



# Hill & Lake Press

‘Where the biggies leave off...’

Providing local news to the Minneapolis lakes community since 1976

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## LET THERE BE LIGHT!

By Susan Lenfestey



With construction finally behind us, the lights on Hennepin Ave shine again — a simple reminder that community and light can lift even the darkest days. It's also an invitation to celebrate Hennepin and strengthen the small businesses that anchor our community. (Image: Craig Wilson)

*Susan Lenfestey is a regular contributor. She lives in Lowry Hill.*

Decades ago, our daughter Zara — then 20, now 55 — was grumping about the short, dark days of winter. “Cheer up,” I said. “In a few more days they start getting longer.”

“Well, that’s what we should celebrate,” she said. And so it began.

Miles of balsam garland were draped along our fence, lights twinkling beneath a snowy mantle. Ice globes lit by candles sprouted through the yard like small winter mushrooms.

A certain party took shape, and politicians, poets and regular neighbors gathered around the glow of a backyard bonfire. It was a celebration of the solstice, yes, but also of community and

light. We need both in these dark days.

What a lift to the spirits it is to see lights strung in the trees at Franklin and Hennepin and all along the avenue that endured the two-year onslaught of construction. What a gift that downtown’s holiday lights now extend all the way to Uptown, a sign of

**“There is a crack  
in everything —  
that’s how the  
light gets in.”**

— Leonard Cohen

unity and renewal. What pleasure comes from every pot of spruce tips adorned with tiny fairy lights or the massive spruce in a neighbor’s yard decked out in old-fashioned rainbow bulbs.

It may seem petty in a challenged world, or a waste of resources, but lighten up. We need all the glimmers of joy we can find in these dark days. Never mind the cost, the energy, the frivolity. Hang the lights for those who can’t.

Let there be light.

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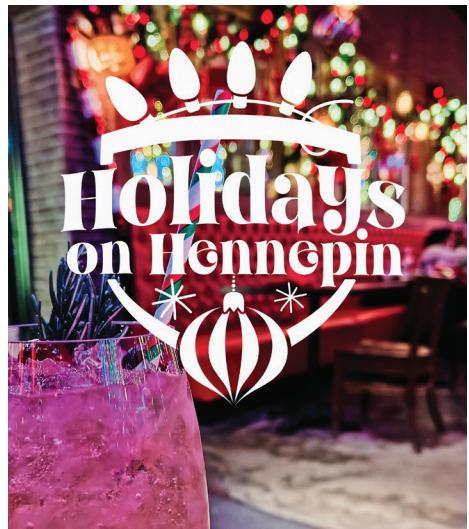
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(Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

## CELEBRATE HENNEPIN: GET YOUR HOLIDAY PASSPORT

By Will Stancil



Left: Support local small businesses by visiting Hennepin Avenue, Lake Street and beyond — and spend your dollars where they matter most. (Image: Sarah Grundhoefer)  
Right: Pick up your Holiday Passport and celebrate Hennepin in style. Shop small, support local and take part in the festivities — collect stamps, meet neighbors and enjoy the season. Pictured is Sarah Grundhoefer, operations manager for Holidays on Hennepin. (Image: Adam Grundhoefer)

*Will Stancil is the chair of the Holidays on Hennepin committee. He lives in Lowry Hill and serves on the neighborhood association board of directors.*

After several tough years of change and construction, South

Hennepin is ready for something to get excited about again. Your neighbors have been hard at work putting together a festive, month-long event this December.

More than 70 Uptown businesses and organizations have partnered with six neighborhood asso-

ciations to decorate Hennepin Avenue, host more than 50 events and launch a business passport program with special deals and prizes.

As chair of the committee planning Holidays on Hennepin, it’s been a delight to watch the celebration grow from concept to reality. It never would have come to fruition without the extraordinary hard work and enthusiasm of so many people who live, work and own businesses in our community.

Even as I write this, dozens of Hill and Lake neighbors have formed volunteer decorating teams and are working with small business owners to light up their stores for the season. It’s incredibly inspiring to see so many people pulling together to put Uptown back on the map.

We want every single neighbor to celebrate on Hennepin this year. Passports are available at all participating businesses. For a list of locations and a full event calendar, visit [holidaysonhennepin.com](http://holidaysonhennepin.com), and follow us on Instagram or Facebook for updates.

And this is just year one. We’ve built Holidays on Hennepin from the ground up to become an annual

celebration. If you want to support the neighborhood’s long-term success, please consider becoming a Founding Family with a contribution of \$250. Founding Families will be recognized as early supporters year after year.

Happy holidays, and see you on Hennepin in the weeks ahead.

### → TO GIVE

visit the Holidays on Hennepin website at [holidaysonhennepin.com](http://holidaysonhennepin.com) where you can make a tax-deductible donation through the Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association.





# Hill & Lake Press

Founded in 1976, the Hill & Lake Press is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit reporting community news and events, educating and informing neighborhood residents about issues of the day. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Hill & Lake Press.

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*Our goal is to offer readers diverse perspectives on newsworthy events or issues of broad public concern to the Hill & Lake community. Our copy limit is 300 words (750 words for a commentary or as space permits), and we reserve the right to edit for clarity and length. We do not publish submissions from anonymous sources; all contributor identities must be verified.*

**Letter from the Editor**

Neighbors, I want to take a moment to invite — and truly encourage — you to send us your letters to the editor.

One of the things that makes this community so special is the range of experiences and convictions that all coexist in our beloved Hill & Lake neighborhoods. Our “Letters to the Editor” section is where that breadth of thought really comes alive.

To restate our policy in plain terms: We welcome letters on any newsworthy issue of broad community concern. Letters are limited to 300 words, commentary to 750, and we may edit for clarity and length. We also cannot publish anonymous submissions — all contributors must be identified and verified. Beyond that, we want to hear from you about topics that affect our local community.

A neighbor recently shared feedback suggesting there was some bias in what we chose to publish. I want to be very clear: We can only print what is submitted. If any month’s letters lean in one direction, it is simply because we didn’t receive a balance of perspectives.

This newspaper belongs to all of us, and it’s at its best when a wide range of viewpoints are represented — including those we may not all share. Diversity of thought, experience and lived reality is one of our greatest strengths as a community.

So please, send us your letters. Add your voice to the conversation. Help ensure Hill & Lake Press reflects the full spectrum of who we are. We’re listening, and we genuinely want to hear from you.

*Craig Wilson  
Editor*



The beloved warming house is back at Lake of the Isles, giving neighbors and skaters a cozy spot to lace up, thaw out and enjoy one of Minneapolis’ favorite winter traditions. (Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

## THE HILL & LAKE PRESS NEEDS YOU!

*Susan is a cofounder of the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Lowry Hill.*

The Hill & Lake Press was started almost 50 years ago by a group of youngsters who had recently moved to the neighborhood. We didn’t know we were youngsters — you never do until you look back as an oldster.

Our intentions were simple: to have fun and connect the community. Our tools were simple, too — a typewriter, graph paper, rubber cement and some beer. We relied on volunteers to write and illustrate the paper, to lay out the pages and to deliver each issue.

Technology has changed how we make the paper, but not why. We still rely on volunteers to cover local stories, take photos, proofread and help produce each issue. But now we rely on the wizardry of computers for editing and layout — and for our new website — and on the USPS to deliver the paper to more than 15,000 households.

And we rely on you, dear readers, for your generous support. Our “Letters to the Editor” section is where that breadth of thought really comes alive.

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*Craig Wilson  
Editor*

donors like you to make up the remaining 20%.

Thanks to your support, we were able to gift our advertisers free space in this December issue, and in last year’s as well, in recog-

**“Technology changed how we make the paper, but not why. We’re still here to connect the community — and to have fun doing it.”**

nition of their contributions to our community and the hardships they endured during the Hennepin Avenue construction.

We hope you appreciate them, and we hope you appreciate our ongoing efforts to connect the community — and to have fun doing it.



Help keep the Hill & Lake Press shining bright into its next 50 years. As you plan your year-end giving, please include your neighborhood newspaper in your plans. Your tax-deductible gift helps “keep the lights on” — supporting local storytelling, digitizing our archives and sustaining independent community journalism. (Illustration: Christopher Bohnet)

## DO GOOD WITHOUT LEAVING YOUR 'HOOD: SUPPORT KENWOOD SCHOOL

By Brandon Colpitts and Sadie Rubin



An aerial photo of Kenwood Community School with the downtown Minneapolis skyline is a reminder that even though we live in a leafy, quiet neighborhood filled with historic homes and parks, we are still part of a larger city — with all the opportunities and challenges that come with it. (Image: Daisy Simpson)

**Brandon Colpitts lives in Lowry Hill. He's mostly known as Elyse's husband. Sadie Rubin lives in East Isles. You've probably seen her on her bike.**

**Worried about neighbors who are under- or unhouse?**  
Every day, Kenwood provides a safe public space where kids can learn, play and belong. If you’re ready to invest in your community — and/or unload that tax refund likely coming your way — start with your local public school.

And before you scroll past thinking, “Kenwood Elementary? They’re fine!” let’s clear something up: looks can be deceiving.

Behind the lake views and his-

toric houses are classrooms full of kids whose families work multiple jobs and rely on the school for far more than reading and math.

**Looking to support immigrant families?**

At Kenwood Elementary, fami-

lies speak more than 20 different languages.

**Hoping to help address food inse-**

**curity?** More than half of Kenwood students live in low-income households, and thanks to parent volunteers and one incredible lunchroom staff member, every child gets a free hot breakfast and lunch.

Help us get kids to the Minne-

apolis Institute of Art for in-person Art Adventures — we need bus money. The PTA also funds artists-in-residence so art stays in the curriculum even when it’s not con-

pencils and sketchbooks so kids can draw (even if your kid keeps drawing you with prominent ear hair)? One of our former Woodchucks was The Purple One, after all.

**“To be a great city with real public safety, we must have great public schools.”**

**Boots & Mittens: Practical essentials for families**

The PTA provides gift cards through our social worker for families facing financial hardship, and the need keeps growing. The Kenwood Closet offers free, gently used clothing, shoes and outerwear, and we’re always in need of kid and adult gloves, boots, snow pants and all the gear that makes Minnesota winters survivable. Drop off your gently used items or donate funds

so we can keep everyone warm. Our Outdoor Classroom and School Forest are open year-round, and being outside is kind of our thing — so let’s make sure every kid can join in.

**Hearts & Connections: Events and gatherings**

We want to increase our family-centered, low- or no-cost events that bring our diverse community together. Think family movie nights, cultural celebrations and neighborhood potlucks — because nothing says “let’s hang” like a PTA folding table and a crockpot. Donate funds, volunteer your time or help sponsor an upcoming event. You’ll be building the kind of community every child deserves.

**Schools & Safety**

To be a great city with real public safety, we must have great public schools. They’re where we invest in the future and in each other, and where we prove that public still matters.

So if you have the time, the resources or both (and yes, volunteering is actually fun), give back to a public institution that centers kids, builds equity and empowers our future citizens. Support Kenwood Elementary.

**→ TO GIVE**

Donations can be made by check:

Kenwood PTA (and mailed to the school), or through our

**Website:**

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Kenwood PTA is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all gifts are tax-deductible.

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## WE CAN DO BETTER, MINNEAPOLIS — HERE'S HOW

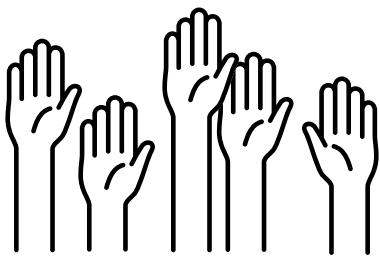
By Susan Lenfestey

*Susan Lenfestey is a regular contributor. She lives in Lowry Hill.*

Whether or not you got the results you wanted, the recent election was an ordeal. Minneapolis is essentially a one-party town.

Many of us agree on the issues, and we know the playing field isn't level. How we address those issues is where things fall apart. At a time when we need to be united against the takeover happening at the top, we endured one of the most divisive city elections in recent memory.

Here are a few ways we can do better.



### End the caucus system

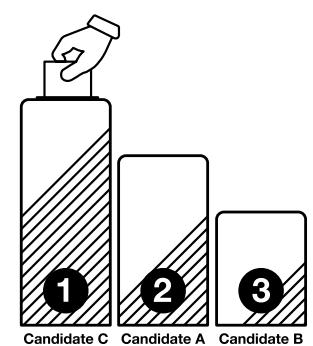
Caucuses are an outdated and time-consuming way to select candidates. Almost every state now uses a primary system that makes participation easier. Minnesota — along with a handful of backwater states and American Samoa — remains a holdout.

This criticism isn't new. In 1995, Secretary of State Joan Grawe formed a Commission on Electoral Reform to increase public participation. The commission noted that "many Minnesotans have become estranged from the political process and view its results as unrepresentative of their views. Others believe that the process is too long and drawn out and that the caucuses are held at times that are inconvenient to them. In 1994, fewer than 2% of the eligible voters in Minnesota participated in the precinct caucuses."

Thirty years later, nothing has changed. Caucuses are still held on Tuesday nights and participation still hovers around 2%. (This year was an exception because of

heightened activism.) Procedural rules are confusing, voting is done by a show of hands, and results are recorded by a volunteer with a quill pen. Ok, not, but probably a Papermate. The process is then repeated in slower motion at ward conventions and again at the city convention, requiring delegates to spend a full day selecting candidates.

These systems are run by well-meaning volunteers with a wide range of skills and strong ideological commitments, making shenanigans and mistakes inevitable. Both were on display at this year's city convention, prompting the state DFL's Constitution, By-laws and Rules Committee to rescind Omar Fateh's mayoral endorsement after reviewing sworn testimony and hundreds of pages of documented irregularities. We can do better.



### Reconsider ranked-choice voting

This year, Minneapolis voters faced a ballot with 16 mayoral candidates, five of whom identified as DFL. Most people are busy with full-time jobs and families. Learning about that many candidates is unrealistic. Choosing one is hard; ranking three is harder.

recent commentary in the Star Tribune, Jeanne Massey of Fair-Vote Minnesota argued that ranked-choice voting is working: "Candidates reach beyond their base," she wrote. "They seek second-choice support rather than demonizing opponents."

Wishful thinking. The three mayoral candidates who campaigned as a bloc under the slogan

"Don't rank Frey" may not have demonized their opponent, but they were hardly modeling civility. And the Star Tribune's own data showed that one in five voters didn't rank candidates at all. They selected only Jacob Frey; a smaller portion did the same for Omar Fateh. Despite good intentions, RCV can be used strategically — even cynically — whether by forming blocs to defeat one candidate or "bullet-voting" for just one. RCV undermines the very goals it claims to advance. Larry Jacobs, a political science professor at the University of Minnesota, has noted that voters who take full advantage of RCV are disproportionately white, affluent and more educated.

Combined with caucuses, RCV's promise of a more democratic process falls flat when participation requires time, childcare and a how-to manual just to cast a knowledgeable vote. We can do better.



**"We can do better. Minneapolis deserves a system that doesn't require time, childcare and a how-to manual just to cast a knowledgeable vote."**

### Curb campaign spending

This campaign season, voters were inundated with mailers, flyers and social media ads from the two dominant political action committees: All of Minneapolis and Minneapolis for the Many. Their names may sound similar, but their views and tactics could not be more polarized. All of Minneapolis backed Jacob Frey and other centrist DFL candidates. Minneapolis for the Many supported Democratic Socialist Omar Fateh and other far-left DFL candidates. The former raised more money; the latter raised more vitriol — even issuing a public retraction after making false claims about a donor aligned with All of Minneapolis.

"We all do better when we all do better."

— Senator Paul Wellstone

# GROVELAND GALLERY

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## THE 2025 MUNICIPAL ELECTION BY THE NUMBERS

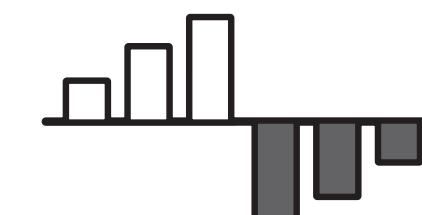
By Marty Carlson



*Marty Carlson is a regular contributor. He lives in Kenwood.*

The results of the November citywide election won't be news by the time this issue of the Hill & Lake Press reaches your hands. Readers will know that Jacob Frey won a third term as mayor with 50.03% of the final vote, defeating nearest challenger Omar Fateh by nearly six points after other candidates were eliminated in round two of ranked-choice voting.

In the closely watched Ward 7 race between Cashman and Shaffer, precinct-level results followed a pattern similar to 2023 but with key differences. In 2023, Cashman narrowly bested Scott Graham by 177 votes, carrying nine of 12 precincts. In 2025, Cashman still won seven of 12 precincts but lost by double-digit margins in all but one of the five precincts Shaffer carried — all of which had relatively high turnout — giving Shaffer an 800-vote victory.



As in 2023, Cashman performed best in lower-turnout precincts, with a few exceptions, while Shaffer's strongest precincts were among the highest-turnout areas. Cashman's top three precincts were Precinct 10 (Stevens Square, 65.3%), Precinct 1 (north and west Bryn Mawr, 59.5%), and Precinct 6 (downtown central, 58.5%). Shaffer's top precincts were Precinct 2 (Kenwood, 81%), Precinct 4 (CIDNA, 64.9%), and Precinct 7 (south and east Bryn Mawr, 61.7%).

Shaffer also won her home precinct of Lowry Hill (Precinct 3) with 53.5% and narrowly edged Cashman in East Isles (Precinct 9) by just 27 votes — essentially reversing Cashman's narrow 2023 win there.

The story in Ward 10 closely mirrored incumbent Aisha Chugh-

tai's 2023 reelection. Despite running an energetic campaign that drew some attention from analysts, Millard carried only one of nine precincts. That precinct, Precinct 3 (East Bde Maka Ska), also went for Chughtai's 2023 opponent, Bruce Dachis, who saw a nearly identical outcome. Overall, Chughtai won 58.7% of first-choice votes, while Millard received 37% — marking Chughtai's third straight victory.



**"The underlying numbers tell a more interesting story than the final results."**

In the race to succeed Shaffer as District 4 Park Board commissioner, Garcia won with 10,142 votes, or 51.5%, compared with Colby's 8,939 votes, or 45.4%. The third candidate, Andrew Gebo, received 1,641 first-choice votes, or 8.3%. There were also 6,838 undervotes, where voters left the race blank.

District 4 includes parts of four wards: Ward 3 in Northeast, Ward 6 in Elliot Park and Stevens Square, Ward 7 in the Hill & Lake area, and Ward 10 in Uptown. In Ward 3, Garcia won three precincts while Colby won four. In Ward 6, Garcia swept all three precincts. In Ward 7, Colby's precinct-level performance largely mirrored Shaffer's. And in Ward 10, Garcia dominated, winning each precinct by more than a two-to-one margin.



## Hill & Lake Press

The Hill & Lake Press is a nonprofit newspaper funded and supported by its advertisers and neighborhood associations:

• East Bde Maka Ska Neighborhood Association (EBMSNA)



• East Isles Neighborhood Association (EINA)



• Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA)



• Kenwood Neighborhood Organization (KNO)



• Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA)



• West Maka Ska Neighborhood Council (WMSNC)



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## UPTOWN'S NEXT CHAPTER: BALANCING BIG IDEAS WITH REAL-WORLD NEEDS

By Craig Wilson, Editor

**"When you think about all the assets — the parks, the neighborhoods, the people — it has everything it needs to thrive. After nearly six years of pandemic, social unrest and street closures, our hope is that Uptown can be reborn into the district it really deserves to be."**

— John Breitinger

*Craig Wilson is the editor of the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in Lowry Hill.*

If Uptown is a mirror of Minneapolis, it reflects a city balancing big dreams with hard economic realities. That tension was on full display at the Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) for Uptown — a 2½ day exercise in visioning that ended Oct. 30 with a presentation equal parts hopeful and head-scratching.

On one side were designers and placemakers, sketching out playful reimaginings of Uptown's streets and parks. On the other were business owners and residents, worn down by red tape, economic headwinds and public safety concerns, asking a simpler question: Who's actually listening?

The TAP program, an initiative of the Urban Land Institute, brings together multidisciplinary volunteer teams to analyze community challenges and propose actionable solutions. The Uptown TAP was funded through Ward 7 Council

Member Katie Cashman's efforts to include it in the city budget at a cost of \$50,000, covering travel, lodging and ULI staff time. All other participants volunteered their time.

Cashman attended the presentation, while Ward 10 Council Member Aisha Chughtai, whose ward includes much of Uptown, was not present.

"I was impressed with the ideas that came out of the Warehouse District TAP process and wanted to bring that same spirit of innovation to Uptown," said Council Member Katie Cashman.

"I'm so glad I did, because this process really did what it was meant to do — it sparked conversation and creativity. You could feel the energy in the room, and it seems to have genuinely excited people, especially as Hennepin re-opens and we start to imagine what's next for the area. It is my hope that this process galvanizes us, helps put us on a strong path forward together with community, government and private sector investors all pulling in the same direction."

Each TAP is an intensive workshop during which experts in urban planning, design, real estate and economic development assess local conditions, interview stakeholders and present recommendations. While not a formal city planning process, these exercises often inform future discussions and policy directions. They are designed to provide practical, outside perspectives — and sometimes, as Uptown's experience shows, they raise as many questions as they answer.

**The Dreamers**  
Marcello Cabezas, a placemaker from Toronto, Canada, described Uptown as "a vibrant destination waiting to be rediscovered," emphasizing creativity, hospitality and optimism. Marcus Westbury, an urban renewal expert from Melbourne, Australia, praised Uptown's "walkability and bones" and dismissed its reputation as a "combat zone," calling it "a neighborhood in difficult transition, but not decline." Both framed Uptown's core challenges as issues of wayfinding and marketing, suggesting that improved signage, branding and online presence are what's needed most.

They also envisioned a new kind of "maker economy" rooted in micro-local retail and small-scale manufacturing — storefronts

infrastructure but imagination. Breitinger, who oversees Cushman & Wakefield's Minneapolis real estate development advisory practice and is a past chair of ULI Minnesota, said he's spent nearly two years pulling the Uptown Technical Assistance Panel together. "This is an act of love," he said. "Many of us live in or near Uptown, and we care deeply about helping it realize its potential. Our goal was to assemble a group of experienced land use professionals who could volunteer their time to think about how to regenerate a district that's been struggling, without stepping on anyone's toes."

He said he sees tremendous promise in Uptown because of its mix of vibrant neighborhoods, diverse housing types, remarkable green space anchored by the Chain of Lakes, and its intact urban grid. "I've lived in and around this area my whole adult life, and it's probably the single most underperforming district in the city relative to its potential," he said. "When you think about all the assets — the parks, the neighborhoods, the people — it has everything it needs to thrive. After nearly six years of pandemic, social unrest and street closures, our hope is that Uptown can be reborn into the district it really deserves to be."

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They also envisioned a new kind of "maker economy" rooted in micro-local retail and small-scale manufacturing — storefronts

where products are both created and sold, blurring the line between studio and shop. Westbury cited examples from Australia, where designers and craftspeople run hybrid spaces that generate most of their sales online but still maintain a visible neighborhood presence.

Similarly, University of Minnesota architecture professor Tom Fisher noted the growing trend of "make-and-sell" retail, where customers participate in customization and design. The idea, they said, would build on Uptown's legacy as a creative hub — a place where things start — by turning vacant storefronts into incubators for small producers, artisans and entrepreneurs who could once again make Uptown distinct from every other shopping district.

Designers Blake Slette of Damon Farber and Tom Fisher presented a series of imaginative public-realm ideas, including transforming The Mall into "the world's longest playground" and creating an "Uptown Loop" that would connect the lakes to Hennepin Avenue via The Mall and 31st Street, enhanced with art and interactive play spaces. Fisher even proposed a "Museum of Touchable Art" featuring sculptures and seasonal ice installations along 31st Street. "We need to get Uptown's funk back," he said with a smile, suggesting residents contribute old playground equipment to help bring the vision to life.

**"Imagine transforming The Mall into the world's longest playground — a joyful spine connecting Uptown to the lakes."**

— Tom Fisher

**"Safe, visible parking is life or death for my business. We can't just keep tacking on taxes and regulations and expect people to survive."**

— Patty Wall

Rooted in this scheme are the notions that Lake Street and Lagoon Avenue are places people avoid — and that attracting visitors from the lakes would require diverting them along an alternate, more "playful" route.

### The Realists

Lisa Christensen, a commercial real estate broker with Colliers, described walking tours where she and other participants witnessed open drug use and repeated vandalism. "One property owner spent \$75,000 last year just removing graffiti," she said. "The perception of crime may be worse than reality — but perception is what keeps people away."

She was followed by Patty Wall, owner of The Market at Malcolm Yards, who delivered a pragmatic perspective from a business owner. Wall recounted moving to Minneapolis from New York in 1992, when Uptown was "defined by its restaurants." To bring that culinary scene back, she said, businesses need one thing above all else: customers who feel safe and can park nearby. "Safe, visible parking is life or death for my business," she said.

Others asked who would form the new improvement district and whether residents would face higher taxes. The panel responded that early funding could come from a narrower special services district, expanded later as results emerged.

A young woman said she found the art and design ideas inspiring, but most questions centered on safety, leadership and accountability — recurring themes that grounded the discussion in pragmatism after two days of visionary talk.

Wall also expressed concern about recent wage and labor proposals, including the now-vetoed Labor Standards Board, which she said would have added costs and administrative burdens that many independent operators couldn't absorb. While emphasizing her support for fair wages and worker protections, Wall said the city must find a better balance.

"We want to bring people back to Uptown, not drive them to the suburbs," she said. Stability and predictability in local policy, she added, are key to keeping creative employers and restaurants in the city. "We can't just keep tacking on taxes and regulations and expect people to survive."

Dayna Frank, owner and CEO of First Avenue and one of the city's most prominent independent venue operators, built on that argument. She described the fragility of opening or expanding in Uptown. "You take out multiple loans and personally guarantee them," she said.

"You need a safe environment and stable laws that let you pay those loans back and feed your employees." Uptown's competitors, she noted, aren't out-of-state — they're local. "It's not going to Florida; it's going to 50th and France, where business is easier and parking is free and plentiful."

Finally, Erin Lonoff, a real estate and economic development consultant with HR&A Advisors, addressed the "how to pay for it" question. She proposed creating a new Neighborhood Improvement District, expanding beyond the current Special Services District to include residents and property owners who would collectively fund clean and safe operations, marketing and programming. She also suggested targeted tax-increment financing to modernize obsolete buildings and a "Motor City Match"-style program, modeled on Detroit, to connect entrepreneurs with vacant spaces.

Her warning was blunt: "The alternative is a do-nothing approach — and your property values will decline."

### Public Reaction

The Q&A session that followed the ULI presentation was brief but revealing. Audience members pressed the panel on who would actually lead and fund the ambitious ideas they had outlined, and several questioned whether the plans reflected the realities of Uptown's business climate. One resident emphasized the need to include areas north along Hennepin and farther down Lake Street, noting that nearby districts are also struggling.

Others asked who would form the new improvement district and whether residents would face higher taxes. The panel responded that early funding could come from a narrower special services district, expanded later as results emerged.

A young woman said she found the art and design ideas inspiring, but most questions centered on safety, leadership and accountability — recurring themes that grounded the discussion in pragmatism after two days of visionary talk.

She added that temporary public art installations, such as the ice sculptures during the Loppet, already bring plenty of vibrancy to the area — but also come with logistical headaches. Coordinating with residents, managing parking and cleaning up afterward can be complex, she said. "Those events are wonderful for a weekend," Pardue noted, "but you can't live with that kind of disruption every day."

"I really appreciate the effort and goodwill that went into this — it's a great concept to get people thinking about Uptown's future," said Judy Longbottom, owner of the UPS Package Store on Hennepin Avenue. "But the truth is, I only found out about it through word of mouth. A few people forwarded me emails, and I wasn't even sure if it was meant for me to attend. There just wasn't one clear, public invitation. So while the intentions were wonderful, it does make you question how inclusive the process really was when so many business owners like me didn't even know it was happening."

— Dayna Frank

### The Path Forward

While the Uptown TAP was city-funded, it was also driven by volunteers — professionals who donated their time and expertise in the hope of helping the district find its footing again. Their intentions were constructive: to spark ideas, share lessons from other cities and contribute practical insights without steering the outcome.

Still, because the process carried official city sponsorship, its findings will likely hold influence in future planning discussions and could even appear in comprehensive plans or redevelopment frameworks.

Earlier efforts — such as the community planning process for The Mall — show how concepts introduced with the best of intentions can later be cited as evidence of broad public engagement, even when few residents had the chance to weigh in.

That tension highlights the fine line between vision and representation. The Hill & Lake Press only learned of the TAP a day before it concluded; it's fair to ask how many others were inadvertently left out of a discussion that could shape Uptown's future.

True inclusion isn't achieved through a brief invitation or a single meeting — it requires time, transparency and a genuine commitment to hearing a range of perspectives. Without that, even the most well-intentioned efforts risk being seen as validation exercises rather than community collaboration.

For all the contrasts between design idealism and business pragmatism, one theme emerged clearly: Uptown's revival will depend on partnership — among city leaders, business owners, professionals, creatives and residents alike. As one attendee put it, "Uptown

**"The first half of the presentation was completely tone-deaf. They missed the point that this is a commercial district."**

— Michael Pickert

doesn't need saving — it needs seeing."

The wonderful things are already happening: the line that wraps around the block for the world's best cinnamon roll at Isles Bun & Coffee; the rebirth of the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre on Hennepin; the world-class entertainment at the Uptown and Granada theaters; the fine retail at Combine; and the steady buzz at Mooma Moono Tea Shop — all reminders that Uptown's spirit has never left. It's simply waiting to be seen and rediscovered.

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## UPTOWN ASSOCIATION HOSTS MEETING TO EXPLORE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

By Terry White

Terry White is a regular contributor. He is also the author of the Better Minneapolis newsletter and podcast. He lives in Field.

On Oct. 23, the Uptown Association hosted a meeting at Merlin's Irish Pub and Restaurant on Lake Street to discuss creating a Business Improvement District, or BID, in Uptown. The event was part of the group's quarterly happy-hour series, which updates residents and businesses on initiatives aimed at improving the area.

Association President Andrea Corbin moderated the discussion, which featured remarks from Sen. Scott Dibble, DFL-Minneapolis; BID consultant and writer Carol Becker; longtime business owner Eric Enge; and Vital Print Press owner Michael Tadros. A follow-up meeting is planned for January. For information on how to participate, contact the Uptown Association at info@uptownminneapolis.com.

### What Is a Business Improvement District?

The city currently operates a Special Service District, or SSD, in Uptown that provides services such as snow removal, graffiti cleanup, boulevard maintenance and garbage collection for area businesses. These services are funded through city-assessed fees on property owners and overseen by a board of property owners, with day-to-day management

handled by the Public Works Department.

A BID functions similarly but with key differences. The city would still levy fees on property owners, but the revenue would go to a non-profit organization instead of Public Works. That nonprofit — governed by property owners, business owners and other Uptown stakeholders — would have greater flexibility to provide services the SSD cannot, including crime prevention, "eyes on the street," marketing, business recruitment, event hosting and social media outreach.

Supporters say a BID could deliver these services more effectively than Public Works and could also pursue city and state grants to supplement revenue. Attendees also discussed shifting oversight from Public Works to Community Planning and Economic Development, or CPED, since a BID focuses on economic revitalization rather than basic maintenance.

### The Intention: Continue Uptown's Revitalization

Corbin said the goal is to strengthen Uptown's business community, which in turn supports workers and helps stabilize the tax base. "If you don't have customers coming in, how are workers going to make tips? How will businesses be able to give raises?" she said.

Dibble acknowledged the difficult years Uptown has faced — the

pandemic, the 2020 uprising, property damage and economic shifts — but said he remains optimistic. "I am very, very hopeful," he said. "I think we're seeing green shoots of renewal all around us."

Becker outlined how BIDs work and why she believes Uptown should adopt one. She said many local property owners already contribute to SSDs, which fund services like sidewalk clearing and graffiti removal. BIDs follow a similar model but are run by a nonprofit rather than the city.

She noted that BIDs date back to 1967 and more than 1,000 now operate nationwide, with low failure rates and strong records of improving cleanliness, safety and business activity. She added that BIDs can also handle marketing, events, business recruitment and public-safety efforts — tasks the city is not structured to manage.

Under the proposal, businesses in Uptown, Lowry Hill, Lyn-Lake and Lyndale — and large apartment buildings — would fund the district, hire a professional manager and set service priorities. Single-family homes and small rental properties would not be taxed. Becker said BIDs can leverage grants and private contributions over time, expanding their impact. She called the model "a proven tool" for revitalizing commercial districts and giving businesses a stronger voice in shaping their environment.

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## AT THE UPTOWN FARMERS MARKET, I SAW A NEIGHBORHOOD FINDING ITSELF AGAIN

By Carla Pardue



Carla Pardue welcomes a visitor to the Uptown Farmers Market, sharing issues of the Hill & Lake Press and swag along the way. The market has become a bright spot in Uptown — a place where neighbors meet, stories are shared and community comes alive. People like Carla help make that spirit possible. (Image: Gwen Daniels)

**Volunteer Carla Pardue is the outreach coordinator for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in East Isles.**

Most Thursday evenings this summer, I stood at the Uptown Farmers Market handing out copies of the Hill & Lake Press. I've distributed the paper for years, but something felt different this season.

As people reached for a copy, they didn't just take it and move along. They stopped. They wanted to talk. They wanted to share. And over and over again, I heard the same sentiment expressed in different words: "Thank you. We really needed this." Thank you for the market. Thank you for the newspaper. Thank you for something that feels like community.

I saw neighbors run into old friends they hadn't seen in years. I saw people linger after buying peaches or bread, just to enjoy the music or watch the dogs go by. Even on the rainy

Thursdays — and we had quite a few — people still came. They showed up with umbrellas, or with frizzy hair and warm smiles, determined not to let a little weather stop the gathering. I watched this weekly ritual bring a kind of ease and familiarity back into Uptown. It felt like the neighborhood exhaling.

One evening, I handed a paper to a woman who paused for a moment before tucking it under her arm. She looked around — at the crowd, the music, the vendors chatting with customers — and she said quietly, "I didn't think Uptown could feel like this again." I understood exactly what she meant.

For all the headlines, for all the opinions, for all the conversations about "what Uptown used to be" or "where it's going," here was something simple and real: people choosing to be together.

The market drew more than 27,000 visits over its first 16-week season, supported by 44 local vendors and over 100 volunteers. But num-

bers don't tell the story. The story is in the shared smiles, the neighbors who came early to set up tents, the musicians who played even when it was humid and sticky, the vendors who remembered your name and asked how your week was. The story is in the feeling — the return of something familiar, something warm, something hopeful.

Distributing the Hill & Lake Press at the market reminded me why our neighborhood newspaper matters. People held it like something they recognized, something rooted, something steady.

Many told me they read it cover to cover. Some said their parents or neighbors save it every month. Sharing the paper in a place full of life made perfect sense. The market and the newspaper are both, in their own way, about belonging.

So as we look toward the 2026 market season, I hope we carry that feeling with us. The market will continue only if we support it — through volunteering, donating, sponsoring, or simply showing up with a reusable bag and a hello for someone you bump into.

This summer reminded me that Uptown hasn't disappeared. It's still here, and so are we. Sometimes all we need is a place to see each other again.

### → HELP KEEP IT GOING IN 2026

If the market meant something to you this summer — if you found a new favorite vendor, saw an old friend, stopped to listen to the music, or just felt good being out among neighbors — you can help make sure it returns next year. This is a volunteer-led market, built from community care. Every bit of support makes a real difference.

#### Ways to Help:

- Lend a hand for a few hours next season.
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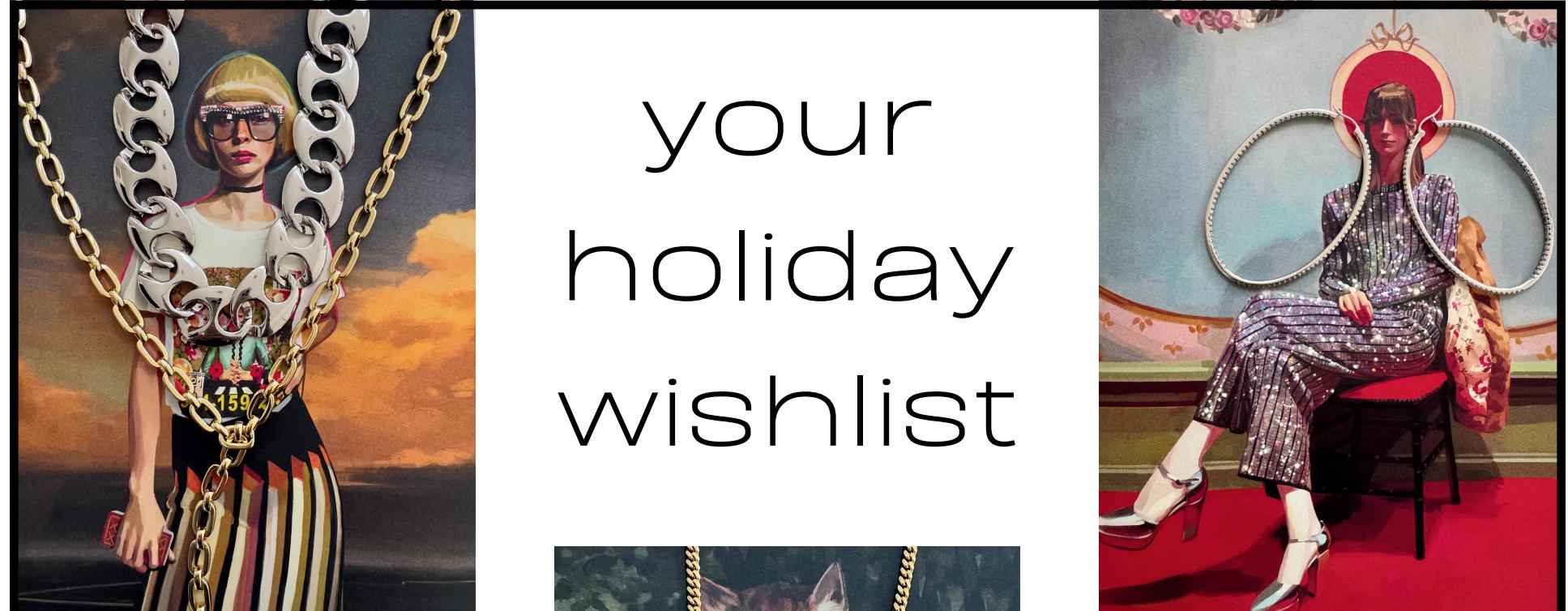
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## KENWOOD ELEMENTARY FAMILIES WELCOME UNION AGREEMENT

By Terry White



Brandon and Elyse Colpitts.  
(Image: The Colpitts Family)

*Terry White is a regular contributor. He is also the author of the Better Minneapolis newsletter and podcast. He lives in Field.*

To better understand how Minneapolis Public Schools are faring, I spoke with Elyse and Brandon Colpitts, whose children are in first and second grade at Kenwood Elementary.

Like many Kenwood families, they supported teachers during recent negotiations and said that educators deserve higher pay and enforceable class-size limits. They also highlighted the role of educational support professionals, operational staff and English-learner teachers in maintaining school quality.

Elyse volunteers regularly at the school and with the Parent Teacher Association, giving her a close view of both the progress and the challenges at Kenwood and across the district. The couple said their goal is to elevate the school and assure families that Kenwood offers a strong education.

Funding pressures remain a concern. Under the state's funding formula, each student who leaves the district for private school or other alternatives takes about \$21,000 in state funding with them, the Colpitts noted. Kenwood's budget has grown from \$2.9 million in 2019 to \$4.5 million in 2024, but enrollment has fallen from 401 to 383 during that period. The school's demographics have also shifted:

about 17% of students now live outside the attendance boundary, compared with far fewer in previous years. In 2019, about 95% of students spoke English as their first language; in 2024, that figure was 80%. More than 20 languages are now spoken at the school, and 57% of students are students of color, up from 35% in 2019.

A major factor in these changes was the district's Comprehensive District Design, approved in 2020 despite significant opposition, particularly from North Side families. The plan expanded Kenwood's attendance boundaries and shifted its middle and high school pathways to Anwatin Middle School and North High School. Previously, students in the area attended Anthony Middle School and Southwest High School.

The district said the plan was intended to address longstanding inequities. But the Star Tribune reported in October 2025 that despite the changes, the district continues to face a

**"We just want our government and our systems to acknowledge that things are broken and adapt."**

— Elyse Colpitts

that we have a strong PTA, because there are a lot of needs and a lot of parents who luckily have the resources and time to meet some of those needs." The couple said that the school's sense of community is a major reason families should consider Kenwood.

With class-size enforcement, increased compensation for teachers and staff, and committed volunteers, they believe that the school

**"I don't think we can be a great city until we have a great school system."**

— Brandon Colpitts

is positioned for improvement. "We're proud Minneapolis Public Schools parents," Elyse said. "We just want our government and our systems to acknowledge that things are broken and adapt."

Asked whether changes in the new union contract will provide the needed resources, the Colpitts were optimistic. "We should be able to equitably educate every kid," they said, and believe parity for educational support professionals and other staff is essential to addressing what they view as a historic underinvestment in public education. "Public schools are a great option. I don't think we can be a great city until we have a great school system," Brandon said.

The Colpitts and other Kenwood families argue that strong schools require sustained investment. They say that investment fosters community pride and expands opportunities for students — and that public schools remain a viable choice families can feel confident in.



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## LAKE OF THE ISLES LUTHERAN CHURCH MARKS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

By Marty Carlson

Marty Carlson is a regular contributor. He lives in Kenwood.

The year 2025 marks the 100th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone for Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church, located on the north arm of Lake of the Isles in Kenwood.

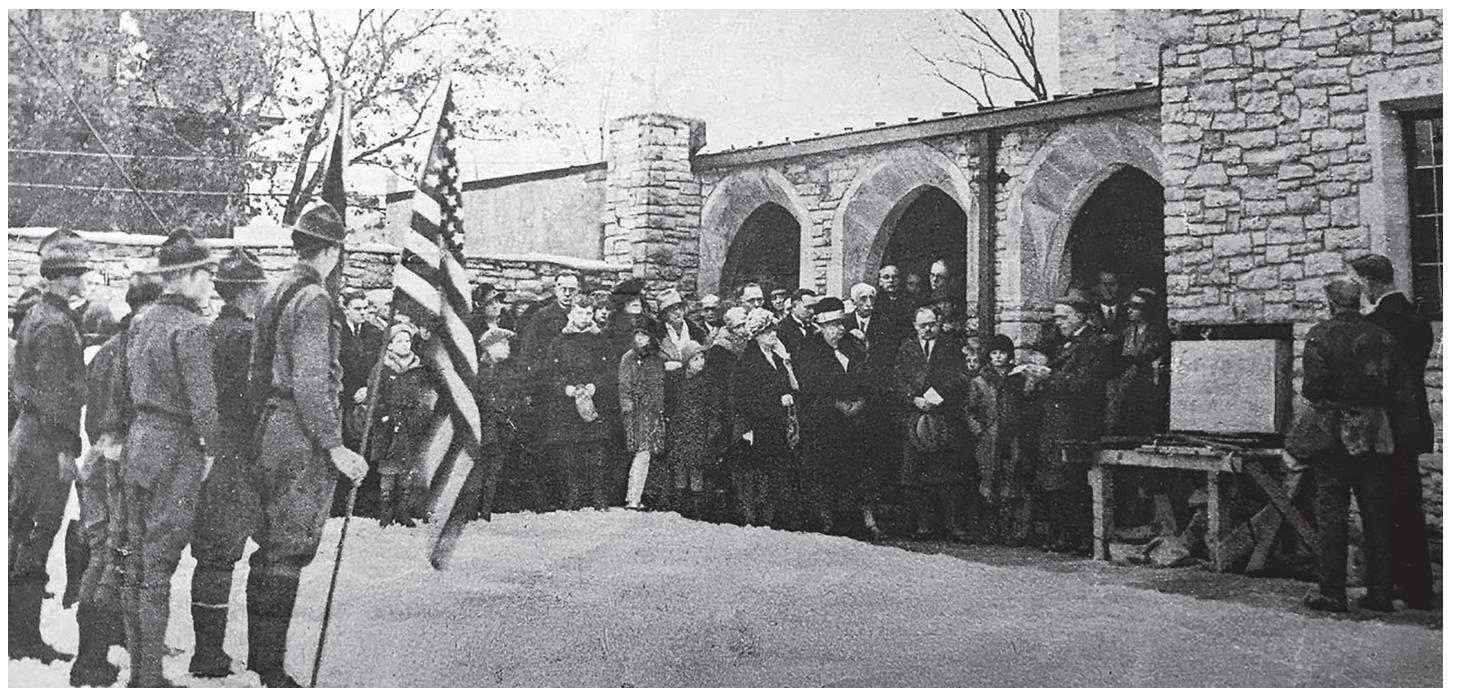
The church was originally founded by Congregationalists from Lowry Hill, but relocated to its current site after the original building at Franklin Avenue and Dupont, across from the Scottish Rite Temple, was destroyed by fire in 1922.

The "new" building was designed by the architectural firm Hewitt & Brown, the same firm that designed nearby St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral and Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church.

Construction began in 1925 and finished in 1929, but the high cost combined with the market crash that year bankrupted the congregation.

The building sat vacant until 1936, when it became home to a newly formed Lutheran congregation that is now preparing to celebrate its 90th anniversary.

The first photo, from 1925, shows the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone, presided over by then-University of Minnesota President Lotus Coffman, on Nov. 16, 1925. (Image: Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church)



Ceremonial laying of the cornerstone, presided over by then-University of Minnesota President Lotus Coffman, on Nov. 16, 1925. (Image: Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church)



On Nov. 16, 2025, current Lake of the Isles pastor Arden Haug staged a re-creation of the photo, shown above, with Ward 7 Council Member-elect Elizabeth Shaffer standing in as the visiting dignitary. (Image: Lake of the Isles Lutheran Church)

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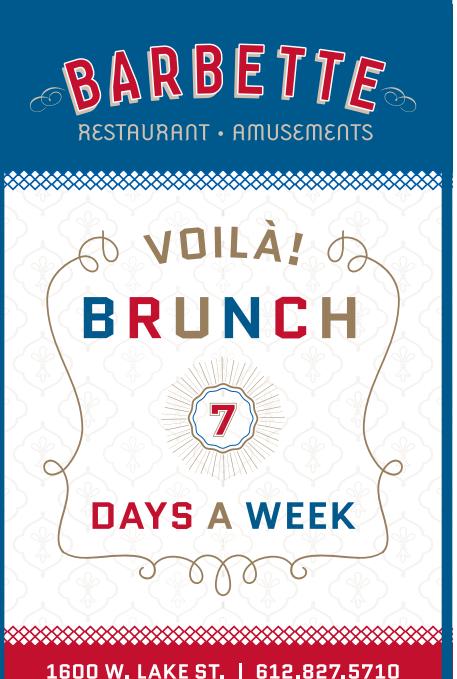
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## CONFETTI BLOSSOM: A MINNEAPOLIS FAMILY FINDS SWEET INSPIRATION IN SWEDEN

By Craig Wilson, Editor

Cities, where Ivy often helps customers choose flavors.

### The Culture of Candy in Sweden

Candy plays a distinct cultural role in Sweden. One of the most beloved traditions is "lördagsgodis," or "Saturday candy," where families visit neighborhood shops once a week to select small mixed bags of candy to share at home. The practice dates back to the mid-20th century and remains widely observed.

Swedish candy also differs from many American varieties. Flavors tend to be less sugary and more flavorful, with tart fruits, mellow chocolate and a wide range of licorice.

Textures are firmer and less sticky, and sour candies carry a noticeable acidity. The pick-and-mix format encourages slowing down and savoring, rather than eating candy quickly or mindlessly.

"It's candy you actually notice," Aaron said. "There's real flavor to it, not just sugar."

### A New Storefront on the Way

With enthusiastic support from markets and community events, the family is now preparing to open a permanent Confetti Blossom storefront in downtown Minneapolis later this year.

When Colleen Ayers' and Aaron Hanauer's 11-year-old daughter, Ivy, came across a YouTube video about Swedish candy last winter, the family didn't expect it to change the direction of their year.

But curiosity has a way of becoming adventure, and soon enough the family found themselves on a journey that would lead to a new family business, a growing local following and a soon-to-open candy shop in downtown Minneapolis.

### It began with one pound of Swedish candy.

The flavors were bright and surprising, with textures that felt different from those in the familiar American candy aisle. The family wanted to understand why, and that curiosity eventually took them to New York City over spring break, where they visited Bon-Bon and Lil Sweet Treat, two shops known for their Scandinavian candy selections.

Ivy sampled everything she could, filling small bags from large "pick and mix" walls of colorful gummies, chocolates and licorice.

"When we came home, we looked for something like that here and realized we couldn't find it," said Colleen. "So we decided to try bringing it to Minneapolis. It makes so much sense with so much Scandinavian heritage here."

The idea became Confetti Blossom, the family's Swedish candy business that has since popped up at markets across the Twin



Swedish Candy Mix Bundle. (Image Confetti Blossom)

Craig Wilson is the editor of the Hill & Lake Press and is Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian). He lives in Lowry Hill.



The storefront location will be announced in the coming weeks. Until then, Confetti Blossom will continue to appear at pop-ups and markets throughout the Twin Cities and offer free next day delivery in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the west metro for orders over \$50.

## Why Swedish Candy?

### Lördagsgodis Tradition

In Sweden, candy is tied to a weekly ritual called "lördagsgodis," meaning "Saturday candy." Families visit the neighborhood shop together to choose small amounts of different candies to enjoy that evening. The practice began in the 1950s and still shapes how Swedes think about sweets today: candy is something to look forward to, not something eaten every day. The ritual makes candy social, shared and intentional.

### Flavor Over Sugar

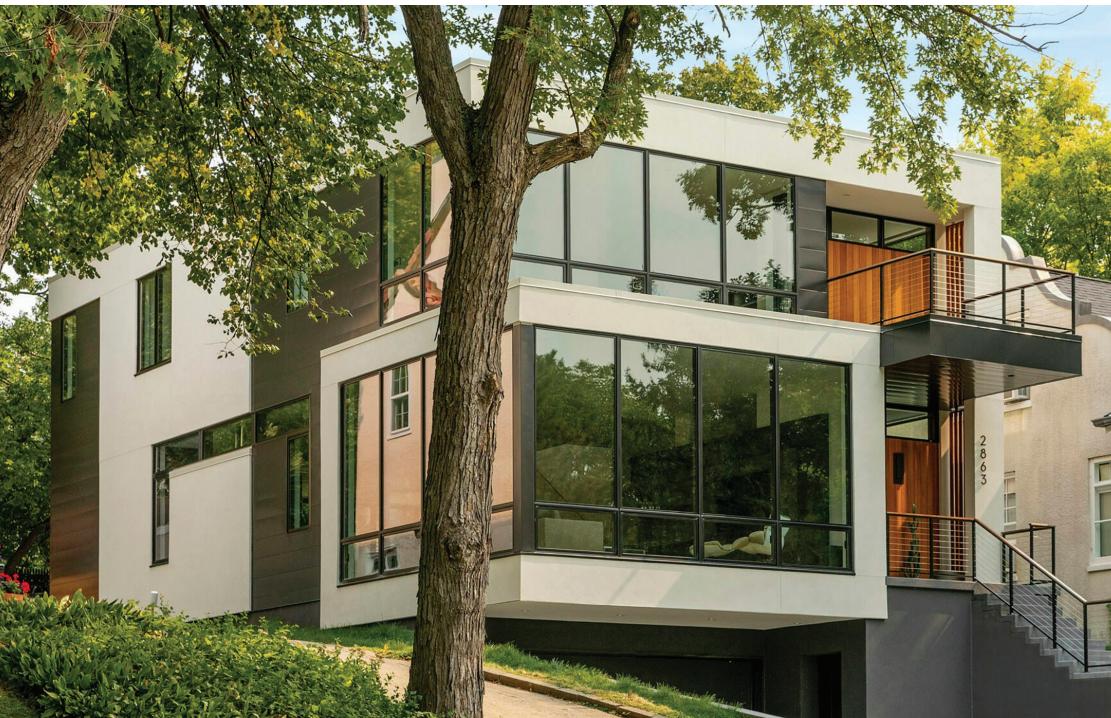
Swedish candy tends to highlight flavor rather than sweetness. Gummies lean toward tart berry and apple tones, chocolates are typically lighter and less sugary, and sour candies are noticeably sharper. Even familiar flavors come with more dimension — raspberry tastes like raspberry, not just "red." It creates a tasting experience where each piece has its own identity.

### The Licorice Spectrum

Licorice holds a special place in Swedish candy culture. It isn't one flavor, but a full spectrum: sweet licorice twists, soft licorice caramels, mixed fruit-and-licorice chews and "salmiak," a salted licorice beloved across Scandinavia. Many people who say they "don't like licorice" often discover they just haven't tried the right kind. Swedish licorice is complex, layered and made to be tasted slowly.

### Pick-and-Mix Culture

The centerpiece of most Swedish candy shops is the "plöckgodis" (pick-and-mix) wall: rows of bins filled with colorful sweets where customers scoop their own assortment. The experience encourages curiosity. You select one or two of something unfamiliar, compare flavors with others and build a bag that reflects personal taste. It turns candy shopping into something playful and communal, rather than a grab-and-go impulse.



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To our readers: we encourage you to support the businesses and services featured in these pages. When you do, please let them know you saw their ad in the Hill & Lake Press. Your patronage not only bolsters our local economy but also ensures the future of our cherished community paper.

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We would also like to thank the political candidates and citizen organizations for advertising in the paper during this year's election cycles — All of Mpls, Katie Cashman, Paula Chesley, Jeanette Colby, Meg Forney, Minneapolis for Many, Mary McKelvey, Averi Turner and Elizabeth Shaffer.

And, of course, these Neighborhood Associations:

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Scan this code or visit [cidna.org](http://cidna.org).



## Lowry Hill Update

Please remember to include LHNA this giving season—your donations help fund our events and communications, building a stronger, more connected Lowry Hill.

This year, LHNA is leading Holidays on Hennepin! Eat, shop, explore, and celebrate on a new and improved Hennepin Ave! Pick up your Holiday Business Passport now at any of the 67 participating businesses for access to local bargains and prizes!

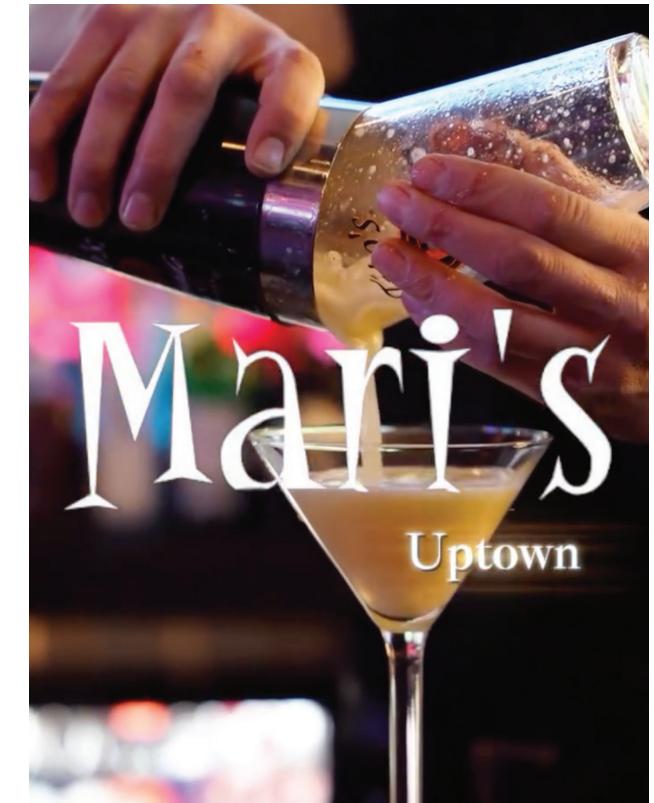
Learn more and follow along at [holidaysonhennepin.com](http://holidaysonhennepin.com) and [@holidaysonhennepin](https://www.instagram.com/holidaysonhennepin) on social media.



[lowryhillneighborhood.org](http://lowryhillneighborhood.org)  
for full details, newsletter sign-up and more

## WHY GO? MARI'S

By Jason Suss



Jason Suss spent 15 years in tech before leaving the corporate world to pursue his passion for cocktails. For the past 12 years, he has worked on both sides of the bar at local restaurants. He now lives in Lowry Hill and owns [AProperPour](http://AProperPour).

There's a new kid on the block. Does it have the right stuff?

Like a small plant pushing up through a crack in a rock, Mari's has opened and shows signs of life in a tough environment.

Located at Lagoon and Fremont and sharing a wall with the cute and very popular The Breakfast Club — with the same owners — Mari's is unmistakably in Uptown.

The space was formerly home to Hammer & Sickle, known for its vodka and pierogies. Hanging on can be tough, with all the construction and other challenges in the area. The opening of a new place like Mari's feels like a good sign that, step by step, the area might find its way back to what it once was.

It's fair to say it has been a wild ride in Uptown for the past five or so years. A lot of people, young and old, seem to be craving nostalgia. Gen Z-ers are using Walkmans, wide-leg jeans are back, claw clips have returned, retro gaming consoles are everywhere, and movie reboots keep rolling out.

Mari's fits that mood. It's a great spot for people looking for the vibe of what Uptown used to be — the people who miss Chino Latino, Figlio and Uptown Tavern.

Simply put, it's a bar. No gimmicks. It's not chasing a TikTok trend or angling to be the new Instagrammable hot spot. It has booths, high-tops, at least 15 TVs, bar food and bar drinks — burgers, sandwiches, wings (the big, full one-piece kind) and an assortment of shareable apps. Everything on the menu is under \$20, which is refreshing.

There's a full lineup of domestic, imported and local beers. The cocktail list sticks to the basics, with an equal number of mocktails. The wine list is short, but yes, there's a New Zealand sauv blanc for that friend we all have.

Prices are comparable to other nearby places, maybe even a touch lower, especially considering the daily specials.

Their intention is clear: Come here, eat, drink, watch the game, bring a group, celebrate a birthday, have fun. That's it.

After I graduated from college, I lived with two other guys. At least once a week one of them would call out, "Hey, you want to go to the bar?"

We lived in the heart of a big city. There were bars everywhere, but we always knew exactly which one he meant. I think Mari's

was hot, fresh and juicy, exactly as anyone would hope. I paired it with a cold tall can of local beer, and it hit the spot. It was happy hour, but one beer was enough, so I passed my free second beer along to someone else. The bartender was as friendly as could be, and she already knew several regulars by name.

Mari's opened quietly. No big PR push, no celebrity chef. You've probably already driven past it at least once without noticing. So why not stop in and check it out? Odds are good it will be happy hour when you do.

## → MARI'S AT A GLANCE —

- **LOCATION:** Lagoon and Fremont in Uptown
- **VIBE:** Classic neighborhood bar — booths, TVs, bar food, no gimmicks
- **PRICE POINT:** Everything is under \$20
- **DRINKS:** Domestic, import and local beers; classic cocktails; mocktails; short wine list
- **BEST FOR:** Game days, group hangouts, casual dinners, birthday gatherings
- **WHY GO:** Nostalgic Uptown feel, friendly staff, solid bar food and some of the best deals in the neighborhood

## THE RUNDOWN —

- **DAILY SPECIALS:**  
4 to 6 p.m. — 2-4-1 rail and call cocktails, domestic bottles, half-price wine and half-price appetizers

Mon. – Thurs., 9 to 11 p.m.  
Same deals as above

- Each day of the week features different specials: ranging from half-price burgers ALL DAY Mondays to Wednesday's 'Wine, Whiskey & Wraps' with half-off on wine and whiskey from 6 to 9 p.m. and half-price wraps ALL DAY. If it's your birthday week, you and three friends can enjoy free drinks from 7 p.m. to midnight in Fridays. Mari's also offers a service industry night on Tuesdays with half-price drinks and apps from 7-11 p.m., with a pay stub.

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## BUZZED SHOPPING AND SANTA BEARS: DAYTON'S HOLIDAY MAGIC RETURNS

By Molly Mogren Katt



Molly's beloved Twins ornament and scenes from the Dayton's Holiday Market. (Images: Molly Mogren Katt)

*Molly Mogren Katt is a writer, entrepreneur and mom who launched HeyEleanor! on Substack to document facing her fears. She is a regular contributor and lives in the Wedge.*

Every year when we dig out our holiday decorations, I unpack my favorite Christmas memory. In December 1987, my Uncle Whitey — a nickname earned from summers spent in the sod fields that bleached his hair — brought me to downtown Minneapolis. We ventured to Dayton's eighth-floor holiday displays, then hunted down the gift of the season: a commemorative Twins World Series Christmas ornament.

I presented the ornament to my parents on Christmas morning, absolutely beaming. It's not every day a five-year-old gets to surprise someone with a special, fragile gift. Now it hangs on my own tree, a reminder of a downtown Christmas adventure that, for whatever reason, became core-memory material.

The days of shopping downtown are, if we're being diplomatic, in transition. In 2001, Dayton's became Marshall Field's. Later, it turned into Macy's, which closed in 2017. We've swapped department stores for apps promising instant gratification, leaving us to wonder what we're going to do with all these empty buildings.

Ideas for the historic Dayton's keep getting tossed around — an event space? A food hall? A dance club that closes at 10 p.m. so we can all get to bed on time? (OK, fine, I made that one up.) While there's no official long-term plan, local market curator Mich Berthiaume dreamed up a way to bring back a little of that Christmastime department store magic.

Five years ago, Berthiaume and longtime retailer Jake Sanders of Shop in the City launched the Dayton's Holiday Market with a handful of vendors in the building's iconic chandelier room. Now it's become the pinnacle holiday experience downtown, drawing shoppers from across the metro.

"Growing up, it never felt like Christmas until we made the pilgrimage to Dayton's for the eighth floor displays, a bowl of wild rice soup at the Oak Grill, and finally picking up a Santa Bear," Sanders says. "Bringing elements of the original Dayton's back to life while showcasing some of the most creative and interesting makers in the Twin Cities feels like the perfect blend of nostalgia and modern-day Minnesota."

This year's market features more than 100 local vendors selling everything from adorable Thumbs Cookies (hot tip: the peppermint cookie bark sells out for a reason!) and Swedish candies from a local family's Confetti



Blossom sweets, to designer vintage clothing from Bleu Boy Vintage and bespoke cribbage boards from Fox Lake Furniture.

There are handmade candles and soaps, Minnesota Aurora soccer gear, those Something's Amiss puzzles that simultaneously delight and annoy me (but mostly delight, since I buy one every year), and stylish-but-functional outdoor apparel from Namakan Goods

**"Buzzed shopping really is the best."**

— of which I am the co-founder and unabashedly promoting here because hey, I write these essays for free and a girl's gotta eat.

In what surely counts as a Christmas miracle, the city finally granted the market a liquor license, allowing Earl Giles Distillery to craft cocktails on site. Their take on an old fashioned evokes that perfect vintage steakhouse vibe and makes spending your Christmas budget on small businesses feel just a little more footloose and fancy-free (buzzed shopping really is the best).

Because you'll need food with that drink, Jester Concepts is bringing back Dayton's iconic wild rice soup and popovers, plus gin-

**"A reimagined department store truly offers something for everyone — except Jeff Bezos."**

ger cookies from Rustica. The market is also selling two special-edition Santa Bears in honor of the icon's 40th birthday. They dropped on Black Friday and may be sold out by the time this paper hits your mailbox.

Let's be honest: none of us wants to buy all our gifts from a place that rhymes with Shmamazon. We want to support local makers and discover unique items with a story behind them. We want reasons to go downtown — especially during the holidays. Maybe you'll even feel inspired to start a new tradition with one of your favorite kids, helping them pick out the perfect gift for their parents.

Just don't expect it to be a commemorative Twins World Series ornament anytime soon. These are just a few reasons a trip to Dayton's should top your holiday to-do list. A reimagined department store really does offer something for everyone — except Jeff Bezos.



→ **DAYTON'S HOLIDAY MARKET**  
The market opened in mid-November and runs daily through Dec. 27 inside the historic Dayton's building in downtown Minneapolis, 700 Nicollet Mall.  
**Hours:**  
Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m.  
Sunday: 11 a.m.–5 p.m.  
**Closed Thanksgiving**  
**Christmas Day and Dec. 26.**



Craig Wilson ran into Molly Mogren Katt by pure chance at the Dayton Holiday Market, where she's hosting her NAMAKAN kiosk. A ruff — their soft, faux-fur trim — snaps on magnetically to a hood or collar, adding a bit of warmth and an easy touch of refinement. (Image: Craig Wilson)

## LARA'S LIST: THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

By Craig Wilson, Editor



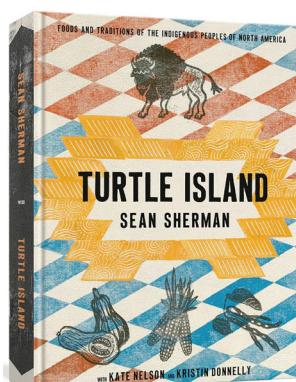
Lara Miklasevics. (Image: [laramiklasevics.com](http://laramiklasevics.com))

*Craig Wilson is the editor of the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in Lowry Hill.*

If you've ever paused mid-scroll because a dish looked so vivid you could almost taste it, there's a good chance Lowry Hill's Lara Miklasevics was behind it. A nationally sought-after food stylist, Lara's work appears in campaigns for some of the country's most recognizable brands. Her signature style — abundant, textural, irresistibly real food — has made her a quiet tastemaker in kitchens and studios nationwide.

When she's not styling a photo set somewhere across the country, Lara is roaming Uptown, noticing details others overlook and championing the small businesses that give the neighborhood its creative pulse. This year, her holiday gift list draws from her favorite nearby spots — thoughtful, local and effortlessly stylish. Lara's Uptown picks reflect exactly who she is: creative, generous and deeply rooted in the neighborhood she calls home.

### Lara's Uptown Gift List



Birchbark Books  
2115 W. 21st St.  
[birchbarkbooks.com](http://birchbarkbooks.com)

Birchbark Books is guided by people who believe in good writing, handmade art, Native culture and the magic of intimate bookstores. From the acclaimed author, Sean Sherman, of "The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen," "Turtle Island" explores the foods that have connected Indigenous peoples across North America for thousands of years. The book includes more than 150 ancestral and modern recipes rooted in place and culture. Lara served as the food stylist for the project, a role she is deeply proud of. She encourages neighbors to gift the book not as a nod to her work, but as a way to support Indigenous cooking, honor Native foodways and help keep these traditions alive.



Black Walnut Bakery  
3157 Hennepin Ave.  
[blackwalnutbakery.com](http://blackwalnutbakery.com)

Simply the best croissants, brioche breakfast sandwiches and more. The ginger snap banana pudding is, in Lara's words, "to die for." When you don't have time to bake in addition to cooking, let the experts help.



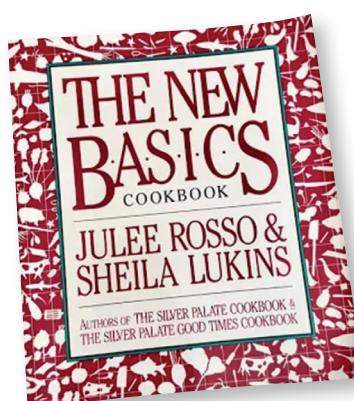
The Flower Bar on Lyndale  
2736 Lyndale Ave S  
[flowerbarexperience.com](http://flowerbarexperience.com)

As a former florist with Brown & Greene in the 1990s, Lara appreciates their beautifully edited color palette and the option to BYOV — bring your own vase. It's her go-to for arranging festive floral pieces for dinner parties and holidays.



Specs Optical  
2204 Hennepin Ave.  
[specsoptical.com](http://specsoptical.com)

Chic frames and exceptional design. If you want to keep up with what's current in eyewear, this is the place. Lara says you can browse, but be warned: You will fall in love. Specs helps elevate your look, whether out in the world or reading your favorite cookbook.



Magers & Quinn  
3038 Hennepin Ave.  
[magersandquinn.com](http://magersandquinn.com)

A go-to for beautiful vintage cookbooks, art books and clever finds for the quietly sophisticated reader. Lara notes that "The Silver Palate New Basics" shaped her early development as a chef and stylist — and now it's considered vintage. She encourages aspiring creatives to explore foundational cookbooks like these to broaden their palate.



Isles Studio 1311 W. 25th St.  
[islesstudio.com](http://islesstudio.com)

Nature-inspired ceramics, home décor with personality, and exquisite taxidermy that turns a simple table into something cinematic. Lara adores everything in this shop but is especially drawn to Astier de Villatte, the Paris-based studio known for its milky white ceramics and distinctive incense. Try the Stockholm or Buenos Aires incense in a delightfully irreverent Marie Antoinette holder — a little wink of history perfect for 2025.

Dervish Mazza  
Available Online with Delivery  
[dervishmazza.com](http://dervishmazza.com)

Lara recommends a curated holiday gift package from her friend and creative collaborator, local chef Mohamed "Mo" Kobt. His Mazza boxes — named for the Egyptian tradition of small, shareable dishes — reflect his journey from Cairo to France to New York City to Minneapolis. Mo grew up along the Nile in a food-loving culture where mazza is enjoyed with eish, Egypt's beloved bread whose name means "life." As he likes to say, what is life without good food and good bread? His Mazza packages bring that spirit of generosity, flavor and connection into any home.



Combine  
1609 W. Lake St.  
[combinegetdressed.com](http://combinegetdressed.com)

Lara's spot for home and fashion basics — and not-so-basics. Owner Michael Pickett curates a relaxed yet sophisticated aesthetic embraced by the city's creative class. Combine is known for clothing, but its home goods are equally strong. Lara's staples include Dosa napkins, Ranger Station candles and Le Feu De L'Eau candles.



Moona Moono  
3001 Hennepin Ave.  
[moonamoono.com](http://moonamoono.com)

A modern coffee shop and retail experience celebrating Asian American and Asian culture. Beautifully designed and inviting for all ages. Come for coffee, boba or matcha; leave with K-beauty, kawaii goods, stationery or housewares. Lara loves their "Delight Box," a custom curated gift based on your person's vibe, colors and quirks — a magical, stress-free way to gift.



Tao Organic Foods & Café  
2200 Hennepin Ave.  
[thetao-life.com](http://thetao-life.com)

A holistic wellness spot offering organic meals, herbal remedies and a mind-body-spirit approach to nourishment. Lara loves their Dr. Hauschka products — especially the hand lotion, which she says is essential for hardworking hands in the kitchen.

## NATURE IS RAD: THE PHYSICS BEHIND NOVEMBER'S AURORA OUTBURST

Article and Photos by Brandon Colpitts

*Brandon Colpitts lives in Lowry Hill. He's mostly known as Elyse's husband.*

The "fall colors" exploded into nighttime on Nov. 11, when a severe G4 geomagnetic storm — on a scale where 1 is minor and 5 is extreme — aligned with clear skies to put on a fantastic performance. Never have I stood under a hospital-white streetlamp (where's the off switch on these things?) and witnessed aurora like that.

Powerful CMEs, or coronal mass ejections, are huge bursts of charged particles from the sun that collide with Earth's magnetosphere, exciting electrons that strike the gases in our

atmosphere and create a dazzling light show.

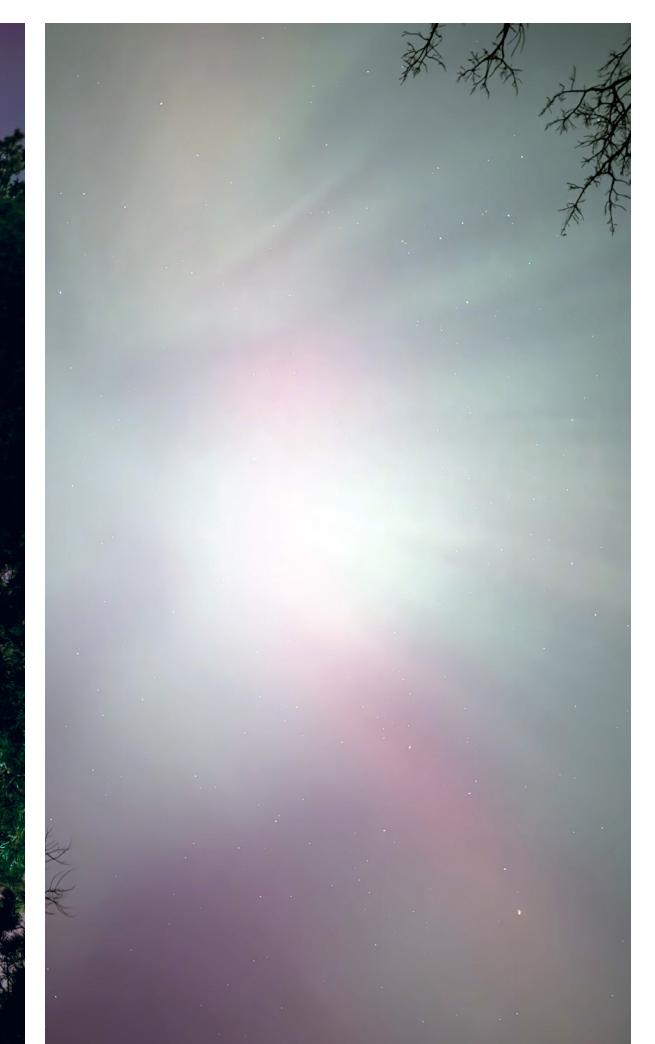
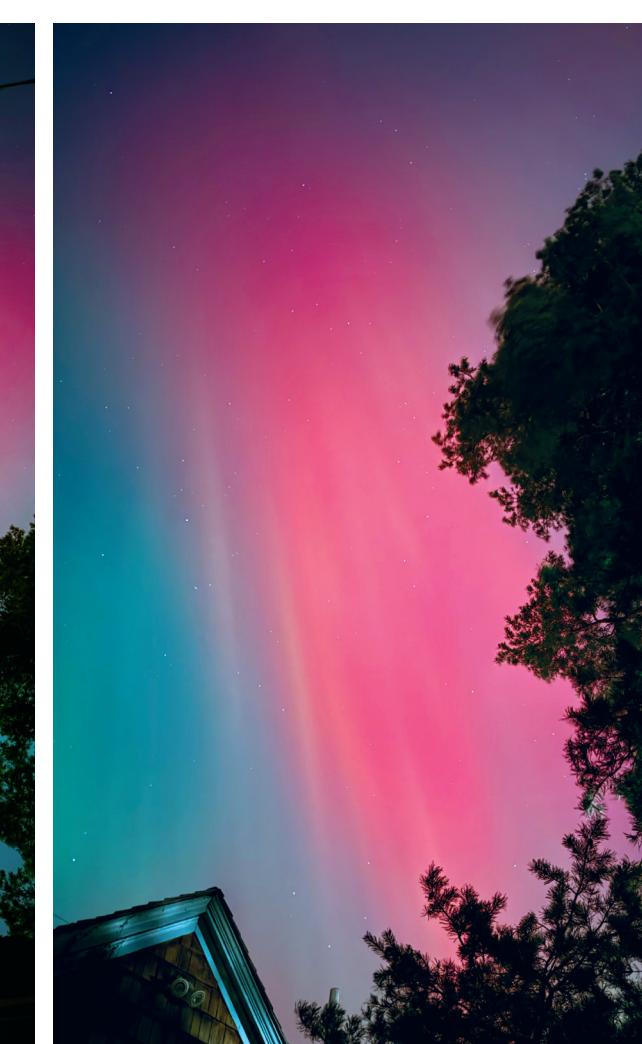
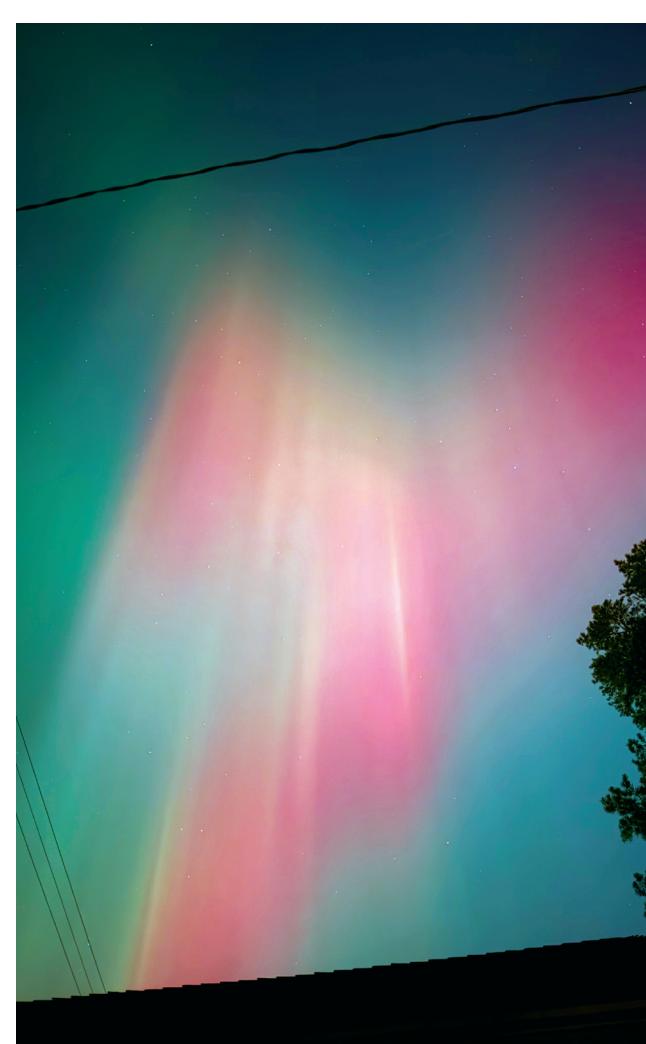
What made this storm rare was how much of the atmosphere was energized. Most people know the "common" green — though calling anything aurora-related common feels wrong — which comes from oxygen atoms in the lower, denser part of the atmosphere. But all that red? That's oxygen too, just much higher up, roughly 150 to 300 miles, where the air is thin enough to produce that deep, stunning red that only appears during the strongest storms.

The pinks, purples and magentas come mostly from nitrogen mixing with oxygen emissions, giving us the full rainbow-sherbet

sky.

If you missed it, the good news is we're still near the peak of a solar cycle, meaning you might get another chance. Several apps — I use My Aurora Forecast — can alert you when the Kp index is high. It runs from 0 to 9, and on Nov. 11 it hit 8.33.

My favorite part was watching everyone stop and look up: neighbors gathering in their backyards, jockeying for the darkest patch; text chains lighting up with the best kind of breaking news; people drifting toward the parks and lakes, phones slipping into pockets as the real show began.



# YOU CAN HELP YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE SOAR

36% of youth who have been in foster care experience homelessness before the age of 26. We're here to do something about it.



**LAUNCH PAD**

PERIS Hill, located in the Lowry/Hennepin neighborhood, is a first of its kind, deeply affordable, supportive housing community for youth aging out of foster care. This year PERIS is introducing LAUNCH PAD, a unique savings program so residents can not only access safe, secure housing, but also build the skills, habits and funds they need to thrive far beyond it.

Partner with us in supporting young people soar. Every dollar contributed to Launch Pad will go directly to a young person's future savings. Scan the code to donate and learn more.

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[perisfoundation.org](http://perisfoundation.org)

## PERIS HILL: A NEW MODEL FOR YOUTH-CENTERED AFFORDABLE HOUSING

PERIS Hill, Lowry Hill's first intentionally designed affordable housing community, has come a long way since opening its doors in 2021. Built on the site of former neighborhood favorites — Brenda's Café, Auriga and Bradstreet — PERIS Hill includes 45 thoughtfully designed apartments, 15 of them reserved for young adults transitioning out of foster care. From the beginning, PERIS Hill was envisioned as a new model of supportive housing, where young people could practice autonomy within a community of care.

Developed with guidance from a youth advisory council and people who have experienced foster care, PERIS combines deeply affordable apartments with a whole-person, youth-centered approach. Onsite staff provide daily support ranging from education and employment navigation to financial guidance and mental health resources. The staff-to-resident ratio is about 1 to 5, a level of individualized attention that is rare in supportive housing. This intentional design ensures young people have consistent, trusted relationships and the stability they need to move confidently into independence.

Eventually, Jayden hopes to have a shop of his own and spend time as a traveling barber, flying to different states to cut hair for people with big names. For now, he is building a strong foundation. At his first shop he learned what it takes to run a business and how money works

The PERIS team also makes a point to be an active and engaged neighbor. Staff and residents regularly participate in Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association meetings, attend neighborhood events and support nearby businesses. As the area has evolved — with the loss of several long-standing local establishments and the need for renewed safety measures — PERIS Hill has invested in lighting, security and partnerships with the Minneapolis Police Department and the neighborhood association to ensure a safe, welcoming space for residents and the broader community.

Today, PERIS stands as a living example of what can happen when stable housing, genuine connection and opportunity intersect. Its impact is reflected clearly in Jayden's story. Jayden moved into PERIS about two years ago, looking for a place to settle and figure out what came next. Barbering had been on his mind for years. He started by cutting his own hair, then friends' hair, and his uncle let him practice on him. "I knew that I wanted to start school for it. I had a passion early on for it," he said.

PERIS has shaped his personal life too. His sister lives in the building, something he did not expect, and it has brought them closer. They hang out, walk her dog and look out for each other.

For Jayden, PERIS has made the hard parts easier — transportation, staying focused, having someone to talk things through with. And while he is still building toward what comes next, he is already doing what he came hoping to do: cutting hair and gaining momentum.

— Rose Carr Schwartz,  
PERIS Foundation Board Member

## MY FIRST NORTHERN LIGHTS — CONNECTION AND WONDER

Article and Photos by Courtney Cushing Kiernat



Courtney Cushing Kiernat is a staff photographer with the Hill & Lake Press and President of the Kenwood Neighborhood Organization. She lives in Kenwood.

I was ho-hum about it at first, but as other neighbors chimed in, their enthusiasm sparked my curiosity. I pointed my camera toward the sky and — wow.

From my backyard, I could see purple and greenish streaks across the night. I marveled for a moment before returning to dinner. Then another neighbor messaged with excitement that he was seeing vibrant reds from Burnham Bridge. I'm slightly embarrassed to admit I'd already changed into my pajamas, but I grabbed my jacket and my phone and headed out, leaving our dogs confused about why I was taking a walk without them.

I live in Kenwood in an area we like to call the Kenilworth Triangle, bordered by the Kenilworth Trail/SWLRT, the west side of Lake of the Isles and the channel connecting Isles to Cedar.

I made my way to the bridge, I lifted my phone to the sky — and suddenly understood all the fuss. The night was streaked with shades of red, slowly shifting and moving. I finally understood what everyone had been talking about.

We're a connected triangle of neighbors, and although our GroupMe thread keeps us updated on random happenings and alerts, I don't know everyone well. On the first night of the aurora borealis, one neighbor messaged that we should check the sky with our phone cameras — apparently the colors show up better that way.

While I was staring upward, a neighbor and friend who has been navigating a difficult health prognosis joined me. We stood in quiet awe before settling onto the cold sidewalk, lying on our backs with our phones pointed toward the sky, exclaiming at the colors, shapes and movement.

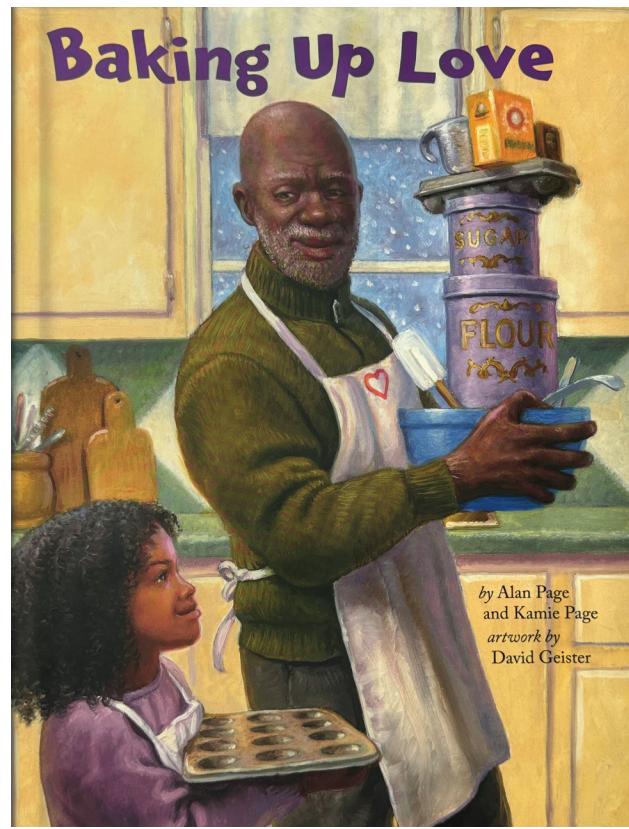
The night was uplifting because of the sky, yes, but just as much because of the community who shared in the wonder. The Northern Lights brought us together — adults suddenly giddy like children — amazed by this natural display.

I'm grateful to my neighbors, whose excitement pushed me outdoors and beyond my comfort zone with astronomy and the stars. And I'm grateful to my friend who lay on the cold concrete with me as we both experienced our first Northern Lights.

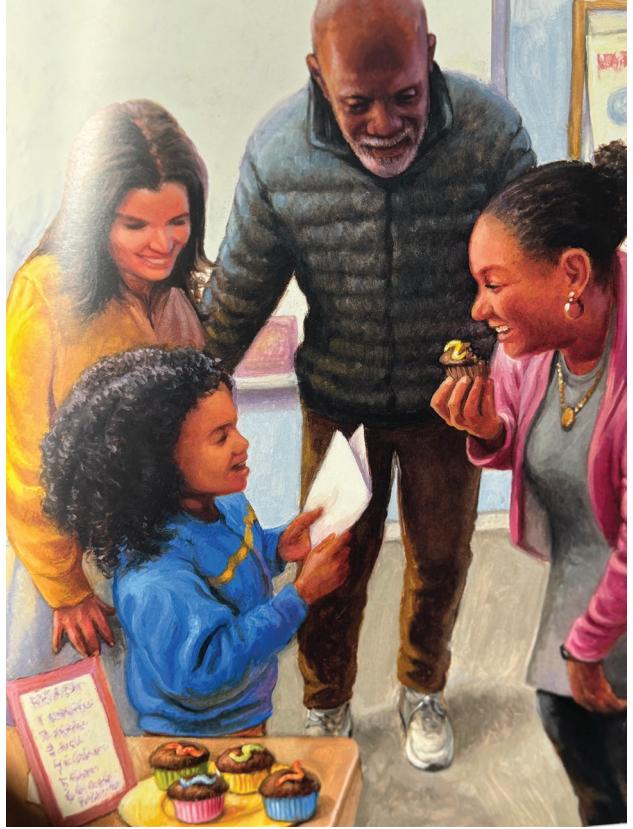
The moment was richer, more memorable, because of them.

## NEIGHBORS IN THE SPOTLIGHT: JUSTICE ALAN PAGE AND DAHLIA BAYLOR BRING “BAKING UP LOVE” TO LIFE

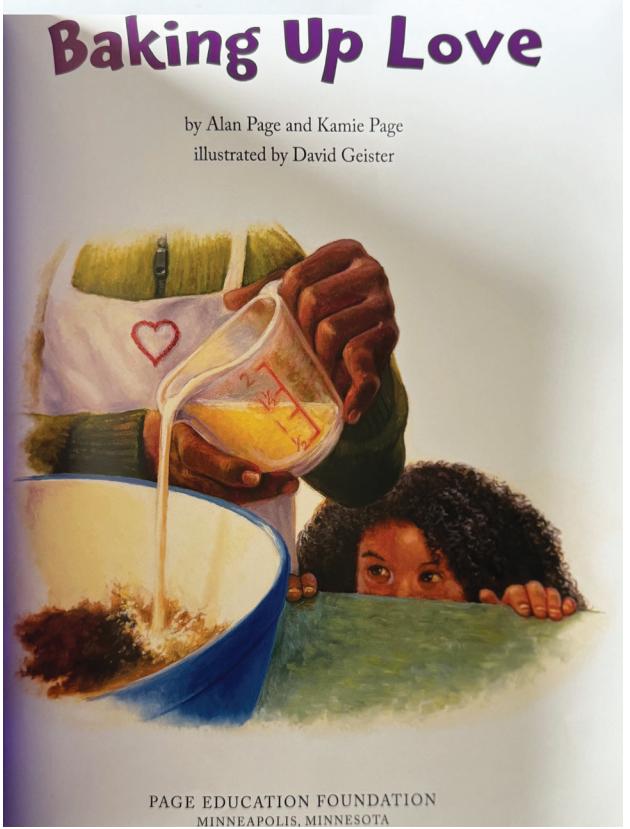
By Chelsea Walcker



Cover of *Baking Up Love*, bearing resemblance to Justice Page and Dahlia Baylor.



Local young reader and writer Dahlia Baylor (in blue) as Esther in the book; Jackie Brown Baylor (in yellow) also makes an appearance as a model for Esther's mom



Justice Page's pinky makes an appearance in the book as well, familiar to readers of his children's book, "Alan and His Perfectly Pointy Impossible Perpendicular Pinky"

Chelsea Walcker lives in Lowry Hill.

There's something special about living in a neighborhood where the people around you are not just neighbors but storytellers and everyday heroes. Justice Alan Page, a neighborhood fixture and former Minnesota Supreme Court justice and NFL Hall of Famer, has added another story to his collection of children's books with his latest release, "Baking Up Love," co-authored with his daughter Kamiie Page — and it's one with deep roots in our community.

"Baking Up Love" tells the story of Esther, a young girl excited to bake cupcakes with her mom for a school literacy event. But when her mom is nowhere to be found, it's Grandpa — who bears a strong resemblance to Justice Page himself — who steps in, rolls up his sleeves and helps Esther whip up something special.

What follows is a tender tale of intergenerational love, patience and the simple joys of baking together. The secret ingredient is love, of course. Justice Page includes a real-life cupcake recipe at the back of the book — a favorite of his late wife, Diane Sims Page — adding an extra layer of meaning and sweetness.

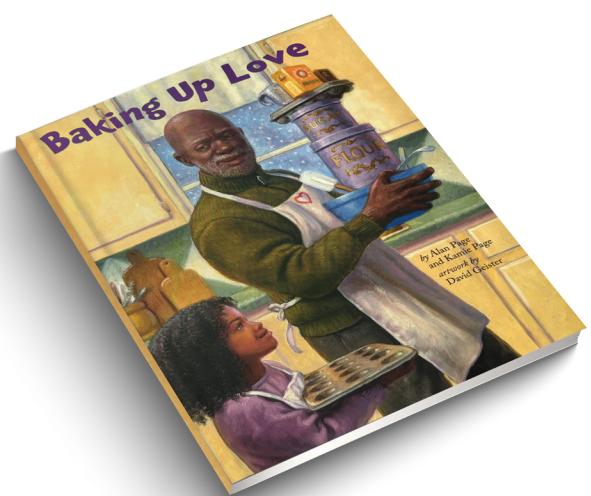
Other beloved neighbors make delightful cameos in the book as well. Local 8-year-old Dahlia Baylor and her mother, Jackie Brown Baylor, served as real-life models for the illustrations. Dahlia, a bright and curious reader, amplifies the story's warmth through her likeness and spirit on the page.

Jackie, a tireless neighborhood volunteer who devotes her energy to organizing community events and supporting childhood literacy, shines in her cameo too. Their involvement adds a touch of familiarity and neighborhood pride for those of us lucky enough to know them.

In our household, all of Justice Page's children's books are beloved, but none more than "Baking Up Love." Our 2-year-old son Henry is completely enchanted by it — so much so that bedtime often includes 10 back-

to-back readings. It's hard to say no when a book brings such visible joy.

We also get the joy of seeing Justice Page in real life. He is a daily presence walking around Lake of the Isles, rain or shine, always with a friendly wave. Little Henry, an early riser like Justice Page, now stops whatever he's doing to wave and say hello to "Alan" — a name he uses because of the book "Alan and His Perfectly Pointy Impossible Perpendicular Pinky."



**“Love really is the secret ingredient — in the book and in our neighborhood.”**

It's a small moment that feels magical. And whenever Henry calls out, Justice Page never fails to kneel down, meet him eye to eye and say hello with gentle kindness. It's a small act that leaves a lasting impression.

We're grateful to Justice Page for sharing his stories and heart, and to neighbors like

Dahlia and Jackie who help bring them to life. If you haven't yet picked up a copy of "Baking Up Love," do yourself — and the young readers in your life — a favor: buy one, gift one and bake something together. You'll be glad you did, and proceeds benefit the Page Education Foundation.

This book is more than a story — it's a snapshot of what makes our community so vibrant and full of love. And to Justice Page — thank you for another beautiful book, for always taking time for even the smallest among us and for showing us how love can truly be the secret ingredient in everything we do.

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## THE HUMBLE ART OF CHORES

A monthly column by Dorothy Richmond

Dorothy Richmond is founder of the Dear Neighbor column and a longtime resident of Cedar-Isles-Dean.

Dear Neighbor,

Let's talk about chores. I recently ran across the term "Zen chores" and hit up Google immediately. It wasn't the Zen part but the word chores that got me, because I've always loved them.

Like many kids growing up on farms, chores were an integral part of life. The word wasn't just spoken but lived daily. While my first words, like everybody else's, were probably "Mama," "Dada," "ball," I think "chores" was one of the first concepts I understood deeply.

I was curious, of course, about its juxtaposition with the philosophical term Zen. Zen chores are the practice of communal cleaning — taking responsibility for shared spaces in Zen temples and monasteries. They're designed to build character and humility. Each morning after meditation, monks receive a 20-minute task — sweeping, washing dishes, laundry — after which a monk rings a bell. Ding. Time for breakfast.

Dad got up at 5 every morning to do what he called chores — feeding cattle, milking cows — and then again after supper. He never griped about this or anything else, and that was a profound part of the humility he silently exhibited. He just did them. The result was simple: The cows produced, the milk tank filled, the milk truck hauled it off. On a dairy farm, the milkhouse has to be sparkling clean, and I always loved the way it smelled — a combination of fresh milk and bleach.

My siblings and I had chores, both farm and house. In between Dad's chores, he worked — meaning farmed. Chores and work aren't the same. Work is more ego-bound, what you tell people you

"do." A job is public and rewarded by money or acclaim. Chores are invisible, intimate, private and usually belong to the realm of family and love. Their rewards are gratitude and being a valued member of the group.

Studies show that kids who grow up with chores turn out to be better self-managers and have stronger emotional regulation and mental flexibility.

### Households generate chores.

Something always needs to be cleaned, fixed, dealt with or cared for. These are responsibilities homeowners take on the moment the deed is signed and, for many, they become part of the richness and reward of home.

And, of course, chores get "stuff" done (GSD — though we all know what the S really stands for). In our individualized, ego-driven Western society, where humility can be seen as a liability, we often pay others to take on our responsibilities.

You know who doesn't do chores? The queen. One of my most memorable takeaways from "The Crown" is a scene in which Queen Elizabeth, preparing for an event, is being draped — undergarments to jewels — like a Hanukkah bush by her royal dresser. I couldn't stop thinking about the trajectory. Where does this end? Does she bathe herself? Brush her own teeth? Blow her own nose? Does she have a royal burper? When did helplessness become aspirational?

I was pleased to see Elizabeth in a later scene spread jam on her own scone. A few years back, I was sitting among a group of women, all engaged in the envy game, regaling one another with tales of their various "properties" and carping — wait for it — "It's so hard to find good help." For ballast, I revealed that I clean my own house. Thud.

"Why?" they demanded.

"Because it's my house and I like taking care of it." It was true. When writing Spanish textbooks, I'd hit a snag, step away, do laundry, vacuum, scrub a sink, and somehow the knot of problems in a difficult chapter would untangle itself. I didn't mention the immense pride I'd felt recently fixing a toilet. "I don't even own a vacuum cleaner," one gilded-age maven cackled, followed by complicit, shrill laughter.

### I was a fish in the wrong sea.

As the conversation turned to comparing their latest purchases — the "right" things — I wondered, Am I missing something? Is this how score is kept these days?

My friend Amy tells me that the first Monday of every month she puts on her bill-paying cardigan and sits down to the task. (She also cleans her own house, and it's a beauty.) Removing the sweater is her reward for a mission accomplished. I don't have a special sweater, but I give myself a star for each chore completed on my daily list.

Our inner lives, not our external displays, are what lead to real confidence and contentment. What you do when nobody's watching is your pith.

I guess the best thing chores engender is humility. I've never met a humble person who wasn't interesting. Or a snob who was.

— Dorothy



**How silently, how silently,  
The wondrous gift is given;  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of His heaven.**

Phillips Brooks, *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 222

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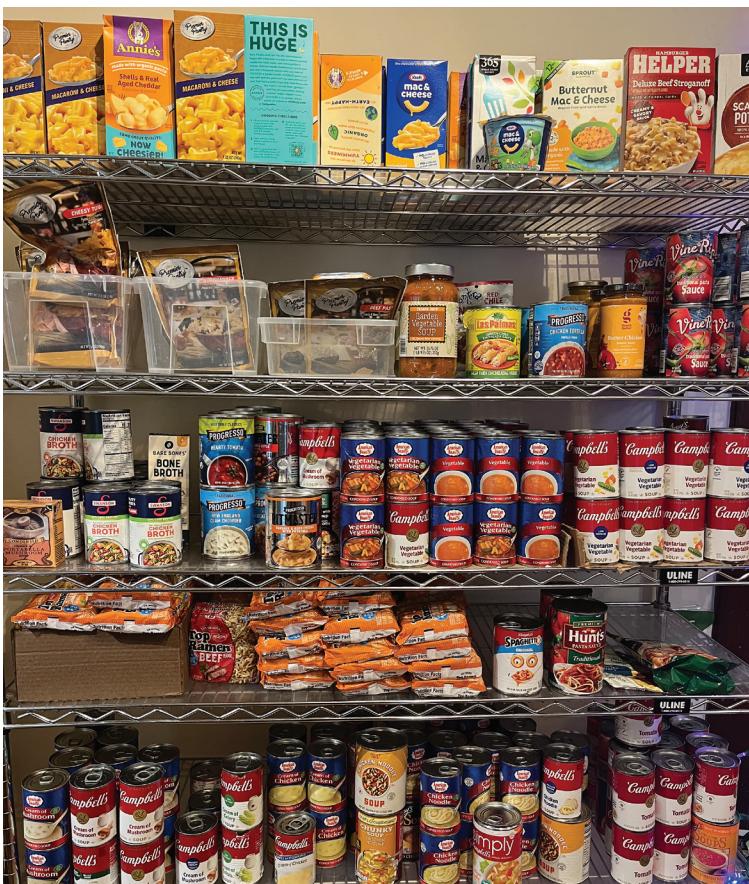
We will also be closed Christmas Eve & Day,  
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# JOYCE UPTOWN FOOD SHELF FACES UNPRECEDENTED NEED

By Paula Chesley



Left: Matthew Ayres, executive director of Joyce Food Shelf, with Sen. Scott Dibble. Right: An ephemeral full shelf of essential groceries for neighbors facing food insecurity — a brief but welcome sight in a year of unprecedented need. (Images: Paula Chesley)

*Paula Chesley is a regular contributor. She lives in East Isles.*

The Tuesday before Nov. 1, frantic emails, meetings and chats started flying around my workplace. “How are clients going to get food now without SNAP payments?”

I work at a clinic for people with eating disorders, and my co-workers rightly perceived Nov. 1 as a potential crisis point, both because of Trump’s ‘Big Beautiful Bill’ and the recent government shutdown. But reading about the the bill and SNAP benefits felt abstract, so I wanted to understand how food insecurity was playing out locally — and how we as a community could help.

Our neighborhoods are often described as affluent, but it’s easy to forget that many low- and middle-income residents live here too.

Without SNAP payments, people would be forced to rely more heavily on food shelves that are already stretched thin, given today’s grocery prices. So, on Saturday morning, Nov. 1, I visited Joyce Uptown Food Shelf and spoke with Executive Director Matthew Ayres.

Joyce Uptown Food Shelf has operated at Fremont Ave. South and 31st Street, in South Uptown, since its founding in 1969. Joyce is an independent nonprofit with three staff members, including Ayres, and more than 200 volunteers.

When I arrived, volunteers were working out of the garage sorting and packing food. State Sen. Scott Dibble had also just arrived for a briefing. Ayres spoke with both of us and walked us through the food shelf.

“Normally, this area is full of food,” he said, gesturing toward a half-full storage area. “It was full just yesterday, but all that food

has gone out the door. That’s how great the need is.” Dibble filmed a video with Ayres for the SD 61 Facebook page, and together they helped me untangle the confusing legal situation surrounding SNAP. I couldn’t help imagining how stressful it must feel to not know if you will be able to buy food because of legal decisions outside of your control.

Food insecurity is peaking now, but it has been rising for years. “Since I started five years ago, we’ve had a 568% increase in the amount of food that goes out the door. This is a crisis,” Ayres said. During the last week of October, Joyce had lines of people waiting for the first time.

Most shoppers are local: In early 2024, nearly 70% came from ZIP codes 55407 and 55408. Joyce historically relied on shopping appointments so people could choose their food, but because of demand, appointments for new shoppers are no longer available. Instead, Joyce is distributing pre-packed emergency bags to anyone who needs them.

The food shelf has seen an outpouring of goodwill — volunteer capacity is maxed out and financial donations are up — but the strain of the current moment is unmistakable. I asked Ayres whether the level of tension he sees has changed during his tenure. “One hundred percent,” he said.

SNAP benefits have returned with the government re-opening — but the BBB’s new work requirements mean that 27,000 SNAP recipients in Hennepin County will be re-evaluated for eligibility.

Many will lose benefits, Ayres said, because a significant number of SNAP participants cannot work or cannot meet the types of work requirements the bill demands. Dibble said the

BBB was “specifically designed to take money out of the SNAP program to create resources for tax breaks for billionaires. This is true for other safety net programs as well.”

Joyce prides itself on being a warm, welcoming place. Many shoppers come for the calm and dignity of the experience.

“We don’t have fluorescent lights or people reaching over you to get stuff, and people really appreciate that,” Ayres said. He is proud of the roughly three-minute turnaround time for emergency bags and of the practice of bagging food and bringing it out to shoppers’ cars.

“Coming to a food shelf can be hard, especially the first time,” he said. “We had someone crying here this week because it was their first time. When you’ve made it 37 years without having to use a food shelf and suddenly your cupboards are empty, it’s a big step to tell yourself, ‘All right, I’m going to step into the food shelf and ask for help.’”

→

## HOW CAN YOU HELP

How to help:

- **Donate money:** Dollars go further when given directly to food shelves because they purchase food at discounted rates. More information is at [joyceuptownfoodshelf.org](http://joyceuptownfoodshelf.org).
- **Donate food:** Food donations still help because they expand the variety available to shoppers.
- **Support upcoming drives:** Holidays on Hennepin is hosting a food drive for Joyce at Kowalski’s on Dec. 6 from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- **Volunteer.** Joyce is at maximum volunteer capacity, but other local food shelves still need help.
- **Help de-stigmatize asking for help.** Encourage those in need to use food shelves — that’s what they’re for.

**If you or someone you know is in need —**

- Many food shelves follow The Emergency Food Assistance Program’s eligibility guideline of 300 percent of the federal poverty level — \$46,950 for a single person and \$96,450 for a family of four in 2025.
- Joyce and many other food shelves offer emergency food bags to anyone who walks through the door.
- At [Hungrysolutions.org](http://Hungrysolutions.org), the Find Help tab allows you to search for food shelves, free meals, senior resources, free pet food and more by ZIP code and day of the week.

**What an Expert Says —**

Abby Bassier is a registered dietitian who lives in the Wedge. Here’s what she’s seeing:

- Much of the Hill & Lake Press coverage area is a food oasis with grocery stores at a range of price points.
- When people don’t know where their next meal is coming from, it can lead to cyclical eating and a feast-or-famine mentality.
- Food insecurity can reduce pleasure in eating and undermine a sense of community.
- Bassier is seeing more clients shift their holiday meal plans because they can’t afford traditional holiday foods.

