, mugs and greeting cards. Photo by Lou Michaels.

By Eric Erickson

News and analysis

When was the last time you looked at your high school yearbook? How much did you pay for your yearbook in ... ? (Feel free to insert year and adjust for inflation!)

High school traditions have evolved over time as society and technology continue to change. But the high school yearbook has endured. The stories, styles, activities and themes are different from year to year and generation to generation. But photos in a hardcover book encapsulate high school memories in a way that social media can’t.

At least that’s what many Como High School students said when informed that there wouldn’t be a yearbook for the class of 2023.

Analyzing Como’s operating budget for the current school year, Principal Kirk Morris noticed the yearbook was operating as an annual $8,500 loss. This was caused by a combination of low yearbook sales and a large upfront cost to Jostens for publication.

English teacher Susie Myhre ran a yearbook class at Como for three years with students producing content and organizing layout. Remarkably, a yearbook was even created during the distance learning pandemic school year of 2020-2021, although fewer than 70 students purchased one.

Como Park High School yearbooks will continue to capture school memories. Photo by Eric Erickson.
**District 12 Community Council**

**Voting for District 12 board**

District 12 board elections open on Nov. 1 and the council wants you to vote and we want you to vote for those who will represent you in areas of environmentalism, equity, transportation and land use.

**Wondering why this is important?**

Remember that the District 12 Community Council represented you in the Cleveland Avenue tree situation, rent stabilization measures, Terrestrial Road projects and local business license renewals.

Vote today at sapcc.org/boardelections2022.

If you are interested in being part of the board, but missed board applications, please seek out appointed seats for St. Anthony Park businesses/organizations, emerging leaders or open seats.

Questions? Contact info@sapcc.org.

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**Ice cream social review**

Thanks to everyone who participated in the first District 12 Ice Cream Social. A special shout out to the Kowais for providing the wonderful waffles, for Minneapolis’s donating supplies for pup cups along with many of our prizes that were available.

We enjoyed music from the Hampden Rounders and the interactive art experience with La Luchadora Ready Go!

Look for District 12 to bring back the ice cream social in years to come!

**District 12 committee updates**

Here is an update on the work of District 12’s various committees.

**The Environment Committee** is currently partnering with the 106 Tree Project to protect the newly planted trees in south St. Anthony Park through Watering Wednesdays. Drought conditions are rough on newly planted trees and watering is essential.

Committee members also are working to build Chimney Swift towers, maintaining the rain gardens near Hampden Park and working with the county on the continuing Cleveland Avenue tree situation.

**The Equity Committee** is working on building community through asking folks what they love about their community and what they’d like to see changed. They are also hosting community meals in apartment buildings throughout St. Anthony Park, advocating for renters’ rights in partnership with Homeline and looking at food access issues.

**The Land Use Committee** continues keeping up to date on the Luther Seminary property, working with local businesses to make sure there’s pedestrian access in the community and making recommendations on variances and building development.

**The Transportation Committee** just wrapped up its Territorial Project this past summer, which put in a sidewalk, crosswalk, street painting, mural and two benches near the Seal High Rise in south St. Anthony Park. They’re actively involved with Rethinking I-94, truck parking laws, 20 is Plenty speed limits and reviewing sidewalk access and safety in our community. If any of the foregoing activities sound interesting, get involved! District 12 leaders are looking for more community members to help make a difference in the community.

Get involved by attending a committee meeting or signing up for a project! Contact jessica@sapcc.org if you have any questions on how you can get started.

**District 12 upcoming meetings**

St. Anthony Park Community Council committee meetings are open to the community and board feedback on the new meeting schedule. Any adjustments to the schedule will be made in January.

- **Transportation Committee:** 7 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 29
- **Corrections**

In our last update (in the October Bugle) on the Chimney Swift Tower, the photo was incorrectly credited - Karlyn Eckman took the photo. Also, the article incorrectly stated that Cemstone donated cement for the project. In fact, the Environment Committee is still looking for a cement donation.

Submitted by Jessica Willman, District 12 community organizer.

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**District 10 Community Council**

**Como curb clean-up continues**

The District 10 Como Community Council is partnering with the Capitol Region Watershed District for the 2022 Como Curb Cleanup program.

When it rains, leaves on streets release nutrients into the water that flows into storm drains and the lake. There it becomes food for invasive algae. Studies have shown that sweeping up the leaves that sit against the curb where this stormwater/ice melt flows is surprisingly effective in reducing this damage.

Join more than 100 neighbors in sweeping your curb once a week this fall to help keep Como Lake clean. Learn more and register as an “official” participant to help District 10 track its effectiveness here on the D10 website: district10ComoPark.org/Como-Clean-Up.

**Subdistrict 1 board vacancy**

Interested in getting more involved with the Como Community Council?

The District 10 board has a vacant seat to fill in a subdistrict 1 (west of Hamline Avenue and north of the BNSF railroad tracks). To be considered for the board, submit an application at bit.ly/D10Application.

Vacancies are filled by the board and all appointed board seats are automatically included in the next annual elections.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about being a board member, go to our website at District10ComoPark.org/Elections or reach out to district10@district10como.org.

**Upcoming license applications/renewals**

- **Carter’s BP** (623 Como Ave): Gas station license is up for renewal Dec. 29. Anyone with input should email the Como Community Council or the St. Paul City Council Ward 5 office: ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us.
- **Speedway** (950 Lexington Parkway): Gas station and malt off-sale licenses are up for renewal Dec. 1. Anyone with input should email the Como Community Council or City Council Ward 5 office: ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

**District 10 meetings schedule**

The District 10 monthly meeting schedule has changed! The trial period began in August and will continue through the end of the year. In December, the district will gather communities and board feedback on the new meeting schedule. Any adjustments to the schedule will be made in January.

- **Environment Committee:** 6 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 2
- **Neighborhood Relations Committee:** 7:15 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 2
- **Land Use Committee:** 6 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 15
- **District 10 Board:** 7:15 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 15

All District 10 board and committee meetings are open to the public and have space for community members to bring topics for discussion. For further details, get in touch with District10ComoPark.org.

Submitted by Shervek McKee, District 10 Como Community Council executive director.
Falcon Heights hires consultant to study policing needs

By Anne Holzman

After several years of uncertainty over their police services contract with the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office, the Falcon Heights City Council has hired Matt Bostrom, a former Ramsey County sheriff and now law enforcement consultant, to study the issue for it.

At its Sept. 7 meeting, the council hired Bostrom’s firm, Center for Values-Based Initiatives, to review what the city needs from police and assess its options for obtaining those services. The Bostrom-led review will cost Falcon Heights about $35,000, about $40,000 less than a competing quote from a national firm.

Besides the disparity on the quotes, Falcon Heights Administrator Jack Linehan said a factor in favor of hiring Bostrom is that he “knows the community.”

Bostrom’s firm also will evaluate the city’s response to the Task Force on Policing and Community Inclusion formed after the 2016 shooting death of Philando Castile during a traffic stop. Results from the Bostrom study and review are expected in early 2023.

At the time of Castile’s death, Falcon Heights had a contract with the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office, the Falcon Heights City Council contracted with the Sheriff’s Office for police services. Their interest particularly peaked after Fletcher told them, in fall 2020, that he would increase the city’s patrol staffing and charge an additional $1.1 million already charged. During 2021, Falcon Heights explored contracting with St. Paul Police.

However, after the State Fair dissolved its police force in 2021 and contracted with the Sheriff’s Office, Fletcher reworked his budget and offered to continue the county’s relationship with Falcon Heights through 2022 at a reduced rate. At that time, Falcon Heights Mayor Randy Gustafson, who works for the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office, said the one-year extension “gives us the option to look at things.”

At the Sept. 28, Falcon Heights City Council meeting, Council Member Yakasah Wehyee expressed concerns about Bostrom’s local ties, including that Gustafson was in the position of voting on a contract for his former boss.

By the time of the meeting, Bostrom will have been examining the city’s relationship with a Sheriff’s Office led by a former rival.

When Bob Fletcher, embroiled in a scandal over a regional gang task force, ran for his fifth term as sheriff in 2010, it was Bostrom who defeated him. Bostrom won re-election to the post in 2014, then resigned in January 2017 to lead a task force, ran for his fifth term as sheriff in 2016, and served out Bostrom’s term.

Council Member Kay Andrews said, “He (Bostrom) will start the process with a lot of experience and expertise that the national firm would not have. They would have to spend a lot of time getting there.”

Anne Holzman is a Twin Cities freelance writer who covers Falcon Heights and Lauderdale government news for the Bugle.
From the Desk of the Editor

By Scott Carlson

Looking for the silver lining

During November, our nation celebrates Thanksgiving. It’s a holiday when millions of Americans gather around dinner tables to partake in festive meals and enjoy the fellowship of family and friends. We are reminded this is a time to count our blessings.

And yet, Thanksgiving observances are cooing along to the backdrop of a lot of terrible news: Mass gun shootings. The barbaric act we call mass murder. Billionaires of people in Florida left destitute from Hurricane Ian.

And then there is the never-ending drip-drip of US political polarization that seems to be eroding our democracy.

Yes, there is much to be said about the good news and perhaps despairing about.

And while there is bad news in our world, I prefer to believe that all that is not bad, all is not lost, all is not hopeless. There is much to celebrate.

This issue of the Bugle is a cornucopia of interesting and newsy life. Stories can be beautiful and joyful. A new baby zebra is born at Como Zoo, a new retailer opens its shop in St. Anthony Park’s Milton Square and the Como High School girls volleyball team is conference co-champions. A Boy Scout is earning his Eagle Scout rank by cleaning up an outdoor area at Murray Middle School where he previously attended. Our cornucopia of Bugle stories this month also includes our stellar stories from, among others, Transition Town, the District 10 and 12 community councils, Falcon Heights, Uptown, Midway, Roseville, sportswriter Eric Erickson and feature chronicler Sarah CR Clark. We also have strong contributions from Ojibwe writer Jenni Wolf.

This Thanksgiving month reminds me of the wonderful generosity of our Bugle community in support of our newspaper and all of our operations. As they say, it takes a village to support a child and friends. We have already more than 100 individual donors to the Bugle. You can see a list of our latest contributors in this issue’s classified advertising.

Their financial support and that of many other individuals and businesses help keep the Bugle a key player that builds community by telling stories and sharing local, community-connecting news and information. On page 6 of this issue, you can find out how to be a Bugle supporter. As we gather around dinner tables later this month to celebrate Thanksgiving, the Bugle board and staff thank all of you for your continuing support and wish you a blessed holiday.

Scott Carlson is managing editor of the Bugle.

Jenni Wolf responds

Thank you, Lauren, for your feedback. I realize that nutrition is a nuanced topic. I am a registered dietitian nutritionist who practices in all food-related fields. I believe the research that supports restricting and limiting foods and portions increases the risk for negative health outcomes while allowing permission for all foods supports and promotes positive health outcomes, less preoccupation with food, less disordered eating/dieting behaviors and a higher quality of life.

Absolutely you value a diet based in whole foods that includes a wide variety of foods, macronutrients, and micronutrients. If you’ve read some of my past articles, I speak to the importance of building a balanced plate and tuning into your body to notice what it is communicating to you in regards to your nutritional needs.

At the same time, I, along with most of the health and respected dietitians in the field, believe and support the evidence and research that food is more than just fuel. Like you stated, it is connection with others and a way we can care for our environment, it is also pleasure and joy for part of our culture and traditions.

It was my intent, with the October article, to encourage readers to be curious about their thoughts and judgments around Halloween candy and how they engage with it — how does it factor into their nutritional needs, their needs to have peace and emotional satisfaction via eating enjoyable food, their need to be grounded in reality and enjoy the holiday?

I am glad you feel grounded in your own needs and values, as we all do, and how you choose to eat/live in honor to our planet and environment. That is true that you are aware of what works for you and allows you to live a happy life. Thank you for sending your reader's sources. Since I am writing for the lay public, I often do not discuss specific, clinical research in my articles for the Bugle and instead summarize some findings, but mostly speak from my own clinical experience in the field, working one-on-one with individuals as well as groups, alongside, physicians, nutritionists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists who specialize in supporting individuals to nourish a healthy and normal relationship with food.

I have included some links to research articles addressing restriction, limiting and cutting out foods — some specifically around candy and what you may find interesting:

- academic.oup.com/acsn/article/69/12/612647149#494
- libreng.uned.edu/tran/Callo-vay_Amp_2006_Final_Your_Soup.pdf
- txch.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3759019

Jenni Wolf, MS, RD, LD

Bugle deadlines

Here are our Bugle deadlines for the next three issues. Please note our publication dates are when the newspapers go out for delivery. Mail distribution of the paper may take several days. Bulk drop-off of the paper around town is usually completed two to three days after publication.

December: Holiday Guide
Copy/ad deadline: Nov. 9
Publication: Nov. 22

January:
Copy/ad deadline: Dec. 7
Publication: Dec. 20

February:
Copy/ad deadline: Jan. 11
Publication: Jan. 24

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Next deadline: Nov. 9, 2022
Publication date: Nov. 22, 2022
Distribution: 5 to 10 business days

The Park Bugle is a monthly non-profit community newspaper serving St. Anthony Park, Lauderdale, Falcon Heights and Como Park. The Bugle reports and analyzes community news and promotes the exchange of ideas and opinions in these communities. The Bugle strives to promote freedom of expression, enhance the quality of life in the readership community and encourage community participation.

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PARK BUGLE • NOVEMBER 2022

4
Our neighbors by the numbers

By Helen Warren

I drive by them nearly every day: The new apartment buildings in south St. Anthony Park along or near University Avenue.

By rough estimate, 700 apartments, mostly studio or one-bedroom, have opened since 2020. What might I have in common with these new residents? In what sense might they become my neighbors?

My neighbors along Commonwealth Avenue in north St. Anthony Park are familiar to me. Some have been my neighbors since 2005 when I moved in. Others have purchased homes in the past few years, as older neighbors move to apartments, most remaining in the 55108 and 55114 ZIP codes.

I know my neighbors thanks to weekly happy hours started during COVID, at safe social distance. Even in the winter months, we bring our chairs and solo stoves to Polar Bear Island, the grassy, tree-filled space that separates the two lanes of Commonwealth.

We also gather for Solstice and Christmas celebrations, a book group and monthly parties of women and children. I greet my neighbors daily when I walk my dog. I check the progress of their front yard gardens and know their dogs and cats by name.

Beyond Commonwealth Avenue, I can learn about my neighbors by consulting demographic data collected by federal and metropolitan governments. I’m fortunate that Mark VanderSchaaf, a neighbor in Westgate and a retired city and regional planner, analyzed U.S. Census data about St. Anthony Park. These data have been assembled by the Minnesota Compass program of the Wilder Research Center and are accessible on their website, mncompass.org/profiles/neighborhoods/minneapolis-saint-paul.

The data Mark analyzed are drawn from both the decennial census, which seeks to count every one, and the American Community Survey, which provides estimates based on annual surveys conducted by the Census Bureau.

The American Community Survey intends to “help policymakers and nonprofit, business and community leaders identify, understand and act on issues that affect lives and communities.”

These data document realities I hadn’t grasped previously. For instance, I didn’t realize that the population of St. Anthony Park grew 28% between 2010 and 2020, the third highest growth rate among the 7 neighborhoods in St. Paul. More than 9,000 people resided in St. Anthony Park in 2020. Only about 40% of them own their homes. Even before the new apartment buildings rose along University Avenue, the majority of St. Anthony Park residents rented their homes.

The Green Line light rail service attracted the development along University Avenue. In fact, data Mark assembled show that 20% of south St. Anthony Park residents rely on public transit to commute to work, a rate that exceeds the figure for all other neighborhoods in St. Paul. That percentage may increase sharply as new apartments are rented.

When I look at those boxy structures adjacent to University Avenue, I picture hip young professionals making their accent up the corporate ladder. I assume that the average age in St. Anthony Park will trend lower, its median income will increase and its diversity will increase.

Of course, it’s too soon to test my predictions against solid data about new residents. So I consider what I know about neighbors in south St. Anthony Park, the community I travel through to get to University Avenue. Mark’s report about 2020 data tells me a lot about those neighbors I didn’t know.

About 50% of St. Anthony Park residents live south of the railroad viaduct, the unofficial boundary between the north and south sections of the neighborhood. The proportion of white residents in south St. Anthony Park (68%) is less than the proportion in the neighborhood as a whole (72%). The proportion of south St. Anthony Park residents who speak a principal language other than English (21%) is higher than the comparable proportion in north St. Anthony Park (14.2%).

Slightly more than 29% of households in south St. Anthony Park reported income less than $35,000, compared to 28% of households with income at or below that level in north St. Anthony Park.

Another measure of financial stability is the percentage of households where more than one-third of monthly income is devoted to housing. Such households are known as “cost-burdened.” Overall, 30% of households were cost-burdened between 2016 and 2020. Likewise, south St. Anthony Park, 36% of households and 41% of renters were considered cost burdened.

These 2020 data points comprise a baseline against which to measure demographic shifts in our community as we welcome new neighbors along or adjacent to University Avenue. Of course, some shifts will be driven by the financial and social repercussions of the pandemic that shapes all our lives.

Reaching out to neighbors

My purposes are less analytic. The demographic data, especially the comparisons between the north and south sections of our neighborhood, help me overcome reticence about engaging neighbors I don’t already know well.

Mostly, the data suggest that assumptions of similarity, that other people’s lives resemble my own, must be tentative. Kind attention and steady observation are more useful to me than my default assumption. What I don’t know about my neighbors is an impetus for engagement and conversation.

Our happy hour conversations about the apartment boom in south St. Anthony Park are often punctuated by gaps of silence. We don’t have much solid information to share with each other.

So we worry about congestion along our regular routes and in our regular gathering spaces in the neighborhood. We wonder what our civic, religious and business leaders will do to build understanding and rapport with our new neighbors.

Apart from these collective efforts, perhaps each of us can do our part, basing our efforts on a sound grasp of solid evidence about our neighbors.

Helen Warren is a St. Anthony Park resident and interested in the community.
SAP history series continues

By Mary Mergenthal

The third program in a monthly history series on St. Anthony Park will be held at 7 p.m., Nov. 1, at St. Anthony Park Lutheran Church, 2323 Como Ave.

Kristin Anderson, Augsburg University Department of Art and Design professor (and St. Anthony Park resident) will present “Local History: St. Anthony Park—Portrait of a Community.”

Originally published in 1987, a recent Lanegran reprint was spearheaded in 2020 by Granger, who steers the profits into his anti-graffiti work.

The church will have free child-care available during the program. Treats will be served afterwards. Please enter via the Como Avenue door and wear masks to the event. Masks will be available if you forget to bring one.

Questions? Please contact Mary Mergenthal at mary.mergenthal@gmail.com for the ongoing link for the series.

Mary Mergenthal is a longtime resident of St. Anthony Park, the former editor of the Park Bugle and a member of SAP Lutheran Church.

Bethesda Lutheran Church, c. 1915. Photo used with permission by Luther Seminary archives.

Bugle donors’ fundraising update

As the Bugle plunges into the heart of our annual fall fund drive, it’s worth repeating that our healthy operations are greatly buoyed by the strong support we receive from scores of individuals and business donors.

As of Oct. 16, the Bugle had received $12,776 in donations for fiscal 2022-23. Our fall fundraising campaign continues in earnest through the end of December.

Donors who have contributed to the Bugle from Sept 9 to Oct. 16:

Individuals
Anonymous
Joel & Theresa Anderson
John & Rebecca Anderson
Steve & Kathryn Audette
Jennette Bach
Lee Barry & Margaret Hall
Alan Baxter
Susan Bikowsky
Correo Sitter Blau
John & Frieda Boeke
John Borden
John & Frieda Boeke
Coreen Sletter Blau
Susan Bikowsky
Michael Baxter
Lee Barry & Margaret Hall
Steve & Kathryn Audette
John & Rebecca Anderson
Joel & Teresa Anderson

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Lee Barry & Margaret Hall
Alan Baxter
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Businesses
Whole Life Elevation
Falcon Heights—Lauderdale Lions Club

Schubert Club • Music in the Park Series

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Pre-concert talk begins one hour prior to performance
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St. Paul
Each student will receive support from formal project committees consisting of a community expert, a couple teaching staff members, a person from home and an Avalon 11th grade student. Avalon Program Coordinator Tim Quealy reflected on the wide variety of student projects, present and past. “We’ve had kids get their pilots licenses, last year a kid built a car,” he said. “Senior projects are often career exploration oriented. Students will do shadow programs and information interviews to try to figure out what they’d like to pursue.”

Quealy told a story of one Avalon alum who now works as an audio engineer. When he was a student at Avalon, his senior project was in audio production. The student’s community project expert became his professional mentor. Ultimately, the Avalon student earned a degree in sound engineering and now runs a recording studio. That student attended the 2022 Avalon Fall Gathering as an alum and will now serve as a community expert for a current student’s project.

Avalon’s practice of senior projects, a 20-year tradition, was awarded the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools’ Innovation Award in 2019. Students at the Twin Cities German Immersion School recently visited the Minnesota Legislature with foreign exchange students. Photo courtesy of Katharina Schirg.
Tech Dump renamed Repowered to make recycling electronics easier

By Amanda LaGrange

Tech Dump, your locally-based electronics recycler, has two good-news items: a new name and a new partnership with Ramsey County that means free electronics recycling for county residents.

Our new name: Repowered
You may have used the services of Tech Dump or Tech Discounts. But we feel our new name, Repowered, sums up the benefits of our multifaceted environmental, digital equity and social missions.

We are an impact-driven non-profit that securely collects technology from businesses and individuals for recycling or refurbishing. This keeps e-waste out of landfills, offers affordable tech items to the public and provides jobs and training to our Work Readiness employees, who are overcoming barriers to employment.

Each year, we provide thousands of employment hours, nearly a million dollars in wages and practical experience for adults facing these barriers. Most have experience in the justice system or are in recovery from addiction.

Since we opened our doors in 2011, our team has processed nearly 40 million pounds of e-waste. We adhere to the highest standards of data security while also prioritizing our environmental and social mission. We address several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty, vocational skills, maternal footprint, sustainable industry, discrimination, urban waste management, hazardous waste and climate change.

Free recycling with Ramsey County
Earlier this year, our company announced an exciting partnership with Ramsey County to offer electronics recycling to all county residents.

Through it, residents pay nothing to drop off televisions, computers and most devices that connect to them, such as VCRs, DVD players, keyboards and printers, for recycling. A list of accepted items can be found on the Ramsey County website. (The free service does not apply to businesses.)

The county is thrilled to offer free electronics recycling for its residents in partnership with Repowered, said Rae Eden Frank, Ramsey County interim environmental health division director.

“This organization has been a critical partner,” she affirmed, “not only for secure electronics recycling but also for providing affordable technology to the community as we so successfully demonstrated with our collaboration on the 2020 TechPaks project.”

Frank continued, “The additional fact that Repowered offers paid employment training for adults re-entering our community after incarceration is so crucial and also adds to our local economy. The partnership with Repowered is an example of the county’s environmental, economic and equity goals in action. This truly is a win for all parties involved.”

We all have a role to play
It’s important for all of us to prioritize extending the lives of all electronics. That might mean buying refurbished from our Repowered retail store, 860 Vandalia St., which is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

It might mean fixing gadgets rather than tossing them, or perhaps clearing out that pile of denial: the various cables and cords you might be saving in a heap. Items you bring to Repowered get back into use, decreasing the need to extract and make new materials.

We all have a role in providing fair chances for people, planet and technology. Thanks for joining us in that work! For more info, visit getrepowered.org.

Amanda LaGrange is the CEO of Repowered. She has testified before the Minnesota Legislature on the right to repair and is a founding member of the national Impact Recyclers Coalition.

Workers at Repowered refurbish electronics for reuse and disassemble others for recycling at their building on Vandalia Street in south St. Anthony Park. Photo by Open Air Journal.

150 years

Make memories at the Bell Museum

Spotlight Science: Brain Power
November 5, 10 am – 2 pm
Join us at the Bell Museum for an afternoon of brain science and exciting hands-on activities with University of Minnesota Researchers. Explore how the brain changes over time, investigate human and other animal brains up close, and learn about the consequences of brain injury and drug addiction.

Narwhal: Revealing an Arctic Legend
Now on view
The Bell Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate, brings an exciting new exhibit, Narwhal: Revealing an Arctic Legend. View a full-scale narwhal model and learn the ways Inuit communities and Smithsonian researchers have worked together to help us better understand both narwhals and a changing Arctic impacted by climate change.

November Star Party
November 18, 7:30 – 9 pm
Join the Bell Museum at our November star party! This time, all eyes are on Jupiter. Out on our roof deck, we’ll have our telescopes set up to observe Jupiter and some of its favorite winter deep space objects (weather dependent!). Inside, we’ll have hands-on activities and a look at the research on Jupiter being done by University of Minnesota scientists.
Building a balanced meal for Thanksgiving

By Jenni Wolf

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite days of the year. I love getting to spend a laid-back day with family and friends, in a cozy home, eating a tasty meal and reflecting on the past year.

If your family is anything like mine, there is no shortage of delicious foods and snacks on the table and around the house. With so many options, some of which might only make an appearance on this “special” day, it can be easy to overeat or overindulge.

While I think everyone wants to eat a tasty meal, partake in family food traditions and enjoy nostalgic favorites, no one wants to leave the table feeling stuffed and uncomfortable. Read on for some tips to build a balanced plate at Thanksgiving giving, while still enjoying all your favorite bites:

**Think in threes.** Visualize your plate in thirds and aim to fill one-third with protein (turkey, beans, fish), one-third with grain (mashed potatoes, stuffing), and one-third with fiber (roasted Brussels sprouts, green beans!) for a balanced and filling plate.

**Add fats to your plate to enhance flavor and satisfaction and be mindful of portion.** How much gravy or butter is satisfying? It might be different than the amount you are accustomed to using. Fats make food taste good and also help your body absorb the fat-soluble vitamins found in the meal.

**Check in with yourself during the meal.** Notice how things taste. What are you enjoying most? Is there anything on the plate you don’t care for? Reflecting on how the meal is going can help you decide when to stop and when, or if, to get more.

**Remember, Thanksgiving foods are available all year.** This is my favorite tip. While it might seem that green bean casserole and stuffing come only once a year, reminding yourself that these foods are available all year can have some more stuffing for dinner tonight or lunch tomorrow. You can whip up a green bean casserole mid-March if you feel like it.

Reminding yourself that you can access foods outside of this one-very-meal, helps to reduce the scarcity mindset that can often lead us to eat more-right-now even though I know full because I won’t have this again—until next year—mindset.

I am sure we have all been there, but something as simple as mentally reminding yourself, I can get another slice of pie in an hour when I am less full, can reduce the likeliness of overeating and that you’ll leave the table feeling stuffed and way past comfortable.

I hope keeping these tips in mind allows you to have a stress free and enjoyable Thanksgiving meal with family and friends!

**“Please remember that nutrition is incredibly nuanced and this article is not a replacement for individualized nutrition therapy or counseling.”**

Jenni Wolf, a practicing registered dietitian, writes about food and nutrition for the Bugle. She is passionate about helping others nourish a positive and balanced relationship with food.
Hitting the road: Vistabule Teardrop Trailers

By Janet Wight

Like many other prototypes, the first Vistabule Teardrop Trailer was built in a garage.

Founder and owner Bert Taylor always admired campers with a vintage flair. With the help of his brother Dave, Bert combined his skills in doing interior design and furniture making and attempted to develop a better trailer design in the garage of his Lake Harriet home, according to Vistabule Chief Administrative Officer Lily Taylor. The first Vistabule trailer was built in 2011.

Formerly based in northeast Minneapolis, Vistabule is now located in the back of the Prior Works building on Prior Avenue. For the past seven years its custom-built trailers have been assembled in this spacious, sun-drenched manufacturing facility, currently at a rate of about 12 per month, with a staff of 15.

Vistabule trailers are celebrated in the camping community for having several unusual features, Taylor explained. Each camper includes a futon that can be used either as a comfortable lounge or as a bed. A spacious rear outdoor kitchen features several options including a two-burner propane cooktop and room for a cooler or portable refrigerator. Although similar trailers have few windows, Vistabules have six including a large one in front, she added.

All of the handcrafted wood pieces are cut in Scandia at Great River Woodworking. Many of these pieces are coved and all of the edges are sanded, which makes these trailers a favorite of carpenters and engineers, Taylor said.

The base price for each Teardrop trailer is $23,995 and increases depending on whatever other options are chosen.

Although there is currently an 11-month wait for delivery, Vistabule recently hired a consultant to help the company determine how to reduce its lead time. Still, pandemic-induced supply chain issues continue to impact production, she added.

Weighing 1,600 pounds, these trailers can be towed by an SUV or minivan. The compact styling leads to a reduced carbon footprint, and the diminutive size of these trailers makes them attractive to city residents with small garages. Most of the components are made in America, although a few parts are imported from other countries including China and Australia.

Off-grid camping, also known as boondocking or dry camping, is definitely feasible with a Vistabule. Off-grid camping is often chosen for a two-burner propane cooktop and several options include a two-burner propane cooktop.

With a 130-watt rooftop solar panel, the average camper can spend about four days without hookups. Alternatively, these trailers are equipped with 12-Volt service which can be used for shore power when staying overnight in a campground.

Empty nesters and young adults are Vistabule’s primary customers along with seasoned tent campers who have grown tired of sleeping on the ground, Taylor explained.

David Jahnke, a St. Anthony Park resident, said he has enjoyed his Vistabule trailer since buying it in 2018. He has taken it to the North Shore of Lake Superior multiple times, staying in both state parks and private campgrounds.

“The quality of the device is excellent,” David said. “Sleeping above ground, in a waterproof tent that keeps you warm even in October nights on the North Shore, this is the way to go.”

A meet-up of 60 Vistabule owners was held earlier this year in Minnesota’s Whitewater State Park. Next year, more than 100 customers from near and far are expected to participate in a large gathering at Itasca State Park, a sign of the tight-knit community enjoyed by Vistabule enthusiasts.

Vistabule is a family business that “wants to make people’s dreams come true,” Taylor said. Anyone interested in learning more about these unique, locally built campers can tour the St. Paul facility on weekdays with an advance reservation. For additional information or to request an appointment visit vistabule.com.

Janet Wight lives in Como Park and is a regular freelance writer for the Bugle.
Volunteer day Nov. 5 at Gibbs Farm

By Sarah CR Clark

Gibbs Farm is hosting a season wrap-up volunteer day from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 5. An initial decision to strike a yearbook from the budget this year was reconsidered. When Myhre stepped down as Como Park site leader, Morris considered cutting the teaching schedule. When Ouverson said they’d help students interested in yearbook work, Morris pursued a plan. Staff will lead projects including preparing garden beds for winter, harvesting, light landscaping and site clean-up, according to Sammy Nelson, Gibbs Farm site manager. She said she is expecting upwards of 40 volunteers to participate in the day’s event.

The November volunteer day is open to anyone age 12 and older, of any skill level. In an email, Nelson said, “We have projects for all skill levels and projects can be modified for weight or movement restrictions. Families are welcome too.” Volunteers are asked to wear closed-toe shoes and work clothes. Work materials, including tool and trash bags, materials and snacks will be provided by Gibbs Farm but volunteers are invited to bring their own work gloves and lunches if desired. Gibbs Farm also hosts two big volunteer days in the spring and shorter events on Fridays in the summer. November’s is the final volunteer event of the season. Nelson encourages anyone who has questions to contact Ramsey County Historical Society Volunteer and Adult Programs Manager Clare Hohe via email, clare@rchs.com. Volunteers are encouraged to register for the event via the website (rchs.com/event/novem-ber-volunteer-day) or email clare@rchs.com.

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

Yearbooks from p. 1

An initial decision

When Myhre stepped down as yearbook advisor last spring and the position was unfilled when this year’s teaching schedule came out, Morris considered cutting the yearbook from the budget. When research revealed only 100 Como students (out of roughly 1,100) purchased a yearbook in 2022, he made the call to strike a yearbook from the budget.

If you’re wondering why kids aren’t buying yearbooks, it’s an economic choice. At $70 a book, few students and their families can afford it. When Morris considered cutting the position was unfilled when

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Eric Erickson is a social studies at Como Park High School and a Bugle freelancer.

Cost of yearbooks may continue to challenge school budgets. The issue of accessibility for all students will continue to raise questions. But like the previous 43 years at Como Park High School, there will be a yearbook of memories available for purchase.

Weins said, “I feel like long-term memories are captured better in a book than looking at a phone or on a screen. The yearbook gives context. Plus, people can sign it and have memories in writing.” From a generation of students who spend hours scrolling through photos on screens every day, it’s refreshing to hear that a hardcover picture book is appreciated. The sustainability and operating cost of yearbooks may continue to challenge school budgets. The issue of accessibility for all students will continue to raise questions. But like the previous 43 years at Como Park High School, there will be a yearbook of memories available for purchase.

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Baby Autumn with her mother Thelma. Photo courtesy Como Zoo.

Como Zoo boasts female baby zebra

A female zebra was recently born into the dazzle, or herd, at Como Zoo. Zookeepers, visitors and social media made it clear there was only one logical name for the baby, who was born on the first day of fall. The zoo bestowed the name “Autumn” onto her. She was born to Minnie, Autumn, Thelma and Autumn, all can be sired by Grant’s Zebras, which are commonly found in the grassy plains of eastern Africa, including the countries of Kenya and Ethiopia. Ulysses sired the newborn.

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2010 Artblok event

The Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association will host a new free event called “Full Open Studios” from Nov. 4 to 6 at 2010 Artblok, 2010 East Hennepin Ave. Minneapolis.

2010 Artblok has more than 30 artist studios including two St. Anthony Park residents, plein air painter Karlyn Eckman and acrylic painter Heather Humbert. Full Open Studios hours are 5 to 10 p.m., Nov. 4; noon to 8 p.m., Nov. 5 and noon to 5 p.m. Nov. 6.

Kleber-Diggs recognized

AARP MN and Pollen have named Michael Kleber-Diggs, a poet and literary critic from Como Park, to its 2022 50 Over 50 list. The 50 Over 50 list recognizes the courageous, compassionate and selfless acts of service by Minnesota residents over the age of 50 as they care for others and are reimagining their careers and businesses.

Kleber-Diggs is being honored for his work in the arts. For the last six years, Kleber-Diggs, 54, has been a leader and instructor with the Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop, helping to cultivate and elevate the powerful literary voices of Minnesota’s incarcerated community.

Kleber-Diggs was among the 50 Over 50 honorees at a celebration Oct. 25 at Quincy Hall in Minneapolis. You can view the full list of honorees and their illustrations at 50Over50mn.org.

Women’s Drum Center concert and fundraiser class

The Women’s Drum Center, 2242 University Ave., has scheduled its annual concert and silent auction from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 12, at Sundin Hall at Hamline University.

For ticket information go to womensdrumcenter.org. Even if you don’t proceed support daily operations, as well as community outreach, health programs and scholarships.

Weekly Scholars sessions on politics

The Ramsey County Library’s free Tuesday Scholar virtual series continues with two programs in November focusing on politics. On Nov. 15, University of Minnesota Law School Professor David A. Schultz will analyze the results of the midterm elections and say what they may mean for our nation and its democracy. The program begins at 12:30 p.m. Schultz specializes in election law.

On Nov. 22, University of Minnesota Law School Professor Richard Painter will discuss the state of American politics. The program begins at noon.

A nationally known political commentator, Painter served as chief ethics lawyer during President George W. Bush’s administration. These online programs are offered remotely using Zoom. You must register in advance for the events on the library’s website or by calling the library at 651-724-6000. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with information about joining the webinar.

Seniors activities

The St. Anthony Park Area Seniors will hold a mix of in-person and virtual activities in November.

In-Person Activities Include:

A blood pressure clinic from 3 to 3:45 p.m., Nov. 15, at Seal Hi-Rise, 825 Seal St.

A defensive driving class from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Nov. 1, at the SAP Seniors office, 2200 Hillside Ave. A showing of the movie “King Richard” at 2 p.m. at the St. Anthony Park Library, 2245 Como Ave.

Virtual Activities on Zoom

Lunch bunch sessions from noon to 1 p.m., Nov. 9 and 30.

Caregiver and bereavement support group meets on Zoom from noon to 1 p.m., Nov. 3.

For details on these or any other activities, or for connection instructions call the seniors office at 651-642-9052.

Recreation center fall activities

Langford Park Recreation Center, 30 Langford Park, register by calling 651-298-5765 or go to stpaul.gov/LangfordRec.

Some classes are single sessions while others have multiple meetings during November. Classes include intermediate pilates, online gardening, Zumba dance and painting for adults with kids classes including jewelry making and canvas and clay.

Northwest Como Recreation Center 1550 N. Hamline Ave. register by calling 651-298-5833 or go to stpaul.gov/LangfordRec.

Classes include drawing, Thanksgiving candy craft, painting party and Taekwondo.

Holiday Bazaar

Handmade and Heartfelt Gifts and Goodies

Saturday, December 3 from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

2129 Commonwealth Ave, Saint Paul

Join us for this one-day bazaar where you will find handmade items including:

- Holiday and home decor
- Original art
- Bird houses and nests
- Soaps and body care products
- Hand knits and embroidery
- Baby
- Plants and wreaths
- Gourmet baked items and canned goods
- Peanut brittle

Scandinavian egg coffee and individually packaged treats are available all day.

Proceeds will support the ministry of the church and Family Tree Clinic.

sapucc.org

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PARK BUGLE ■ NOVEMBER 2022
Rosann supports the Bugle and here’s why

Rosann Cahill, co-chairperson of the Park Bugle, shares why she supports the Bugle, as we conduct our annual fall fund drive:

How do you connect with the local community?
I connect with neighbors daily through over the fence conversations and frequent potlucks and happy hours.

I love the chats and information sharing on politics, house maintenance and garden tips. Daily walks within the neighborhood are an important way I stay connected. During COVID in particular, our street made many concerted efforts to come together outside to talk, listen to music, and share a glass of wine. It was at this time that we deepened some of our friendships. I feel an equal affinity to our local business, too.

What does the Bugle mean to you?
When my wife and I first moved to SAP we were looking for ways to learn about the community. I wanted to know what stores were here, what restaurants to go to and learn about services we might need. Through the Bugle we discovered Speedy and the Bistro, our snow removal service, and where to get a picture framed — we grew to depend on the news and information each month. Now nine years later we are still learning something new in the Bugle about the neighborhood and the interesting people who live here.

What would you say to encourage people to support the Bugle?
Across the country community newspapers are closing at a rapid pace. We are so lucky to have a healthy, thriving newspaper dedicated to our neighborhoods of St. Anthony Park, Lauderdale and Falcon Heights. It has been a critical tool in staying aware and connected to this amazing community. It's worth supporting!

What are kids thankful for?

Editor’s note: With the Thanksgiving holiday just around the corner, Bugle freelance writer Sarah CR Clark recently asked students at St. Anthony Park Elementary School what they are thankful for. She collected answers in the school hallways before the start of classes.

Lars, age 7: Lunch.
Skye, age 8: My family.
Soren, age 7: Winter’s coming. I like to build snowmen!
Violet, age 9: A home.
Mohamed, age 8: My family.
Lyle, 8: School.
Norah, age 9: Cold weather.
Yassin, age 7: Being happy.
Ila, age 7: My family.
Malachi, age 9: My parents.
Kaden, age 9: To be alive.
Guadalupe, age 10: Video games.
Emma, age 7: My family.
William, 9: My mom.
Sasha, age 5: My cat.
Joaquin, 6: Food.

What do you connect with neighbors daily through over the fence conversations and frequent potlucks and happy hours?
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Join us for our Holiday Markets featuring local and sustainable vendors!
November 19th, 20th, December 3rd and 4th.

Even Checks & Balances
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Free yourself to enjoy life, unencumbered by stacks of unfiled paperwork, unbalanced checkbooks, unpaid bills and unending tax and financial organizational burdens.

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Sasha, age 5: My cat.
Joaquin, 6: Food.
This month we remember, among others, a veteran St. Anthony Park dance instructor, a local French teacher and poet, and a long-time Teamsters advocate.

Cheryl Baldwin
Cheryl Baldwin, 75, died Sept. 16, 2022. She was preceded in death by her parents, Edward and Dorothy Stute. She is survived by her husband, Stephen; children, Chris- tine, Rebecca and Peter (Melissa); four grandchildren; and siblings, Jim (Bennie) Stute, Jeff Stute and Toni (Ron) Anderson.

Memorial service was held Oct. 6 at the Church of St. Ce- cilia, with interment at Sunset Cemetery.

Joan Jensen
Joan S. (Piper) Jensen, 91, died peacefully Sept. 19, 2022. She grew up and attended schools in St. An- thony Park. She and her husband Warren bought a house in the park after their marriage, raised their kids there and continued to live there until two years after his passing.

Joan started dance at 3 years, taught at age 14 and passionate- ly taught for 62 years. She also enjoyed volunteering at Como Zoo. She was a Girl Scout leader, active in St. Anthony Park Lu- theran Church and enjoyed square dancing with Warren.

Both Joan and Warren were close with their high school friends Card Club and lived in St. Anthony Park for more than 40 years raising their six children.

Joan was preceded in death by her husband, Warren, parents Ralph and Goldie Piper and great-grand- daughter Lydia Marie Villella. Joan is survived by her six chil- dren, Richard (Michelene), Susan (John) Villella, Julie (Paul) Villella, Patti (Michael) Price, Amylo, Rod- ney (Katty), 15 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren and beloved sister Judy Majerle.

Celebration of life was held Oct. 15 at Donna Shore, where she lived in her later years.

Memorial donations suggested to Como Zoo.

Douglas LeMay
Douglas LeMay, 62, died on Oct. 3, 2022, at his beloved cabin. Doug was born at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines to Lugari and Regina LeMay.

He grew up in Roseville, gradu- ating from Ramsey High School in 1978. He received his undergrad- uate degree from the University of St. Thomas and his doctorate in veterinary medicine from the University of Minnesota.

Doug married his soulmate Linda G radert on July 30, 1994. They were blessed with three sons; Brit- an, Ben and Brandon. He enjoyed volunteering with their activities, particularly Boy Scouts and FIRST robotics. Doug also enjoyed movies, reading, putting around at the cabin and traveling. Doug spent nearly 20 years as a volunteer fire- fighter for Falcon Heights. He owned his own veterinary clinic, Family Animal Hospital, in Fridley for 20 years. He was also a certified small animal hospice provider with his own home visit practice, Pet Hospice MN. In addition, he was a staff veterinarian at Banfield Animal Hospital in Woodbury.

He was an active member of St. Rosemary of Lima Catholic Church. As a father and husband, he was lov- ing and supportive. A calm, quiet, compassionate and sensitive soul, he was very much loved. His organizational skills left a little to be desired, at least to the outside world.

Doug was preceded in death by his father Lugari, beloved dogs Thor and Angel and uncles and aunts. He will be missed by many, especially his wife, Lisa, sons Bri- an, Colin, Aat, Ben, Rose- ville; and Brandon, (partner Allie), Lebanon, New Hampshire; mother Regina; and brothers Dennis (Suzy) LeMay and Dan (Ann) LeMay.

A celebration of Doug’s life was held Oct. 11 at St. Rose of Lima Church. Memorials preferred to the International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care (iaahpc.org).

Robert Mcinnis
Robert McNattin, Falcon Heights, 84, died Sept. 18. He was a long-time Teamster activist and an in- valuable leader in the Teamster pension protection movement.

He was born to Robert and Hil- da (Mose) in Illinois in 1938. Noth- ing in Bob’s life meant more to him than his family.

Bob is survived by children Michael and his partner Cynthia Slack and Andrew (Gia Vital), Jim (Grizely Malowchick), Patrick (Helen Ingham) and Elizabeth (Joe Domanik) and their mother Ann McNattin; and five grandchil- dren, as well as dear friend Mary Ann Mattos and cherished com- panion Monika Kyley of Belling- ham, Washington.

Beloved family, friends and col- leagues remember Bob fondly for the undimmed glint in his eye, his ready laugh, his unyielding de- votion to the causes he believed in and the unconditional love he had for so many.

Celebration of Life was held on Oct. 10 at Mancini’s Chair House in St. Paul.
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Cat aMEWsement from p. 1
cat caves have been particularly popular.
"I find things that make me giggle," Christopher said of her inventory — items like catnip tor-
tortillas and crinkle toys shaped like pancakes.
In time for fall, Cat aMEWsement is carrying pumpkin cat caves as well as harvest vegetable toys.
The holiday season is going to be special, Christopher added, de-
scribing a collection of Christmas tree caves, cat tree garland and toys shaped like dreidels, peppermint candies and snowmen.
"You’re not going to find this stuff anywhere else," Christopher said. "Most of this stuff is not on Amazon and none of it is at Petco or Pettinett."
After a stressful few years, Chris-
topher is now "having loads of fun," she said. "People come into the store and they giggle and they point, and that’s exactly why I’m here."

Cat aMEWsement, located at 2238 Carter Ave., is open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Meanwhile, you can shop online at catamewse-

Dr. Christie Vogt is a Twin Cities-based freelance writer and a regular con-
tributor to the Bugle.
By Eric Erickson
Sports analysis

For the first time since 2015, the Como Park Cougars volleyball team were champions of the St. Paul City Conference.

With a 5-1 conference record, Como finished in a three-way tie atop the standings along with Central and Highland.

As the Bugle went to press, the Cougars possessed an overall record of 12-7 with a few regular season matches remaining before the Sections 4AAA Tournament started on Oct. 26.

When coach Hannah Wolf began official practice sessions in mid-August, her team displayed an eager attitude and a drive to improve. Several players who started as sophomores were returning, ready to raise the level of their play as juniors.

Early season victories over quality nonconference opponents built the Cougars’ confidence, most notably beating last year’s sectional champions from Chisago Lakes. By the time conference matches started, Como felt it could compete with anyone in the city.

Junior co-captain Greta Seppanen conceded the loss to Central was disappointing but acknowledged that the overall journey to finish tied at the top was joyful.

Much of that joy was fueled by fans. Families are consistently present with words of encouragement and timely cheering, but the loud and proud classmates added another element this season.

“Our student section has been really supportive and reliable,” Seppanen said. “There are so many ups and downs in volleyball. The fans are always giving us energy that picks us up if we’re down. It’s been really fun to have them there and to see our bleachers so unified with positive energy.”

The positivity from the student section included many theme nights. Examples included dressing up for Tropical Night, Tie-Dye Night, a “Pink Out,” a “Gold Out” for Senior Night and even Neon/Construction Night (which worked well for the signature win over Highland.)

Unlike many sports, there are abundant celebratory moments in volleyball. Every point played ends with a quick team huddle on the court. If you’re winning most of your points, most of those huddles are energetic. And a chance for the fans to make some noise.

Como fans are synched in with the same choreographed actions, gestures and celebratory routines the girls on the floor make after a big point.

With a core group who has played together since their Murray Middle School days, the team has some long-standing traditions. For senior Zhane Singer, playing her first year of Como volleyball after transferring, the Cougars celebrations are new.

“Zhane brings a fun, unique energy because she smiles when we teach her something new and says, ‘I like that!’ That makes the rest of us laugh and enjoy it more because it becomes fresh again for us,” Seppanen said.

Singer plays a key role as a powerful middle hitter for the Cougars. Senior Kayla James is a multi-sport athlete who does the challenging job of blocking opponents’ hits at the net. Senior Dawn Weins is a consistent source of positive spirit who always has uplifting words.

Every other player on the varsity roster is a junior. Seppanen is a third-year varsity player and outside hitter.

Co-captain Ellery Tennison is a natural leader who plays setter. A third-year varsity player, she’s a facilitator who can place the ball precisely where her teammates can maximize a hit. Beyond physical awareness, Tennison also has an ability to address her teammates’ mental state and pick them up with the right message at the right time.

Julia Petch played varsity as a freshman, missed her sophomore year with an ACL injury, but has returned to excellent form as an outside hitter this season. Mairin Blank is a setter who seeks perfection. According to her teammates, she only wants specific constructive criticism regarding the details of her sets.

Xei Lee is a defensive specialist who hustles to make digs and keep points alive. Kiki Ruddy is a reliable defender and effective communicator. Alice Wagner-Hemstad is a selfless three-sport athlete who covers a lot of court and has leaping ability. Desiree Yang is a first-year varsity player with quick reaction skills at the net.

Together with their supporters, the 2022 Como volleyball team shared a special and successful season.

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

### Como volleyball captures share of conference title

![Cougar volleyball players and fans celebrate a pivotal point in their victory over Highland Park on Oct. 3. Photo by Eric Erickson.](image)